

The right kind of King

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- [0 : 0 0] All righty. So back into John 6, verses 1 to 21. As we do, we're kind of looking at the character of Jesus, who he is, what kind of leader he is, what kind of king he's going to turn out to be.
- And friends, I'm going to suggest to you that he turns out to be a pretty darn good kind of king, even by the standards that we have, except that our standards kind of limit him a little bit too much.
- You see, we have expectations of our leaders. We have expectations that they will meet our demands. Now, it doesn't always appear at the forefront of our minds when we're electing our politicians.
- We're grateful. We're grateful to be in a country that Donald Trump isn't leading. We are. This is the kind of thing we talk about amongst ourselves, isn't it?
- Amongst each other. We dread the fact that Donald Trump will have a Twitter war with another global, at least nuclear power in the world.
- [1 : 0 2] Suddenly, Donald Trump, who's someone who we can have a bit of a laugh about and a snicker about over a coffee at work, becomes someone who is affecting and impinging on our lives.
- And then we start to get really interested in what he is doing and our opinions kind of firm up into being somewhat more critical, shall we say. It's the same with our leaders. Same with our leaders here.
- Our prime minister and his party. You know, he's out there. He's kind of in the back of our minds. We kind of know who he is. And if it was, you know, who wants to be a millionaire, it probably wouldn't be the kind of question that we'd actually have to phone a friend on, who is this, who is our prime minister.
- But I can tell you, he comes to the forefront of our minds around budget time when he starts to say who's going to get tax cuts and who is going to get tax increases.
- When the party starts to lay out what's going to happen with the healthcare package this year. What is the government contributing towards education? What are all these things, these big decisions that they make, going to do to our lives?
- [2 : 0 5] Are they going to improve them or not? We have expectations of our leaders. Expectations that they will make our lives better.
- And expectations that when they don't, they should expect to hear from us about it. And so as Jesus emerges in John's gospel, we start to see a little bit of what Jesus is like, who Jesus is and the kind of leadership he's going to bring to earth.
- We start to hear the controversy. Who is this Jesus? And is he really who he claims to be? The authorities are actually starting to view him as an enemy of the state.
- Why? Because he's not delivering on their expectations. But the witnesses, as David pointed out last week, the witnesses say he is the true king.
- He is the promised saviour. He is God himself. John is laying out Jesus' life and ministry to reveal the answer to this question.

- [3 : 11] Who is Jesus? Not so that we can get the answer right in the pub quiz, but so that we might believe in him and be saved. In this next event in Jesus' life, we get a glimpse of what kind of king he is and what kind of salvation Jesus offers.
- Let's have a look at it now. So if you actually got your Bibles open, chapter 6, verses 1 and following. To start this event, John actually provides the context.
- He introduces this episode in Jesus' life, kind of like a date in the diary, like we might introduce. You know, the where, the when, and the who are we meeting, that sort of thing. Kind of like a date in the diary.
- But in light of the fact that John is wanting to witness to who Jesus is, perhaps more like testimony in a witness box. Testimony in a witness box.
- So let me pray now as we start to look at the where, when, and who and invite God to actually preside over us as we look at his word. Father God, we thank you for people like John who so faithfully represented Jesus in this gospel.
- [4 : 35] But we pray now as we look at it, Lord, that what we would see is the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth. In Jesus' name. Amen. Okay, so where were they?
- Well, they were by the Sea of Galilee. They'd just crossed it to a quiet place, probably the area that we now know as the Golan Heights. It was a remote place, very quiet area.
- But by the time John wrote this gospel, the lake actually had another name, and we get that other name as well. It was also called Tiberius, named after the Roman emperor at the time of Jesus' ministry.
- By all accounts, Tiberius was a good emperor. He was humble. He was the first of a group of emperors that actually refused to be deified, turned into a god and worshipped in the emperor cult.
- And he was a wise and capable leader. So King Herod, well, he tried to rename Galilee after Tiberius. So both names were known at the time, Sea of Galilee, Sea of Tiberius.
- [5 : 39] Why is this important? Well, perhaps John wrote both names to include the non-Jews who would read his gospel, the people who would know the lake by the name Tiberius.
- Or perhaps he wrote this other name to remind the Jews that they were still under Roman rule. Or perhaps he wanted us to be thinking about the kind of ruler Jesus is over and against someone who was respected in the world at that time.
- Where were they? They were by the Sea of Galilee, a remote area on the shore of the Sea of Galilee. So who was there? Well, Jesus, and most likely his 12 disciples were there.
- Why do I say that? Well, they all fit into one boat, so it's unlikely that there were more than that. So it was round about that, round about the inner 12. But we also learn as well here that a large crowd followed Jesus.
- Jesus and his disciples went in a boat, the crowd had to walk around the edge, they took longer. And we read in verse 2, a large crowd was following him. We even read, why? Because they saw the signs that he was doing on the sick.
- [6 : 52] They followed Jesus because of what he could do for them. Where, who, and when. Finally, the when. The date, we read again, is around the time of the Passover.
- Now, this date is important. It's the first event God put into the Jewish calendar. On this date, the Jews remembered their exodus from Egypt. A lamb was killed and eaten.
- Its blood was painted on the doorposts of the house. And a prophet called Moses led them out of captivity into freedom.
- This was a time of year when Israel probably felt their captivity the most, their Roman occupation most. At this point of the year, more than any other, they longed for salvation.

