

Scripture

Luke 20:19-26

[19] When the scribes and chief priests realized that he had told this parable against them, they wanted to lay hand on him at that very hour, but they feared the people. [20] So they watched him and sent spies who pretended to be honest, on order to trap him by what he said, so as to hand him over to the jurisdiction and authority of the governor. [21] So they asked him, "Teacher, we know that you are right in what you say and teach, and you show deference to no one, but teach the way of God in accordance with truth. [22] Is it lawful for us to pay taxes to the emperor, or not?" [23] But he perceived their craftiness and said to them, [24] "Show me a denarius. Whose head and title does it bear?" They said, "The emperor's." [25] He said to them, "Then give to the emperor the things that are the emperor's, and to God the things that are God's" [26] and they were not able in the presence of the people to trap him by what he said; and being amazed by his answer, they became silent.

Devotion

Expect the unexpected. What does that mean, exactly? It seems like a contradiction of terms. How can we expect, anticipate, prepare for something that we have no idea about, don't know it will happen, that's not even on our radar screen?

In the scripture for today, Jesus is preaching and teaching to a crowd of people. This story takes place toward the end of Jesus' ministry on earth. Like any good teacher or preacher, I imagine that he had certain things that he wanted to say to the gathered throng, an outline of sorts. After all, time was running short for him and he probably felt the pressure to tell his followers everything that they would need to know once he was gone. Imagine Jesus' surprise when, in the midst of his teaching, someone interrupted with a question---a question meant to trap Jesus into saying something incriminating. The unexpected broke in to change the course of the conversation.

When we think about it, the unexpected happens all the time. It can be an event that happens in the blink of an eye and is gone or one that consumes us for the foreseeable future; it can be something simple or something complex; it can be something good or bad. For example, we drive around a curve in the road and there in the sky in front of us is a rainbow in all its glory. We open our email and receive a message from an old friend. We hear of the sudden death of an acquaintance. We slip on a wet leaf and spend the next two years in recovery. We are surprised to learn of the anticipated birth of a child. The unexpected breaks in to our lives and changes us in ways we could never anticipate.

When Jesus was interrupted that day, he didn't exclaim how rude the person was or become befuddled when he lost his train of thought. He didn't bemoan the interruption. He simply "went with the flow" and

answered the question. He expected the unexpected to happen and let it become a moment of grace for his followers.

Things break in to our lives unexpectedly every day. They may be large or small, joyous or tragic, funny or serious. But they will happen. We should expect them to happen. Those unexpected events can break into our lives and can become moments of grace for us, moments when God breaks into our lives in new ways to teach us new things or remind of us old ones. May we always live in expectation of the unexpected.

Prayer

Living Christ,

As we prepare our hearts to celebrate your breaking into the world in an unexpected way, may we always live to expect the surprises of life and to let them bring grace to us in new ways. Amen.