

God's New People

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[0 : 00] Galilee followed. When they heard 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, 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 the 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 Boonegris, which means sons of thunder.

Andrew, Philip, Bartholomew, Matthew, Thomas, James, son of Alphaeus, Thaddeus, Simon the Zealot, and Judas Iscariot, who betrayed him. Amen.

[1 : 24] Thank you very much, David, for reading. If you haven't met before, my name's Jack. I'm a member of the congregation here. And as we get started, I'm just going to pray for God's help as we start looking at his words together.

Father God, we thank you that we can gather this evening and look at what you have to say to us. And please speak to us now. Please be at work in our hearts by your Spirit, so that we may understand what you are doing better and love you more. Amen.

And as we said, do we be thinking about questions you've got about Mark's gospel, and particularly kind of application and what it means for us actually to live in light of what we're hearing from God's words.

But our question for this evening in Mark 3 is, why does it matter so much how I respond to Jesus? Why does it matter so much how I respond to Jesus?

Really, this is a question we're going to be thinking about this week and next week as well, in the rest of Mark chapter 3. I ask it, I guess, because obviously it's something that we'll be dealing with in the text, but actually sometimes it can feel like how we respond to Jesus doesn't really seem to matter that much.

[2 : 41] People around us might not think really that it matters at all what they make of Jesus. They might think that because, well, option one, there's no God, so it would be a completely useless question to ask.

Or two, perhaps if there is a God, then whoever that God is, the God of the Bible, perhaps, maybe, Jesus, whoever it is will approve of me. And they'll understand my situation, and they'll see that I was a good person, really, and he'll allow me in, he'll accept me.

I think that's probably British spirituality 101. There is a God, and he recognises that I'm a good person, and so he's going to let me in. And with this way of thinking, Jesus basically becomes irrelevant.

It doesn't matter what you make of him, because everyone's okay anyway. And perhaps, though, if we call ourselves Christians, and this question is different for us, why does it matter that I recognise Jesus and want to live for him day to day?

And what difference will that make to me? What would it matter if I took my foot off the gas in doing that? And does it matter to God, really, how I respond to him as well?

[3 : 51] Because there's an alternative ways of thinking about the Christian life. It's possible to think down, think deep down, not explicitly, perhaps.

But it doesn't really matter too much about my ongoing reaction to Jesus. You can say, yeah, I know I'm a Christian. I know I'm saved. Yeah, I think I know what the gospel is. I've ticked that box. So now I can just get on with the rest of my life and live how I would like to. What's going on in my heart when I hear from Jesus in his words? Well, it doesn't really matter too much.

And this week in Mark 3, we're going to see what happens after a group of people have responded to Jesus with an emphatic no. They've decided they don't want him. And this helps us see how it really does matter.

So I'm just going to give a quick recap of where we've got to so far in Mark's gospel. Because right from the start, Mark has made it really clear that Jesus is God's king. Chapter 1, verse 1.

[4 : 51] The beginning of the good news about Jesus the Messiah, the Son of God. The words Messiah and Son of God, those both mean God's king.

Mark is telling us that Jesus is God's king, bringing God's kingdom, a place free from sickness and evil, and free from death. And he proves this to us in the miracles that he does, all throughout Mark chapter 1, showing us that Jesus is here to bring about the perfect world that we would all love to live in.

And two weeks ago, we saw the centerpiece of how Jesus is going to make that happen. He is a king who provides forgiveness. And he's got two key verses, two, verse 10.

I want you to know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins. And in 2, verse 17, Jesus says, It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but those who are ill.

I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners. Jesus is a sin doctor. He is here. His cure is forgiveness. Sin, the way that we have all treated God wrongly and disobeyed him, is our biggest problem.

[6 : 02] And Jesus says that he is here now to solve it. God's kingdom is here. And the surprise last week was that people say no.

They say no to God's kingdom. They saw it. They experienced it right in front of their eyes. They met God's king, Jesus. They met him face to face. They heard his teaching.

They saw his miracles. They didn't want anything to do with him. Jesus gets into a fight. He gets into a fight with the religious authorities, the Pharisees. And the fight's about who is really in charge. It's actually the fight that goes on inside each one of us as well. But Jesus says that he's in charge and not them. It's him and not us. And his opponents, they actually say something worse than they want him dead.