They longed for the new Moses. This is the context that John presents this feeding of the 5,000.

[7 : 54] This is the context. But the question is, who is this Jesus? Now we move on and see the actual sign of the feeding of the 5,000.

To answer the question of who Jesus is, John gives us this next sign. John peels back the layers of Jesus' life to reveal who Jesus is. And this next layer begins with a problem.

As we've already seen, Jesus and his disciples had come to a remote area and the crowd that had followed them had followed them into this remote area. And Jesus can't help but see the problem.

If we read in verse 5, lifting up his eyes then and seeing that a large crowd was coming toward him, Jesus said to Philip, where are we to buy bread so that these people may eat?

Jesus' first response is to lift his eyes. He takes in everything, the crowd, their need, the resources at his disposal. And he has compassion on them.

[8 : 59] Jesus is in control. They are hungry and he's going to do something about it. That's who Jesus is. But, ever the teacher, Jesus doesn't miss a chance to test his disciples.

We read in verse 6 that Jesus said this to test him for he himself knew what he would do. Now Jesus probably asked Philip, singling out Philip of the Twelve, because it seems pretty rough, doesn't it, to be the one that actually gets this question.

But he probably asked Philip because Philip is a local. And if there's a shop nearby, Philip is going to know where it is. And Philip's answer gets straight to the point.

In verse 7 we read, Philip answered him, 200 denarii worth of bread would not be enough for each of them to even get a little. Paraphrase that.

Philip is saying, I don't know. Perhaps I don't know isn't even strong enough to describe the sense of Philip's response. Philip is really saying, impossible.

[10 : 09] There is no shop. There is no money for this scale of catering. We're talking 200 denarii. That was over 30 weeks of wages for the average labourer.

tens of thousands of dollars we're talking about. Now Andrew, he tries to bail Philip out a little bit, maybe take the pressure off like you do in the classroom.

In verse 9 he says, he chips in and says, there's a boy here who has five barley loaves and two fish, but what are they for so many? Five barley loaves and two fish were not enough to go around.

They couldn't just, I don't know, cook up a little rice or throw in a side salad and try and pad the meal out to make it bigger. The task was huge.

Not even the Minter family, Manning, Manning at KFC could actually meet this demand. Not even the Walker family and the resources of Curry McDonald's could meet this demand.

[11 : 16] But even if they could, there was no KFC, there was no McDonald's, there was no money to meet this need. Jesus set a test and the disciples failed.

But what was the test? Jesus knew what he would do. We can read that here. So the test wasn't actually to provide the meal. The test was to accept the evidence that David described last week that we saw in John 5.

The test was to realize who Jesus is and act on it to begin to trust in him. But they don't get it.

So Jesus gives them this sign. In verse 10 we take up, Jesus said, have the people sit down. Now there was much grass in the place and the men sat down, about 5,000 in number.

Jesus then took the loaves and when he had given thanks, he distributed them to those who were seated. So also the fish, as much as they wanted. Jesus had them sit down. It's a nice grassy area we read here.

