

Meet Jesus: As he reacts to the cold shoulder

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[0 : 00] Amen. So we're continuing in Mark's Gospel and we're in chapter 6, it's page 841 in the Visitor's Bibles, 841, Mark chapter 6.

Jesus went away from there and came to his hometown and his disciples followed him. And on the Sabbath he began to teach in the synagogue. And many who heard him were astonished, saying, Where did this man get these things?

What is the wisdom given to him? How are such mighty works done by his hands? Is this the carpenter, the son of Mary and the brother of James and Joses and Judas and Simon?

And are not his sisters here with us? And they took offence at him. And Jesus said to them, A prophet is not without honour except in his hometown and among his own relatives and in his own household.

And he could do no mighty works there except that he laid his hand on a few sick people and healed them. Incidentally, it's the same with salvation.

[1 : 11] If we're not willing, he's not going to impose it upon us. And he marvelled because of their unbelief. And he went about among the villages teaching. Verse 7.

And he called the twelve and began to send them out two by two and gave them authority over the unclean spirits. He charged them to take nothing for their journey except a staff. No bread, no bag, no money in their belts, but to wear sandals and not put on two tunics.

And he said to them, Whenever you enter a house, stay there until you depart from there. And if any place will not receive you and they will not listen to you, when you leave, shake the dust that is on your feet as a testimony against them.

So they went out and proclaimed that people should repent. And they cast out many demons and anointed with oil many who were sick and healed them. So we're into chapter 6 of Mark's Gospel and the big question is, Who is Jesus?

Is he God's Son? That's the question before us. And first of all, I think we'll bring the question of God into the agenda.

[2 : 22] As humans, we can often stubbornly refuse to believe the evidence that we're party to through our senses. You know, they're staring us in the face.

Why is that? Well, think about this. If there's a creator, you know, think about the logic. If we admit that we're owned by God, he created us, we're owned by him, then we're suddenly accountable, aren't we?

We're not autonomous. And so the world colludes together, doesn't it? In a delusion that there's no God.

It's a bit like Adam hiding back in the Genesis chapter 3 in the garden. Just imagine. We'll give God a project. Just imagine that we're all floating around in space.

You know, and he's got to reveal himself to us in a sufficient way so that we can acknowledge him. Just think. Bang! He creates matter out of no matter.

[3 : 22] It's the ultimate scientific mystery. He sets into place gravitational force so that we're perched on this lump of evidence called planet Earth.

We can't escape it, can we, if you think about it? You know, we're dependent on the water and the food that he provides from his planet. And then there's a beautiful scenery, isn't there?

Beautiful scenery. It sort of attracts us like a magnetic force. I dare say, in a city centre church like this, this Wednesday, there may be some people here today who've come to Scotland to see the scenery, the beautiful lochs, the mountain ranges.

You know, God's put all these things into place. He's sort of piling up the evidence so that we'll acknowledge him. King David says this, listen to this, Psalm 19, the heavens declare the glory of

God, the sky above proclaims his handiwork.

So the external evidence is bombarding our senses. Yes, think about this, he'd already made us in his image so that his signature is weighing upon our souls.

[4 : 33] You know, our internal compasses pointing to him. All this is in place. But we all sin, friends, don't we? We all sin. Which is the rejection of the God that we know to be out there.

Yes, you and me. We're all sinners. That's why we're here today, isn't it? That's why we're lifting things to the Lord in prayer, asking him to help in those situations.

And think through the logic of it. It's not that there's a deficit in God's revelation. It's not that, is it? Rather, it's that we think we know better.

There's a very pertinent verse, a couple of verses here in Romans. Just listen to this. For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men who by their unrighteousness, what do they do?

Suppress the truth. For what can be known about God is plain to them because God has shown it to them. For his invisible attributes, namely his eternal power and divine nature, have been, what?

[5 : 39] Clearly perceived ever since the creation of the world in the things that have been made. So they are what? You and me, without excuse, says the Apostle Paul.

