

# Jesus came to Embrace the True People of God

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[ 0 : 00 ] Good afternoon and welcome to our lunchtime Bible talk. For the next four weeks we're going to be spending some time in Mark's gospel. Before we have our reading for today, let's pray.

Father, we do thank you that on this Wednesday we can come together, away from all that distracts and gets in our way in the week, to spend some time listening to your word.

So, would you be with us now, removing any distractions, help us to hear and respond with all of our hearts to your word.

We pray in Jesus' name. Amen. Please do turn in your Bibles to Mark chapter 3. We're going to be reading Mark chapter 3, verses 7 to 35 this afternoon.

If you're using one of the Bibles on your seat, that's page 838. Mark chapter 3, verses 7 to 35.

Jesus withdrew with his disciples to the sea, and a great crowd followed from Galilee and Judea and Jerusalem and Edomia and from beyond the Jordan and from around Tyre and Sidon.

[ 1 : 18 ] When the great crowd heard all that he was doing, they came to him. And he told his disciples to have a boat ready for him because of the crowd, lest they crush him. For he had healed many, so that all who had diseases pressed around him to touch him.

And whenever the unclean spirits saw him, they fell down before him and cried out, You are the Son of God. And he strictly ordered them not to make him known. And he went up on the mountain and called to him those whom he desired, and they came to him.

And he appointed twelve, whom he also named apostles, so that they might be with him and might send them out to preach and have authority to cast out demons. He appointed the twelve.

Simon, to whom he gave the name Peter, James, the son of Zebedee, and John, the brother of James, to whom he gave the name Boanerges, that is, sons of thunder. Andrew, and Philip, and Bartholomew, and Matthew, and Thomas, and James, the son of Alphaeus, and Thaddeus, and Simon, the Canaanite, and Judas Iscariot, who betrayed him.

Then he went home, and the crowd gathered again, so that they could not even eat. And when his family heard it, they went out to seize him, for they were saying, He is out of his mind. And the scribes who came down from Jerusalem were saying, He is possessed by Beelzebul, and by the prince of demons he casts out demons.

[ 2 : 42 ] And he called them to him, and said to them in parables, How can Satan cast out Satan? If a kingdom is divided against itself, that kingdom cannot stand. And if a house is divided against itself, that house will not be able to stand.

If Satan has risen up against himself, and is divided, he cannot stand what is coming to an end. But no one can enter a strong man's house, and plunder his goods, unless he first binds the strong man.

Then indeed he may plunder his house. Truly I say to you, all sins will be forgiven the children of man, and whatever blasphemies they utter. But whoever blasphemes against the Holy Spirit, never has forgiveness, but is guilty of an eternal sin.

For they had said, He has an unclean spirit. And his mother and brothers came, and standing outside, they sent to him and called him. And a crowd was sitting around him, and they said to him, Your mother and your brothers are outside seeking ye.

And he answered them, Who are my mothers and brothers? And looking about at those who sat around him, he said, Here are my mother and my brothers.

[ 3 : 55 ] Whoever does the will of God, he is my brother and sister and mother. I love getting new things.

New shirts, even if they're only for work. New books, even if they sit in a bookcase for a few years. New electrical gadgets. I love getting new things.

I usually always have in mind the next new thing I would like to get. However, my wife is very different. She thinks new things are only needed when the old ones no longer work. Mark is a book all about who Jesus is and why he came. And the scope of why he came was grand. Over the next few weeks, as we build up to Easter, we're going to look at some of the things Jesus was achieving by his death.

And this week, we're looking at Jesus' new people. This is a new thing that suits both myself and my wife. It is exciting in its newness.

[ 5 : 03 ] The scale of it is grand and it's significant in world history. But it is also necessary because the old thing was no longer working. Old Israel was no longer compatible with the king that had now arrived.

Mark starts his gospel with a great announcement. This is the gospel. This is the victory announcement of a conquering king. This is the good news that God's long-promised king has arrived.

Jesus is here. Jesus, the Christ, the Son of God has come. And he is proclaiming the coming of the kingdom of God. Mark tells us who the people of the kingdom are going to be.

Early on in Mark's gospel, Jesus has faced opposition from the religious leaders of the day. They question him at various points, opposing everything he does. And at the start of chapter 3, we see that they even know that he has supernatural power.

