

Reactions to the King

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[0 : 00] Just pray for a moment before we begin. Heavenly Father, we do thank you again for your word, which continues to speak to us all these years down the generations.

And Father, we thank you for the opportunity we have this morning to pause and to look at your word, to hear what you are saying. Father, give us minds to understand and hearts to live in light of it, we pray.

We ask it in Jesus' name. Amen. Well, it would be great if you could have your Bibles open at Mark 3. There's also an outline in your bulletin, which you might find helpful.

I don't know if you've noticed, but my preaching style is to work as much as I can through the text. And so if you don't have a Bible open, then it's going to be rather boring.

Sorry about that. Well, there are some things in life where most people react the same way. For example, holidays. Most people who are going on holidays, we all react the same way.

[0 : 57] They're all fairly excited, in my experience. But there are other things in life where people react differently, like a football match, for example. And how you react often depends on how your team does on the day.

Sometimes, though, our reactions depend on where you are in the queue. Here is a photo of some schoolchildren getting some vaccinations. I love the second child in the queue.

You know what he's thinking? Crikey, I'm next. Thanks, Joe. Of course, it's not just things we react to, is it? But it's also people.

Our son, Timothy, had his first sleepover at his school just last Friday night. And when my wife, Michelle, came to pick him up on Saturday morning, she asked, did you miss me? And he said, no, I was having too much fun.

Honest answer, sure. Not quite the reaction, though, Michelle was hoping for. And today we'll see different reactions to the person of Jesus. In fact, Jesus often provokes reactions, doesn't he?

[1 : 56] Whether it's joy because people come to believe in him, or whether it's discomfort or ridicule because they still don't quite think he's real or the king.

Or whether it's a reaction of anger because Jesus has broken their rules and customs, as we heard last week. Remember last week, Jesus broke the traditions and the customs of the Pharisees.

And so in chapter 3, verse 6, we saw one reaction. Just one verse before your reading, have a look there. We see the reaction, the Pharisees went out and immediately conspired with the Herodians against him, how they might destroy him.

And that's one serious reaction, isn't it? And what follows in the rest of Mark chapter 3 is a series of further reactions by different groups. Some down by the sea, some on a mountaintop, and others back in town.

And as we follow these reactions, we'll see that they're not too different from the sorts of reactions people have in our world today. Of course, the implicit question for us is, how are we reacting to Jesus?

[2 : 58] And so with those things in mind, let's turn to the first group we meet, a great multitude of people or crowd. Point 1, verse 7. Jesus departed with his disciples to the sea, and a great multitude from Galilee followed him.

Hearing all that he was doing, they came to him in great numbers from Judea, Jerusalem, Idumea, beyond the Jordan, and the region around Tyre and Sidon. He told his disciples to have a boat ready for him because of the crowd, so that they would not crush him.

For he had cured many, so that all who had diseases pressed upon him to touch him. Now, after reading about the plot to kill Jesus in verse 6, Jesus withdraws from town, somewhat sensibly, some may say, to the sea of Galilee.

Yet a great multitude or a large crowd follows him, from all over the place, in fact. Did you notice where they'd come from? They came from all over. In fact, I've got a map that you'll come up on the screen.

Just have a look at the black arrows. That's the places. Down the bottom, we have people coming from Jerusalem and Judea. But even further south, people came from Idumea. Or up in the far north, we've got people coming from Sidon and Tyre.

[4 : 08] In fact, people came from the west, from across the Jordan, into Israel, into the Sea of Galilee, where Jesus was. And the interesting thing to note is that the last time Mark mentions a great multitude of people coming from places was when John was baptizing, back in chapter 1, verse 5.

Only when John was baptizing, the whole crowd of people only came from Jerusalem and Judea. Now, I think this tells us two things that are interesting. Firstly, Jesus draws a much greater crowd, doesn't he?

Much greater crowd from a much greater area. And John the Baptist himself said, That's the first thing to notice.

Jesus is the one more powerful than John. He is here. But secondly, he draws people from Gentile or non-Jewish areas, doesn't he? From across the Jordan, from Tyre and Sidon.

You see, Jesus has come not to be just a light to the Jewish nation. He has come to be a light to all nations, as Isaiah speaks about in chapter 42. Jesus has come to preach the gospel, not just to the Jewish tribes, but to all tribes, all nations, all tongues.

[5 : 31] The question is, what sort of reaction does this crowd have towards Jesus? Well, it seems to somewhat resemble the reaction of a crowd of shoppers on the morning of some Boxing Day of sales.

