

Reactions to the King

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[0:00] I'm reading from Isaiah 49, verses 5 and 6. Isaiah 49. And now the Lord says, He who formed me in the womb to be his servant, to bring Jacob back to him and gather Israel to himself, for I am honoured in the eyes of the Lord and my God, and my God has been my strength.

He says, It is too small a thing for you to be my servant, to restore the tribes of Jacob and bring back those of Israel I have kept. I will also make you a light for the Gentiles, that my salvation may reach to the ends of the earth.

This is the word of the Lord. Thanks be to God. And the second reading is from Mark, chapter 3, and it's on page 1004 in those same Bibles.

Mark, chapter 3, starting from verse 7. Jesus withdrew with his disciples to the lake, and a large crowd from Galilee followed.

When they heard about all he was doing, many people came to him from Judea, Jerusalem, Edomia and the regions across the Jordan and around Tyre and Sidon. Because of the crowd, he told his disciples to have a small boat ready for him to keep the people from crowding him.

[1:27] For he had healed many, so that those with diseases were pushing forward to touch him. Whenever the impure spirits saw him, they fell down before him and cried out, You are the Son of God!

But he gave them strict orders not to tell others about him. Jesus went up on a mountainside and called to him those he wanted, and they came to him. He appointed twelve that they might be with him and that he might send them out to preach and to have authority to drive out demons.

These are the twelve he appointed. Simon, to whom he gave the name Peter. James, son of Zebedee, and his brother John. To them he gave the name Boanerges, which means sons of thunder.

Andrew, Philip, Bartholomew, Matthew, Thomas, James, son of Alphaeus, Thaddeus, Simon the Zealot, and Judas Iscariot, who betrayed him. Then Jesus entered a house, and again a crowd gathered so that he and his disciples were not even able to eat.

When his family heard about this, they went to take charge of him, for they said, He's out of his mind. And the teachers of the law, who came down from Jerusalem, said, He is possessed by Beelzebul, by the prince of demons, he is driving out demons.

[2:46] So Jesus called them over to him and began to speak to them in parables. How can Satan drive out Satan? If a kingdom is divided against itself, that kingdom cannot stand.

If a house is divided against itself, that house cannot stand. And if Satan opposes himself and is divided, he cannot stand. His end has come.

In fact, no one can enter a strongman's house without first tying him up. Then he can plunder the strongman's house. Truly I tell you, people can be forgiven all their sins and every slander they utter.

But whoever blasphemes against the Holy Spirit will never be forgiven. They are guilty of an eternal sin. He said this because they were saying he has an impure spirit.

Then Jesus' mother and brothers arrived. Standing outside, they sent someone in to call him. A crowd was sitting around him and they told him, your mother and brothers are outside looking for you.

[3:49] Who are my mother and my brothers? He asked. Then he looked at those seated in a circle around him and said, here are my mother and my brothers. Whoever does God's will is my brother and sister and mother.

This is the word of the Lord. Well, there are some things in life where people react the same way. For example, holidays. The reaction is usually joy. I don't think anyone hates holidays. Anyway, I'm not going to ask. But most people react with joy. Or getting things for free. Most people react with excitement. I mean, who doesn't love free stuff? I still remember the episode. I didn't actually watch it, but I heard about it. The episode of Oprah Winfrey when she gave every single person in the audience a car, a brand new car for free. And this was the reaction. One of excitement.

People react generally like that to some things. But on the other hand, people with other things react differently. Like the weather. Some people love hot weather.

[4:49] Some people loathe hot weather. Some people love seafood. Some people loathe seafood. You think most people love chocolate, but there are some people like Tim Walker who loathe chocolate.

There you go. Yeah, I know. It's crazy. Crazy. And sometimes your reaction just depends on where you are in the queue. I like getting vaccinations. So one reaction of the guy getting stuck with a needle is a bit different to the ones towards the end of the line who were laughing.

But my favourite is the next one, number two. He's going, Oh no, I'm next. Well, today we'll see different groups react in different ways and not to food and vaccinations, but to Jesus.

You see, we've been doing Mark's gospel, as you know, and from the very first sentence, Mark declares Jesus to be the king. And as we saw last week, people are starting to react to him vehemently.

So last week ended with the Pharisees going out to plot with the Herodians how they might kill him. But that reaction is not just from the leaders. Actually, Mark shows us this week, Jesus is forcing loads of different people to react to him.