They know that. They don't doubt that. Look at verse 2. The Pharisees are waiting to accuse Jesus of healing on the Sabbath. But notice, they don't doubt that he can do the healing.

[ 6 : 15 ] They don't doubt that he is someone that has clear authority. But their desire is to catch him out. Jesus exposes in these early episodes the rotten root at the heart of old Israel.

He says, the bridegroom is with them. The long-awaited heir to David's throne is here. If they don't accept that, if they can't see that and respond appropriately, then they will, chapter 2, verse 22, be like old wineskins as the new wine arrives.

Old Israel, represented by these hard-hearted religious leaders, are going to be a thing of the past. They are ultimately going to be destroyed. Jesus sees right to the heart of people he won't be fooled and those who cling stubbornly to dead religious observance, those who cling on to notions of their own importance so that they deny Jesus, they will be exposed.

3.5, Jesus looked at them with anger and he grieves at their hardness of heart. And in the end, those who do not want to have their noses put out of joint by Jesus end up hating him so much that 3.6, they plot to destroy him.

Jesus is a divisive figure. We're on safe ground when we talk with people about some sort of vague sense of God, but when we put Jesus on the table, when we look closely at his claims, his purpose, then people are much less comfortable.

[ 7 : 50 ] Some of us might even like the idea of Jesus helping us to avoid punishment. We like the idea of forgiveness. But when he asks us to give our all to him, when he asks for our obedience, we don't like that.

Jesus is a divisive figure. It wasn't long ago that some street preachers were convicted of a public order of fence for quoting Jesus' own words. For he was too exclusive when he said that he is the way, the truth, and the life.

It is against this backdrop of opposition that we pick up this week's passage. The religious leaders are plotting to destroy Jesus. Jesus has exposed that they will be left behind as his new kingdom arrives.

This is a kingdom that is all about the king, and hating or opposing the king is not a viable option. So we see firstly in verses 7 to 19, Jesus has established a new people as his own.

Jesus has established a new people as his own, and Jesus' people will no longer just be Israel. Jesus has arrived. He has already faced opposition, but he will not be thwarted.

[ 9 : 02 ] The promises made in the covenant of the Old Testament will ring true. From the beginning of Jesus' ministry, he is opposed. As early as chapter 3, 6, the plot to kill him is already underway.

But what does Jesus do? He cries on his normal. The crowds still flock to him. We see that in verses 7 to 12. Jesus' popularity continues to grow, but perhaps all these crowds don't fully understand why he's come.

They gather around him in hordes. Verse 10 tells us why they're so frantically surrounding him. His fame has gone forth because he could heal people. All with diseases wanted to be in on the action. It seems that this little incident is not so much about Jesus being popular and growing in fame, but rather it's about the gathered crowds misunderstanding who Jesus really was. Anyone will take Jesus if what he offers is healing.

Anyone will take Jesus if he offers healing for their immediate and felt physical needs, wanting simply the benefits of what Jesus offers. That is not accepting him.

[10:17] That is interested in his gifts, but not him as the giver. Jesus' priority was preaching. His priority was shaped by the arrival of the kingdom. So verse 9, the crowds end up being an obstacle, a threat to Jesus' ministry.

He has to get a boat to get out of there lest he be crushed. And in the end, in these verses, the only people who recognize him are the demons. Verse 11.

There were great crowds flocking to Jesus, but they didn't know who he really was. They just wanted his healing. And perhaps today we see glimpses of something similar.

There are parts of Jesus that sound great. Perhaps we like it when he tells us to give to the poor, or we like the sound of not being judgmental, or that we should be loving and accepting to all people. Who can argue that these things don't sound positive? They seem to fit in with the progressive agenda of the world around us. We can have a Jesus like that, and it means we're not in conflict with the rest of the world.

[11:21] Jesus is great when he talks about peace or social justice or love. But just like the Pharisees and the crowds, this is misunderstanding what he was about.

The crowds don't get who he is, so he orders the demons to keep quiet about it. Blatantly telling this old Israel who he is won't help.