You know, where people pushing and shoving. Have you seen those sales on TV? People going crazy, that sort of thing? That seems to be what's happening here. Because have a look at verse 9 and 10 again. He told his disciples to have a boat ready for him because of the crowd, so that they would not crush him.

For he had cured many, so that all who had diseases pressed upon him to touch him. You see what's happening? The crowd wanted something from Jesus, and so they push and shove to touch him.

So much so that Jesus needs to get into a boat so he's not crushed, literally, by the crowd. Now, I don't think there's anything particularly commendable about this crowd's reaction.

For here is a group of people that essentially want a quick healing, a quick fix. They certainly don't treat Jesus as the King, you know, the Christ. Instead, they treat Jesus more like a vending machine, you know, that dispenses bargains, healing bargains, as it were.

[6 : 39] They wanted Jesus to do something for them, rather than seeking to serve him, you see. And we see this sort of reaction from others in our world today, do we not?

We see people who are in trouble turn to God to dispense help, and as soon as they receive the help, quickly turn away. You see, the classic example is in the Hollywood movies, you know, when the plane's suffering engine failure, and it's about to dive down and crash.

You get people suddenly praying, God, if you get me out of this, I'll go to church twice on Sunday and help my grandmother, and so on and so on. And then as soon as they're out of the fix, they ignore their grandmother, and more importantly, they ignore Jesus.

It happens in our world today, does it not? I've even seen it with some Christians, people, or rather, people who claim to be Christians, who are happy to take forgiveness that Jesus offers, but not willing to live with Jesus as their king.

And not too long ago, I was chatting with a teenager from the youth group that I was running, and he was telling me a story about how he told his sister, who claimed to be a Christian, that she should stop swearing, because that wasn't a Christian thing to do.

[7 : 45] Her sister replied by saying this, she said, God will forgive me, doesn't matter. You see, she was taking what she wanted from Jesus, forgiveness, but not willing to seek to do his will.

And in the end, this is the crowd's reaction. They want to take from Jesus without acknowledging who he really is, the king, who needs to be served and followed. And I think this crowd's reaction is the wrong reaction, and I think it's highlighted by the second reaction we see.

For the next group we meet, at one level, they react rightly to Jesus. But the irony is, look at who they are. Point to verse 11. Whenever the unclean spirits saw Jesus, they fell down before him and shouted, you are the son of God.

But he sternly ordered them not to make him known. You see the irony? The irony is that it's the evil spirits of all people who rightly acknowledge Jesus for who he is.

Now, some scholars think that the evil spirits are worshipping Jesus in a mocking kind of way. Others think they are trying to control Jesus by, you know, making his identity as God's son known before he wants it to be known.

[8 : 56] But I'm not sure I agree with that. See, when you look at how these demons react to Jesus in chapter 1 and chapter 5, they're actually afraid of Jesus. And they say things like, have you come to destroy us? Or swear that you won't torture us?

They're scared of Jesus. They think his arrival means judgment day is fully here. It's not a mocking worship. Rather, I think it's a right reaction. And I think Mark puts it deliberately next to the crowd's reaction, not only because it happened in history, but because it highlights just how inappropriate the crowd's behavior was.

That even the evil spirits of all people react more appropriately than they did. Of course, even though these evil spirits fall before Jesus and acknowledge who he is, they remain evil, don't they?

And their reaction is forced. For Jesus is one who is more powerful than they are. And we see it by the way he silences them and they obey immediately. He's more powerful.

And so it's not the ideal reaction. They react because they must. Because they know who Jesus is. Now, I don't know many people in our world today who react exactly like this, who acknowledge Jesus as God's son, yet remain opposed to him as the evil spirits did.

[10 : 07] But I do know people who react the same way on judgment day. You see, the reaction of the evil spirits here is also a reminder that every knee will bow and every tongue will confess on that last day that Jesus is Lord, that he is King.

And we who are Christians will do it willingly and will enjoy God's kingdom forever. But those who are not Christians will do it because they must. And just like these evil spirits did.

And sadly, they will also share in the fate of these evil spirits. A fate that even these spirits themselves feared. And that tells you something about how bad judgment day is going to be, doesn't it?

If they even fear it. And therefore, how much we need to keep praying and proclaiming the good news of Jesus to our loved ones. Those who don't know Jesus, that they too might be saved.

Well, Jesus moves now from the sea to the mountain where we see reaction number three, verse 13. Jesus went up the mountain and called to him those whom he wanted.

