

“Healing of Unrealistic Expectations”
Lenten Service, March 17, 2010
Pastor Tim Eighmy

Please read Bible text: Luke 23:32-34

We live in a cynical society. One thing that makes our society so cynical is our extremely high and unrealistic expectations of others.

For eight years before coming to North Platte, I served as a university campus pastor in Minot, North Dakota. I met many college students who expected that they should get a job that paid well relating to their college major within a few months after they graduated. They really didn't think that they would have to find a temporary job to 'tide them over' while they looked for jobs in their own career. They didn't expect that they would have to start from the bottom in most jobs to prove themselves. Many graduates were disappointed how things turned out after they graduated.

I have talked to managers of restaurants who tell how high school students often have unrealistic expectations when they get a job. They think they should be able to leave the job at any time to go out with their friends. Some think they can just call in sick anytime to skip out of work, and they do that frequently. So there is often a high

turnover rate in restaurants because employees don't have realistic expectations of what their work ethics should be.

This reminds me of something that a pastor asked me when he heard I am a movie buff. "How can you go to so many movies when there is so much bad stuff out there?" He went on to say that's why he didn't go out to movies very much.

I told him that I watch movies with the same attitude that I take when I meet new people. I just watch the movie for what it is and try not to have strong expectations.

Most movies have parts in them that I don't like, but there is usually something in them that I enjoy as well. Whenever I expect the movie to be something more, it usually disappoints me. The same is true with people; if I expect them to live according to my standards and act the 'right' way, I am often disappointed and don't like them very much. However, if I accept them for who they are, I find that everyone has some qualities I don't like, but they also have qualities that I like and admire. You have to take the bad with the good and not expect people to be something they are not.

Another example of unrealistic expectations occurs during election years when I hear people complain how we don't have anybody who 'stands out'.

Instead of finding someone who is competent, we try to find another Abraham Lincoln or someone who will please everyone. Then we are disappointed that politicians don't meet our high expectations.

Today we often have political stand-offs because Democrats and Republicans and Independents can't see eye to eye. Yet they don't seem to desire legislation that is simply competent, fulfilling a simple need. Rather, they try to make it 'great' and 'historic'.

When Jesus prayed on the cross, he didn't pray for God to change the hearts of those who persecuted him. Nor did he pray for a spectacular miracle—for him to ascend into heaven from the cross or for the Holy Spirit to come down into the crowd watching him.

He simply prayed for the Father to forgive the people for they didn't know what they were doing.

He didn't ask God to change them, just to forgive them.

Jesus loves us just as we are. He knows how sinful we truly are. He knows how many gifts we have and the faith that we can have through the Holy Spirit.

Too often we judge people because we expect them to know better and change. We expect them to be heroic. And we don't forgive them for not knowing any better.

To have realistic expectations of people means that you have to be willing to forgive them for not being as perfect as you want them to be.

Jesus forgives us. Through our baptism in him, we can forgive others and love them for who they are—rather than whom we want them to be.

Amen.