

Main Point: Jesus is the King-Sacrifice who destroys fruitless religion and invites us into a life transforming relationship of faith and forgiveness

Have been warned about being political in my sermons. So, going to try and avoid that.

We have all had enough of leaders who tell us to do one thing and then do another.

It's very hard to follow a leader who you suspect is asking you to do that hard work while they are making it easy for themselves.

Don't like being told what to do, we will find any excuse that we can to not follow rules – can't trust the person in charge, why do what they say?

Call of Mark's Gospel – repent and believe the good news. Turn your whole life around, including your most deeply held beliefs, hand your life to God who made you and believe the brilliant things he says.

Quite a call. Bigger call even than the call to stay home and save lives. Breaking in of God's rule means we serve others, talk about Jesus, stop trying to cling on to all the things the world says make success, trust and follow Jesus instead.

I am very aware for some of the people watching this that there is a huge cost to living that way with God in charge of your life, abandoning cherished beliefs about good life to accept God's view – very hard. Painful. Struggle to launch yourself out in trusting God instead of doing what you want.

I get that.

Others, cannot imagine why you'd turn your life over to God to be in charge of, thought of it is a bit fundamentalist and worrying.

Want to tell you, trust Jesus is a battle, not because there is a single fault in him. See Jesus today as this biography written by Mark shows us, God's help, you will want to trust him. Faith in him. Faith that will lead you to do and pray for crazy things, faith that will get you down into forgiving worst of people, see Jesus, call your heart to trust him.

Perspective?

The Ruler who serves

Since Jesus has been recognised as King, ruler sent by God, by his closest followers in chapter 8 of Mark, he has set his face towards Jerusalem. Followers are generally amazed and defiant about that – know group of people who want to kill Jesus in Jerusalem, healing and feeding ministry where he was.

Explaining again and again, he is heading there because he knows he will be rejected and killed there. That's why he is going.

Followers are still working out what they can gain by being on Jesus' gravy train – explaining he is going to serve everyone by dying for them. Ransom for many – pay the price for all the wrong things that people do by dying.

Disciples, over our heads we still just want you to tell us whose getting the best seats in the new kingdom.

And here he is, arriving in Jerusalem as a king. Welcomed as the one bringing the coming of the kingdom of our father David – harking back to the best king they'd ever had before. Kingdom of God breaking in and everyone is welcoming that kingdom. Disciples must have been loving it.

Couple of strange things happening in this passage deserve a closer look. Strange spy novel intrigue at the start of the story.

The first and only time that being a pastor has been like being a spy.

Go into the village, untie a colt, mysterious answer if anyone asks you. It works, and we never hear anything else about it. It was as Jesus said, they let the colt go.

Underlining to the disciples and to us that everything that happens and is coming next is entirely under his control. Arrest, trial and everything else is in Jesus control, his gift to do it or not to do it, down to the finest detail.

Of course, that makes his choices interesting. If I had this power, I'd be like, go down to the Ferrarri showroom and say "the master needs that large red one." Drive in waving, ticker tape and glory.

Very thing that Jesus chooses is a donkey. Never been ridden animal, traditionally that of a king, but donkey. Not a charger. Predicted hundred of years before Messiah would enter on a donkey – sign of his humility.

Can we trust the one giving the orders? The only one with perfect ability to organise things as he wants to, he chooses humility. Recognised as king, because he is, arranges it so that he is not lording over anyone demanding recognition or glory, he chooses humility, appear less than he is, not more.

Another strange thing: Enters Jerusalem people welcome him as their king and ruler, saying God will save us through you. Quote this song from the first part of the Bible, Psalm 118: "Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord".

Hits from other parades, welcome home victorious rugby players by singing football's coming home.

Except, if you read Psalm 118 it is about a happy procession, but not a procession to crown a king. No it was something people sang as they

carried their sacrifice up to the altar. Took something that was going to die in their place to make them right with God.

Who knows what the people singing understood? Mark knows and Jesus knew that the celebration of his kingship going on here is because he is a king who gives away his life for the sake of those who follow him.

Jesus is Lord – we should respect him.

Eternal song of humbling himself for the sake of others. When he chooses he chooses humility. When he chooses he chooses to die in our place. He is the person who you can trust.

Repenting. Bad rap. Misery of realising you are wrong. Whipping yourself, feeling bad, being judged.

Repent from bad things, repent towards good things. Repent is give up things I like, turn towards emptiness without things I like. Repentance is like lockdown.

Repent turn away from the rule and domination of bad things, towards a ruler who loves, lowers himself for your benefit, chooses what's best for you at his own cost every time.

I appreciate, I really do, that repentance for some people at this time is very hard. Battling with some thing you know isn't part of God's kingdom. Turning away from self righteousness, thinking you must be ok the way that you are. Stressful time has made something more difficult for you. Serving.

You need to repent because Jesus is the ruler.

See him, want to repent. Because he is the leader who puts himself below us, sets his face to do what's right for us, who chooses to be humble.

Hard to repent from chocolate to exercise. But it's easy to repent from watching TV to seeing friends. Watching TV, life giving nature of seeing people so amazing. Repent towards Jesus, someone so much better than what you are leaving. Ruler who serves.

The Servant who Judges

Go completely mad and tear the place up. Reason I shouldn't, and you shouldn't ever do that – our anger doesn't lead to the righteous life that god requires – even if angry about something that is wrong, an angry response is likely to be twisted and damaging and hurt others and you.

