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Sermon Text: Ezekiel 2:1-3:4

The Lord does the Unexpected

Every word of God is flawless; He is a shield to those who take refuge in him. Amen.

Dear friends in Christ,

The Lord does the Unexpected. God's Word in Isaiah 64 literally says just that: **"You did amazing things that we did *not* expect."**

There are so many examples. God sends Israel to attack the fortress city Jericho not with battering rams or siege ladders, but by walking and blowing trumpets. And those walls came a tumbling down! The Savior, the King of kings is born not in a golden palace like you might expect, but in a lowly stable and placed in a manger.

Our lesson from Ezekiel points us to unexpected and amazing things the Lord still does for you and me this day.

Ezekiel served as God's prophet about 600 years before Jesus, at the time the Babylonian Empire was starting to take groups of Israelites into captivity far from their homes. As God called Ezekiel to speak to the captives in Babylon, the Lord showed Ezekiel a stunning vision of God's brilliant glory.

Beneath and around the Lord's throne, stood four special angels, each with four wings' and other details that boggle the imagination. This heavenly, other-worldly scene is filled with bright, brilliant light—glory beyond human experience. At the sight of it, Ezekiel fell **facedown**.

Now that's not **unexpected**. We've seen that before. Moses covered his face when God spoke to him at the burning bush (Exodus 3). The night of Jesus' birth, the glory of the Lord shown around the shepherds and they were terrified (Luke 2)! Imperfect, sinful human beings cannot stand before the magnificent, holy God of all.

If you think about it, *this* is what is **unexpected**: **"Son of man, stand up on your feet, and I will speak with you."**

God calls Ezekiel a **Son of man**. In Hebrew, the word man is *Ae-dam*. You know, as in **Adam**, the first human being who was formed from the dust of the earth (in

Hebrew: *Ae-dam-ah*), **Adam** who with his wife plunged the world into sin and then heard God say: *dust you are and to dust you shall return* (Genesis 3:19).

What a *contrast!* On one hand, there is the infinite and marvelous Lord of heaven and earth, utterly beyond our understanding. And on the other we see a lowly **son of man, a son of Adam**, a human being, limited and powerless. One tainted with sin and so deserving death and hell like every other **son** and **daughter** of **Adam**, including you and me by nature.

But what does the holy God do? Destroy Ezekiel? No. He **speaks** with him! *He speaks with him!* That God should bother with us at all is amazing. That He should seek a relationship with us, converse with us and reveal His heart to us through His word that is astounding!

Just like this: “**Son of man, go now to the house of Israel and speak my words to them.**” Who does the Lord send to bring His Word to His people? Those mighty angels around this throne? *No*.

Throughout history, including in Bible times, God has most often spoken to people through other human beings—like Ezekiel, like Moses, like the prophets and apostles the Spirit used to write the Bible for us, like pastors, teachers and parents who still bring that written word to us today, the only way God has promised to still speak to us today.

And so right now, this very moment, God does the astonishing, **unexpected** thing! He uses an unlikely messenger to bring you His Word—namely me—a fellow sinful, weak and frail human being who needs God’s mercy, help, forgiveness, every day, every minute, every second.

Of course God knows what He’s doing. If he spoke to us directly like He once did at Mount Sinai we would be left trembling on our faces like Ezekiel. But when God speaks to us through lowly human messengers, through His Word written in the Bible, we don’t have to shield our eyes from His brilliant glory, but can give our full attention to what His Word says.

By using fellow sinners to speak His word, the Lord also teaches us the success of His Church does not depend on human strength or wisdom, but upon His own powerful Word. What matters most is not the messenger, but the message of God’s Word they bring!

So God does this marvelous thing! He chooses to speak to human beings His wonderful, saving Word! And what happens? *Well of course people would always, give it their undivided attention and eagerly listen to every word he speaks.*

Oh that would be fitting, that would be the only logical conclusion *when God speaks!* But that's not what we hear about Israel of old: **They and their fathers have rebelled against me to this very day...These children of mine are brazen-faced and hard-hearted... whether they listen or do not listen—for they are a rebellious house...**

Of course you know that's not just the history of Old Testament Israel, it's the history of our sinful human race from Adam and Eve down to this very moment.. And so the people in Nazareth rejected the Son of God as he preached to them. In our second lesson, Paul perfectly described not just what we find in our world and culture, but often in much of the visible Christian Church: **there will come a time when people will not put up with sound doctrine.**

But before we wag our fingers at the Israelites or the people of Nazareth or those who reject the Bible as God's truth today, let's not forget that there still lives inside each of us a sinful nature. That rotten old sinful part of us works overtime to keep us from always gladly listening to what the Lord speaks to us in His Word.