[6:10] Jesus is the sort of person who demands a reaction from everyone, including us. And so the implicit question will be for us, how are we, how am I reacting to Jesus, the king?

Well, Mark begins by combining the first two groups of people and reactions. So point one, verse seven and eight, Jesus withdrew and a loud crowd from Galilee followed him.

And in verse eight, when they heard, others heard about what he was doing. Many people came from all over, Judea, Jerusalem, Idumea, and the regions across the Jordan in the east and then around Tyre and Sidon.

Here we meet a large crowd of people, which seems to be made up of two other crowds. So one, verse seven from Galilee and another from all those other regions in verse eight.

And they do seem to come from everywhere. So here's a map of Israel and Jerusalem and Judea are in the south and Idumea is further south.

[7:14] So they're coming up from the deep south. They're also even coming from the far north, Tyre and Sidon, right at the top and even across the Jordan from the east.

They're coming from everywhere. And I suspect Mark is trying to highlight something about Jesus at this point because the last time Mark mentioned people coming from everywhere, it was to see John the Baptist back in chapter one, verse five.

But back then, it was only from Jerusalem and Judea. And do you remember John said, after him comes one more powerful than me, you know, whose sandals I'm not worthy to untie.

And so here is Jesus and people are coming from much further afield than they came for John. It's almost this implicit kind of statement that Jesus is this more powerful one.

Plus, he's not just the more powerful one, but he's also God's servant from our first reading, it seems, who would restore not just the tribes of Jacob or Israel, but be a light for the Gentiles too, do you remember?

[8:25] Because Jesus' reach is going beyond the borders of Israel up to Tyre and Sidon, which is Gentile or non-Jewish country. It seems Mark is also suggesting that he is this servant too.

And yet despite his light, these crowds don't fully see who he is. For their reaction is to take from Jesus as healer rather than serve him as king.

So verse 9 and 10, because of the crowd, he told his disciples to have a small boat ready for him to keep the people from crowding him. For he had healed many so that those with diseases were

pushing forward to touch him.

Here is pushing and shoving to touch Jesus for healing. In fact, at the end of verse 9, the word crowding is literally crushing. They are crushing Jesus.

It kind of reminds me of those crowds on a Black Friday super sale, you know, where they push and shove to get a bargain. Only here with Jesus, it's a bargain cure.

[9:37] And at one level, it's understandable really. I mean, if we could be cured of cancer without chemo for free, I mean, we'd be lining up too, wouldn't we?

And yet, like the Black Friday sales, these people are so fixated on what Jesus can do for them, they don't even consider what his ability says about him.

That his authority over diseases shows that he's more than an ordinary person. He is the Son of God, which was another title for king. The one there to fall before in service.

And I think we see this kind of reaction in our world today, actually. I like in the movies where people are in a plane and it hits turbulence and it starts to dive down. What do they all suddenly do? They all start praying and become believers all of a sudden. And then once the plane lands safely, they then all forget about Jesus, right? Or people who've come to me here at church asking for money and saying, yeah, look, I want to follow God and I'll come to church and learn about Jesus.

[10:44] But then after you help them, you never see them again until they need more money, that is. The point is, people are often happy to take from Jesus as saviour, but less happy to serve Jesus as king.

And I wonder if we can sometimes fall into this reaction too. You know, we're happy to have him as our saviour who saves us from sin, but less happy to fall before him in service as our king.

Like when it costs us time or effort or comfort. Jesus says to forgive others as God has forgiven us, but we kind of think, oh, that's a bit too hard.

I'll take his forgiveness, but I won't do what he says as king and forgive others. Or like many Christians who only come to church when it's convenient. But you see, king and saviour go together.

In fact, Jesus is the king who saves. He can only save because he's the king, you see. And so yes, we're to enjoy the blessings from him, but we're also to serve him.

[11:52] Even when it's hard. Which can I say, I see many of you doing, which is terrific. And many of you make so much effort despite health issues and to do all you can to keep serving Jesus in many ways.

And just to encourage you, I can see it in the next generation too. Sometimes we kind of, you know, lament the next generations of people, but at 1030 Church, I see mothers coming to church, one hand pushing the stroller, the other hand holding one kid with another kid in the pouch here.

Their husband's at work and they're still trying to manage to open the doors and come to church. I mean, it's a huge effort, but they're doing it. And not only to set a good example for their kids, but because they want to serve Jesus as their king as well.

