

Following a Crucified King

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Date: 02 July 2023

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[0 : 00] Oh, fantastic. Wonderful. Well, I think we all got the message. And the boys and girls, you helped us so much. That was fantastic. Thank you so much for coming up and sharing that with us. We love that you love to sing about that. We love that you love to sing about King Jesus. And as a church family, we help each other to understand that. And you've helped us this morning. So thank you so much for doing that, boys and girls.

Now, we're going to have a think about those words that we heard from Jesus. So, grown-ups and children, if you've got your Bible, you want to get those words back open in Mark chapter 8. And as you do that, I'm going to pray for our time as we hear God's word. Our Father, we thank you for King Jesus. We thank you that his word has authority and power, that he called the disciples and they followed him, that he commanded the evil spirits to come out, and they did. And Father, we trust and we pray that his voice would speak with authority to us this morning, and that we would hear his call and that we would follow him just as they did in the beginning of the gospel. So speak, Lord, we pray, and help us to listen, for we ask in Jesus' name. Amen.

Amen. Now, boys and girls, it's so, so good that you're with us for so, so many reasons. We love worshipping with you. You're part of our church family. Wherever you're sitting, okay, we love you. You're part of this church, and we're so, so thankful that you're here with us. In fact, okay, did you know you are VIPs in this church? Do you know that? You, boys and girls, you are very important people to us in this church. That's why you get to sit on the front row, in the front couple of rows. You are very, very important people. But I wonder, I wanted to ask you, okay, if you got to meet a very important person, okay, maybe someone famous or a celebrity, someone that you know from the TV or a book or something like that, who would it be? Who would you like to meet? A very important person. Maybe, maybe a footballer. The king? Love it. The king. Yeah, very important. Very important. In fact, I've got a story about that this morning. Maybe you will meet him.

[2 : 38] That would be good, wouldn't it? The king? Love it. Who else? Who might you like to meet? The queen. The queen? Well, maybe one day. Love it. Fantastic. Who else would you like to meet?

A footballer? A celebrity? I don't know. A Ninjago? Something? A superhero? Okay, it shows how out of touch that I am. I don't know who you'd like to meet. I'm sure there's people you would like to meet. But, okay, today we're going to see and meet the most very important person ever in the world. Okay, the biggest VIP. He lived a very long time ago in a faraway place from here. But here's the strange thing, okay? The people who were with him, at first, they didn't recognize who he was. They didn't see that he was the most very important person ever in the world. Imagine that. Okay, they went about with him and they spent loads of time with him. Okay, they went on long trips with him. They ate together and they talked together and they spent their lives together. But the very first people who knew him didn't know that he was so, so important. Imagine that. It's strange, isn't it? Now, I know a couple, okay, who like to ride their bikes in the hills, Tabitha. And one day they were out riding their bikes near here, okay, a place called Balmoral. And they met a very important person. Do you know who they might have bumped into? No? Well, they bumped into the king, walking out on the hills. And the king stopped and the king spoke to them. And they talked about how much they loved the hills and they loved going outside. But the funny thing is that our friend didn't even realize that it was the king until her husband said, your majesty. And then her eyes were open. Did she realize who she was speaking to? I guess he was wearing maybe his outdoor clothes or something. But she didn't see who it was that she was speaking to, the king. And it was like that with the most very important person ever in the world who we're going to see today. His followers didn't recognize him at first, that he was the king. And so I wonder if we can recognize him today, this morning. Can any of you guys guess, I'm sure you can, who we're talking about?

Who am I talking about this morning? Who's the most very important person in the world ever? Could be.

[5 : 24] Jesus. Jesus. That's who we're talking about. Jesus. We're going to see him this morning. And he is the most very important person ever in the world. And there's three things we're going to see about him, okay, that he tells us himself. The first thing is that he is God's only chosen king. Now, Jesus at this time was a bit of a celebrity, okay? Wherever he went, he had followers who went with him. And he also, wherever he went, he had a big crowd of people who wanted to see him from a distance, okay?

