

Sermon: Unspoken Expectations – March 26, 2017 (Scripture is from the ESV)

Location: New Philadelphia Church, Sillim Campus – 1:30pm service

Introduction

Good afternoon, Sillim! Last week Pastor Marcus gave a great message about patience and long-suffering and how to deal with disappointment and disillusionment. Today I want to speak about one of the greatest traps that leads to disappointment and turns our heart from friends, family, our spouse, and even God. The title of today's message is, "**Unspoken Expectations.**" The passage I'll be preaching from is found in Mark 4:35-41.

Here in the passage in Mark 4 Jesus had just finished a long day of teaching the masses of people by the Sea of Galilee and is with his disciples. Please read along in your Bible or follow along on the screen above...

Slides 1 and 2

Mark 4:35-41 – On that day, when evening had come, Jesus said to them, "Let us go across to the other side." And leaving the crowd, they took him with them in the boat, just as he was. And other boats were with him. And a great windstorm arose, and the waves were breaking into the boat, so that the boat was already filling. But he was in the stern, asleep on the cushion. And they woke him and said to him, "Teacher, **do you not care** that we are perishing?" And he awoke and rebuked the wind and said to the sea, "Peace! Be still!" And the wind ceased, and there was a great calm. He said to them, "Why are you so afraid? Have you still no faith?" And they were filled with great fear and said to one another, "Who then is this, that even the wind and the sea obey him?"

Remember, a number of Jesus' disciples were fishermen. These men were extremely skilled at navigating boats on the sea. As the storm picked up they likely assumed, "We got this." Jesus was asleep, no need to wake Him. But soon the storm became too intense for even the experienced sailors. They were at their wits end. And so this was when they decided to wake up their Rabbi, their teacher. And what were their words? "Teacher, do you not care that we perishing?"

Put yourself in Jesus' shoes. You just had a really long day of teaching a large crowd of people and you're really tired. You fall asleep peacefully in the boat, knowing your experienced disciples are in control. And then you're suddenly jerked awake. And your disciples are all around you accusing you of not caring. **Poor Jesus.** He hadn't been sitting around watching the disciples struggle. He hadn't been reading a book while the boat was sinking. He was sleeping! He was exhausted! And when the disciples woke Him up they didn't say, "Hey, Jesus, the storm is really bad and we could use your help" or "Jesus, please save us." Instead, just a straight accusation! "Do you not care about us?!?" Talk about the worst way to wake up.

The disciples had likely tried everything in their own power and had become exhausted with no patience left. They had waited too long to wake up Jesus and so offense came out. Accusation came out. Amidst their struggle they realized they expected Jesus to at least help out. They expected Jesus to do something. But Jesus was asleep. He was not meeting their expectations. And so they accused Him of not caring. **In this moment of stress and broken expectations, they lost their trust in Jesus' care for them.** It was as if they expected that Jesus, even while sleeping, should know their needs and be concerned for them. This was unfair to Jesus! Unspoken expectations that are pent up inside often lead to disappointment,

disillusionment, bitterness, and even separation. Unspoken expectations are extremely dangerous.

Let me share an example from my marriage. Very early on in our marriage around dinner time I would ask Sky what we should do for dinner. I am a planner and so I like to know things in advance and be prepared. Spontaneity is a weakness for me. Sky was very much the opposite, although she has changed a lot since we first married. Sky loved spontaneity but found planning to be a bit stressful. So early on in our marriage when I would ask what we should do for dinner Sky would shrug her shoulders and say she wasn't sure. So, being in my mind a great husband, I would offer to cook. "I got this!" I would say and would make spaghetti, one of the four meals I knew how to make. The next night when dinner time came around again Sky wasn't sure what to do again. Not to worry, I had already purchased ingredients for meals I knew just in case. So I made us omelets. The next night, the same situation happened, so I made us burgers. I was quickly running out of meals I knew how to cook, but in my mind I was the best husband ever for cooking for us each night. But little did I know. After a couple weeks of being married we went to the local grocery store together. I quickly began to stock back up on the food items I knew how to cook... eggs, noodles, tomato sauce, and ground beef. As I was busy grabbing the different items Sky suddenly had a "moment." Tears came to her eyes and she exclaimed, "Why do we always only eat the food that you like?" What? I thought she had been loving my food! She hadn't complained once and she had never voiced wanting anything else. But as we spoke I soon realized that my planning strength was so strong that I had quickly moved forward with cooking and shopping and she had never felt comfortable speaking up. She appreciated my cooking of course, but we hadn't eaten a Korean meal since marrying. And we hadn't eaten anything spicy. In my mind I thought I was a great husband for cooking for her. In her mind she thought she was a loving wife for constantly eating only the meals I liked, or at least knew how to cook. But deep down she was longing for kimchi. And for rice. And those expectations remained pushed down inside, until they eventually burst out that day at the grocery store.