Calvin says this, I think with, he's got a wry touch of humour here and he's talking about people who claim that there's no God. He says, they from time to time feel an inkling of what they desire not to believe.

Chapter 3, Book 1 of his Institutes. And think it through, all the world's made up religions, they're all based on this innate feeling that there's a creator God out there, you know.

It's sort of trying to satisfy that missing component that we would otherwise have in our human condition. It's just, well, they lack the interpretation of the data.

You know, that their senses are rightly taking in. So, it's the first century and the Jews are on the right track. But then, revelation, par excellence, strides onto the world stage.

[6 : 48] Yes, it's 30 AD and Jesus turns up, doesn't he? What will they make of him? What do you, friend, make of him? So, let's go with this passage.

Let's think about this passage before us. What do they think about Jesus in the synagogue here? We'll call Jesus and his followers New Israel.

And Jesus has already been talking about new and old. You might remember back in chapter 2, Jesus said, you can't put new wine into old wineskin.

They're incompatible, he said. And this passage here before us, chapter 6, it's about new and old. It's about wineskins. We've got two points.

Our first point is new Israel is rejected by old Israel, verses 1 to 6. And our second point is old Israel is rejected by new Israel, verses 7 to 13.

[7 : 49] So, our first point, new Israel is rejected by old Israel. Verse 1, and Jesus comes home with his disciples.

verse 2, and notice Jesus' priority. What's he doing there in verse 2, do you see? It's been consistent throughout Mott's gospel so far, his priority. And on the Sabbath he began to teach, do you see, in the synagogue.

It's the same there, look at the end of verse 6. Do you see the end of verse 6, the last word there, verse 6, teaching. And then I think verse 12, yes, the disciples were out proclaiming, do you see? Do you see the consistency there of Jesus' priority? What's the reaction? Verse 2, what do they think about his teaching? Do you see that? The second half, and many who heard him were astonished, astonished at this teaching.

So, let's look at the second half of verse 2. You remember our introduction when we were thinking about God piling on the evidence and he's going to do this now with Jesus Christ.

[8 : 54] We're thinking about him in this particular situation. Look, there's a truckload of evidence here in verse 2. It's like, it's like the prosecution has turned up at the old bailey.

You ever see them on television with one of these pallet trucks and all the files stacked up? The prosecution evidence, I've sometimes seen that on the TV.

I think they, they should, maybe the Jews should have a meeting in a side room here when they see all this evidence and capitulate. You are the son of God, they should say.

But let's not forget the human heart. And so they fire off a barrage of questions. Did you notice when we read through? Do you see there in the middle of verse 2?

Where did this man get these things? What is the wisdom given to him? How are such mighty works done by his hands? It's comprehensive, isn't it? That, you know, they're first of all astonished by his teaching.

[9 : 52] That grips them first of all and then it's these three questions. Where does he come from? Number one. What sort of knowledge is this? Number two. How can he do such mighty miracles?

Number three. And we shout into first century Jewish world, he's the son of God. Can't you see that? It's what his father said, isn't it?

Do you remember? It is baptism. This is my son. But they suppress the truth like you and me, friend, when we sin. We tend to sort of kick the truth into touch.

So, it's a doctor's surgery and this man walks in and the lady doctor sat there at a desk and she says, can I help you?

He says, yes, I'm dead. And she says, well, how long have you been suffering from that condition? And he says, it was quite a long time and she thinks it through. She's never had such a situation in her surgery before.

[10 : 50] She says, and then she realises what she could say, the logic of it. She says, do dead men bleed? And he said, no, no they don't. And she slowly slides open the bottom drawer, gets out of scalpel and just, he passes his finger to her and she slices into the side of his finger and blood oozes out and dribbles onto the desk and they both look at the blood and then they look at each other eye to eye and he says, hmm, I was wrong.

Dead men do bleed. And friends, friends, that's what we can do, isn't it? Our sin is suppressing the truth. Do you see?