[11 : 14] And they came to him. And he appointed twelve, whom he also named apostles, to be with him. And he sent them out to proclaim the message and to have authority to cast out demons.

And so he appointed the twelve, Simon and so on. You get the list of names there. Here we have a complete contrast to the scene before. We move from the sea to a mountain, for starters.

And we move from the crowds trying to get Jesus to do what they want, to a group of men who are doing what Jesus wants, you see. And the crowds come to get their quick fix, to get Jesus to do what they want to do.

But here it's people who are doing what Jesus wants, doing his will. For example, when he calls, they obey. And what's more, they continue Jesus' mission by proclaiming the gospel, the good news that the kingdom of God is at hand.

And they also drive out demons, just as Jesus did, as a visible expression that God's kingdom had come near. That there was now freedom available for those who repented and believed.

[12 : 16] Freedom from Satan's realm of sin and hell. But why call only twelve? I mean, it's a bit of an odd number, isn't it? I mean, it's not an odd number, it's an even number, isn't it?

But you know what I mean, it is a kind of... Why twelve? Well, because Israel was made up of twelve tribes. Israel was essentially God's physical kingdom.

And so Jesus is symbolically saying, I have come to create the new Israel, the new twelve tribes, the true kingdom of God. As we heard in our first reading, where God brings his children home and will establish his new kingdom, this is what Jesus is symbolizing he's here to do now.

But as we heard last week, though, entering this kingdom is not about doing traditions and customs, it's about grace, through simply believing in Jesus. Now we'll come back to these disciples at the end, but for now Jesus heads back to town, possibly to Peter's mother-in-law's house, where he was staying.

You know the one that had the new skylight put in from the Paralytic's four friends? If it is the same house, it explains how the crowd found them so easily, even before they could start eating.

[13 : 26] But it's not just the crowd that comes this time, it's his family as well. Point four, verse 20. Or the end of verse 19. Then he went home, and the crowd came together again, so that they could not even eat.

When his family heard it, they went out to restrain him, for people were saying, he's gone out of his mind. Here we see our fourth reaction to Jesus, and this time it's that of his own family, isn't it?

They come up from Nazareth, and the reaction wasn't the usual, son, are you sleeping well? Are you eating right? Are you having your McCain healthy dinners? It wasn't any of that, was it? It was, son, everyone thinks you're insane.

What are you doing? Now no doubt they knew Jesus was different. After all, there was the miracles. There was the childhood obedience. Anyone who's dealt with children knows that no normal child obeys all the time.

There was also the angel that appeared before his birth. I take it that didn't happen for the birth of any other of Mary's children. Surely they would have expected something from their gifted son and brother.

[14 : 30] Yet, they've come to take charge of him, to get him to do what they want, just like the crowds did earlier on. Why? Well, it seems they've become embarrassed by him, or had thought he'd gone too far.

He was behaving, he's going too extreme. Jesus has taken things too far, he's become a little embarrassing, and so now they've come to stop him, to restrain him, it says. And again, it's a common reaction today, isn't it?

Our friends and even some of our family members might think that we here this morning take this Jesus person, this Christianity, far too seriously. I mean, Nan Roberts comes to us this morning on her 90th birthday.

That's terrific. I'm sure family members, if they're non-Christians there, might think that that's a little odd. Why have a week off church? Go out for lunch, or something like that. You see, Christians think that we might take Jesus far too serious, just like Jesus' family thought.

I know one couple at my previous church whose non-Christian parents thought the same of them. They flew in from Europe one Friday morning, and that Friday at night, they went to youth group to serve.

[15 : 39] Now, they didn't have any children to look after, and they were younger, so they had a bit more energy, sure. But their non-Christian parents thought they were out of their minds. Take it easy. Don't go to youth group. Come around to our place. Show us some photos, or something like that.

Why are you taking this Christian thing so extremely, so seriously? Now, they didn't say it to their faces, but I do know they thought their children were out of their minds. Sadly, though, it even happens with Christian parents.

I have a friend who's a missionary in Indonesia. When they decided to go to Indonesia, his parents, his Christian parents, tried to persuade him not to go, because that's going a bit too far.

It's a bit too extreme. It's a bit too fanatical. But, you see, when we look at people whose lives are so gripped by the gospel, whose lives are so shaped by Jesus, that they truly believe he is the king, and they truly believe that only Jesus can give what everyone needs, forgiveness and hope.

