

“What do we expect?”

I attended Eden Theological Seminary to receive my Master of Divinity Degree. It is located in Webster Groves, Missouri, which is a suburb of St. Louis. During my last two years at Eden, I also served as the student minister for Samuel UCC in Clayton, Missouri, which is another suburb of St. Louis. As I neared graduation from Eden, I was searching for a Call to be an ordained minister in a UCC congregation, just like many of the other students who were graduating from Eden. The title I used for my last sermon at Samuel UCC, which was about the Fulfillment of the Kingdom of God, the title was **“When Will It Come?”** The Pastor of Samuel joked with me that he assumed the sermon title was a reference to my wondering when I would receive my Call to an ordained ministerial position! He **expected** the sermon would be about my search for a Call.

When I meet with couples to plan their wedding ceremonies, part of the time during the meeting is spent on having a discussion on strategies to help reduce conflict. A portion of that conversation is about the **importance of one’s expectations when shaping one’s reactions to the words or actions of another person.**

There is a story about “A Sunday school teacher” who “was examining her pupils after a series of lessons on God’s omnipotence. She asked: **‘Is there anything God can’t do?’**

There was silence. Finally, one lad held up his hand. The teacher, disappointed that the lesson’s point had been missed, asked: ‘Well, just what is it that God can’t do?’ ‘Well,’ replied the boy: **‘He can’t please everybody.’**” (Gary W. Houston, *Cowherding Christians*, CSS Publishing Company) The teacher did not **expect** such wise insight!

In today’s Gospel Lectionary Reading, Jesus presented his original disciples with his instructions and encouragements just prior to their first missionary journey. What do you suppose the disciples were thinking? **What were they expecting, following Jesus giving them those instructions?** Put yourself in their places. What would you expect? How would you have reacted?

Jesus anticipated they would have multiple reasons to be afraid! That is why Jesus spoke words of comfort and repeatedly said, **“do not be afraid”**. He further explained something of the importance of their welfare to God by comparing and contrasting it to the Divine Parent’s care of birds, **“For only a penny you can buy two sparrows, yet not one sparrow falls to the ground without your Father’s consent. As for you, even the hairs of your head have all been counted. So do not be afraid; you are worth much more than many sparrows!”**

For generations, when persons of faith consider Jesus’ claim upon them, they express their expectations for their relationship with him and God in a great variety of ways. One of those expressions is through music. **Indeed, today the Chancel Voices are sharing with us some powerful musical expressions, which illustrate the expectations, which many Christians experience in response to Jesus’ promises and call – the Good News!**

As the Chancel Voices share these moving anthems, **place yourself** in the shoes or sandals of the believers, who first sang such songs. **Consider** the difficult times in your life – those when you experienced challenges to your relationship with Jesus, family, loved ones, friends, neighbors, and even enemies. **Remember** when you or someone important to you suffered from significant illness, job difficulties, strained relationships or even death. **Recall** also Jesus’ words of comfort in today’s Scripture and how he is the ultimate manifestation of God’s Self-Giving and Sacrificial Love for you and for all who trust in him. **Listen for the expression of your expectations and respond with faith, love, hope, and greater commitment to your relationship with Jesus Christ and our Divine Parent.** Amen.