It's suppressing what we know is right. And verse 6, look at the reaction of Jesus and he marvelled because of their unbelief. And I dare say he marvels at us from time to time, at our unbelief, you know, when we cast aside his word for our own logic.

Now, verse 3, it's a sort of a bitter, sly, acidic attack, a trolley full of propaganda. It's the Garden of Eden.

It's a spin on the truth and it's this 21st century world, friends, in which we live. Let's just look there at verse 3. Is this not the carpenter? Do you see the human categories?

[12 : 15] Is this not the carpenter, the son of Mary? You know, they should have said, they should have said, Ben, Joseph, the son of Joseph. That's a normal Jewish way of looking at genealogy, but they go for his mother, the son of Mary, the brother of James and Joseph, Judas and Simon.

And aren't his sisters here with us? And look at the reaction there, the end of verse 3. That's their verdict. They took offence at him. So they're sort of saying, let's bring him down to earth.

Let's classify him with human criteria. Didn't we see him playing with that wooden rocking horse that his dad made? That sort of thing. And so they've taken offence.

And think about this theologically, friends. They've taken offence at the incarnation, haven't they? That God should become flesh like one of us. You know, they've had the evidence of his divinity, but it's the evidence of his humanity that they're using as a tool of their verdict.

Do you see what they're doing here? They've distorted him, wanting his humanity to eclipse his divinity. Do you see what they're doing? They want to pigeonhole him. And, you know, they're putting themselves back in control, aren't they?

[13 : 28] They're acting as judge. It's abhorrent. Same today. The world's made up religion. They can't reconcile God walking his planet. And so they have to suppress the data about God's divinity and major on his humanity.

Well, he was a great teacher. We'll give him that. Set a good example, people say. And we all have a world view, don't we? We all, we all, each one of us here has to account for Jesus.

So, we've had four items of evidence on the table, verse 2. They're astonished by his teaching.

They don't know where he's from. They can't understand his knowledge.

They don't know how he can perform such miracles. And so what do they do? Rather than investigate things deeper, they're whitewashed it all, don't they? Sweep the evidence under the carpet.

They're saying he is, after all, human. And so we'll shelve everything else. Be mind-blowing, wouldn't it, friends? To have an encounter with your creator.

[14 : 31] To acknowledge that he's finally trapped you down on planet Earth. He's after you. To welcome him into your heart. So what does Jesus say, verse 4? It's always been the same.

With the prophets before, it was always the same. It's always the same when God raises people up from your own kin, he says. Why was it? Was it envy? Were they ashamed to have seen, listen, what they themselves ought to have been like?

Is that the logic of it? Perhaps if it was an alien, that would have been alright. They might have accepted it. You know, we wouldn't feel our guilt in the very marrow of our being, would we? But here he is, flesh of our flesh, bone of our bones. And we feel it, don't we, when Jesus visits us. And so they rejected he who could have made them like himself, righteous in God's sight. New Israel is rejected by old Israel. And think about this, friends, Jesus on the cross is the ultimate example of that, isn't he?

[15 : 44] Yet thereby, astonishingly, we can become, can't we, like him. And now, in our second point, we see the message of Jesus going out into the world.

And we'll think more about the consequences of rejecting him. So our second point is old Israel is rejected by new Israel. And that's from verses 17 to verses 7 to 13.

So what does Jesus say? Chapter 1, Israel will make you fishers of men, he said to Simon and Andrew when he came across them. And now they're sent out, 12, 12, symbolising the new Israel. And first of all, let's notice their priorities. There's no food, no bag, no money, do you remember? Minimal amount of clothing. But what they do carry is what?

It's a message. A message of an invitation into God's family. And then, of course, today, we aren't these first century apostles.

[16 : 48] You know, this isn't our blueprint. Paul says, don't muzzle the ox. But nonetheless, friends, there's something powerful about somebody sent out, isn't there?

