

iSOULation 3

This is a strange time. I never expected in a million years that we'd be in this situation! Yes, this is strange! Jesus rose from the dead hung around for 40 days before ascending into heaven and now we are traveling around spreading his message and sharing his stories. And now people are calling us Christians? How weird? That's a Greek word not a Hebrew one! Very strange indeed.

Or wait... This is a strange time. I never expected in a million years that we'd be in this situation! In the past three weeks I have only seen my parents through a windowpane or a computer screen. I haven't received Communion in a month. I've never had such a desire to turn off Netflix and go into the office this much. Instead of watching baseball and the battle for the green jacket at Augusta I'm watching sporting events that took place in 1987. Very strange indeed.

And the tie for the most unexpected event goes to the resurrection of Jesus and the impact of COVID-19 on 21st century Americans. What unexpected life changing moments!

As I'm sure you have I have had numerous conversations, emails and texts oh or zoom calls with people that include phrases like never in a million years, these are strange times, I never expected, how bizarre, I could have never imagined, I don't even know what normal is anymore.

So it seems apparent that we didn't expect to be living in the reality in which we are currently living and neither did the early followers of Christ. Perhaps one of the gifts that we can learn from them is that they didn't seem to hold tightly to expectations but shifted with the unexpected reality that was put in front of them.

Was it their openness and adaptability that in part made them so successful? They certainly were not flawless (One of the gifts the New Testament gives us is sharing the mistakes and missteps that the followers of Jesus made. They aren't presented to us in a Pinterest perfect way.), betraying Jesus, arguing over who was better, they fell asleep and being slow to catch on to the master plan but they kept going. They were able to shift and adapt they were imperfectly persistent and they were successful – so successful that there are now over 2 billion Christians in the world.

For a moment think about their expectations or lack of... they didn't expect Jesus to be crucified and then expect him to rise (did anyone really see that coming?!) Their expectations didn't paralyze them they adjusted or pivoted through interacting with "unclean" people, they were threatened and some of them martyred. When those 11 disciples finally left the upper room they healed people, they spoke about the salvation that Jesus offered and baptized thousands of people and they let that guy Saul who really hated Jesus and his followers go out and share the message of Jesus to the

Gentiles – talk about a change in plans.

In the liturgical or church year the season of Easter is 50 days. As we live in this Easter coronavirus season I think that the first followers of Jesus have something to teach us. We cannot be so tied to an idea or methodology that we are unchangeable, completely immovable or angered if we cannot proceed as expected. If we don't open ourselves up to adapting we aren't allowing ourselves to be co-creators with God. The mentality of "We always do this or I always do that prevents us from new possibilities that God is putting in front of us or that God is inviting us to. In these unexpected moments we receive gifts some big and hard to miss like the resurrection others are small like seeing a drive by birthday party or the joy and comfort we get from chatting with a friend in her driveway we find in these moments the Holy Spirit breathing and moving new life into us and creation whether we expect it or not.

Questions for Reflection

What were you expecting for this spring and Easter season?

What has been hard for you to adapt and change while you are sheltering in place?

What are some unexpected joys you've experienced over the past month?