Look at 3, verse 6, just before the passage we just had read to us. Then the Pharisees went out and began to plot with the Herodians how they might kill Jesus.

[7 : 05] The religious elites, the Pharisees, and the secular elite, the government, the Herodians represent the king of Israel, Herod, at that time. They want Jesus dead. They want him gone.

This is the world, actually, that we live in, a world that has responded to Jesus like this, a world that doesn't like Jesus' claim to have total authority over them.

The world doesn't want Jesus in charge. It wants Jesus silent. It wants him irrelevant. And those are the same things as wanting Jesus dead. And at this moment, it could look like Jesus' mission had failed.

He came as God's king, but he wasn't respected and treated as if he was God's king. And he wasn't respected by the people who you might think mattered most, the religious authorities and the secular authorities, the government.

What would he do? What's he going to do next? Is he going to try and patch things up with them? Is he going to try and reconcile himself to them? Say that there must have been a huge misunderstanding and that he's really sorry.

[8 : 13] Surely they can try and work things out. Well, we're going to dive into the passage. And the first thing that Mark wants us to see, wants us to see something really important about Jesus.

He wants us to be really sure that Jesus is God's king. So verse 7, Jesus withdraws with his disciples to the lake and a large crowd followed him.

Galilee followed him. He moves away from the people who want to kill him and this huge crowd follows him. A large crowd, perhaps in LIV doesn't sound that impressive, it's more a huge multitude, thousands and thousands of people follow Jesus to the lake, to the Sea of Galilee.

And we're like, yeah, yeah, we get the point. Jesus was popular. We know it's kind of normal for Jesus to be followed around. When he was in Capernaum, the entire town came out to see him. But

then Mark gives us this list, doesn't he?

He lists all the places that these people come from. Why does he do this? Why don't you just say that a massive crowd gathered? Well, we're going to visualize it. I hope it's going to come from the screen.

[9 : 17] There's a map of Israel. And we're going to see all the places. So they come from Galilee. And then I think that's from Jerusalem and Judea. There, where's the next one?

Idumir, that's a bit down there. Across the Jordan, just across the river there. And from Tyre and Sidon, just up at the top. Now, why has Mark told us all of these places?

Well, he's telling us that Jesus has drawn a crowd from all of Israel, from all Jewish territory. Even the place where those who want to kill him come from, the same places.

So Idumir is where King Herod, and therefore, I guess, the Herodians were from. Jerusalem, the religious center, the center of power for the teachers of the law and the Pharisees.

And there's people from there as well. Now, Jesus gathers a crowd, but it's not just any crowd. It's not random. It's the sort of crowd that you would expect a king of Israel to gather.

[10 : 15] God's king, specifically, is the king of Israel. These are the people you'd expect to be there if God's king was coming. Because it's possible to read what's happened so far to see that Jesus was rejected by the Pharisees and think, is Jesus God's king, really?

If he was really God's king, then things wouldn't happen like this. Well, he gathered a crowd like you'd expect a king of Israel to gather, from the places you'd expect a king of Israel to gather a crowd from.

And what people do, what their popular opinion, does tell us something about people, doesn't it?

They might not prove everything. Crowds might not prove everything. They do prove something.

We saw this recently with Her Majesty the Queen and her death. 250,000 people queued for hours and hours and hours to see her lying in state.

One million people, apparently, according to the transport authorities, as I looked up, gathered in London itself on the day of the funeral. And you wouldn't be in doubt that the queen was popular, enormously respected, and loved, actually, by huge numbers of people.

[11 : 23] You couldn't argue with it. It proved something about her. So many people were willing to travel and to pay their respects to her. In her death, she was treated as a queen should be.

And you can't argue with this about Jesus. Everyone there is treating him as if he was. A king. So we are kind of left asking the question, who's winning it? Who's winning the authority battle?

Is it Jesus or is it the Pharisees? And then we see more about him as well. We're asking the question, why do they flock to him? Why do they gather to him? And so the second thing that I would like us to see is they are gathering to him because he is doing what God's king does.

He is doing what God's king does. So look at verse 8 with me. When they heard all he was doing, many people came to him.

And what was that? What had he been doing? Well, verse 10, he had healed many. So those diseases were pushing forward to touch him. You can imagine what it would be like to be there, the crush of bodies all clamouring, pushing, trying to get close to Jesus, so much so that he wants a boat there unless he himself is crushed by them.