Look at verses 7 to 8. The crowds had gathered, and where they're coming from are all corners of Israel. The details of where they have come from are the border of the whole country of Israel. Jesus' point here is there needs to be a new Israel, a new people that Jesus could call his own, and that's what happens next.

Look at verse 13. Jesus went up the mountain, a detail that is not incidental. Jesus goes up a mountain, and Mark is pointing us back to another mountain.

[12:24] God's great covenant with Abraham promised that he would make a great nation of his descendants, a people that would be his very own, and that promise was kept at the Exodus.

Having rescued Abraham's descendants from slavery in Egypt, they were brought to Mount Sinai, and God declared, Now therefore, if you will indeed obey my voice and keep my covenant, you shall be my treasured possession among all peoples, for all the earth is mine, and you shall be to me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.

At Mount Sinai, Israel became God's people, his treasured possession, his holy nation. Here they received God's precious law, his very own word. And from Sinai to Mark's gospel was a long time, and evidently, those who claim to be God's people, those who claim to follow the law, have skewed it and lost any sense of who God really was.

It was time for a new people, a new Israel, so we're at a new mountain. And Mark twice points out the number 12 to us. Look at verse 14 and verse 16.

Twice he says he appointed 12. A new people, so now there are 12 apostles instead of 12 tribes. This new people, the people who will belong to Jesus' kingdom, will be shaped by their king.

[13:53] Verse 14, they are to preach. Verse 15, they go with the authority of the king to do what he has been doing. Cold, dead religion could be no more.

Jesus has established an exciting new people. No more could Israel they claim to be the special people. Israel had the heritage.

Israel had the covenant. Israel had been chosen as a nation from which God would bless the world. But they failed. They twisted what they had and they rejected Jesus. The very answer to all the promises they were supposed to be looking forward to was the person they were rejecting.

The old had ceased to do what it was meant to do. It was time for the new. Jesus came to bring about a new people. A new Israel wouldn't have a completely different goal.

It wouldn't even look that different. Jesus is exposing clearly now that those who reject him will be left behind. The new wine has come and new wineskins are required.

[15:00] Jesus' new people weren't going to look particularly spectacular. His new people would begin with these 12 apostles. And even from within them there is still opposition for what Jesus is going to do.

For all the excitement about the new beginning it is tapered by verse 19. Amongst new Israel there was still opposition. Judas who betrayed Jesus.

New Israel was a seismic event. God's new people had been established out with the old in with the new but this event also reminds us that the building had only begun.

Jesus has established his new people but there was still going to be opposition along the way. The foundation had been laid. The age of the church has dawned.

And after the cross as the apostles and the church take the gospel message forward there was still going to be opposition. but because of this there is a day coming when this new people will enjoy the fullness of God's kingdom forever.

[16:07] Be assured God's new people have been established. They continue today and one day his people will be raised to share fully in his kingdom forever.

However, for those who continue to ignore reject and mock Jesus they will not be part of it. That's what Mark moves on to tell us in verses 20 to 35.

All who reject Jesus now will be rejected by him. All who reject Jesus now will be rejected by him. It doesn't matter who you are.

If you reject Jesus now then his kingdom will not be for you. You will be left behind. For those who reject Jesus now that is the only outcome.

This section is bookended by two incidents with Jesus' family. Look at verses 20 to 21. More crowds flock to see Jesus and as he spends time with them his family try to stop him.

[17:13] They say in verse 21 he is out of his mind. His own earthly family don't get what he is doing. They are rejecting his ministry too.

And look on to verse 31. His earthly family are left waiting for him. The crowd that are with Jesus even point out that his family are waiting and Jesus remarkably says who are my brothers?

Who is my family? It isn't his earthly family that he answers with. They misunderstand and reject his ministry. Mary just for being Mary will not be part of his new family.

It does not matter who you are whether rich or poor wise or foolish a success or a failure popular or despised a terrorist or a philanthropist a lifelong churchgoer or a first time attendee a drug addict or a middle class generally good nice guy.

If you reject Jesus now he will reject you. We see this in the incident in verses 22 to 30. Jesus reveals that those who reject his work those who feel to see that his actions are God's actions those who consider Jesus' ministry and purpose as anything short of what they really are they will all be rejected by Jesus.