To be honest when she released her previously unspoken expectations I felt offense in my heart. I had been such a good husband! Why is she so upset??? It wasn't until the dust settled that I began to understand things from her point of view. And Sky soon became more vocal about what she wanted to eat and I would help her plan and shop for the meals in advance so she could cook what she is comfortable making. She is now an amazing planner and we love our meals together. But imagine if she had kept those expectations pent up deep inside? We would have kept eating spaghetti, omelets, and burgers for over five years. That would have been horrible!

Slide 3

James 4:2 – You do not have, because you do not ask.

Matthew 7:7 – Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you.

Often expectations aren't met because we don't speak them out. We don't ask of them. We don't request them. And yet when our unspoken expectations aren't met, we often respond with great disappointment and frustration.

During our first year of mentoring in Oak Tree Project we had our four scholarship students over to our apartment along with Jee and Mijeong. For some of the orphans it was their first time into someone's apartment for a meal. Sky prepared wollamsam for the kids, which is Vietnamese rice paper rolls. She laid out some fish sauce, peanut sauce, and sriracha sauce for us to dip our rolls in. One of our boys found the fish sauce disgusting and some other things not so tasty, and he was very vocal with his displeasure. "Oh, this is gross! Oh, how can you eat this?!" Sky was mortified. I just shook my head. For a 19 year old boy to come into someone's house and totally bash the food prepared for him was completely rude. Even 10 year olds shouldn't speak like he did. But you know what? He had never been taught that such behavior was wrong. He had grown up eating cafeteria food with other boys his age. They were never taught manners. And he had never had a meal at someone's apartment. We had to let go of our offense. The boy hadn't sinned. He hadn't rejected our words. We had just never communicated expectations for a guest. While I've served in the orphanage ministry I've realized just how important it is to communicate expectations.

Every year I drive 3rd to 6th grade girls from my children's home to our three day Arts and Crafts Camp. The girls are always excited for the camp, but for some of them when they get in the car they don't greet me at all but just talk to the other girls about their complaints. I used to get offended and hurt when the girls would ignore me and I would speak in my frustration about how they should greet me. My frustration usually wouldn't help and they would feel like I didn't like them. But soon, just like our Oak Tree Project boy, I realized these girls hadn't been taught well to greet and to smile. They just took me for granted. And I realized I couldn't let myself get offended or frustrated until after voicing my expectations in a clear way. And sure enough, after talking to the girls in an authoritative but not frustrated tone, they would make sure to greet me and to smile. They simply had to be taught! So often we do not have because we do not ask.

I have seen so many friendships, family relationships, and even marriages fracture due to unspoken expectations. **So often people are like the disciples in the storm, waiting and waiting for their expectations to be met only to lose their trust in the person's love and yell at them in frustration.** Like Jesus sleeping, usually people are unaware of the unspoken expectations of those around them. They just have to be woken up, and preferably in a loving, trusting way.

So how should we communicate our expectations? I'm going to give you all three steps, but first I want you to try and think of any friendships, ministry leaders or disciples, or family members who you feel disappointed or frustrated with. For some there might be clear sin or failure, but my bet is that for most of you your disappointment, frustration, and even bitterness stems from unspoken expectations that you have put on the other person. And for some of you perhaps you did finally voice your expectations, but because you waited so long your expectations came out in a poisonous, bitter type of way.

Who have you been offended by? Who are you frustrated with? Have you spoken with this person in a loving way and voiced your expectations? If you haven't spoken, then you definitely need to. Keep these people in mind as I share these three steps.

Here are **three steps** for communicating our expectations...

Slide 4

1. Pray and reflect first.

You don't want to just go and blurt out your expectations. Think about what expectations are realistic and what expectations might be too much. You shouldn't overwhelm the other person with too many expectations right away. So think ahead about what expectations are most important for you to express. You also want to be loving in the way you approach, so first make sure all offense has been dealt with internally and that you've forgiven them in your heart. As much as you might think they should know better, like our Oak Tree Project student, the odds are that the person has been unaware, just like Jesus was when He was sleeping. So don't approach the person in frustration or bitterness. Gain your composure through prayerfully forgiving and praying for the person before you meet.

Slide 5

Luke 23:34 – And Jesus said, “Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.”

Jesus' words of forgiveness are so powerful here. They were spoken on the Cross as He died for us. We need to have His heart and forgive others, especially when they know not what they do.

Slide 6

Proverbs 17:9 (NLT) – Love prospers when a fault is forgiven, but dwelling on it separates close friends.

Forgive. Stop dwelling on your unspoken expectations and offense. After forgiving and regaining your composure, then take the next step...

Slide 7

2. Affirm the person and voice your expectations

In marriage, often when someone has been offended or hurt, the desire is to lash out at the other spouse and express how much they have been wounded by their actions. “All these years you've done this!” Or, “I have been hurt by this so many times!” **Such statements are completely unfair to the person you are finally voicing your expectations to!** It's not their fault they unknowingly hurt you. **It's your fault if you've never spoken up! So do not demand apologies if you have never spoken out your expectations.** To make them feel grief and condemnation shows you haven't fully forgiven them and you want them to feel pain for their past actions. Satan's name means, “The Accuser.” We have to be careful not to accuse when our expectations have never been spoken.