[12 : 39] And why are they like that? Well, they have heard about his power. They have heard about his power to heal. It's not just people turning up out of curiosity. And again, although they don't say it explicitly, what they want from him is what you would want from God's king.

They want an end to sickness. They want an end to death. They are people who are scared of death and threatened by it. And here is someone who they think, well, he can put an end to it.

And that is the sort of expectation that the Bible tells us we should have of Jesus, of God's king.

And finally, even his enemies, his spiritual enemies perhaps, recognize him.

Verse 11, whenever the impure spirits saw him, they fell down before him and cried out, you are the son of God. And even they get it. They recognize, they see who Jesus is.

After our route study, on Wednesday night, routes are kind of midweek small groups. We're talking about childhood films. And I shared a, there was one thing I really didn't like. as a kid. And that was, I don't actually think I saw it all the way through.

[13 : 50] Couldn't survive. Couldn't hack it, basically. Anastasia, anyone seen it? Yeah, there's a few, few nods. It's a bit old, I think. Anyway, so I was looking a bit more into it.

And so, there's a kind of, so quite a, you know, weird story that happens with it. Well, the Russian royal family, they were killed during the Russian revolution in 1918, the Bolshevik revolution. But rumors came apparently that one of the members of the royal family had escaped and one of the, the youngest daughters of the Tsar, of the Russian king. And then two years later, a woman appeared claiming to be the daughter of the Russian king, the daughter of the Tsar, claiming to be Anastasia, who's in the, in the film.

And this creates a lot of media sensation. Quite a lot of people believed her, quite a lot of people, some of the servants from the Romanov family, the Tsar's family, said she was a fake. And, it turns out she was.

People managed to figure out that she was a Polish woman. I'm going to get, my Polish pronunciation is not very good. Franziska Shanskowski, she wasn't a Russian princess at all. They confirmed it with DNA evidence in the 1990s.

[15:02] They found the skeletons of the Russian family. They found that she had her ashes, she was cremated, they managed to compare it to that, it's a bit morbid. But the DNA testing actually proved once and for all that she wasn't, she wasn't a member of the Russian royal family at all.

There was no proof. At the end of the day, the people who doubted her, they were right. Jesus is not like that. He provides us with plenty of evidence. When it really matters, he shows that he is God's king.

And what Mark wants us to see is that despite his rejection, Jesus really, truly was God's king. If verses 7 to 12 from this week underline and reinforce that Jesus, his authority and his kingship, then verses 13 onwards tell us what he does with it.

What does God's king do? We know he is good God's king. What's he going to do next? Well, here's how he responds. This is what we're going to think about next. Jesus starts a new people. Jesus starts a new people. The next events of 13 and 14 might seem underwhelming. Jesus went up on a mountainside and called to him those he wanted and they came to him and he appointed 12 that they might be with him that he might send them out to preach and have authority to drive out demons.

[16:24] So to help us understand what's important about this, we've just done a bit of Bible geography. We're now going to do a bit of Bible maths. So I think the sum is going to appear on the screen. Some features from that.

So what does a mountain and that's Scarfell, it's a great mountain, plus 12 equal in Bible terms?

Turn to your neighbour. Have a go.

What does a mountain plus 12 equals? I'll give you 30 seconds. Turn to your neighbour and have a chat about it. Okay, that's your 30 seconds.

The very first words that I heard from the front here came from the mouth of Josh Stocks as he turned to the person next to him and said Exodus. So if you said Exodus, then you're right.

If you were with us in Roots last year, we did Exodus. So I'm hoping you were able to enlighten your neighbour who may or may not have known that Exodus is the answer to what a mountain plus 12 equals.

[17:47] Exodus tells us about how the people of Israel, they were enslaved in Egypt about one and a half thousand years before Jesus. They were rescued from being slaves in Egypt by God and they became his people and this is what is happening here and the point that in Exodus that this is referring to is Exodus 19 and when the 12, the 12 tribes of Israel, they come to a mountain where they meet with God and they agree to be his people and they sign the contract.

They really, truly become God's people at that point. It's when the nation of Israel as God's special people, his treasured possession as he calls them. It's when that properly gets going.

So what does that tell us about what is happening now here in Mark? Well, it's the same thing happening again. Jesus is starting a new people.

He's kind of pushing the reboot button on Israel by doing the same pattern that happened before by taking 12 people up to the mountain. He's saying that he's doing that.

