

“Expecting the Unexpected”
#1 of 3 *“The Physics of Faith” series*
10:00 AM July 2, 2023
Pastor Huber FELC/TLC/ZLC

Grace, mercy, and **peace** to you from God our **Father** and our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ! You might assume that today I’ll be preaching yet another sermonic **iteration** on the topic of “**freedom**” with which I’ve **homiletically hounded** parishioners every Independence Day weekend for the past 50 years. But **INSTEAD**, for these first **three** Sundays of **July**, I’ve decided to **sneak** into Pastor Matt’s “**scientific wheelhouse**” while he and Marjie are on their much-deserved **hiatus** up at their mountain **cabin**, frolicking through fields of **edelweiss**, and **yodeling** the hours away.

Now that you can’t get that image out of your head...back in the **Stone Age**, I had a high school **physics** teacher who knew his subject **well** but had difficulty **explaining** it to the “scientifically challenged”...like **me!** However, in **college** my gifted physics professor was a retired Air Force colonel who’d **taught** at the **Air Force ACADEMY** and could explain physics in ways that even **I** could comprehend! Well, for today and the next two Sundays, we’ll be exploring **THREE THEMES**—“*Expecting the Unexpected*”—that correlates with **Heisenberg’s “Uncertainty Principle”**. “*Believing the Impossible*”—corresponding to **Bell’s Theorem**, and finally, “*Reversing the Irreversible*” which applies to “**Entropy—The Second Law of Thermodynamics**”.

Being neither a **physicist** by training **NOR** aptitude—**AND** not having stayed at a **Holiday Inn Express** last night—**please don’t fret!** I will be accurately and religiously **borrowing** (that’s “**preacher terminology**” for **plagiarizing**) a number of scientifically accurate and legitimate terms and definitions with the assistance of a Harvard **physics** professor’s book, “**Can A Smart Person Believe in God?**”

This morning, we’ll be juxtaposing **FAITH** with a discovery by German physicist, **Werner Heisenberg**, who won the **Nobel Prize** in **1932** for his work in **quantum mechanics**. For hundreds of years, **physicists** believed in Newton’s “**clockwork universe**” that was **measurable** and **predictable**. But **Heisenberg** pulled the rug right out from under the scientific community by formulating his “**Uncertainty Principle**” that says, “...with a “**quantum particle**” (the smallest physical particle in the universe that **cannot** be broken down) *we can never know for **CERTAIN** the precise position and momentum of a quantum particle at the same time, because sometimes matter behaves like a **PARTICLE**, appearing to be in only **one** place at **one** time...yet other times, matter behaves like a **WAVE ON A POND**—appearing in **several** places at the **same** time.” Thus, there always will be an amount **UNCERTAINTY** in the **natural world**.*

SO then, what does this **mean?** It means you and I are going to need to learn how live our lives by **EXPECTING** the **UNEXPECTED!** But does that also apply to

our **spiritual** life of **FAITH**? And if it **does**, what are the **implications** and **applications** for us believers?

I decided to begin this mini-series with this physical “**Principle of Uncertainty**” to juxtapose with our spiritual **FAITH**, because maybe it’s only **ME**—after all, I wasn’t around for the turmoil of American Revolution or during the Civil War or the Great Depression—but out of my nearly 75 years on this earth, I don’t ever recall observing such a pervasive mindset of **UNCERTAINTY** before in the life of our **NATION** than **right now**. A national poll just came out this week that 7 out of 10 people (the highest ever) are deeply concerned and **UNCERTAIN** about the direction and condition of our nation! The examples are so **blatant** in our political, economic, judicial, medical, ecclesiastical, military, national, foreign, and the outrightly **immoral** policies mandated in the past few years by leaders of our country, that I don’t think I even have to **give** examples! But I **do** know that the majority of people in our nation are **uncertain** about the wisdom of the primrose path we’re following, forcing them **each day** to “**expect the unexpected**”!

Having read quite a few volumes of George Washington’s writings back during my senior college days, probably **50 times** Washington referenced **Micah 4:4** in today’s Old Testament lesson as his vision for the future nation he helped to found...a nation in which “*every person would be able to sit under his own vine and fig tree with no one to make them **afraid** and a people blessed by safety, peace, prosperity, and **VIRTUE!***” How’s **that** working out for us? Is that what we see broadcast in the daily **media**? Or do you **ALSO** sense a growing “**uncertainty**” in the air of what, if anything, can be **DONE** before everything **previously** accomplished may become **UNdone**?

Even more importantly than our **civic** responsibilities, how then in the **spiritual** realm do we believers respond to the increasing uncertainties around us? I’ll tell you: We **also** must learn to expect the **UNEXPECTED** events that only seem to create **MORE uncertainty** and anxiety each day in the **natural** realm. However, we need only look at the Prophet **Habakkuk 3:17 & 18** as our **go-to, spiritual EXAMPLE** in **UNCERTAIN** times of not only learning to “**EXpect** the unexpected” but also how to “**ACCEPT** it”.