Which is really encouraging. Unlike the crowds here. And I suspect Mark highlights this crowd's failure by combining their reaction with the next group's reaction in verse 11.

Whenever the impure spirits, that's the next group, saw him, they fell down before him and cried out, you are the son of God. But he gave them strict orders not to tell others about him.

[13:02] Here, these impure spirits have presumably possessed people, but notice as soon as they see Jesus, they fall before him and acknowledge him as king, son of God.

You see, they do what the crowds should have done. Of course, they don't do this out of reverence or service, do they? I mean, they're impure or evil spirits.

They're on the opposition. They're against Jesus. And they don't do it simply to try and out Jesus as the son of God, even though he does tell them in verse 12 to keep quiet.

Because Jesus has told other people to keep quiet who weren't trying to out him as the son of God. This whole kind of keep quiet thing enables him not to get mobbed so he can go into other towns and keep preaching the gospel.

That's why he came. Chapter 1, verse 38. That's what he said. I came to preach the gospel. Rather, these evil spirits fall at his feet simply because they have to.

[14:02] For Jesus is the more powerful one that came after John the Baptist. In other words, these impure spirits fall before Jesus and confess him the king unwillingly.

And while we don't see that kind of reaction in our world today, we will on the last day, won't we? when every knee will bow and every tongue confess that Jesus is Lord, King?

The difference being if people do it unwillingly on that day, they will sadly end up in the same place as those impure spirits.

But if they do it willingly before that day, they will join us and Jesus in heaven with great joy. And so it's worth continuing to do what we can to see people bow before Jesus as king and saviour willingly before it's too late.

I like one of our members at 1030 who's been praying for his dying uncle and even asked me to visit his uncle last weekend in palliative care because he wanted to do all he could to make sure his uncle believed in Jesus before it was too late.

[15:16] And he thought a minister might help but I didn't because God had already answered his prayer. You see, we went there thinking we'd have to try and persuade this uncle of the gospel but in the end he ended up persuading us he really did believe in Jesus.

God had actually answered his prayers and he passed away on Friday night. The point is we want to do all we can to help people believe in Jesus and confess him as their saviour and king willingly before it's too late because they'll have to do it unwillingly on judgment day and then it will be too late.

Well next Mark focuses just on one group and not so much this time to highlight their reaction to Jesus he does that when he combines groups but to really highlight who they become for Jesus. So point to verse 13 Jesus went up to a mountainside and he called to him those he wanted and they came to him which is the only reaction we really see here at the moment.

He appointed twelve that they might be with him and that he might send them out to preach and have authority over to drive out demons. These are the twelve he appointed and on it goes.

[16:37] Here Jesus calls twelve disciples from among the larger group of disciples and they obey which as I said is the extent of their reaction at the moment.

But Mark focuses on who they are. He calls them twice the twelve verse 14 and verse 16 and why twelve? It's a bit of an odd number even number actually.

Well you know don't you? Twelve because it's the twelve tribes of Israel. Israel were made up of twelve tribes based on the twelve sons of Jacob.

Jacob whose name became Israel you see. And so what Jesus is doing is he's calling twelve and recreating the people of God. The church that will come and be based on these twelve apostles teaching you see.

And by doing so he is saying that he is the king who recreates God's kingdom through these twelve. In fact we see his kingship by the way he calls them and appoints them.

[17:45] Mark is showing us that Jesus is the king who recreates God's kingdom and will build God's church through these twelve apostles. Now there's more to say about this but we don't have time to say it and so we're going to move on sorry not those twelve apostles the other twelve apostles but we're going to move on to point three and look at the next groups that Mark combines and their reaction.

So point three and then verse 20 and 21. Then Jesus entered a house and again a crowd gathered so that he and his disciples were not even able to eat.

When his family heard about this they went to take charge of him for they said he is out of his mind. So the next group we meet is his biological family.

Jesus enters a house with his twelve disciples or twelve apostles that we just talked about and another crowd comes to him. But this crowd seems different from the earlier ones because as we'll see they end up sitting around Jesus and listening to Jesus rather than crowding and pushing Jesus.

Which means they're more like disciples because that's what a disciple does sits and listens and learns. But it means he and the twelve couldn't eat and so perhaps his family is concerned he's not

eating enough.

[19:11] You know his parents are concerned their kids are not eating enough veggies and getting their vitamins and so on. But verse 21 seems to suggest otherwise. The real reason they've come to take charge of him is not to eat better.