Not true of Jesus. No sinful nature, always behaved rightly. Right thing for him to do to go into this religious building, destroy the livelihoods of the people who worked there, tear the place up. What's more not just vandalism of buildings, but vandalism of plants. Poor old fig tree, cursed on the way in the morning, dead by evening.

Please don't send out emails with my name on them with grammar mistakes.

Quotes "den of robbers" from book of Jeremiah. This temple had a history explained in Jeremiah, it was the place that people were supposed to come and meet the real God. Supposed to step in there, to this temple which had his name on it.

Actually important people know what God's like. Matters, if they are to be brought to repentance, turn away from bad to good, matters that they can go to the places with God's name on and see what he is like, not some fake, self centred version.

Destroyed once for being like that, and rebuilt, Jesus is saying that this temple has the same problem. Making money out of people's need for Gods forgiveness, ways of trying to keep people out, when their hearts

were as cold to God as anyone's. Become a way of getting something for them.

God in person angry about that – his generosity and care, his grace and compassion, things with his name on are nothing like him.

Example – growing a tree for a particular reason – to get fruit. Discovered your tree while looking all green and leafy actually doesn't have any of the fruit on it that you planted it for – in the end, going to give up gardening that tree.

Jesus illustration: temple is the fig tree: lots of leave but no fruit. It looks all bustling and good and like lots going on. But instead of acting like a beacon to the world, advertising the God whose name is on it, inviting many nations to know God it's just activity.

This is the story of Mark's Gospel, King, God has stepped into the world and he is inviting people to repent, turn away from what's wrong and turn towards him, gracious loving servant who dies for them. Sick, and poor and excluded who are invited. When they accept they are transformed into agents for this self giving kingdom of God, servants of all, putting others before themselves, fishers of people; reaching out beyond themselves

Just say a religious community bears God's name. Identifies themselves with the God of the Bible. Has his name. But that community isn't driven by inviting others to know God, demands of the people in it. Community is self righteous thinking better than others outside it. People who need its welcome are not welcomed. Not self giving, not servants of all, don't look to reach others. Temple without worship. Tree without fruit. God is patient and generous and forgiving about much, default pose is to be slow to anger and abounding in love, but when people's selfishness

means he is misrepresented he is angry. He will not let that community, that family, that church, go undisrupted.

The gracious king's anger is saved really, for religious hypocrisy – wants the benefits of God's name without serving or reaching others. Block to his gracious call going out into the world.

And so it was, that this temple, was, as Jesus said, thrown down. Destroyed. Won't find anything with the God of the Bible's name there today.

Of course it applies itself to us. The king is real, and the king is humble and kind. Whoever you are, whatever life you are leading now, however messy, he came to serve you, give his life to buy you back, to turn what you have now to reflect the serving, reaching out love of God. No bounds to that.

What he will not have is people with his name, Christians, self comforting, a church which is for the benefit of us ourselves, a Christian life that isn't open to the service of people outside the family, a person who is a Christian not caring about the world God is reaching. That will make him angry.

God replaced that temple with a different type of relationship with God, more on that in a minute. Take the label of the new way, but still being like this old way.

Gentle, humble king, serves to pay your ransom, may need a moment to go back to him, sick need a doctor, unclean, need to be clean, humble yourself. We, as a church, may need that too.

Disruption allows us to do.

The Judge who commands

Peter surprised by the fig tree dying, Jesus uses it as a chance to explain that now that way of life is dead what the new life looks like.

“Have faith in God” – generic phrase what does that mean.

Saying goodbye to the old mountain: I guess it's the temple mountain, being thrown away for good.

Start relationship of trusting God, that way of covering up our failures with religious practice is being thrown into the sea.

Therefore I tell you, there is a new way living in God's kingdom – a wayradical prayer and radical forgiveness.

We are used to that. Religion of works to please God gone. Faith in God to be put right with him instead. But what does it look like to be healed by Jesus, trust him, beacon of his serving love in the world, what does it look like day to day.

Believing, radical exciting faith stretching prayer. Abuse of this idea, never get to use of it. Thrown away dead religion that has God's name but doesn't live in his kingdom, replaces it with every day faith in God, praying for things and seeing God answer those prayers. Dynamic exciting relationship with God pleading for help in crazy situations.

Of course. Repentance is hard, involves doing crazy and difficult things. Leaving old life behind and living towards Jesus is hard. Will mean taking decisions that you and people round you think your mad. Need, God to come through for you, prayer. Not the old way that discredits God by just putting a religious veneer on selfishness, dependence where we need God to do stuff, rely on him doing that.

Service, humility, fishers of men. Church life in coronavirus. Prayer. Does this mark us?

Believing prayer. While praying forgive.

Pictures of what the Christian life is. Hugging an insignificant person.

Fishing for people. Person praying, while they are praying, forgive.

Pulled into this life is a huge ask. Daily repentance, pulling away from false easy religion that doesn't show what God is like, trust God, ask crazy things from him in dependence, attitude of forgiveness to the world.

Who is asking? One you should listen to, one you can trust to put you first. King who serves.

Wriggle about, do some religious stuff instead? No, because the servant judges.

Call to a life of crazy service, heavy dependence on God in prayer for unlikely things, forgiving our enemies. Judge commands.

Hard to imagine the church, the family, the Christian that does that? Should imagine it, walk towards us, leader is one who can be trusted.