Instead it is much better to affirm the person and then voice our expectations. For example: “Honey, thank you for cooking so much these past few weeks. That's been really sweet of you. But I am really desiring some Korean food. I've lived off of rice all my life and I realize I need to eat it often. It would be great if we could eat Korean food at least a few times a week.” When someone is approached in such a way, being affirmed and then hearing a person's desires, there should be little room for offense.

So rather than speaking something like, “Boy! When you come into someone's house you never say something so critical and mean about what has been cooked for you! You have hurt my wife Sky! How dare you! Next time you say thank you and you never say a critical word!” Voicing that way only leads to feelings of condemnation, grief, and offense. Instead, simply voicing expectations and affirmation is so much better. You take him aside, away from

everyone, “Hey, Sky put a lot of work into the meal. It would be good to thank her and compliment her. When you say critical words they can hurt the host. You’re a good kid. It would be good if you apologized for what you said and thank her. You got this!”

It’s okay to express that you’ve been hurt, as long as you don’t express it in a dramatic, condemning way. **Loving words draw people closer, even when they’re words of rebuke or discipline.** But words spoken out of offense or frustration tend to separate even close friends.

Now handling unspoken expectations doesn’t end here. The third step is very important...

Slide 8

3. **LISTEN to their response and hear their expectations**

Relationships are never meant to be one way streets. Even with parents and children there should always be a level of giving and receiving. Only babies just receive. Even toddlers are taught to at least say thank you or to give a hug. So none of us in this room should have a relationship with anyone where it is just receiving from the person and never giving back. We’re called to love others. Listening is one of the greatest acts of love.

Not all of your expectations are going to be met, so it’s important for you to know what the other person agrees to and doesn’t agree to and what their expectations are of you. And then you need to choose whether you can continue to lovingly connect with that person or not. Sometimes it is important to ask the other person, “What are your expectations for our relationship?” You might be surprised by their response.

Over the years of pastoring I’ve met so many different people who have different expectations for their pastor. One new member when I was at Itaewon called me all the time wanting counsel for all sorts of different things. I had to voice to him the healthy boundaries that I expected for him and other members of the church. He was very offended by my expectations. He expressed to me that at his previous church the pastor would counsel him whenever he was in need and would meet with him for long hours to listen to him and pray for him. As he expressed these expectations he tried to make me feel guilty for not being loving and caring enough. He didn’t want to hear about my own needs or my own responsibilities. He just wanted me to fulfill his expectations. He soon left the church. **For those of you who have found yourself getting drained by certain people who only come to you when they’re in need, you also need to voice your expectations for these people.** It’s not healthy if you are just giving and giving and giving. You’ll soon grow tired and even bitter and unloving. We should always be receiving something back at least to a small degree.

So after you share your expectations then you need to listen. You need to listen lovingly, not demanding the other person to do what you want.

Slide 9

1Corinthians 13:4-5 – Love is patient and kind; love does not envy or boast; it is not arrogant or rude. **It does not insist on its own way;** it is not irritable or resentful.

After the three steps of praying, then expressing your expectations, and then listening in a loving way, you have to make a decision whether what has been discussed is okay or not. If

expectations are close and agreeable, then likely just from the conversation you've grown closer with that person. But if expectations are far apart, then decisions need to be made.

For some dating relationships, it should be time to break up if the expectations between the two people are way too far apart. It's not that one of you is a failure for not being able to meet the other person's expectations, it's just that you aren't the right puzzle piece for that person. You are in for a life of misery if you marry someone who has expectations for you that you can never fulfill.

For family relationships, if there is abuse or unhealthy behavior, boundaries might need to be set. One of my friends grew up in a non-Christian, verbally abusive household. She lived in fear for so long until she met the Lord and grew strong in Him. She finally began to express her expectations to her parents; that she couldn't be with them if they acted abusive or manipulative. She got her own apartment and would continue to visit, but only when she felt strong enough. Whenever poison would start coming out of their mouths she learned she would have to just leave the house and meet them again another day. Her parents clearly couldn't live up to her expectations of being loving and gentle. But she hasn't given up on them and continues to love them, while being careful about boundaries and not letting their words hurt her.

For friendships, if expectations are too far apart then you should pray for and look for other friends. I've seen many friendships change when one person starts dating, or especially after one person marries and has kids. Suddenly the married friend with kids and the single friend are in very different life stages. Expectations need to be spoken through these changes. I don't think people should break off friendships unless there has been clear sin. Instead, if expectations that have been shared are too far apart, the friends should bless each other to hang out with other people and lessen their expectations for each other. We should be cheering for each other, not using each other.

Conclusion

I want to close this message with prayer for those of you who have been struggling with someone due to unspoken expectations. You have some offense or hurt in your heart towards that person, but you haven't found the strength yet to speak to them about it. If you can think of someone who you know you need to express your unspoken expectations to, whether a friend, a family member, a co-worker, or a church leader, then I want to invite you to stand up where you are to receive prayer.