While living in the declining nation of **Judah**, whose political and religious leaders had purposely led people into **idolatry**, legalized **immorality**, and treated God gracious blessings as “**rights**” rather than undeserved **blessings**...as well as facing the imminent invasion of the **Babylonians** coming to cart them away from their Promised Land, just how does God’s prophet **respond** to all this unsettling news? Habakkuk basically **prays again and again** in the midst of this bleak, uncertain future ahead of them...yet **also** a future accompanied by God’s **promise** that freedom **eventually WOULD** be returned to the them when they returned to their **homeland** from captivity.

Now listen to what Habakkuk **prays**: *“Though the fig tree should **not** blossom, **nor** fruit be on the vines, the produce of the olive **fail** and the fields yield **no** food, the flock be cut off from the **fold** and there be **no** herd in the stalls, yet I will rejoice in the **Lord**; I will take joy in the God of my salvation.”*

How do **YOU** respond to God when “the fig tree does **NOT** bud and there are **NO** grapes on the vines” and your future seems to remain **uncertain**? Can you still *“rejoice in the Lord and be joyful in God our Savior”*, even when the Babylonians are nearing your gates and coming to take you away?

For me, reading about quantum **physics** is like being thrown into the deep end of the **pool** and not being able to touch **bottom**! Then again, that’s also true of **theology**...and I **majored** in systematic theology! This is because no mere mortal can ever get to the bottom of **God Himself**. To do **that**, we’d have to **BE** God! Even the brilliant **Apostle Paul**, who studied under **Rabbi Gamaliel**, had to admit in 1 Cor. 8:2 that, *“He who **thinks** he knows, does not yet know as he **should** know.”* The NLT translates it, *“Anyone who claims to know all the **answers** doesn’t really know very much.”*

Living in the midst of **SOME** uncertainty will **always** be our fate as mere mortals who are not even **CLOSE** to being **omniscient**. I think **all** of us need to come to the point of **acknowledging**—and, most importantly, **accepting**—the fact that **God** is God and we’re **NOT**...and then to embrace with absolute **TRUST** “the **Uncertainty Principle**” of God’s own words in **Isaiah 55:9**, *“For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are **My** ways higher than **your** ways and **MY** thoughts than **your** thoughts.”*

If you’ve ever read **Hebrews chapter eleven**, you know its “hall of faith”, or “**righteous roster**” is filled with “**faith all-stars**”...**EACH** of whom with one thing in common—a very high tolerance threshold for **obedience** in the midst of **UNCERTAINTY**! **True Faith** learns to **EMBRACE** uncertainty and to find how to use it to bring more glory to **God**, as well as to increase one’s faith in God’s **promises**! Besides, not **ALL** uncertainty is a harbinger of **evil**! I mean, a world without **SOME** uncertainty would be a world without **mystery** or **romance** or surprise **birthday** parties! That’s why I always liked **rollercoasters** better than boring **merry-go-rounds**. On a **rollercoaster** there’s always a **surprise** ahead of you!

But please don’t think I’m being **oblivious** to or making **light** of **NEGATIVE** uncertainties. They’re the source of most of our **Excedrin headaches** aren’t they? And even **NOW**, some of you may be experiencing an extended “**Excedrin moment**” in your life due unforeseen **circumstances** or uncertainty in your **relationships** or **job** stress or **financial** fears, and you don’t have your **answer** to it! In the natural, sinful world, the “**Uncertainty Principle**” isn’t just a principle of **physics**. It’s a law of **life**!

But don’t **despair**, because it also says in **Eph. 3:20**, *“God is able to do far more abundantly than all that we ask **OR KNOW**, according to His power at work in **us**.”* **SPIRITUALLY** speaking, God’s redeemed people **never** have to live with **constant**

uncertainty, because as St. Paul assures in **Rom. 8:35ff**, *“Does it mean God no longer loves us if we have trouble or calamity or are persecuted or hungry or destitute or in danger or threatened with death? NO! Despite all these circumstances, overwhelming victory is ours through Christ, Who loved us. And I am convinced that nothing can ever separate us from God’s love, revealed to us in Christ Jesus, our Lord.”*

However, when it comes to living within the parameters of this sinful, quantum universe, daily life **IS** uncertain...a veritable **crapshoot**...with the dice **loaded** with **uncertain** and often **unforeseen** outcomes. So, what can we believers **do** about that “**quantum reality**”? Wallow in **fear** or **resentment** or **anger**? Or ask the Holy Spirit to give us the power and wisdom from **above** to **use** those “**uncertain situations**” to God’s **glory**? Yes, uncertainty **does** create **anxiety**, but it **also** can create **opportunity** to reexamine our circumstances through **GOD’S** eyes and the eyes of our **neighbor**...rather than just our **own**. By suddenly **seeing** things differently, we can begin **doing** things differently to glorify God and also help our **neighbors** who may be experiencing the same challenges **WE’RE** facing!

