

Reactions to Jesus

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- [0:00] The day and the age that we live in is very much a day and age where the internet is dominant. It has an effect on virtually all of our lives.
- And when we log on to, whether it's Facebook or Twitter or just the World Wide Web in general, we find that the internet is full of people who are reacting to the world around them.
- When something happens in politics or in world news, when there's headlines that are going across our newspapers and there's some event like the independence debate or Brexit or whatever the political thing is at that time, we log on to Facebook and what we have is just a myriad of reactions to the news that's breaking.
- Or even if you take it down a level and think about a football match or a boxing match, some sporting event that's been happening. We sit down, we watch the game and then for 20 minutes afterwards, we listen to the musings of pundits who are reacting.
- They're giving their considered reaction to the game. What I'd like us to observe today as we look at John 6 and as we glance back at John 5 also, I'd like us to consider three reactions to Jesus.
- [1:24] And I'd like us to consider where we fit in terms of the scale of these reactions to Christ. If we were to have read in John 5, and even if we glance back to the verses that we see in John 5, we see that in that chapter, for many people, it's a time of clarity.
- Jesus was one, as John's gospel develops, Jesus is one who's coming to a great point of focus in that place at that time.
- The things that he's doing, the things that he's saying, are causing a stir in the environment that he was in. People were talking about Jesus.
- People were gathering around Jesus. People were looking to Jesus and they were trying to understand who he was and what he was about. And in John 5, Jesus begins to make clear the truth about himself.
- And he's making clear that he's not just another prophet. And he didn't come just to teach. And he's not the next philosopher.
- [2:48] He didn't come to be some social revolutionary. But Jesus in John 5 is making clear that he was and is God.
- He is God the Son. He is God the Judge. And he's God the Savior. And we see all that in John 5.
- And then as we spill over into John 6, as we consider where the passage fits in context, what we see here is we see developing reactions to Jesus.
- So there's three I'd like us to look at. The reaction of the Jews, the Pharisees, which was a very straightforward, strident reaction of rejection.
- They reject him. And then we see the reaction of the crowds who have an infatuation, we might say, an interest in Jesus that causes them to gather around him.

[3:53] And then we see thirdly the reaction of the disciples. And what we see is an evolving and developing faith. So where do we fit in this scale?

Let's keep that in our minds as we look at these verses. First of all, we see the reaction of the Jews, the Pharisees. Now, the story so far going through John's Gospel, we can observe the Jews and the Pharisees in the first few chapters of John's Gospel paying close attention to Jesus.

They're very interested in Jesus, his person and the things that he's saying and the things that he's doing. They have been watching Jesus. Some of the commentators think that the Pharisees were initially hopeful that Jesus might be one that they could take and mold and shape and put into their ranks.

Nicodemus, famously, in John 3, when he came to Jesus, he seems to speak initially on behalf of a larger group of people that he was representing.

He says to Jesus in John 3, we know you are a teacher who has come from God. They were impressed by him. None more so than Nicodemus.

[5:11] Jesus spoke with authority. No one doubted that. And Jesus did amazing things.

Unexplainable things. And no one contested that and that drew the Jews to him. But when he began to challenge their traditions and when his teaching began to penetrate the hearts of the religious Jews, when his teaching began to show them what was wrong with their own hearts as well as what was wrong with the heart of the man on the street, they didn't like it so much.

And when the authority of Christ began to tower over those who thought they had authority in themselves, that's when the objections really came with great force.

And Jesus in John chapter 5, you can read it when you go home, we see in that chapter, Jesus was making clear that he was not on a par with the Pharisees. He was not one of the opposite numbers of the religious Jews.

He was not equal with them, but he was equal with God. That was the revelation in John chapter 5 and verse 18, that Jesus was equal with God.

[6:47] And that meant that he was in authority over them. And so the Pharisees, as they listened to Jesus' teaching, and as they began to understand the position that he presented himself as holding, they had a decision they had to make.

And they could either bow to him and submit and begin to follow him, or they could reject him and stand against him and seek to silence him and seek to remove him and his influence from their up till now very comfortable lives.