And so they mould their whole life around it. When you look at those people, it's easy to see, or think, rather, that they're going too far, that they're behaving too extremely, that they're mad fanatics.

[16 : 46] Now, there is such a thing as mad fanaticism, but we must not confuse it with sacrificial commitment. Now, I know many of you here are committed to Christ, and so you serve him, even if it costs you time, or money, or effort, even if you prefer to have a quiet one at home.

And that's terrific. That's excellent. But perhaps there are some here this morning who fall in the same trap of Jesus' family. People who say things like, oh, we'll follow Jesus, but as long as it doesn't cost us too much.

You know, or it doesn't interfere too much with my family, or sporting commitments, or what the world calls a normal life. Oh, I'll follow Jesus as long as people don't think that I'm out of my mind. It's easy to do, isn't it?

We can fall into the trap of the family here. Well, Jesus' family thought he was being too extreme in his single-minded service to his father. And I suspect they feared what the authorities might say.

If they did fear that, their fears are soon realized. For in the very next verse, the big guns come down from Jerusalem. They're called in to deal with Jesus. Have a look at verse 22. We're at point five.

[17 : 52] And the scribes, or the teachers of the law, who came down from Jerusalem said, he has Beelzebub, and by the ruler of the demons he casts out demons, it says.

Now, this fifth reaction here is somewhat stronger than the families, isn't it? These scribes, they're from Jerusalem itself. Now, they would have been the Jewish big guns, if you like.

The theological, theological theologians, the intellectual theologians of the day. And what is their reaction to Jesus? Well, they conclude that he's evil, that he's possessed by Beelzebub, or Satan himself.

It's as though they say, everyone, keep clear of Jesus. He's possessed by evil. But Jesus then responds in verse 23 to 26. And it's as though he says, look, guys, come here for a moment, and let's think about your great conclusion.

He says, verse 23, he called them to him and spoke to them in parables. He said, how can Satan cast out Satan if I am Satan? If a kingdom is divided against itself, then that kingdom cannot stand.

[18 : 58] And if a house is divided against itself, that house will not be able to stand. And if Satan has risen up against himself and is divided, then he cannot stand. But his end has come.

Do you see what Jesus is saying? He's saying, how can I be possessed by Satan? Satan wouldn't drive out his own demons, would he? He wouldn't create civil war in the underworld.

It means his house would fall. I once went to a Bucks party who went paintballing. Now, does anyone know what paintballing is? It's called skirmish.

It's where you have air-propelled guns and they propel little balls of paint. Now, I don't know why guys do this. Apparently, it's fun. It hurts, let me tell you.

We went there and we had games where there was one team versus the other team. And then suddenly, the ref blew the whistle and said, every man for himself. And my team suddenly turned on me and shot me.

[19 : 58] It hurt. And we started shooting each other. And our team that was working so well together that stood firm was now divided and we fell apart. You see what Jesus is saying to these theologians, these so-called theologians?

Why would Satan turn on himself and drive out his own demons? As soon as they turn on each other, the house would fall apart, you see. It's as though he's saying, gentlemen, where did you learn your theology?

What you are saying makes no sense. So much for these theological big guns, you see. And then Jesus continues in verse 27 by saying that Satan's end is imminent.

For the fact that Jesus is able to cast out demons shows that he is stronger than Satan, that he has tied him up. Have a look at verse 27. Jesus says, But no one can enter a strong man's house and plunder his property without first tying up the strong man.

Then, indeed, the house can be plundered. Do you see what Jesus is saying here? He's saying, No one can enter a strong man's house, that is, Satan's house, and plunder his property, that is, free people from his kingdom, without first tying up the strong man.

[21 : 10] Then he can free people or plunder his house. Jesus, you see, by carrying off Satan's possessions, so to speak, by freeing people from demon possessions, he's showing that he's indeed stronger than Satan, that he has indeed tied Satan up, or is in the process of tying him up.

And therefore, his end is near. These theologians from Jerusalem couldn't have it more wrong, you see. What they're seeing before their very eyes is God's king at work. What they are seeing is a glimpse of Satan's downfall and an even greater plundering of Satan's house.

For at the cross, by Jesus' death and resurrection, he will free many people from Satan's realm of sin and hell. But these theologians refuse to truly see this.

And so they call Jesus and his work evil. Again, I've seen this reaction in our world today. There was a man who studied at a respectable Bible college like Ridley. He left there, went over to Perth, I think it was, and he called himself a theologian.