[18:46] The religious leaders attack their latest attack on Jesus was the claim that he's a demon. Verse 22 he's possessed by Beelzebul. To think of Jesus' work as anything other than wonderfully gracious in all that it reveals a hatred of God.

Jesus' response to them is simple. How can Satan cast out Satan? A divided kingdom is a doomed kingdom. If Satan has turned on himself then verse 26 he is coming to an end.

The scribes are foolish in this accusation because rather than being a demon Jesus is the only person able to bind Satan and plunder his house.

verse 27 is astonishing. Satan is the strong man the source of evil in the world the ruler of darkness and evil. He is a strong man.

Sin darkness and evil have real power in the world. It's easy in a sophisticated western world to think that anything demonic sounding is mere superstition sin.

[20:00] But there is a strong man in the world Satan who has a kingdom and who has real power and rules over real people. But Jesus has come to bind Satan.

Jesus has come to defeat him. As strong as Satan is Jesus is stronger. Jesus has come to plunder Satan's kingdom to rescue people from the hold of sin to release the clutches of evil to allow people to stop rejecting God and to bring him into his kingdom as his new people.

Those who see Jesus and recognize that he is the rescuing king they will verse 28 have their sins forgiven whereas those who look at Jesus and see his work as not being from God they blaspheme the spirit and won't be forgiven.

My people often worry that they may have committed what they think is the unforgivable sin but be encouraged if you think that if you're wrestling with that question then it is not you for verse 30 explains what blaspheming the spirit is.

It is to claim the work of God as evil. It is to look at what Jesus has done and claim that as evil. It is to reject him.

[ 21 : 24 ] Rejecting Jesus is rejecting what he has come to do. Rejecting Jesus is seeing what he has done and failing to respond to him rightly. Old Israel seen in the religious leaders see what Jesus has done.

They see what he was able to do and instead of following him with awe they seek to discredit him, to deny him and to destroy him. the fact that Jesus establishes a new people is an act of judgment out with the old and in with the new.

Jesus has come to bring about the kingdom of God and it is a kingdom that is all about King Jesus. So wanting much of what the kingdom of God promises but not loving Jesus, not trusting and following him, not submitting to him as king is rejecting him.

If we want some of the good things like forgiveness, like wanting to avoid hell and judgment, if we like the sound of being part of a warm church family that will look after us, if we want the blessings of being a Christian but don't want to submit to Jesus, then no matter how much we want to sanitize it or to make it sound viable or pious, we are rejecting the king.

And Jesus makes clear that we that he will reject those who reject him. This is a passage about judgment. New Israel, the new people of God is a judgment on old Israel.

[ 23 : 00 ] But it's not all doom and gloom. Jesus finishes with an invitation to be his new people. He finishes with an invitation to be part of the family of God.

He asks, who are my mother and brothers? brothers. Verse 35, whoever does the will of God, he is my mother, brother, and sister.

Whoever does the will of God, they are my family. Jesus tells us that we can call God our father if we submit to Jesus.

Those who love God obey his commands. Those who love God listen to Jesus. Those who love God trust who Jesus is. They see him as the fulfillment of all of God's promises, the denouement of all that God is doing in the world.

And so they follow him. Jesus has come to invite people to be part of his new family. And that begins with knowing Jesus as he is.

[ 24 : 07 ] And it continues by listening to him and following him in obedience. So whilst he speaks cuttingly about judgment to those who do this, he says, here are my mother and brothers.

And he says to them, verse 28, all sins will be forgiven. Because of the cross of the Lord Jesus, in the end, all those who submit to him and trust him are invited to be part of his family.

All those who submit to him and follow him will have all sins forgiven. It is an exciting new people that he has established with a great future as part of the kingdom of God.

All we have to do is trust him and obey him. And he says to us, you are my family. All sins are forgiven. Amen.

Let's pray. Father, we do thank you that you stay true to your covenant promises.

[ 25 : 32 ] That long ago as you promised to Abraham to make a people that would be your very own, that still you keep faithful to that promise, that we can be a part of your family forever, that we can be welcomed into your kingdom because of the Lord Jesus.

So encourage us today by this hope. Help us trust the Lord Jesus and obey him with all that we are. For we pray in Jesus' name. Amen.