

The last shall be first

By [Ryan Dueck](#)

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There is much that we hope for, we who have cast our lot with Jesus of Nazareth. We hope for mercy, forgiveness, new life, *eternal* life. We hope for the promise of a new heart that—against all odds!—beats in sync with our Maker, as promised [by the prophet Ezekiel](#). We hope for the relief from pain, for relational wholeness, for freedom from the burden of crippling doubts and unmanageable burdens. We hope for heaven, whatever that might mean. We hope for justice and peace, *shalom* for all of creation, for lions with lambs, for swords into plowshares, for a new heaven and a new earth. We hope that we will be loved and healed and restored, despite all that we have contributed to the brokenness of a broken world. We hope for no more tears. We hope to be with God. And to be able to stand it.

It's quite a cocktail of hope that we embrace, that we cling to, that keeps us moving during times when hope seems like naïve and wildly wishful thinking. *Everything will be all right. All shall be well and all manner of things shall be well.* God, we hope so.

I hope for all of these things and many more besides. But one of the deepest hopes I have is for the Great Reversal that Jesus so often gestures toward. *The last shall be first and the first shall be last.* The losers and the misfits, the awkward and the rejected, the poor and the needy, the nobodies, the lonely, the ugly and the embarrassing, the incompetent and inconvenient, the ones whose primary experience in life is of being on the wrong end of the score, of being on the outside looking in, of not having enough, of being ignored and mistreated, of not *being seen* ...

*These ones*, Jesus impossibly says, *will be first.*

They will no longer be defined by the cruel and merciless standards of a world that doesn't know what or how to value. They will no longer judged by what they are *not* or what they cannot do, but by who they *are*, who they were created to be. They will receive love and acceptance in place of mocking scorn and cold rejection. They

will hear “yes” instead of “no,” “welcome!” instead of “go away.” They will be seen truly, maybe for the first time, for what and for who they are. And, perhaps most importantly, for *whose* they are.

They will know that God is different—that God *sees* differently, that God *values* differently, that God *loves* differently than everything their experience has taught them about how human lives are measured. And they will not only know it, but they will *experience* it. They will see the world and themselves as they were meant to be.

In Luke 4, we read of the first words Jesus ever speaks in his public ministry:

When he came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up, he went to the synagogue on the Sabbath day, as was his custom. He stood up to read, and the scroll of the prophet Isaiah was given to him. He unrolled the scroll and found the place where it was written:

“The Spirit of the Lord is upon me,

because he has anointed me

to bring good news to the poor.

He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives

and recovery of sight to the blind,

to let the oppressed go free,

to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor.”

Release. Recovery. Freedom. Favor. *Good news*.

For all those for whom the world makes no room. From the Divine Reject upon whom the Spirit of the Lord rests.

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