And what they went for was the latter. The Jews, the Pharisees, they rejected Jesus.

Verse 16 of chapter 5 says that they persecuted him. They sought to silence him. Verse 18 of chapter 5 makes clear that they were trying hard to kill him.

Seeking all the more to kill him. That was their reaction. It was a furious rejection. And as we move into chapter 6, even in verses 41 through to verse 59, I haven't got time to actually go through that and take out these verses, but what we can see in the main sweep of it, and we'll come back to this in the evening, is we see and we hear more negative reaction against Jesus as their rejection of him becomes more bitter and more determined.

[8:53] The religious Jews, the Pharisees, they rejected him. They rejected his authority. They refused to bow to him.

And Jesus' authority for some, for many, is still a huge stumbling block in the world that we live in, which is so adverse to authority, there are many people who, they're thinking as such that if Jesus would just settle for a lower place, they might consider embracing him and inviting him into their kind of team of life advisors that they go to in times of struggle.

If he would subcontract to them and be a consultant to them, they may consider Jesus. But as they meet him, as we meet him in Scripture, we meet him not as one who will bow to us, but we meet him as one whom we are required to bow to.

He is not equal with us. He is in authority over us. Jesus is Lord. Jesus is King.

He is King of kings. He is name above all names. And you and I will do one of two things in response to his authority, his lordship.

[10:26] we will either recognize that authority and take him to be our lord and submit to him humbly and give him his place as king over our lives, or we will seek to silence him.

And we can do that even in a few as we try to zone out of the passage because we don't like the claims that Jesus makes upon our lives.

we will either bow to him or we will battle against him. We will either receive him as lord or we will rebel against him day after day and refuse to let him come in to our lives.

And ultimately seek to remove him from our whole life and experience because that's what the Jewish Pharisees sought to do.

First reaction to Jesus is rejection. The second reaction to Jesus that we see here is the reaction of the crowds and it's infatuation or it's a compelling interest.

[11:57] We see in verse 2 of chapter 6 that a great crowd of people a large crowd was following Jesus. And initially as we read that and as we respond to that in our own minds we think well that's a good thing.

It certainly appears at first glance to be a good thing. But remember Jesus can see what we can't see. He can see the heart. And Jesus knew that all was not as good as it seemed.

The crowds were following Jesus. Why? Well they were following Christ for what he could do for them. Not because of who he was in himself. And even a glance back over the first few chapters reveal what the crowds were preoccupied with.

They knew that Jesus could heal the sick in great numbers. What a wonderful thing. Let's go to Christ. They knew that Jesus could turn water into wine because that's the news that came from the wedding in Cana.

and Jesus was about to demonstrate in chapter six that he could turn fresh air into bread and fish. And the Jews as they saw him, the crowds as they gathered, were thinking this is someone that we want to see more of.

[13:19] This is someone we could use. This is someone who seems to have a supernatural power. And this is someone who seems to have a supernatural courage because we think back to chapter two isn't it?

We see Jesus in the temple and he's flipping over the tables and where he sees corruption, where he sees things that should not be in God's house, he takes action. What courage!

Nobody else would have done that. And so the crowds see potential in this Jesus as one who could become their king, one who could overthrow these Romans that held them in such tyranny.

That was the thinking of the crowds. And in verse 15 of chapter six, we see what Jesus knew. Jesus knew that they intended to come and make him king by force.

So what did Jesus do? In this point of such huge popularity, what did he do? verse 15 tells us he withdrew from them.

[14:34] And as we think about this in terms of application to ourselves, remember Jesus still knows our hearts. He knows why we're here.

He knows why we come to him. and when we follow him simply for the things that we can get out of him, he withdraws from us.

Now it's true that sometimes it's a healing touch, sometimes it's a gracious provision, sometimes it's a supernatural sign that is used to start us on our walk as we begin to follow Jesus.

but if we continue to follow Jesus just so that we can get more of the stuff that he can give and not because of who he is, then he withdraws from us.

when Jesus reemerges, look at verse 22 through to verse 59, that big section, what Jesus does is he challenges their way of thinking and we'll consider that this evening.