It's because they think he's lost the plot. They think he's out of his mind. By allowing such crowds to come to him and listen to him he's acting like he's some special prophet or teacher.

And in that culture of honour and shame it would have been very embarrassing for his family. Can you imagine the neighbours? Oh Barry your son Jesus is at it again thinking he's all that.

You better go and sort him out. And so they come to take charge of him. To make him submit to them on their terms. Take charge. Rather than submit to him on his terms.

And again I wonder if we can fall into this bad reaction too. Where we prefer to take charge of Jesus and determine just how far we will follow Jesus.

[20:16] You know follow him on our terms rather than his terms. just so that we won't get embarrassed by our family or friends or colleagues.

I like some churches who insist who instead of submitting to Jesus' teaching about marriage and sexuality, they're the hot topics of today, want to take charge of Jesus and claim his view is out of date.

He's out of his mind to think that this is still relevant today. And so they take charge and follow Jesus on their terms. rather than upholding a traditional or biblical view just to save embarrassment from people in our world.

But if Jesus is king, then we're to follow him on his terms. That's what it means to be king, right? We don't take charge of him, he takes charge of us.

Which might cause us to think that's not very nice, but remember this is the king who is good and uses his authority for our good. We've seen it over the last couple of weeks.

[21:22] He gives us his authority for our good to forgive sins. Last week he gives us rest from religion for our good. God's design for marriage and sexuality is for our good.

He takes charge of our lives for our good. He's not out of his mind. Nor is he possessed by Satan, which is the next reaction at verse 22. Here Mark combines this reaction with the previous because they're both false accusations about Jesus.

He's out of his mind, he's possessed by Satan. By the way, Beelzebub or Beelzebul is another name for Satan. I used to go to a church with a guy called David, whose sister Michelle teased him and tormented him so much so that he started calling her Beelzebub, which he later realized was a bit harsh and so he stopped.

But that's what they're saying about Jesus. They're seeing him drive out demons and these religious leaders who've come up from Jerusalem, from the capital where the temple is, these are the big guns.

They see what he's doing and their conclusion, he's possessed by Satan. presumably because they don't want to admit the alternative that Jesus is from God.

[22:50] But this accusation is both harsh and false. I mean, it simply ignores what the evidence says. And so Jesus calls them over in verse 23 and it starts off by pointing out how flawed their thinking is.

He says, how can Satan drive out Satan? You know, if you're saying I'm possessed and I'm driving out demons, then Satan is working against himself. And if he's working against himself, he's divided and he cannot stand.

His kingdom and his house cannot stand. If he opposes himself, verse 26, he cannot stand. His end has come. Like a sports team, if they are divided amongst themselves, do you think they're going to win the match?

Of course not. Or if you tried to do a three-legged race with a partner, you've got to kind of run together in the same direction, don't you? These guys are taking it way too seriously, but if you go in different directions, if you're divided, what happens?

You fall over. You cannot stand, can't you? The point is Satan would simply not work against himself. And so how can you say I'm possessed by him?

[24:02] Your thinking is flawed, says Jesus, which means the evidence is ignored. God. Because the very fact that Jesus is able to drive out demons means not only is he not Satan, but he is from God.

Because he has to be more powerful than Satan to do this, right? Verse 27, in fact, no one can enter a strong man's house, that's Satan, without first tying him up, being more powerful than him. And then he can plunder the strong man's house. In other words, free those who have been possessed. But if you claim I have an evil spirit rather than the Holy Spirit with God's authority over Satan, well, verse 28, truly I tell you, people can be forgiven all their sins in every slander they utter, but whoever blasphemes against the Holy Spirit will never be forgiven.

They are guilty of an eternal sin. He said this because they were saying he has an impure spirit. Now, some Christians are not exactly sure what this unforgivable sin or blasphemy against the Holy Spirit is, and they worry about it, which is understandable because we don't want to commit it, right? But it's really just about rejecting Jesus. To say he has an impure spirit is to blaspheme the Holy Spirit as evil, but also deny that the Spirit anointed Jesus at his baptism like Hong said at the start of the service, to signal that he is God's Son who has authority to forgive sins.

[25:48] And so to say that he doesn't have that Holy Spirit and doesn't have that authority to forgive sins is basically to say he can't forgive sins. We reject him. And if you reject the only source of forgiveness, can you be forgiven?