Boys and girls, I don't know what you think a crowd. There's lots of people today, even more people than that, okay, went about and wanted to see Jesus. A big crowd. And so imagine that, a big crowd. And some of them have L plates on their backs, all right? Do you know, do you guys know when you see a car with a big L on it? Do you know what that means? Have you seen that before? Do you know what that means? Learner. Brilliant. Learner. Those people are learning to drive, right? When they have a big L on their back or in the car. But these people, they're not learning to drive. They are learning to follow Jesus. And so there's Jesus, and he's going about with his learners, okay? That's what the word disciple means, a learner. And then Jesus turns and asks them, who do people say that I am? Now, that's a really important question, isn't it? If you're going to learn from somebody, then we need to know who that person is. What are their credentials, okay, that they should teach us? If you are a Christian, you call yourself a Christian this morning, that's still the most important question for you. Who do you think Jesus is? Who are you learning from? And for all of us, even if we wouldn't call ourselves a Christian, that is the most important question. You're a bit like kind of bumping into the king, like my friend. We need to know who Jesus is if we're going to respond properly to him. So who does everyone think that Jesus is? Well, the learners say, here's who people say that you are. Some say John the Baptist, some say Elijah, some say one of the prophets. Now, we could spend ages looking at those guys, but what we need to know is that they all came to get ready for God's king. So they came before Jesus, and they all came to get people ready for God's king to come. They weren't God's king, but they came first. And God's people have been waiting for hundreds of years, okay, for God's king to come to save them and rescue them. But they couldn't see that he was here yet. So they thought that Jesus might be one of those guys.

People were saying, Jesus, he must be a helper for God's king. He must come and help us to get ready for God's king. Maybe Jesus does things like he rolls out the red carpet, or he irons the king's clothes, or he drives the posh car. But they are saying he's not God's king. He's the helper.

[8 : 39] Now, boys and girls, you probably know people, maybe other kids at your school, or maybe teachers, who maybe say that Jesus, he was a good person. Maybe he taught good things, even an important person, person, but he's not God's king. You probably even have people who say that Jesus came to get ready for someone else to come, but he's not God's king. Now, people will tell you all sorts of things about Jesus, but they might not know who he really is. They might have got his identity wrong.

So here's the question. Jesus says next, not what is everyone else saying, but what about you? Who do you say that I am? Again, that is the most important question for you boys and girls, for all the grown-ups here. Who do we say that Jesus is? Not what someone else thinks, and not what someone else has told us, but who do you say that he is?

Jesus. Now, in Sunday school, you guys have been learning some big words, haven't you? You've been learning some cool words about Jesus. I've actually got a book at home that helps me learn these words about Jesus. Words, okay? Get this, everyone. Words like deity.

The boys and girls have been learning what it means for Jesus to be divine. Incarnation. You guys could tell us that, couldn't you? I'm not going to ask you now. That would be a bit mean, wouldn't it? But you could tell us, couldn't you? You've been learning about Jesus being God, and Jesus coming as man, and how Jesus is our rescuer, and how he's our priest, and our prophet and king, how he died and rose again. I'm sure everyone here would love to hear you guys tell them about that, wouldn't you? Yeah? Would you ask them, maybe? Ask the boys and girls, maybe today, maybe another time. Ask them to tell you about Jesus, what incarnation means. Would you do that? Surely mums and dads, okay, at home, you want to know that, don't you? Have a refresher. Get your kid to tell you what it means, who Jesus is. Boys and girls, you are very important people.

[11 : 01] It's such a gift. It's such a privilege. You guys have got to spend that time learning Jesus at church and at home. It's an amazing thing. You guys get time to listen to Jesus and read about Jesus and speak about Jesus. That's an amazing, amazing thing because it's people who spend time with Jesus who get to know who he really is. It was the same back then. Peter was one of Jesus' very first learners. He had spent the most time with Jesus, and so he knew who Jesus really was, like you guys, I hope. Okay, Jesus asked him, when he asked him, who do you say that I am?

Peter got it right. He said, you are the Messiah. Now, Messiah means what we have just been singing about, that Jesus is the king. Jesus is God's only chosen king. That is what Peter said. He saw that Jesus wasn't only a helper for the king, but that he was the king himself, come to save us. And I wonder today, whether this is your first time in church, or you've been in church your whole lives like some of you guys here, do you see Jesus rightly? Do you say he is the king? Do you see he is the most very important person ever in the world? Who do you say that he is? That is the most important question that we could take away from here today. Do you say he is only a good man, or a helper, or a teacher, or more than that, that he is the king sent from God to save us? And if not, I wonder, have you taken the time to see him? Or is that maybe just what somebody else has told you? Have you taken the time to see who Jesus really is? It is the people who spend time with Jesus who know him.

Just like the learners. And if you haven't seen that yet, well, take the time. Like these guys, they didn't see it all at once. And in fact, we see next, even when Peter saw that Jesus was God's king, he didn't understand then what he'd come to do. So this is the second thing we see.