[15:52] Jesus makes clear to the gathered crowds he didn't come to entertain them. He didn't come to just be interesting and stimulating to the academics.

he didn't come to be some supernatural doctor for our temporal bodies. He didn't come to be some heavenly vending machine. He came to be the bread of life.

Not a supplement to our lives, but one who sustains our very lives. He came to be the one who would be our very lives.

Remember what Paul said, for me to live is Christ. Jesus' perspective was not limited to time and things and our transient passing well-being.

Jesus' perspective was eternal. God was and the benefit that Jesus wanted to give to the crowds who were gathered was not an easy life and time, but it was security for eternity.

[17:10] And when he made that clear, because of what he said, many of the crowd, many who claimed up until that point to be his disciples, verse 66, they turned back.

And they withdrew from Jesus. Jesus looks for more than a passing interest from us.

He looks for more than an hour on a Sunday morning and evening. He looks for more than a fleeting infatuation for a season.

He looks for more than a He looks for our worship. He is worthy of our worship because He is God the Son.

So we see the reaction of the religious Jews, they reject Him. We see the reaction of the proportion, the large proportion of the crowds, which is to have a passing interest, but no, nothing lasting.

[18:23] faith. No faith. And thirdly, we see the reaction of the disciples, and that is to have faith. Remember in Matthew chapter 17, Jesus says to the disciples, if you have faith, even as small as a mustard seed, you can move mountains.

and He might equally have said to them, if you have faith like a mustard seed, you can feed thousands. And as we look to the disciples here, those who were following Jesus because of who He was and is, not just for what they could get from Him, we see faith at work in them.

We don't see a robust, mature, steady, developed faith here, but we see mustard seed faith, and there are four evidences of that faith that we can see in the life of the disciple.

And as we review them, let's think about how they're seen, to what extent they're seen in our lives. The first thing we see in the disciples' life as we see faith in them is that they sit down with Jesus.

In verse three, we see that they sit down with Jesus. They're with them. If we go back to Mark chapter three and verse 14, a passage I very often go back to, Jesus, when He calls the disciples, He calls them, first and foremost, not to be His servants, not to be His preachers, but to be with them.

[20:00] Mark chapter three, verse 14, let's just check the verse. Because it's such a key verse in our experience and in our calling.

Jesus, in verse 13 of Mark 3, He went up on the mountain and called to Him those He desired and they came to Him. And He appointed twelve, whom He also named apostles, so that they might be with Him and He might send them out to preach and have authority to cast out demons.

demons. Sometimes when we think about the disciples, we think about them in terms of the jobs that they were commissioned to do. Yes, they were called to preach. Yes, they were called to cast out demons.

But first and foremost, they were called to be with Him. If they were apart from Him, John 15, they could do nothing.

And so they were called to be with Him. And so here we see the disciples, just before this huge miracle, this amazing miracle that is about to take place, they're with Jesus, up on the mountain side, away from the crowds for a while, sitting down with Jesus.

[21 : 30] Why? Because of the faith that was in them. The appetite of faith is an appetite that drives us to want to be with Jesus.

It's an evidence of faith. When God is beginning to give faith, there is a desire to be with Jesus, a desire to come away from the world, and sit with Him, and speak to Him in prayer, and listen to what He's saying to us as we take our Bibles and we open them with expectancy, expecting that we will hear from Him.

So many testimonies that we hear when God is beginning to work in our lives, what are they doing? hiding away in wee rooms, away from their spouse, away from their family, away from their friends, because they have this compulsion to read the Bible, to be with Christ, to learn of Him.

God's evidence of faith, to be with God. So we see in the disciples, that evidence of faith, they sit down with Jesus. Secondly, they take the tests that Jesus sets for them.

Now, tests are set for our progress. If you have a desire and ambition to move from the passenger seat of the car into the driving seat, you need to set the test.

[23 : 16] There is a theory test that you have to complete. I didn't have that in my day, it shows my age, but the young ones today, you have a theory test that you have to complete, and when you complete the theory test, you can step into the position of taking the practical driving test.