He's saying that he's starting a new people again. And we can see other hints from that in the passage as well. Verse 16, he gives Simon, he gives a new name, his brother John.

[19:05] He also, to James, the son of Zebedee and his brother John, verse 17, he gave him the name Barajanes. David pronounced it differently, which means sons of thunder.

It's a new people with new names. And this makes sense, I think. Jesus is bringing in a new kingdom. It is something different to what we have seen before. And a new kingdom gets a new people. The school I went to has quite a lot of odd things about it. And one of the odd things about it was that we used to have a school song which was about Skiddor.

Now, Skiddor is a mountain in the Lake District. And the funny thing about that is my school was nowhere near the Lake District. It's like hundreds and hundreds of miles away. So we used to kind of, in our assemblies or whatever, we'd sing the school song about Skiddor.

Everything about why, why do we care? We don't. It's a long way away. But basically what happened was there was a school in Keswick at the foot of Skiddor and the headmaster decided that he'd had enough and decided to go and start a new school down in Harpenden.

[20 : 08] He went to school. And he had a different set of ideas perhaps about how a school should be run. The main ideas are important for educating children and so on. And a new set of ideas that required a new set of people.

It required a new school. So it's not just that we've got a new kingdom coming in Mark. Also we have a new people. Jesus is restarting God's people again.

Now this implies something and it implies something that's really quite shocking I think. And it's important that we spend a bit of time dwelling on this. Because when you start a new people in this case that's going to imply something about the old people.

The old Israel. And so the next thing I'd like us to see is this. Is that this new people replaces the old one. This new Israel replaces the old one.

Jesus starting a new people is a shock because there already was a God's people. They already existed. There was already a nation of Israel with 12 tribes. And they say we don't need a new one.

[21 : 13] We've already got one. We've already got a group of people who belong to God. We've got a group of people who are God's people. We have his promises and can look forward to his kingdom. So when Jesus starts a new people what does that say about the old ones?

Well it says that they are no longer God's people. They might have been able to say that before but they're not able to say that now. Before they could go around saying that they belong to God and that when God's kingdom came they should be the ones who benefited from it.

And we're in it. It was for them. But Jesus when he starts God's people again says that those things they don't apply to them anymore. And he takes the label of God's people off them and he's going to give it to 12 new people 12 new leaders who represent a new nation.

And he's not doing it for no reason. It's not arbitrary that Jesus does this. He's starting God's people again because the leadership of the old God's God's old leadership the old leadership of the old nation well they said they want to kill him and they said they want him dead.

It's a right reaction. It's a just reaction. And you can't have two. You can't have two God's people. This new people replaces the old people as the people who really belong to God and his kingdom.

[22 : 35] And we shouldn't miss how radical this is. This completely cuts across everything that pre-existed. He doesn't offer new positions of authority in his new people to the people who had positions of authority in the old nation.

He doesn't say Sepharic's do you want to come and be my minister for justice or whatever. He chooses new people to fill those roles. And Jesus he makes it revolve around him.

There's only one hierarchy that matters in this new kingdom and that's the hierarchy of Jesus at the top. Jesus is the king with everybody else under him. And what Jesus does here is a revolution.

It's bloodless but it's a revolution nonetheless. And being replaced you'd imagine this would be a huge shock to the Pharisees and to the people of Israel. It must be a huge surprise to the disciples who were clued up enough to figure out what was going on.

Because whenever we have a position of responsibility or privilege something that we enjoy being part of and to imagine that being taken away and to lose your position your place your privilege is terrible to think about that happening to you.

[23 : 48] And worse than that to see it being given to someone else instead. But because of their rejection of him that is what Jesus does to the leadership of the old Israel. He replaces them and he starts again.

So that's the main thing that I want us to see this evening and we're going to talk about the implications of that now. But Jesus starts God's people again and it replaces the old. Because we

started with thinking about whether our response to Jesus matters or if it matters why does it matter?

Well Jesus starts new people and when he starts something new that means that nobody is in it automatically and no one belongs to that new people by default.

You're not automatically in it because it's new. And if the question then arises is who is going to be in this people? But this new people they're going to be defined by Jesus.

They're going to be defined by how they respond to Jesus. So how we respond to him will decide whether we are in God's people or whether we are out of it and whether we will benefit from his kingdom or not.

