

Jesus the King

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[0 : 00] Good morning, and please turn your Bibles back to Mark chapter 1.! Let's consider this question.

! What is humanity's biggest problem, do you think?! Destruction of the environment, global conflicts, which we pray every Sunday for.

If you ask people what's wrong with themselves, they might talk about financial stress, mental health issues, burnout, loneliness.

These are all legitimate problems, right? So I think very few people, if any, would say, my biggest problem is that I refuse to recognize God as king.

I don't say that either. And yet, in the Bible, from beginning to end, that is exactly the diagnosis that it keeps giving. The Bible says that the deepest problem of humanity is that we want to rule ourselves in our own way.

[1 : 24] From the beginning, in Genesis 3, Adam and Eve wanted to be like God, deciding for themselves what is good and evil. In Deuteronomy 29, people persisted in going their own way.

In Judges 21, Israel, God's people, was messed up because everyone did what was right in their own eyes. In Isaiah 53, it says, we all like sheep have gone astray.

Each of us has turned our own way. From Genesis to the prophets, our problem is the same. God knows what is good for this world.

He created it. We have consistently rejected his rule and chosen our own way. That's the story of the Old Testament.

And so God the king gave his people over in the Old Testament to the consequences of rejecting him. Instead of living under God's good rule, they lived under the rule of sometimes their own messed up kings and other times the other nations.

[2 : 45] And so in the Old Testament, Israel waited and waited for the day when God would return as their king.

Now, when Mark begins his gospel, he is announcing the answer to the problem that the Bible has been naming. And that's how Mark begins in verse 1.

The beginning of the good news about Jesus the Messiah, the Son of God. The Messiah means God's chosen king.

Mark begins with an announcement. Hey, here's the good news. The king is finally here. It's good news.

It's the gospel. The one they had been waiting for is here. They had been waiting for it in verse 2 to 3.

[3 : 43] As it is written in Isaiah the prophet, I will send my messenger ahead of you who will prepare your way. And a voice of one calling in the wilderness, prepare the way for the Lord, make straight paths for him.

There are promises in the Old Testament that the messenger would come and then after him would come the Lord, the king. And then straight away, we meet that messenger in verse 4.

And so John the Baptist appeared in the wilderness, preaching a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. The whole Judean countryside and all the people of Jerusalem went out to him, confessing their sins.

They were baptized by him in the Jordan River. A messenger had been promised before the king would come, and here he was, John the Baptist.

John called people to repent so that they're ready for the coming of God the king. And John's appearance looked like the prophet Elijah in the Old Testament, wearing a clothing of camel's hair, eating locusts and honey.

[5 : 14] Everything about John signals that he was the promised messenger. But who's coming after the messenger?

The king himself. And so Mark makes it clear that the story is not about John in verses 7 to 8. And this was his message. After me comes the one more powerful than I, the straps of whose sandals I am not worthy to stoop down and untie.

I baptize you with water, but he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit. John the Baptist was popular. The text says a lot of people came out of the Judean countryside and Jerusalem to follow him.

And yet, he was only the messenger. Someone greater was coming. Even the great John the Baptist was not worthy to even stoop down and untie his sandals.

Because the coming one is the Lord himself, the king. John baptized with water, but the king would baptize with the Holy Spirit, the very presence of God himself.

[6 : 38] Who is this king? In the very next verse, the king appeared. At that time, Jesus came from Nazareth in Galilee and was baptized by John in the Jordan.

Jesus appeared. If John was the messenger preparing the way for the Lord, then who's Jesus? The king, the Lord himself.

He is the God king. And this is good news for Israel. Because they had been waiting for the king to come and give them a direction towards God's way, not their own way.

And to lead them in his rule of peace, rather than the destruction that came from self-rule. And now the king is here.

And his name is Jesus. But this is not just good news for Israel. Because even now, people are still searching for a direction in a directionless world.

[7 : 49] They are searching for truth in this confusing world. For peace in the broken world, people are looking for an answer that only Jesus can provide.

Just last Monday, I went to see someone who fixes my guitars. He's Greek. And he was complaining that people around him were always fighting over religion.

He said, I don't even know what God is like. And I don't think anyone knows what God is like. And so people should stop fighting over this. I was about to leave.

And I heard that. And I thought, oh, great. Now I have to stay. And I said, I know what God is like. I even know his name.

Do you want me to tell you? And he said, yes, tell me. So I said, I know God. His name is Jesus. And I believe that.

[8 : 50] Because he's the only God who has come down here to tell us. And he proved it. He said he would die and come back to life. No one has ever done that.

And no one can do that. And he did. After that, he asked me questions after questions. And I was thinking, I have to go.