And these disciples, they're very immature disciples. They're followers of Jesus, but if I could put it this way, they still have their L-plates on. And so Jesus, he sets a test.

Having revealed to them in the previous chapter that he was equal with God, that he was and is God the Son, having given them the theory, he now sets a practical test.

And Philip is the first in line under test conditions. Look at verse 5 of chapter 6. Lifting up his eyes, then, and seeing a large crowd was coming towards him, Jesus said to Philip, where are we to buy bread so that these people may eat?

He said this to test him, for he himself knew what he was going to do. Think about this for a moment in terms of the identity of Christ and some of the things the world says about Jesus.

[24 : 47] If Jesus was just a man like me or you, there's nothing he can do here. As the 15,000 likely crowd come in with nothing to eat, what can a mere man do?

Nothing. If he's a rabbi with great learning, what can be done in this context? nothing. But if he's equal with God, as he claimed to be, he can do whatever he wants.

Because God is the one who can create. John chapter 1 and verse 3, through him, the word, Jesus, all things were made.

in John chapter 2, we see water is made into wine. So how about fresh air into food? Will Philip think in these terms?

Will he see the magnitude and the wonder and the glory of Christ and think, anything is possible here? Well, at this juncture, not. Because in verse 7, Philip is out with his calculator.

[26:01] and he says in verse 7, 200 denarii, eight months wages, they tell us. We're not buying enough bread for each of them to get a little, to get a bite.

That was Philip's response. It was the wrong answer. It was the wrong response. He has too small a view of Jesus still. He fails the first question, the test.

And then along comes Andrew. He's the next one under test conditions. And he brings along with him a wee boy. And he says in verse 9, there is a boy here who has five barley loaves and two fish, but what are they for so many?

How far will they go, says one translation, among so many? And that's a great question, Andrew. Andrew's on the right track. How far will this wee lunch go among so many of Jesus' involved?

And so the lesson proceeds. But before we proceed to the next element of this, let us be encouraged to view our lives with eyes of faith.

[27:18] faith. As disciples of Jesus, sometimes Jesus allows us to be taken into seemingly impossible scenarios.

And he stands back and he says to us, what now? And sometimes these are the tests of verse six.

And we know how this works if we are parents and we have children. A loving parent, because they love the child, will sometimes stand back from the child and let the child figure things out with the paint pot and the paper.

And let them even make a hash of it and a mess everywhere, because that's the way they learn. It's part of maturing. And sometimes Jesus, because he loves us and wants to see us grow in faith, sometimes he sets a test.

And I wonder, could this apply to the church of Jesus Christ in our country today? Are we as disciples of Jesus, if we are Christians, are we living under test conditions?

[28:53] Because we've all read in the last couple of weeks the surveys that have been undertaken and the statistics that have been presented that shows us how weak and how fragile and how bleak the church looks compared to yesteryear.

And we look at ourselves and we see how limited our resources are in a world that so much needs to hear about Jesus and is so deeply lost.

We see the magnitude of the task and we might think it seems impossible. impossible. We look at the lost crowds and the complexity of these crowds, even in our nation today, and the rebellion within the crowd, and we think the task seems impossible.

We look at the authorities and we hear this increasing hostility against Jesus and his gospel, and we think the task seems impossible. people are not but when we look to Jesus, anything is possible.

Do you believe that? Revivals and awakenings that we are acquainted with as we study our history, need not be locked in history.

[30:21] because the same God who worked before can work again. Do you believe that?

We see faith in the disciples. They sit down with Jesus. Secondly, they take the tests that Jesus sets.

Thirdly, they obey Jesus, even when it's risky, even when they're perhaps fearful for their own reputation. Look at verse 10. Jesus said to the disciples, as the test continues, have the people sit down.

Now there was much grass in the place, so the men sat down, about 5,000 in number. That must have been an uncomfortable moment for the disciples, because they are those that the crowd is looking at.

they're those that Jesus is calling to do this and to do that. Must have been uncomfortable for these disciples as we think ourselves into their shoes, because once 5,000 hungry men and their families sit down to eat, they expect to eat.