I’m not convinced that following Christ reduces uncertainty. **OH**, it reduces **ULTIMATE** spiritual uncertainty, because God **promises** to give believers what Philippians 4 calls *“a peace that passes all understanding”* **AS WELL AS** the absolute certainty that we **CAN** know we are in right relationship with God totally because of God’s grace to us through faith in Christ Jesus... to know we **certainly ARE** going to spend our eternity with Him. But following Christ **daily** may still actually **INCREASE** uncertainty in **OTHER** areas of our lives! Oswald Chambers said it best: *“To be certain of God is to be uncertain in all our ways; you never know what a day may bring.”*

Hebrews 11:8 says, *“By faith Abraham, when called to go to a place he would later receive as an inheritance, obeyed and went, even though he was not yet told where he was going.”* As **believers**, you and I are a **lot** like Abraham. We have plans and goals and dreams, yet sometimes we still have **no idea where God is TAKING us with them!** And that’s the challenge of faith to everyone who would follow of the Savior—no matter **WHAT**—even in **uncertain times** like **today**.

The other day, I happened across a list of the different **names** of various **groups** of creatures. I already knew that a group of **CROWS** is referred to as a “**murder**” of crows. But two I didn’t know. Do you know what they call a group of **BUZZARDS**? They call it a “**COMMITTEE**”. (Perhaps church organizations might want to rethink the word’s **origins** of that before forming **anymore** of them!) But the **OTHER** group term I hadn’t been familiar with was the one for a group of **RHINOS**. They refer to a group of **RHINOS** as a “**CRASH**”! Can you think of anything more appropriate?

Believe it or not, a **rhino** can run about **thirty miles per hour** which is pretty **amazing** considering how much **weight** they’re carrying! They’re actually faster than **squirrels** which can run about **twenty-six miles per hour!** But here’s the **FUNNY**

thing. Rhinos have **terrible eyesight**. They can only see about **thirty feet in front of themselves!** So, picture a rhino running **thirty miles an hour** with no idea what's at **THIRTY-ONE FEET!!!** You'd think they'd be pretty **TIMID** creatures, because they **can't see very far in front** of themselves. But **God**, in His creative **FORESIGHT**, gave each rhino a **BIG HORN** on the front of their head to keep them **boldly moving forward, no matter what!**

If Heisenberg's Principle **IS** correct, then in this physical universe our daily future **always** is going to be subject to elements of **UNCERTAINTY** until the Day Christ returns. But even **so**, that doesn't mean God's people—His **church**—still can't move **FORWARD** in it **RIGHT NOW...AND** with **BOLD CONFIDENCE...bold** as a rhino! We "**mere mortals**" may not know **EVERYTHING** about the **FUTURE**, but we **DO** know Who **HOLDS** the future of this "whole, wide world" in His **HANDS!** And He tells us in His inerrant **WORD** that there's still an eternal future to be **created** and a **HUMANITY** to be **liberated** from sin, death, and the devil.

So, rather than aimlessly wandering in Satan's playground of **uncertainty**—debilitated by **doubt** and anchored to **anxiety**, as members of God's army, we need to keep quick-marching **FORWARD** in lock-step with the message of "Christ Crucified", long ago **entrusted** to us in *the Great Commission*. We need to stop being afraid of what we can't always see **AHEAD** of us and that we may not know **FULLY** even **now**. **Instead**, we need to move forward **FULL FORCE**, because what we **DO** know are the words of St. Paul's promise in Philippians 4:13-14...that..."*We can do all things through Christ Who strengthens us.*" Of **THAT**, we can be **ABSOLUTELY CERTAIN!**

SO, #1) Accept that uncertainty is **inevitable**. #2) Decide to trust God to have a **plan** to get you **through** the uncertainty. #3) **Pray** about the uncertainty as **much** and as **often** as you **need** to. **And #4)** Then refuse to stay **frozen** by uncertainty...and get to work taking the next best step **FORWARD** that the Holy Spirit **reveals** to you.

These uncertain times are the **perfect opportunity** for teaching us how to trust God even **more...if** we're willing to let Him! **Prov. 3:5-6** assures God's redeemed people to..."*Trust in the Lord with all your heart; do not depend on your own understanding. Seek His will in all you do, and He will SHOW you which path to take.*" To borrow the famous words of Martin Luther, "**THIS** is most **CERTAINLY** true!"

In our Savior's Name, Amen!