So I said, my friend, you seem to be curious about this. So this is what I can offer you. I can come here once a week with my Bible. And for one hour, we can read and talk.

And you can ask me as many questions as you'd like, as long as you provide some Greek coffee. And he said, yes, let's do that.

People are looking for answers. Not everyone, but many are still searching for meaning, for truth, and for direction.

[9 : 55] Because without the king, we are directionless. We have no idea what the meaning of this life is. And we have no idea where to go.

And Mark is saying that God has revealed the king to us by coming down here in the person of Jesus, the only one who knows the way.

And he has revealed it to us. And that is great news for this directionless world. Jesus is king.

And immediately, Mark shows us what kind of king Jesus is. Verses 9 to 11. At that time, Jesus came from Nazareth in Galilee and was baptized by John in the Jordan.

Just as Jesus was coming up out of the water, he saw heaven being torn open and the spirit descending on him like a dove. And a voice came from heaven, You are my son, whom I love.

[11 : 02] With you I am well pleased. Remember in the Old Testament, Moses parted the Red Sea. Joshua, Elijah, and Elisha parted the river Jordan.

Those were signs of authority, signs that God was with them. But here at Jesus' baptism, it's not water that was parted. It was heaven.

This is someone greater than Moses, Joshua, Elijah, and Elisha. But at his baptism, the spirit descended on him like a dove.

And God the Father spoke, You are my beloved son. With you I am well pleased. Can you imagine that?

If I were to be baptized here and then the heavens opened and a dove came in and then there's a voice from heaven saying, You are my beloved son. You would be amazed.

[12 : 07] Who is this man? This is the great king. This echoes Psalm 2, which is a royal psalm.

That is a psalm about the king. And in that psalm, God says to the king, You are my son. Today I have become your father. Now perhaps this was even said during the king's coronations because Israel's kings were adopted, so to speak, to be God's sons.

But notice the difference. At Jesus' baptism, there is no, Today I have become your father. Jesus is not like Israel's kings who became God's sons at coronation.

Jesus is God's son. Mark wants to show that this Jesus is the real deal.

He is the true king, greater than any other kings in the past, greater than Moses or Joshua or Elijah or Elisha. He is the Lord himself. At his baptism, the heavens opened, God's spirit descended, and God himself spoke.

[13 : 32] This is a great king who has come to his people. And yet, look carefully at how Mark describes Jesus coming in verse 9.

At that time, Jesus came from Nazareth. It sounds almost anticlimactic. This is the great king coming, but there's no trumpets, no display of honor.

He came from Nazareth. Remember what Nathanael said in John 1? What good thing comes from Nazareth? Nothing good comes out of Nazareth.

Although he is more powerful than any human king, Jesus is also deeply humble. He did not show off. He came to be with his people.

The first thing he did in his ministry was not to take up a throne. The first thing he did in his ministry was to step into the water and to be baptized along with sinners.

[14:41] Why did he do that? He didn't need to do that. This was the baptism of repentance. He didn't need to repent. This king identified with his people.

Imagine a king who walks alongside peasants instead of above them. Or a king who flies economy class with everyone else.

Or a king who lines up at Maccas with screaming toddlers. That's basically what Jesus did. Jesus stepped into the water with sinners.

Other kings are crowned in palaces separated from ordinary people. This king was crowned in the wilderness alongside sinners. Other kings are lifted above.

This king came down from above. If this is the beginning of his rule, can you imagine what the peak of his rule would look like?

[15:48] Actually, we don't need to imagine. We know the peak of his rule is the cross sacrificing himself for us. And immediately after this moment, Mark tells us, verse 12 to 13, at once the spirit sent him out in the wilderness and he was in the wilderness 40 days being tempted by Satan.

He was with the wild animals and angels attended him. Again, he didn't need to do this. Why did he do this? To show his identification with his people.

In the Old Testament, Israel spent 40 years in the wilderness. Remember? Being tested and failed because they always wanted their own rule in their own way.

Jesus entered the wilderness for 40 days and identified with his people's trials. But where Israel failed, Jesus was faithful.

This is why the king, this king, Jesus, is the most suitable representative of his people because he identifies with us in our trials and our suffering and yet he succeeds where we do not.

[17:13] But a few years ago there were some photos that made the news photos of Princess Kako of Japan flying economy class, sitting amongst ordinary passengers and having to sleep sitting up like everyone else.

People talked about it because she did not act like she was above everyone else. You see, we instinctively understand this. When a high-ranking official is willing to live alongside ordinary people rather than above them, we say, oh, they're good representative of the people.