[12 : 24] Plenty of room for 5,000 men. Probably twice that number were present when you count the women and children. They didn't count women and children in their counts. And we know there was at least one child there because he had the lunchbox, the only lunchbox there.

And then in verse 11, Jesus took the loaves and he gave thanks and distributed them. He fed more than 5,000 people with five loaves and two fish.

Then after everyone had eaten their fill, you read here, Jesus told them to gather up the leftovers and they did. Twelve basketfuls of leftovers from one kid's happy meal.

It's an incredible feat. But there's more going on here than a miraculous free meal. The phrasing, even the phrasing of this verse of what Jesus does and how he does it, well, it's very close to the accounts of the Lord's Supper.

If you can read through, go and have a look at those later when you get home. But the accounts of the Lord's Supper in the other Gospels with Jesus taking bread, breaking it, giving thanks. And the abundance of the provision in a wilderness area is meant to remind us of the Israelites in the wilderness and that manna, the bread from heaven.

[13 : 53] Jesus wants us to make these links. He wants us to hear about what he did and think Exodus. Now, if you're thinking I'm stretching things a little bit here and that's, you know, where are you seeing all this in the passage, then what I would encourage you to do is to keep reading.

Keep reading in this chapter and look at the links that Jesus makes. See, when Jesus goes back to the other side of the lake and the crowd catches up with him, he starts explaining exactly what he was doing and he overtly makes these links.

So he's setting us up here to be starting to think along these lines. He wants us to hear about what he did and think Exodus. He wants us to think Passover lamb and Moses leading the people out of slavery.

This sign is meant to tell us who Jesus is. It's meant to tell us more. It's meant to tell us about what kind of kingship he is going to have. what kind of king Jesus is going to be and it does.

The word of what Jesus had done spread through the crowd and it provokes a response, a right response and a wrong response. In verse 14 we read this.

[15 : 04] When the people saw the sign that he had done they said, this is indeed the prophet who is to come into the world. Jesus has just claimed to be this prophet in chapter 5 verses 45 to 47 and the Jewish leaders didn't believe him.

Now the crowd is making the connections. Connections that the Jewish leaders wouldn't. They are beginning to believe that he is the prophet. It's the right response but it comes with a wrong response.

the wrong response is that they then try to make him king. Their kind of king in verse 15. Perceiving then that they are about to come and take him by force to make him king Jesus withdrew again to the mountain by himself.

Jesus is the king the ruler over everything but he's not the kind of king that they want. When the people of Israel saw what Jesus could do they saw a man who could save them from the problems as they saw it.

They saw their problem as their circumstances. Life was hard under the Romans. Things were difficult in a subsistence economy living day to day. Sickness and disease went virtually unchecked.

[16 : 24] Life expectancy was half of what ours is today. We're going to say that 2,000 years later things aren't too different for us. We want our leaders to sort out our problems.

Even our prayers reflect our worries our circumstances our jobs our families and relationships or lack of our health. These were and are real problems.

we should take them to Jesus and Jesus is genuinely concerned about them. Jesus fed the 5,000.

He healed many. But even though he fed the 5,000 we need to understand that he was concerned for far more than their stomachs.

He was concerned for something a little north and west of our stomachs. He was concerned for our hearts. So he didn't come as their kind of king.

[17 : 30] He fled from that. They wanted the Moses of the Exodus. Jesus came as the Lamb. The Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world is how John the Baptist introduced him in John 1, verse 29.

The Lamb. You see, our problems are only symptoms of the real problem. Our problem is that we are separated from God by our sin.

We live in rebellion against God as our rightful king and so we don't experience the goodness of God's rule. We experience our brokenness and his wrath, his judgment.

And you know the world is messed up. Here's the problem and this is what I think. I'm guessing that most of the time you and I, we spend our time thinking about the problems and the mess being stuff that's out there that impinges on me, that sticks to me but it's not my fault.

It's all this other stuff going on. It's the stuff going around us but not in us that we see so clearly. And if that stuff could change, we think everything would be all right.