Number two, that Jesus came as God's king to suffer, die, and rise again. He says that really clearly, like in verse 31, if you've got it. He then began to teach them that the Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders, the chief priests and teachers of the law, and that he must be killed. And after three days rise again, he spoke plainly about this. So he says that really clearly, this is why I've come. But Peter, the very same Peter who's just said, you are God's king, he now takes Jesus and starts telling him off. Can you believe that? This Peter says, I can see you're God's king, but I'm not going to listen to why you have come. Now, how does he do that? Well, I think it's a little bit like this. Okay, there's a big book festival in Edinburgh. Maybe you guys have been, or maybe you're going in the summer. If you love books, it's the place to be. Okay, the Edinburgh

[14 : 36] Book Festival. Now, one year, I went along, and I was standing there, and it was a bit quiet, and I was standing next to a table, a bit like this, and at the table was an author who'd written a book.

Okay, and the author was waiting for people to come and meet him, and get them to sign their books, like fans, to come and see who he was. Anyway, somebody came over to him, and she started raving to him about how much she'd loved his book, and how she'd read it 20 times, and really enjoyed it.

But, okay, it didn't take long for the author to work out that actually she was talking about someone else's book, and he hadn't written it. And it was a little bit awkward when he said, I think you've got the wrong author. I didn't write that story. That's not my story.

And I think that is what has happened with Peter and Jesus. Peter has gone to find God's king, king, but the real king from God standing in front of him wasn't the king that he was looking for. Because Peter loved the story where God's king came and destroyed all his enemies, and gave them their land back. And that was the king he's looking for, but the real king from God has a different story. The real king's story is where the king comes to suffer, be rejected, be killed, and then rise from the dead. So, Jesus is saying to his learners and his listeners, I am God's king, but my story is different than what you think it is. Now, when King Jesus says that, Peter says, know your majesty, you've got it wrong. That's not how the story goes. He saw Jesus was God's king, but he didn't see why he had to come and what he had to do. He saw something, but not everything. And we can be like that too. Perhaps we think and we believe that Jesus really is from God, and he is God's king. But we think really he should come to fix my problems now. My relationships, or my friendships, my finances, or my health, my sadness, my loneliness. And if he can't fix those problems for me or he won't do that, why should I be his follower? Well, Jesus says that God cares about those things more than we could ever, ever know, but that he didn't come the first time to fix those problems in our lives. He says he came the first time to fix our worst problem and our deepest need by dying and rising again. We have all sinned against God. We deserve to die for our sins, but

Jesus came as God's king to save us by taking what we deserve for our sins. That's why he had to die, and in rising again to give us life with God forever, even when we die. He came, he says, to save us by putting us right again with God, and he could only do that by suffering, dying, and rising again. Now, to Peter back then, like most people today, that doesn't sound like what the king from [18:21] God should do. Surely, if a king is coming from God, he should stop wars and make everyone well and stop people dying. Surely, suffering and dying himself isn't what should happen.

But Jesus told Peter off for thinking like that. He says the problem is Peter was thinking in a Peter sized way about him when he needed to think in a God sized way about him. He says, get behind me, Satan. You do not have in mind the concerns of God, but merely human concerns.

Because God's concern is making the way for us to come back to him. Our sin separates us from him. So he sent King Jesus to suffer, die, and rise again to bring us back. That is why he came.

And so if you do see Jesus this morning, and you say he is God's king, well, here's another question. Do you trust him then for what he came to do for you? Or only what you wish that he'd come to do for you?

Perhaps there are problems that you wish that Jesus had come to fix, but they're still there. And you wonder then whether you can really trust him and follow him.

[19:44] Or you need to know why Jesus really came. And to see that even though just now we still struggle and we have problems until he comes again, that he has come the first time to meet our deepest need, which is to be right with God again.

And to fix our deepest problem, which is our sin. He did that by dying and rising again. And so the very last thing for us to see here is that Jesus calls us to trust in him for his rescue.

And so give our lives here and now to follow him. Now you guys, you're listening so, so well. Thank you so much for listening. You're doing really, really well.

I wonder, have you guys ever played this game at a party? Follow the Leader. Do you know that game? Yeah. Yeah? You know that game? Sometimes called Copy the King. Maybe you know that name as well, this game.

What do you do? What do you do in that game? What do you do? One person is the leader. What does everyone else have to do? Follow them.

[20:54] Brilliant. So if the leader, I don't know, jumps up and down, everyone else has to jump up and down, right? They copy the king. They follow the leader like that. And that is how King Jesus says we need to follow him.

So he gets all his learners together and the whole crowd together. And he says, listen, whoever wants to be my disciple or learner must deny themselves, take up their cross, and follow me.

