A song on my morning worship playlist caught my ear and lifted my soul as it built to the bridge that proclaimed, “You're never gonna let, you're never gonna let me down.”[[1]](#endnote-2) These are inspiring and triumphant words unless you have been let down by Jesus. How do these words sound to the young couple who have prayed in faith every day of their toddler’s 8-month struggle with cancer when it ends with the loss of their child? To these parents and to countless other believers whose faith has been disappointed, these words sound false, even offensive. The Jesus who is faithful to others let them down.

Jesus may disappoint your expectations, but He will never break His promises. Understanding the difference between these two could be the difference between losing your faith and holding on to Jesus.

A sharp-tongued dialogue between Jesus and Peter in Matthew 16:22-23 confirms that Jesus does disappoint expectations and also reveals precisely how a good and faithful God lets people down.

**The Letdown is Real**

Listen for the letdown in Peter’s words, “Far be it from you Lord, this will never happen.” (Matthew 16:22) Jesus had just shared that He would suffer and die. Peter said “no”. With this rebuke, Peter was not lacking faith in the Messiah, he was expressing it. He caught Jesus in a moment of what he assumed to be wavering faith and proceeded to correct the Lord. With Peter’s faith in the Messiah (see v.16), suffering and death would be a huge letdown.

The letdown was intense in the final week of Christ's life. The enthusiasm surrounding the triumphal entry shows that many in Jerusalem were holding on to the Messianic vision that Peter put his faith in. Many of those who waved palm branches to shouts of "Hosanna" were let down later that week as Jesus overturned tables, told pointed parables, and blasted the Pharisees with seven woes. Having his hopes disappointed when Jesus disagreed with him about the best use of the expensive perfume, Judas finalized his plans to betray Jesus. The upper room experience was a letdown. Peter didn’t want Jesus to wash his feet because the Messiah he believed didn’t act like a humble servant who talked about His spilled blood and broken body. Jesus let His disciples down again at His arrest when he refused to defend Himself and rebuked the disciples who tried, in faith, to protect Him. Jesus let down Pilate and Herod when they wanted to release Him on account of His innocence, but Jesus refused to speak a word in defense of Himself. During the crucifixion, the crowd mockingly expressed their letdown with the words, "If He's the son of God, let Him come down from that cross" and "He saved others, but He cannot save himself." As Jesus lay in the tomb, His letdown followers hid away in disappointment.

Have you ever felt the weight of disappointment in your faith? Have you struggled to hold onto a belief that seemed to crumble in the face of unmet expectations? Have you, like Peter, been tempted to take Jesus aside and express your disagreement with His way of doing things? Have you ever found yourself insisting, 'This will never happen' in response to an unwanted promise from Jesus?

The letdown is real. But it will not destroy your faith when you know that the letdown is not the truth.

**The Let Down is Not the Truth**

**Matthew 16:23** But He turned and said to Peter, “Get behind me, Satan! You are a hindranceto me. For you are not setting your mind on the things of God, but on the things of man.”

“Get behind me, Satan.” That was surprising. The letdown is a vulnerable space where the devil shows up. When we question Jesus, Satan is ready to supply answers. We especially need God in the place of our disappointment.

Then Jesus identified the source of the letdown, “You are not setting your mind on the things of God but on the things of men.” Peter was disappointed because he held on to his human perspective of God. Peter had not yet learned that faith is not telling God what you think God should do but trusting God no matter what He does. Jesus will disappoint your expectations, but He will never break His promises. We will always be let down when we hold Jesus to expectations that He never promised or base our faith on who we want God to be rather than who He says He is. God never committed Himself to do what we expect of Him. The next time God lets you down, receive this correction, “You are not setting your mind on the things of God but on the things of men.”

I was in my car, ready and waiting by 3:00 am. But the friends I expected to meet me let me down. I had a long day, bookended by airport runs, with a drop off at 4:30 am and a pickup at 11:00 pm. It was June in Alaska, and the sun would be out that entire time. I planned to spend the time between departure and arrival hiking to save a trip and have an adventure. I chose two hikes that I had never done before. Both were challenging and in total, it would be a 30-mile day. But I had time. I get excited about these things, so I prepared like I was going on a polar expedition. I watched videos about each trail, prepared lightweight trail food, packed a water filter, a change of clothes, and three pairs of running shoes. The preparations kept me up until midnight; in a few hours, I was waiting in my car. After a while, I gave them a call. No answer. I texted. Then I got worried. Maybe they overslept. I could drive to their house but might miss them on the road. They would miss their flight, and I would get a later start than I hoped. After about 30 minutes of waiting in the car, I noticed that the previous text message, which included the 4:30 drop-off time, didn't specify AM or PM. I should have clarified or at least assumed the more usual hour of 4:30 pm. Perhaps because I had done previous airport runs at inconvenient times or was eager to hike all day, it took me 30 minutes of sitting in my car before I even considered that they might be flying out in the afternoon. Maybe they weren't answering the phones because they were sleeping, like everyone else but me. They completely disappointed my expectations, but my expectations were wrong. They let me down, and it was all my fault.

This is how Jesus lets us down while remaining entirely faithful. It is not His promise that He breaks but our assumptions that He disappoints. Is there some pain or disappointment in your life because you are holding Jesus to an expectation He never promised?

I'm so grateful that God doesn't stoop to my expectations of Him. Some of the people standing before the cross claimed that they would believe if only Jesus came down from the cross. But if Jesus came down from the cross, they would have nothing to believe in.

Have you ever gotten into a fight with the copy machine… and lost? I have survived many such battles but have an overall losing record. A recent fight involved a paper jam. I noticed the red light, saw the message, and removed the jammed paper. The trouble was the machine didn't notice my intervention. It kept flashing red and giving me the same message. I unplugged it back in, but it still insisted there was a paper jam. I would tell the machine to copy. The copy machine would respond, “Ah, but you don't realize there is a jam paper.” I would respond, “But what you don't know is that I removed the jammed paper, and you are too dumb to notice.” The machine would insist it was right, but I knew I was. To prove it, I opened all the doors, and this time, I saw something I hadn't before, a second jammed paper in a different place. The message on the screen turned out to be correct, but the paper was still stuck. When I removed it, the machine cleared the message and worked flawlessly. When something doesn’t turn out like you expect, one possibility is that your expectations are wrong. What looks like a failure on God’s part could be a lack of understanding on ours. Consider that maybe you are the one with less information, and your assumption is off. Even if you have removed the jammed paper and think everything is fine, you don't see it all like God. Whenever God lets us down, the fault is not in His faithfulness but in our expectations.

Peter’s disappointment was triggered by the suggestion that Christ would suffer and die. In disappointing Peter's expectations of the Messiah, Jesus became His savior. The very act that let Peter down provided forgiveness for his sin. Every time Jesus disappoints your expectations, trust that He is better than you have assumed Him to be. Jesus will disappoint your expectations, but He will never break His promises.

1. King of my Heart, Bethel Music [↑](#endnote-ref-2)