[18 : 49] But am I the only one in the room who knows he's a mess inside? Am I the only one who has those moments of lucidity? I'm afraid there are, you know, unfortunately there are moments. Those moments though where I say something or I do something or I think something that genuinely shocks me.

sometimes I even can feel these thoughts actually forming in my mind and I can't stop them from coming out in an action or words.

And when they do, they become words and attitudes that do real damage to the people around me. these attitudes that actually come from within me, attitudes that take the blood, sweat and tears of Jesus to untangle.

Jesus is that kind of king. The kind of king who would take our brokenness and God's anger on himself. the kind of king who would get slain like a lamb.

The kind of king who would be the lamb so that he could be the Moses and lead us out of slavery to this mess once and for all. So Jesus, when they tried to make him king, he withdrew from them.

[20 : 22] He left his disciples alone to return to Capernaum without him. Who knows how they must have been feeling. Who knows after all that had just gone on.

The melee that must have actually happened around these people starting to surge toward Jesus. I can tell you now though, we know enough to know this, that these 12 disciples, even these 12 disciples argued over who would be the greatest in the kingdom of God.

These 12 disciples lobbied for who would sit at his right and his left in the kingdom when it came. These 12 disciples resisted Jesus' servant leadership and we'll see that in John 13 when Jesus tries to wash Peter's feet.

These 12 defended Jesus with force when the soldiers came to arrest him. They likely wanted a Moses too.

I think at least a part of them was hoping that the will of the crowd would have its way that day. But instead, they were left alone, crossing the Sea of Galilee at night without Jesus.

[21 : 39] And the crossing was turning out to be a hard one. In verse 18, we read these words, the sea became rough because a strong wind was blowing. When they had rode about three or four miles, they saw Jesus walking on the sea and coming near the boat and they were frightened.

Now, the Sea of Galilee is roundish. It's not massively bigger than Lake Macquarie, but it's kind of roundish and it's deep, way deeper than Lake Macquarie. So the water can get pretty rough when the wind picks up.

And three or four miles, that kind of puts them roughly in the middle of this lake. But it wasn't until they saw someone walking on water that they really started to freak out.

In the ancient Near East, water was a sign of the, well, the chaos, of chaos in the world. It was one of these forces that they just could not even think of controlling and they struggled to live alongside.

Working on the water, therefore, was a dangerous job. I remember Joe and I on our holiday recently. We went back to England and we went to a coastal town called Bridlington, which was a fishing town.

[22 : 50] And we discovered, I didn't realise this, but you know the cable knit jumpers that we don't tend to wear over here because it's too warm? We've got Ugg boots, like Matt. Yeah. The cable knit jumpers all have their own unique pattern according to the village that the person comes from.

Why? Because when you get lost at sea, you're not always easily identifiable. And so they would look at the jumper to see what village they came from.

They could take the body back to that village and they would know who was missing. It was a dangerous job working on the sea.

So people who worked on the water were often incredibly superstitious. someone walking across the surface of the water in the middle of stormy weather was not going to send their thoughts in a healthy direction.

They were alone, demoralised by what had happened that day and afraid. And something was coming toward them across the water.

[24 : 06] So Jesus spoke to them. In verse 20 we read, he said to them, it is I, do not be afraid. It is I.

A literal translation would be, I am, like, I am the bread of life, which we'll read as we go into the next part of chapter 6, 635. As John also recalls Jesus saying, I am the light of the world in chapter 8, verse 12.

I am the good shepherd in chapter 10, verse 11. I am the way, the truth, and the life in chapter 14, verse 6. But this time, when the disciples are totally confused about who Jesus is and totally freaked out about how he's appeared, it's just, I am.

This is the Greek version of God's personal name, Yahweh. When they were feeling at their lowest and most helpless, Jesus appeared and he said, I am.

Who is Jesus? He is the king, but more, he is I am. He is Yahweh, the God who cares for his people, even in the mess.

[25 : 39] Whoever you think Jesus is, he's more. Whatever you want Jesus to do, he delivers more. whatever the mess in your life, he is with you in that mess, working toward a time when one day all of that mess will be wiped away.

That time when the Lamb once and for all deals with the sin in the world, deals with the sin in our hearts, and restores peace to us all.

Whoever you think Jesus is, he's more.