He said, hasn't he, I'm going to give myself up and suffer and be rejected. So you must deny yourselves. So you must deny yourselves. And he said he's going to be killed.

So you must take up your cross and follow me. That's what it means to follow him. Jesus is saying that following him is copying him.

Now, that doesn't mean that we have to be beaten up and spat on and nailed to a cross to follow Jesus. That is what it means for some Christians in some parts of the world.

[21:59] They are hurt and they are killed for following Jesus. But normally, for me and you, what does it look like to take up the cross, to deny ourselves?

Well, this is what I think it looks like. It looks like saying what I want comes last and what King Jesus wants comes first.

It's saying what is best for me comes last and what is best for others, what's best for my family, what's best for my friends at school, what's best for my friends at church, what's best for my church family, what's best for other people comes first for me.

That is day to day what it looks like to follow Jesus, to deny ourselves, to take up our cross and follow him. Now, if you're thinking that sounds hard, it's not hard.

It's impossible. It is impossible for me to do that. And it is impossible for you to do that because we want to come first, don't we? Boys and girls, don't you?

[23:14] Don't we want to come first? Well, Jesus says, listen, you can only live this life because you're following me. It's only when we trust in Jesus, what he came to do for us, when we know that he gave himself for us, died for us, rose again for us, when we believe that for ourselves and own him and trust in him, only then do we have the strength and the ability and the heart to live a life where we come last and he comes first?

And we come last and other people comes first. Jesus is the king, but he is an upside down king and he has an upside down kingdom. He's a king who gave his life to save us.

And so he says we are saved when we trust in him and give our lives to follow him. And boys and girls, I don't need to tell you that that's not a popular way to live, is it?

I don't know. Maybe you're the only Christian at your school or in your class. Maybe you don't know many other people outside of church that follow Jesus.

It's not a popular thing to do. Maybe we feel, maybe you feel as well a bit lonely or a bit different from other people because of that. And maybe you guys think, I just want to follow what everyone else is doing because that's so much easier, isn't it?

[24 : 44] Well, let me say, if you guys feel that way, everyone in this room feels like that. Okay, if we follow Jesus, we feel different. And if we follow Jesus, sometimes we feel lonely.

It's not a popular thing to do. But Jesus isn't trying to trick you. Listen to this. Listen to what he says. What good is it for someone to gain the whole world and yet forfeit their soul?

We don't get to keep our stuff when we die. And we can't stop ourselves. Even you guys, you guys are very young. We can't stop ourselves from growing old.

And we can't stop ourselves from dying. But Jesus says that we can live with him forever if we trust and follow him. And if we don't trust and follow him, well, we won't live with him forever and we'll lose everything.

We still don't get to keep everything in this world. So he says, what's the point in living and following what everyone else wants and having what everyone else has if you lose it in the end and don't get me?

[25 : 48] He says, why forfeit your soul to follow the crowd? So it's hard. But I want to say to you, boys and girls and church family, it's hard.

But it is so worth it. And we don't deserve that, do we? To have Jesus and nothing else. Sometimes people might make you feel ashamed of following Jesus.

But Jesus says it's only what he's done for you and only what he says about you that matters in the end. That's why we need to hear his words, isn't it? We need him every day.

So, boys and girls, we want to help you to love and trust and follow Jesus. That's what your Sunday school teachers want. That is what your church family wants. It's what your mom and dads want. What your families want. That is what we want for you. And we pray that for you. Because Jesus gave himself for us. And we give ourselves for each other.

[26 : 49] And we give ourselves for him. That's what we want most of all for you. Because he lives. Let's just pray together as we close. Lord Jesus, how we praise you.

That you so willingly gave your life that we might live. And Lord, your call is everything to us. Lord, there is no room for us to do it our way.

Forgive us, we pray. When we take you as our own savior. And then try to fit you into our mold.

Lord, we pray that you would fit us into your mold.

Lord, we pray for all of us together. Lord, if we follow you. That you would help us to follow you ever more closely. Lord, to deny ourselves and take up the cross every day.

To follow you. Lord, we pray for those who as yet do not follow you. And that they would hear your call and respond. Lord, we know that we lose everything in the end.

[28 : 00] Lord, that you hold out to us eternal life that we do not deserve. Help us pray. We pray to take hold of it today. And we pray for these boys and girls, Lord. And we thank you for them.

And we thank you, Lord, that you've given them their early years. And their time, Lord, to know Jesus. And we thank you for that. And we pray, Lord, that that would yield eternal fruit in their lives. That as they hear about Jesus and read about him and walk with him. That they would know, love, and trust in him. And be with him forever. And this we pray in Jesus' name.

Amen. Amen.