He started writing theological works, books and things like that. And he also started teaching this. He said, it's evil to say that Jesus' death on the cross was taking God's anger at our sin.

[22 : 27] It's evil to say that because he likened it to divine child abuse. Now, child abuse is evil. But what Jesus did was not child abuse.

For starters, he wasn't a child. But more than that, Jesus willingly went to the cross for us. He knew what he was doing. He chose to go out of love for us. And it's by taking God's just anger at our terrible sin that means we can be forgiven.

And so to call Jesus' work evil, even in that form, means you're rejecting the very means of forgiveness. And that's serious. See verse 28 to 30?

He says, truly I tell you, people will be forgiven for their sins and whatever blasphemies they utter, but whoever blasphemes against the Holy Spirit can never have forgiveness.

But he's guilty of an eternal sin. For they had said he has an unclean spirit. And now there's a solemn warning here for those who call Jesus' work evil. But before we get to that, don't miss verse 28.

[23 : 30] It's an incredibly encouraging verse. For it says that all our sins will be forgiven. Whatever blasphemies we have uttered, past, present, future, will be forgiven.

That's great news, is it not? That's freeing, is it not? Jesus is the one who has authority to forgive and he came into the world to eat with sinners, to offer acceptance, fellowship and rest as we saw last week.

And so verse 28 ought to be a great comfort to us. But there is a warning in verse 29. Blasphemy against the Holy Spirit will not be forgiven, Jesus says. You see, Jesus and the Spirit work together.

For example, the Spirit anointed Jesus at his baptism. And so to reject one is to reject the other. And to blaspheme against the Spirit is to reject the one whom the Spirit anointed, Jesus.

And if you reject Jesus, then you're rejecting the only means of forgiveness available. And so therefore, logically, you can't be forgiven. Well, Mark wraps up his series of reactions to Jesus by returning to his family and his disciples who are the true family.

[24 : 34] Have a look at verses 31 to 35. Then his mother and his brothers came and standing outside, they sent to him and called him. A crowd was sitting around him and they said to him, Your mother and your brothers and sisters are outside asking for you.

And Jesus replied, Who are my mother and my brothers? And looking at those who sat around him, he said, Here are my mother and my brothers. Whoever does the will of God is my brother and sister and mother.

You see, while Jesus' natural family is outside still trying to take charge of him, Jesus says his true family are those inside who have accepted Jesus' charge over them.

Do you see the difference? Jesus' natural family is outside still trying to take charge of him, but the true family are those inside who are listening to Jesus and accepting his charge over them.

For as Jesus says, Whoever does God's will is my brother and sister and mother. It's not just the twelve, but whoever does God's will shows that they are a true member of Jesus' family.

[25 : 42] Well, in the end, there are five reactions, aren't there? There's the self-seeking crowds who want Jesus to do what they want. There's also the evil spirits who fall down and confess Jesus as the Son of God but remain evil.

There's the theologians who think Jesus and his work is evil and so they reject him. And then there's the family who think Jesus is a bit too fanatical, a bit too extreme. And then there's the true family who like the twelve and others gathered there, hear his call, come to him, listen, and to have their sins forgiven.

And in response to this, seek to live out God's will in their lives. Now, which do you think is the right reaction? It's pretty clear, isn't it? But it's not always the easy one to live out.

Sometimes we act more like the crowds and want Jesus to do what we want. Jesus, look, I'm going to go to church a bit more if you heal my friend, my relative. We want Jesus to do what we want sometimes.

Or sometimes we act more like his earthly family who think, you know, don't want it to go too over committed. We don't want to get too serious with this Jesus business. Or for others, we can seek to really live out his will.

[26 : 50] I know a guy who, whenever he prays the Lord's Prayer, emphasizes the pronoun your. So for example, he says, our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name.

And I've noticed that he especially does it for the line, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Why does he do this? Because he knows what Jesus has done for him.

And so in response, he wants to do Christ's will, God's will, not his own will. You see, that is a true member of Christ's family, is it not? Let's pray that we would keep acting like his true family, people who know the joy of our sins forgiven.

And so let's seek to live out his will in our lives. We're going to pray, but I thought we might pray the Lord's Prayer and we might actually all emphasize that pronoun your.

So it's going to come up on the screen. Let's pray this prayer. Together, our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name.

[27 : 53] Your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as in heaven. Give us today our daily bread. Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us.

Save us from the time of trial and deliver us from evil. For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours now and forever.

Amen. Amen. Amen.