

A Definite Plan | Acts 2:14, 22-38 | Trinity Sunday
Pastor Nick Shults | St. Mark Lutheran Church | Sunnyvale, CA

Focus: God's definite plan of salvation for the world runs through the cross of Jesus

Function: That my hearers will trust God's plan is complete in their own redemption and await in certain hope the resurrection of the dead.

Me →

We all have certain expectations, don't we? Certain expectations of ourselves, expectations of one another, expectations of our spouse, expectations of our neighbors. There's no getting around it. But, in fact, most of our expectations go unspoken, don't they? We don't typically actually communicate what it is we expect of people. And so, what? We are constantly let down by other people. They don't meet the expectations that we set for them (and, of course, never tell them about) and so they are a constant disappointment to us.

Is there a funny story that illustrates this??

We →

But what, I wonder, are our expectations of God? What do we expect of our omnipotent, omniscient deity who created this world in which we live?

Maybe you expect God to fulfill all your needs and desires like a bellhop or a concierge. Perhaps your expectation of God is that He is a divine matchmaker or bodyguard - finding you that perfect spouse and keeping you safe from all harm. Maybe God is an accountant who will fix all your financial problems, or a divine nanny who will make sure your children turn out just right.

Most of the time, these things might work out ok. Sure there's some stress here and there but by and large things fall into place for many of us.

But what happens when things don't fall into place? What happens when our kids screw up not just a little bit but a lot a bit? What happens when our children are born ill? What happens when our parents die too young? Or we don't meet that man or woman of our dreams? What happens when our bodyguard takes the night off and we find ourselves in a devastating car accident? What happens when we're not kept safe from the evils of this world?

What happens when the events of life don't meet our expectations of God? Do you know someone who has become disillusioned with God? Perhaps this is you. Do you know someone whose expectations of God don't match up to the facts of life and have walked away?

Our text from Acts this morning suggests to us that when it comes to our expectations of God, the issue may not be God. It might actually be us and our expectations. This is the question, then, that I want to explore this morning: What is God's plan for us and what might be reasonable expectations of Him?

God →

As we continue to look at Peter's sermon on Pentecost after Jesus ascended into heaven, we find that our expectations of God have all been looking in the wrong place. The definite plan and foreknowledge of God is focused on One thing...the redemption of His fallen creation. And so as we look at the outpouring of the Holy Spirit upon God's people and remember our own baptisms even as Daniel and Amanda recall the promises which God made to them in their baptism, we find that God's plan of Salvation has been perfectly fulfilled already in us, his children.

In Peter's sermon to the onlookers at Pentecost he reveals the plan of God for the salvation of the world. This is a plan that, simply, goes through the cross. God's plan for the world goes through the cross. His gifts of forgiveness, life, and salvation are bought by Christ the crucified one...we receive them as we ourselves are buried with him and raised again to new life in our baptism.

In God's definite plan and foreknowledge, He gave up His son to crucifixion. But, just as David prophesied, death could not hold Him. Peter quotes David in Psalm 16, showing that God would not let his messiah see corruption. He would not let his messiah see eternal death. And because Jesus was not abandoned to Hades, because Jesus did not stay in the grave, neither shall we. Because death could not hold Jesus, death shall not hold us either.

As human beings we talk a lot about 'God's Plan'. What is God's plan for my life? Is it to go to this school or that school? Is it to marry this person or that person? Is it to live in this city or that city?

The fact is that the Bible only speaks of one plan of God. Acts 2 gives us a glimpse: What is the definite plan of God? Well it is Jesus Christ crucified, died, buried, and ascended for the sins of the entire world. This is the plan of God that Daniel and Amanda were baptized into and the plan of God for their lives that they confirm today.

You see, God's plan of salvation is complete. In your baptism, God's plan has been completed. God's plan of redemption for you has been fulfilled when, in your baptism, you were crucified with Christ and then raised again to new life. This, right here, is God's plan for you. And his plan has been completed in Jesus.

You →

So what does this mean? Well, this means that you have been crucified with Christ, and raised up again. You are no longer in your sins but have been free from them. More

than that, you have also been set free from all of the perceived expectations from God. Because of the Gospel, we have found freedom.

See, when those who hear Peter preach ask the important question, “What shall we do?” they are not met with a laundry list of expectations from God. God does not say go to this school and then marry this person and then become a missionary. God does not say you must do this and this and this. No, it’s simply repent and be baptized. Change your mind about who Jesus is and then receive the free gift of love and grace that he is giving you. By the power of the Holy Spirit, believe that Jesus is both Lord and Christ and receive the forgiveness and grace that He has won for us. That’s it. That’s all.

Because of Jesus, because of God’s plan of salvation, you are free to do or be anything. You are free to be a parent, you are free to not be a parent if you don’t have children. You are free to do this job or another job. You are free to live in this place or another place. The plan of God brings with it limitless freedom in Christ.

Us →

In the same way, as a congregation, as the body of Christ here in this place, we have been given freedom as well. Freedom to think and plan and discern how we can best be that church in this place and best carry out the great commission. In Christ we are free to do that. We are not bound by the past. We are not fearful of the future. We are free to think about [insert Putnam’s stuff here]

- 1) Our Current Predicament,
- 2)

Perhaps think for yourself, where do these three areas come together here at St. Mark? I would be interested in hearing about where each of you see these coming together in this place.

Conclusion →

God’s plan, then, is clear and focused. It’s His plan of salvation instituted from the beginning of time. It’s God’s plan to redeem you. To buy you back from sin, death, and the devil. It’s God’s plan to reclaim you as His very own child. To write His name, the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, on your forehead and on your heart. This is what He has done for you, Daniel and Amanda. He has claimed you as his very own. “You are mine” - we are reminded of the words of Isaiah...written there on your baptismal banner. “I have called you by name you are mine”.

These are the promises that you confirm today. What your parents did for you at your baptism, now you have the opportunity to do on your confirmation. Confirmation, then, is not a sort of graduation. It’s one step in a lifetime journey as followers of Jesus. It’s a journey that is marked by the freedom of the Gospel. But it’s also a journey that goes through the cross. So...you’re going to have to deal with that. Haha.