[24 : 59] And I think this must have been a huge encouragement to the people who first read Mark's gospel. That first generation of Christians in the 50, 60 years after Jesus' death.

Because they'd have recognized Jesus as king they'd have repented and believed as Jesus tells people to do in chapter 1 verse 15 the time has come he said the kingdom of God has come near repent and believe the good news.

They'd have repented they'd have believed that Jesus was king that he was Lord they'd have asked him for forgiveness and trusted him. But they'd been surrounded by people who would have made competing claims as to whether they were really God's people or not.

If they were from a Jewish background their friends and family who were still observing that would say that they were God's people or they'd be surrounded by people who worshipped other gods and they might look down on their exclusive claim to say that they were really part of the kingdom of God and that others weren't.

So the question would advise them am I right to trust Jesus? Am I really part of something? Am I really God's people? And more do they have a valid claim as well. It could feel arrogant to say that I belong to God and his kingdom and that they won't especially if they are serious and religious.

[26 : 15] But God started something new and he started a new people centred around Jesus. And if we have trusted him if we follow Jesus who died on the cross if we repent and believe if we believe that Jesus is Lord and King over us and that he died in our place to take our sin then we are part of God's people for new Israel for God's kingdom who get forgiveness and eternal life.

I mean even though we don't really look that different actually to the people around us there's no kind of perceptible change necessarily. I think this also helps us guard against a couple of missteps about what we think it means to belong to God.

as we've said that Jesus has started a new people and the implication of this is that no one is in automatically. Well this is actually really good news for us as well it guards us against a couple of things because it means that there are being part of God's people there are things that it's not defined by there's some negatives because perhaps you are here and you would say you really have much of a religious background at all perhaps you say you've very rarely been to church in the past you wouldn't say that you really know that much about God or about Jesus and it could be possible to look at church and to look at Jesus and to think well he's really for the people who have credentials that were born into the right family who have been to church for a long time or kind of know the right sorts of things and you could be left asking is God's kingdom really for me?

What Jesus does here is he says actually it doesn't really matter the past doesn't really matter he's starting a new people all that is going to matter for this is what you think of him so if you've been here for the past few weeks and you say it describes you what do you make of Jesus in Mark's gospel do you think he is God's king and how are you responding to him because the chance to be part of God's kingdom is there by starting a new people God is opening up an invitation for anyone to be part of it but some of us here might have the opposite sort of problem to that we might have backgrounds that are actually religiously really really active you know it might be going to church a lot going to bible studies a lot youth groups volunteering on Christian summer camps having a largely Christian morality and beliefs about right and wrong we might know lots of things about God or about church and perhaps all of our friends are people that we have met through church and that can lead us to a mistake of assuming that we are in for another reason other than knowing Jesus it can lead us to assume that because we have all of those things that somehow makes us part of God's people but if the people who had the best possible claim to be in the Pharisees and the old as well end up being out of God's people because they reject Jesus we can't let ourselves think that our background is going to give us a free pass into the people of

God Jesus doesn't orientate God's people around which family you were born into or whether you necessarily had a background of going to church or not or whether you know the right things and can say them at the right time and it's around him and deep down what you really think of him and as we're going to think about more about that next week and in some ways the more Christian a culture we come from the more confusing this can be for us and it's possible to enjoy doing Christian things and to enjoy hanging around with people who call themselves Christians without really thinking much of Jesus himself and actually want the silent dead Jesus that the Pharisees and the Herodians want this is good news for us it gives us a chance to re-evaluate to think about ourselves do I want to be part of this new people am I part of this new people what do I make of Jesus and how have I responded to him and then to choose to be defined by a new set of priorities that Jesus brings verse 14 and 15 tells him what defines the people of God in verse 14 he appointed 12 that he might send them out to preach and to have authority to drive out demons they share his mission they share his mission and priority of forgiveness

[30 : 44] I think that's where this can shorthand for what Mark is saying there and that gives us a great opportunity to think about how we are shaped as part of God's people I'll be shaped by what Jesus is interested in and by his priorities of forgiveness and eternal life I'm going to pray for us now and then we're going to sing Father God we thank you that you started something new that you created a new people to be in your new kingdom I ask that for each of us we would examine ourselves in our hearts and think about how we are responding to you and whether we respect you as king thank you for the open invitation that you give to anyone to be part of your people please help us to say yes to that and to trust you and to trust your words in Jesus name amen