[31 : 42] I've never worked as a waiter, I'm just too clumsy for it, but some of you here will have worked as waiters, waitresses, and you know when you take a couple or a family to their seats, you show them their seats, you pass the menu, they've made their choice, they expect to eat, and they may wait with a degree of patience for 10 minutes or so, but they expect to eat.

and if there's no food in the cupboards, and if there's no chef at the cooker, and you're the waiter, you're expecting trouble.

To put yourself in the shoes of the disciples, they take the crowd of 15,000 lightly to their table, they have them sit down, and the whole time they know the disciples, in their minds, there is no food, and they have no money.

And there is no local shop to go to, and there is no Tesco delivery just about to arrive. Had Jesus told them what the plan was? No, he hadn't.

Had he told them where the food was coming from? No, he hadn't. He just asked the disciples to have the people sit down. So can you imagine what was going through the minds of the disciples?

[33 : 07] What is it that you're doing, Jesus? I know these people. I recognize some of these faces.

We could end up looking extremely foolish in this situation. We could have a riot in our hands having promised so much, and we have nothing to deliver. Have them sit down, says Jesus.

trust me. So the disciples obeyed, uncomfortable as it likely was. They had the crowd sit down, and when everything is orderly, and the crowd are sitting down, and they're quietened, Jesus, God the Son, he speaks to his Father, he gives thanks, and a packed lunch for one wee boy, is multiplied into a hearty feast for 15,000.

Don't you think the faith of the disciples in that encounter must have grown, stressful as it may have been?

And the principle as we apply this to ourselves, it's a helpful one. as we sit with Jesus, and as we live sometimes through difficult experiences, sometimes through seemingly impossible situations, and watch what he does as we obey him, he strengthens our faith in ways that we would never have expected.

[34 : 54] did. So the disciples, they obey Jesus, even when it's risky. They take the test that Jesus sets, they sit down with Jesus, and finally, and very quickly as we finish, they see Jesus, verse 20, even in the storm.

What a day for these poor disciples. Having gone through everything they've just gone through. They go from the land to the sea in this intensive course in faith.

And in verses 16 through to verse 22, I have no time to go into it, but we see them, and they're down at the lake, and the weather whips up, the weather gets uncomfortable, the weather gets even worse, it gets to the dangerous stage, the storm kicks in, and there's these poor disciples, tired from the day, in the eye of the storm.

And yet, in the eye of the storm, at that very point, they see Jesus, and they hear Jesus, and they learn that even in a storm, they can trust Jesus, knowing that he is their refuge.

and he is their strength. Why did Jesus allow the storm? Was it because he didn't love them?

[36 : 34] Was it because he wanted to scare them? No, it's because he did love them. and he wanted them to know that no matter how huge the breakers were, and how much they felt like they were being thrown around, ultimately, they were safe with him.

And they could really and truly trust him. And what amazing, reassuring words must have come through the ears of the disciples in the eye of that storm, words that I'm sure they turned over in their memories time after time as life went on.

Verse 20, it is I. Do not be afraid. And that's the perspective you and I need to get as Christians.

Life is full of storms. And in any given congregation, at any time, there will be people who are going through their own private, personal storms.

And sometimes many of us are going through storms. They shouldn't surprise us. Jesus said, in this world, you will have trouble.

[38 : 04] But as we see here, it's often in the storms that we learn so much more of the love that Jesus has for us.

and the extent to which we can trust him. Don't ever think Jesus has abandoned you when it gets rough.

Look for him in the storm. And when you see him, verse 21, take him in with you day by day.

and put your faith in him. Why? Because he is God.

And he can be trusted. Three responses to Jesus. The religious Jews, they rejected him.

[39 : 09] They rallied against his authority. The crowds, they were interested, I suppose, in what they could get from him.

But that's as far as it went. When his teaching got tough, when his demands became costly, they were gone. in the disciples.

They trusted him. And they followed him. Even into the storm and to the other side.

Which reaction is yours? And we'll leave it there. Let's pray. Amen. Amen.