

Great Expectations

Reflection by Richard Fox

Have you ever had grand dreams of being great at something, only for them to disappear?

We all have dreams in life. Maybe dreams of achieving great success, fame, or simply being happy. Some people dream of flying to the moon or expecting that they will find the perfect partner to share their life with.

What ambitions have you had? How do those dreams match up with where you are today? Some people say that all you have to do is believe in yourself and your dreams will come true. But how do you really cope when life doesn't turn out like you expect?

When I was a kid, I wanted to play cricket for Australia – probably like most boys. I remember practising everyday – playing cricket with my brother and cousins – or on my own against a wall with a bat and a ball. I dreamt that one day I would walk out on the MCG or SCG and have the time of my life. I even joined the local cricket club at an early age but sadly it didn't happen. I didn't even play cricket for my state side, let alone Australia.

So, were my expectations too high? Was I being realistic?

Some people may say that they needed to be higher!! I should have aimed to be the Australian cricket captain. And done everything to make it happen! Some might say that yes, it's good to have dreams, but mine were a little unrealistic – to put it nicely.

What are your expectations?

Do you want to be rich and famous?

Maybe a job promotion?

What about friends or a partner or maybe you just wish you could be happy on your own?

Fulfilling our dreams can be very difficult. Here's a story of a bloke called John who had great expectations along with great adversity. John, also known as John the Baptist was born just before Jesus. John was a wild kind of a bloke. He lived in the wilderness, wore camels' hair and a leather belt for clothes. He ate locusts and wild honey. He was a rough and ready type of bloke. He was a doer and wanted things done. So much so that he wanted everyone to hear his message. His message was one of someone coming to save the world. He wanted everyone to turn from their selfish and harmful ways and trust in God. Many people heard his message and believed in God. And as a result, John baptised many people in the Jordan River. John was a popular bloke.

However, John's outspoken ways also landed him in hot water. The king was having a relationship with his brother's wife – his sister-in-law, Herodias. John spoke out about this in the hope that the king would turn from what he was doing. Herodias, the sister-in-law, was not happy so had the king lock John up in prison. It wasn't much of a life in prison so I can only imagine that John wanted to be rescued – maybe by the saviour that he was expecting? So, when John heard what Jesus was doing he sent his followers to ask Jesus if he was the one John was expecting or should he expect someone else?

John's concern was not just for himself. John was focused on the saviour of the world and his coming, so that everyone would be saved, including you and me.

John the Baptist had high expectations of God. He wanted the saviour of the world to come. So, he asked Jesus if he was the one. Jesus replied with, "The blind receive sight, the lame walk, those who have leprosy are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, and the good news is proclaimed to the poor." These events actually took place. Jesus did give sight to blind people. He healed the lame to walk. He cleansed people of their skin diseases. Jesus opened the ears of deaf people so that they could hear. He even raised people from the dead – now that would have been something to see!

Believe it or not, these types of healings still happen today. It may not always be a physical healing, but may be an emotional or spiritual healing. But most importantly for John and for us today, the good news is proclaimed to the poor.

Now you might not think you're poor, but in God's eyes people are poor if they do not have him in their lives. It's not just an assessment of how much money we have or our standing in the community.

The good news is that this good news is for you and me too. This good news is that Jesus is the saviour. Jesus is the one who heals. Jesus is the one who gives a new life, a new start. Jesus is the one who is always with us. Through times of tragedy, celebration and everything in between, he is here.

Jesus didn't set John the Baptist free from prison; neither did Jesus let me be an Australian cricketer! So even though our expectations don't always turn out the way we want, it doesn't negate the good news Jesus brings. Because of Jesus there are wonders that lay ahead for us that we can only imagine. What God has in plan for us is amazing and wonderful. And he gives us this through Jesus, his son.

John heard this message, the message that he needed. That Jesus was the saviour of the world and that he was saved. Just as Jesus responded to John's expectations, Jesus also responds to us. It may not be what we wanted or how we expected. We may still be in the same predicament that we are in now. But the good news that we are saved through Jesus for eternity is great news.

This great news is not something that we have to wait for. Jesus is with us now. He is our permanent best friend who always sticks with us and never runs away. Jesus is our best friend, our protector, our supporter. Because of this good news, Jesus focuses us back to what really matters – our relationship with God. This is good news, that through Jesus we have a new life with God.

This refocus leads us to rethink our expectations in life. Are they realistic? Are they focused on the right priorities? Do we wish we had the latest gadget, or are we thankful for a drink of water?

So, like John the Baptist did, I encourage you to ask the question of Jesus, "Are you the one who is saving the world?"

Are you the one who is going to help me in my relationships, my work and play, my sickness and tragedy?

Ask Jesus and be prepared for his reply, "The blind receive sight, the lame walk, those who have leprosy are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, and the good news is proclaimed to the poor."

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