Somebody with purpose who's prepared to leave all that this world offers. I was listening on Radio 4 today. They had the, sorry, yesterday, they had a vicar on from Baghdad.

And there was a five million pound ransom on his head. And he's somebody like that. He's gone out on a mission, hasn't he, to take God's word to far lands.

Take up your cross, says Jesus. And is that a message for someone here today? Who, in being very nature, God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped?

That's what Paul says about Jesus. C.T. Stood says this, listen to this, if Christ Jesus be God and died for me, then no sacrifice can be too great for me to make for him.

[17 : 49] Friends, think about this. Think about your own life just now. Is there something in your life that you wouldn't be prepared to give up for Jesus? Think about that. If there is, you'll never really be assured of your salvation.

You'll be tossed about, never knowing whether you're in or out. Why? Because that thing to you is more important than Jesus.

And so it's taken control of you, it's got you as its slaves. Verse 12, they go out and what do they say to us in verse 12.

So they went out and proclaimed that people, that's their message to us today, should repent. And so the message reaches us, doesn't it? Repent. Repent.

Well, a couple of weeks ago I was on my honeymoon and I was in Italy with the wife, Catherine, and we went to this little village on the Adriatic coast and it was completely deserted, it was surreal.

[18 : 53] I said to Catherine, I wished I'd got a video recorder here to video it, it was really weird. It was like there'd been an atomic explosion and humanity had been wiped off the face of the earth. Like some of these American scenes when you see things blowing around on the floor, deserted.

So all the hotels were closed, all the restaurants were closed, everything. So we went to the next village which is Port Garibaldi. We went there and there were not many more people but at least there was some humanity there, found a little hotel, nice little family looking hotel.

We went into the hotel and knowing that there was hardly any holiday makers in the area, I thought there's a potential here to bargain with the room rates.

So we went in and I asked him what the rates were and he said 60 euros which actually genuinely was a lot. We'd been paying 30, 5 euros each at other places.

So he said 60 euros and I thought 60 euros to a person that's too much really and I said we've got a budget. I said could you bring it down a bit? Would you accept 40 euros?

[20 : 05] This is in English incidentally. I can't speak much Italian and his reply was one word. He said go. You can't forget that can you?

I don't know what Catherine thought of a new husband. So we walked out. It was like a dog with its tail between its legs and we went back to the car and I was just about to go and Catherine said you know something?

He might have been talking about the room and not per person. It might have been the room and I said Catherine it's great being a Christian because you get to know how to repent. I said I'm going to repent.

So I got out and I went back and I said I'm very sorry. I think I've got confused. Did you mean it was for the room or the person? He says the room. I said I'm very sorry. I said could we pay and stay here for a few days?

And he says yes and we paid the money and we stopped there. And sometimes we need to laugh at ourselves don't we in the light of further revelation. Am I right?

[21 : 04] And just do it. Repent. Just do it. You know turn back to our creator. And that life can be so lonely otherwise without a relationship with God.

Not knowing your origin not knowing your purpose here on this planet not knowing your destiny lonely. Verse 11 if you reject this message and if any place will not receive you and they will not listen to you when you leave shake off the dust that is on your feet as a testimony against them. Kick off the dust says Jesus and it's the opposite if you think about it of communion with Jesus isn't it? And we might not have another moment like this friends today so why not repent right now? Shall we pray? Dear Heavenly Father we thank you once again for sending your son into this world Jesus Christ we thank you that all this that we've been looking at is wrought in history and has an impact upon us through your spirit and your word and we pray Father if there's particular areas in our lives that we need to turn back to you we pray you'd help us through your spirit enable us to repent we ask and maybe Father there's one or two of us here we've never yet come to you as our Lord and Saviour we've never yet turned our lives to you and we pray also in those situations you would help us to repent and turn to you and so look forward to an eternal future with your son as our Saviour and in communion with you and in fellowship with the saints so I lift these things to you and may the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be as this day and forevermore and we ask in Christ's name Amen