You can't, can you? Imagine you're drowning, actually it's a bad thing to imagine but I'm trying to illustrate this. Imagine you're drowning and there's only one lifesaver on duty. The lifesaver swims out to you and offers to save you but you say I don't think you're the real deal, I think you're possessed by seaweed, okay?

Go away from me. And so the lifesaver is rejected. Are you going to be saved? You've just rejected the only lifesaver on duty. You can't be saved. And that's his point here.

To say Jesus has an impure spirit is to blaspheme the Holy Spirit, calling him evil and denying his anointed Jesus as God's son with God's authority to forgive sins. And so to reject Jesus, the only lifesaver, means you simply cannot be forgiven.

But the reaction of these leaders is to claim false things about Jesus and ignore the evidence, which we see in our world again today, don't we? People who falsely claim Jesus is not worth thinking about, except as a swear word.

[27:12] Or, you know, Jesus is just a good guy who taught good morals, despite all the evidence we have for his miracles and even his resurrection, which proves he's much more than both.

they claim false things about Jesus and ignore the evidence for Jesus, you see. And so finally we come to those who react rightly, verse 31 to 35.

Then Jesus' mother and brothers arrived standing outside, they sent someone in to call him, the crowd who was sitting around him told him, your mother and brothers are outside looking for you. Who are my mother and my brothers? he asked. Then he looked at those seated in a circle around him and said, here are my mother and my brothers. Whoever does God's will is my brother and sister and mother.

So the biological family we met back in verse 21 has finally arrived to take charge of him and the crowd from verse 20 are now sitting around him, which is the posture of students listening to their teacher.

[28:19] It's like a classroom scene if you like, which suggests their disciples and given in verse 32, it's a crowd who are sitting around him. It's more than just the 12 apostles.

But when they let Jesus know about his biological family, verse 34, he looks at those around them and says in verse 35, whoever does God's will like them is my brother and sister and mother, is his true family.

family. And so if we want to be part of his true family, what is God's will that we're to do? Well, firstly, to come to Jesus like this particular crowd did, to humbly sit at his feet, to believe in him, actually.

God's will in the Bible is to do that. In fact, it's God's command, like 1 John 3, and this is his God's command to believe in the name of his son, Jesus Christ. There's God's will.

And so, do you believe in Jesus? Don't be like the religious leaders who ignored the evidence and so reject Jesus as the only source of forgiveness.

[29:35] Believe in him as your king who died to pay for your sin. Trust in him. That's the first part to God's will. And for us who do, then secondly, doing God's will means doing what the crowd were doing.

listening to Jesus, like students listening to their teacher. Jesus actually equates what they're doing with doing God's will here. We're to keep listening to him, this good and kind king, keep letting him take charge of our lives for our good, unlike his biological family who sought to take charge of him. Not to earn our way into his family, now we can't do that, we saw that a couple of weeks ago, but to show that he, has enabled us to come into his family.

We'll talk more about listening to Jesus next week, and so thirdly, doing God's will means obeying God's word. I mean, isn't this where we find God's will? In the Bible? And so doing God's word means obeying, doing God's will means obeying God's word.

For example, from 1 Peter 2, it is God's will that by doing good, you should silence the ignorant talk of foolish people. And by doing good here, he's talking about submitting to the authorities, unless they're telling you to do something wrong, like in Iran.

[30:56] It means respecting people. You look at the context there, it's living good lives so that people who claim we're troublemakers don't have a leg to stand on. It's about doing good and being a good witness for the Lord's sake.

That's God's will. And so are we doing good in our lives to be a good witness for him? Or 1 Thessalonians 5.18, give thanks in all circumstances for this is God's will for you.

In Christ Jesus, he's God's will. To give thanks in all circumstances, even difficult circumstances, which again is good for us. It forces us to focus on the good which we can be thankful for and be encouraged by.

Rather than focusing on the bad which discourages us, doesn't it? Well, people react differently to different things like food and vaccinations and even to Jesus, but the right reaction is to come to him in faith that you might be forgiven and given a place in his family and then do his father's will, which shows we are part of his family.

It's not always easy, I know. And so when it's hard, remember Jesus who did his own father's will and was obedient even to death on a cross.

[32:17] Remember him and ask God for the strength to follow his example as we serve him as our king. Let's pray. Our gracious father, we thank you for this reminder that although people even today react differently to Jesus, that we are to react in faith and obedience, trusting in him as our saviour and king and obediently following him and doing your will.

Give us strength to do this, we pray in his name. Amen.