And Mark is saying here, this king, Jesus, did exactly that and beyond. This is the king praised by John the Baptist, the king at whose baptism the heavens were torn open, the king crowned by God himself, the king that was ministered by angels.

And yet he was born amongst the people, baptized alongside sinners, tempted like his failed people, and eventually he would die for the sins of his people.

If Princess Kako was praised for flying economy, how much more is Jesus worth praising? How much more is he worth devoting our lives to?

[18:54] How much more is he worth following? This king is good, he loves us. And so, when this king speaks, we follow.

And this is what the king said, verses 14 to 15. After John was put in prison, Jesus went into Galilee proclaiming the good news of God, and he said this, the time has come, the kingdom of God has come near, repent and believe the good news.

John's ministry ended, he was put in prison, but he was only the messenger. So after John was arrested, Jesus the king spoke. Jesus proclaimed the good news of God.

What is the good news? Verse 15, the time has come, the waiting is over. All that Old Testament story has reached its turning point.

The kingdom of God is here because the king is here. And because the king is here, Jesus says, repent and believe the good news.

[20:11] This is what the king says for us to follow. Two commands, repent and believe. But actually, just one response.

Repent means turn around. Turn around from what? Well, if the problem is that we always want to go our own way, rejecting God's rule, then repentance means turning away from our own way, from the way of self-rule, from the way of managing life as though we are the king.

And then believe the good news. If the good news is that the king is here and his name is Jesus, then believing that means living in light of the reality that Jesus is the king.

We are not. And therefore, turn away from self-rule. If you haven't recognized Jesus as your king, Jesus is asking you to stop going your own way and to trust him as your king.

He is good. If there's one thing that COVID taught me, it's that we cannot be trusted to be kings.

[21:40] When a crisis comes, we humans think about ourselves. And then we hawk toilet papers. Remember that?

We break rules without thinking about other people. and we become so hateful towards each other. We cannot be trusted to self-rule.

And so this is the good news. Here is the king and he's good and he's humble and he does things not for his own sake but for the sake of his people to the point of dying for his people.

So turn around from going your own way and come to him. And for us who have followed Jesus, this message is not something we graduate from.

Every day we are tempted to drift back into our own way. I am tempted to do that. So every day this message remains relevant. Repent and believe the good news.

[22:55] And this is why at church on Sunday we confess our sins. We repent, we turn around and we believe the gospel again that Jesus is king, we are not.

And that's a good thing. Now, Mark does not leave following Jesus as an abstract idea.

he shows us what it looks like. Verses 16 to 20. As Jesus walked beside the sea of Galilee, he saw Simon and his brother Andrew casting a net into the lake, for they were fishermen.

Come, follow me, Jesus said, and I will send you out to fish for people. At once they left their nets and followed him. When he had gone a little further, he saw James, son of Zebedee, and his brother John in a boat preparing their nets.

Without delay, he called them, and they left their father, Zebedee, in the boat with the hired men and followed him. Notice the king's authority.

[24:08] He said one thing, follow me. and Simon, Andrew, James, and John followed at once.

Amazing. It's amazing. Like we've already said, this is a powerful, sovereign king. But in the passage, there's no sense that Jesus was forcing them or bribing them.

the word that Mark uses is follow. They followed. It's voluntary.

This king does not coerce. This king attracts people towards him. And that makes sense given what we have already seen. This is the king who stepped into the water with sinners who went through the same trials as his people.

This is the good king. And when this good king calls and says, follow me, people follow. So if you're reading this and think, I could never just drop everything and leave my family and my father to follow Jesus and let him be the king of my life like that, well, perhaps you haven't seen or experienced the goodness of this king.

[25 : 37] God when you know that this king is powerful and sovereign but he uses his sovereignty for your good, then following him makes sense.

I have experienced the goodness of this king and I can tell you that he is irresistible. I pray that if you haven't tasted that, I pray that you do.

that you do. one of my favorite lines in Narnia, in the book Narnia, or series, is when Lucy finds out that Aslan, the king, is a lion and not a man.

And she said to Mr. Beaver, is he quite safe? I feel rather nervous about meeting a lion. And Mr. Beaver said, safe?

Who said anything about safe? Of course he isn't safe, but he's good. He's the king, I tell you. Friends, that good king is here.

[26 : 45] And this king is powerful and sovereign, but he is good and humble, and he is worth trusting. So will you keep going your own way as if you're the king, or will you turn around and follow him as your king?

Let's pray. Father, we thank you for this great reminder of the gospel, the good news that Jesus is king and we are not. So help us with the power of your spirit to live in light of that reality that Jesus is king, and help us every day to turn away from our self-rule, to fall under the rule of Jesus, the good king.

In the name of Jesus we pray. Amen.