The Lord wants us to devour everything He says in His book. He taught that in the vision to Ezekiel by having him literally consume the scroll of God's word: **Eat what you have received.**

But one sinful temptation that nags at our hearts is to instead of treating the Bible like a plate God sets before us, is to treat His Word like a buffet, where you pick what you want, and avoid what doesn't sound good to you, things that might make you unpopular with friends, family, society, or what would get in the way of our sinful desires. But entertaining that sin is not just failing to listen *some* of God's Word, but it saying that God is wrong for putting that in the Bible and that we know better than the Almighty!

And that's exactly what we've done when we angrily folded our arms in stubbornness when a Christian parent, Christian teacher or pastor had to point out our sin. And this is also our sin when we don't hungrily, eagerly devour God's Word in worship and Bible reading as the honey-sweet food for our souls it truly is!

But really, this too is not **unexpected** when we listen to what the Bible says about our naturally lost condition. That sinners like us would sin, no shock there!

But what *is unexpected* is the amazing love of the Lord we see in the final verse of our lesson: **He then said to me, “Son of man, go now to the house of Israel and speak my words to them.”**

Do you see it? The astonishing mercy of our God? Consider how the Lord just spent most of Ezekiel chapter 2 talking about how disloyal and rebellious Israel has been, and yet He still sends Ezekiel to speak to them. In love He is still reaching out to them, still desiring to save them!

For more than 8 centuries they as a nation have not been listening... for 8 centuries!!! And yet even at this late in Israel’s history, God, in patient mercy sends them His Word.

Oh yes, His message will contain God’s law filled with strong warnings that if they continue in their unbelief they will have only **Laments, Groaning, and Woe**. But even that message was **sweet like honey** in Ezekiel’s mouth.

You see, when God speaks His law in such harsh terms, it is done in love and for our good. Such warnings are an alarm to wake the sinner up to see their spiritual house is on fire and they need God’s rescue. The Lord proclaims words of judgment so that we might repent, run to His mercy and not fall under his judgment!

And so in amazing love for your souls and mine, our Lord still reaches out to us, speaks to us this very day in our Scripture readings. He not only calls for us to recognize our sin and look to His mercy, but through His Word He sends the Holy Spirit to work such repentance and faith in our hearts, so that we might taste just how honey-sweet his love and forgiveness is and so remain in His saving Word!

And there is no sweeter message the good news of God’s love and forgiveness in Jesus! Does the phrase the Lord call Ezekiel, **Son of man**, sound familiar? If it does, it’s likely because that is the title Jesus uses for himself more than 70 times in the Gospels of the New Testament. **The Son of Man** is Jesus’ special name for himself as the long promised Savior of the world.

And Remember what we said, **Son of Man**, means **Son of Adam**!?! It speaks of human beings made from dust and who because of sin turn to dust. Yes, He who is eternal and almighty God took on our flesh and blood, joined himself to our lost race, and in humility carried our dust, death and hell earning sins to the cross in our place. Yes, Jesus Christ, became a **Son of Man**, the **perfect Son of Man** who always listened to the word perfectly, was loyal to God in every way and gives you the credit for His holy life.

On account of Jesus, your sin, my sin, our failures to always gladly, cheerfully, hungrily devour His word, all our sins are forgiven in full. Instead of the dust and hell we deserve, we get the life and eternal glory Jesus has won and brought to us through His saving Word He still speaks to us today.

And through His Word he gives us new strength to not only listen to His Word, but work to carry that Word to others—His Word through which He does the most amazing and **unexpected** of all! He saves sinners, makes them His holy people and give them eternal life by bringing them to faith in Jesus. Amen.

The LORD's right hand is lifted high; the LORD's right hand has done mighty things! I will not die but live, and will proclaim what the LORD has done. Amen.

(Create in Me p. 20)