

Mark 1:1-11 Just how important is this King?

Recap. Title v3.

▲ A few years ago, Emma and I lived in Belgium. It was a great place to live, and I worked for an English-Speaking Church just outside Brussels.

One day as I was cycling to work, suddenly there was a loud siren and a police motorbike screeched to a halt in front of me. With all the air in his lungs, the policeman blew on a whistle at full strength, and held up his hand to stop all the traffic.

Moments later a couple of very expensive cars with tinted windows went past at top speed with several more police cars and motorbikes, and then in a flash they were all gone.

Who was it? Well I never found out, but it must have been someone very important, because most people don't get treatment like that in Belgium unless they are a prime minister on the way to an EU summit, or a member of the Belgian royal family.

In our passage today as we continue to look at Jesus in Mark's gospel, we see people preparing the way for him. To change the metaphor, they are rolling out the red carpet. It's a very helpful passage that shows us just how important Jesus is.

So let's look together carefully at this passage under the title:

Just how important is this King?

And to get our bearings in this passage there are 3 voices speaking:

- 1) Isaiah and the Old Testament v2-3
- 2) John the Baptist v4-8
- 3) God himself v9-11

So let's listen first of all to verses 2 to 3.

1) Isaiah

Now I don't know how familiar you are with the Bible, but as I said last week, it's basically a game of two halves. The Old Testament (BC before Christ), and the New Testament (AD- the year of our Lord): The story of Jesus, and the story of those who followed him.

▲ You know how you would never understand what's going on at a football match (offside rule!) or an ice hockey game without a bit of background, we need to understand a bit of the background of Christianity to really appreciate what's going on with Jesus, and that background is in the first half of the Bible.

We spent all of last time looking at verse 1, but it's actually one long sentence connected with v2 and 3. v1-3. So The story of the good news of Jesus is connected with thousands of years of history of the Jewish people that came before him.

Way back 700 years before Jesus was born, the people of God were in a bad way. Because of the stupid mistakes they had made turning away from God, they were invaded, their city was burnt down, and most people were captured and carried off to a distant land. It was called the Exile. You might be able to relate to that from mistakes you've made in your life.

But through a man called Isaiah, God promised that God himself was going to come and rescue his people, and take them back home.

This message must have felt as good as Nelson Mandela felt when he was told he was being let out of prison. A pathway out of captivity.

And in the same way that someone must have come to his cell to tell Mandela that he was being freed, so Isaiah was coming to the people of God to tell them that they were being freed. The time of captivity was over.

But actually the trouble was that it wasn't. The people of God **were not** really freed. They did come back to their city- Jerusalem, They did get free from captivity, but they didn't get free from Sin. They were stuck- they weren't free from themselves. They were still looking forward to the great rescuer.

And so when Mark quotes Isaiah 40:3, he's saying, at last you can be free- here's good news God is coming to the rescue.

But there's a couple of things that are really important that we need to note.

First the messenger. A messenger has to come *first* to tell people that God is coming to rescue (we'll see him in our next paragraph), confirming that we are really at this turning point in history.

But **secondly** (and this is the particular point I'd like us to see) Who is coming to rescue? **It's God himself.**

V3 Prepare the way for the LORD. Lord there means God himself- the Creator of the Universe- the LORD- the God who we meet in the Bible. This is made even more clear if like a weblink on a website, you go back to the verses quoted and look them up – perhaps with the help of the “dig deeper” sheet as you go out.

AS John the Baptist prepares the way for Jesus, he is in some way preparing the way for GOD to come and rescue his people. We could say Jesus is the GOD-KING!

This helps us see how important Jesus is. He is no less than God.

The point is that Jesus is in some way GOD coming for us.

▲ Now I guess if we asked around (you might like to do this over coffee) some of us have met famous people in our time. I'm sure you can do better than this, but I once met Rowan Atkinson (Mr Bean) and I once saw the Queen from a bit of a distance.... She's quite small.

But the one coming down the red carpet is not a film star, or even human royalty. He is divine royalty. **He's God himself.**

We don't need to get our heads around how God is three and one at the same time at this point. I'll leave the doctrine of the Trinity for another time!

But we do need to get a sense of the bigness of Jesus. He is the GOD- KING coming to our rescue.

I meet a lot of people who say, I've never seen God, I don't believe in God. In fact one of our Asda delivery men told me that he's an atheist. But if Jesus is God come into our world, then we don't need to be in any doubt. There is a God, because he has turned up. And we can read all about him in the Bible.

And if you are a Christian, you need to make sure that the Jesus that you believe in is not a Jesus of your own imagination (the political Jesus, the hippy Jesus, the environmental Jesus!), but this Jesus- who is God walking on earth come to the rescue.

Do you see as the red carpet is laid out, as the motorbike outriders prepare the way, how important Jesus is?

He is the **God- King.**

That's the first voice- from Isaiah. Let's move to the second.

2) John the Baptist

There's a lot to see here-

- v4 John's **location**. In the wilderness. (imagery)
- V4, John's **message**- of repentance (that is turning away from sin) for the forgiveness of sin. (we'll see more on that next time).
- v5 John's **effect**- like a magnet drawing thousands out to the desert
- v6 John's **clothing and food**- it's all a bit weird (but there's a verse to look up when you get home to figure out why he's wearing such uncomfortable clothing).

But can we look particularly at verse 7.

V7 And this was his message: After me comes the one more powerful than I, the straps of whose sandals I am not worthy to stoop down and untie. ⁸I baptise you with water, but he will baptise you with the Holy Spirit.

One more powerful than I.

John the Baptist was actually Jesus' cousin, but he didn't treat him just as a member of the family, he treated him as someone of incredible importance.

He saw him as a figure of greatness. The GREAT KING

It was usually the lowest slave of all that had to untie someones shoelaces and wash their feet, but John said he wasn't even worthy to do that of Jesus.

In fact we get a clue for how powerful Jesus is in verse 8. John is baptising- that is- dunking people in the river as a sign of them seeking washing that comes from God. But John says all he can do is get someone wet. "I baptise you with water". It's actually the same when we baptise someone in church. I can only get them wet.

But Jesus can baptise with the Holy Spirit. That's to say, he doesn't wash us on the outside, like a bath, he washes us on the inside by the Holy Spirit- actually changing us.

What a powerful and GREAT KING Jesus is.

▲ I was once given a plastic [Jesus figure](#) for my birthday from my sister. It was just a bit of fun, but I have to say it ended up filed under B (BIN!). The problem was that the Jesus figure was just too small. I don't just mean that physically, but the picture of Jesus that it gave was too small. A smiling plastic buddy figure that you can keep in a little box. I'm sorry but Jesus [isn't like that](#).

He is awesome. He is majestic. He is GREAT.

In this book he stills a storm with a word./ He sends thousands of evil spirits into a herd of pigs, so that they run down into a lake

and are drowned, and their owners plead with him to leave. /He turns the tables in the temple over because people were misusing God's house.

He is not a pushover, He is powerful. You don't want to get the wrong side of him.

▲ I've been the [Narnia](#) chronicles to our girls. You might know the Lion the Witch and the Wardrobe. There's a part in the book where Aslan the Jesus figure is back from the dead, and the children have a chase with him.

Here's how it's [described](#).

"It was such a romp as no one had ever had except in Narnia; and whether it was more like playing with a thunderstorm or playing with a kitten Lucy could never make up her mind".

I love that quote. It speaks of the fun and joy that CS Lewis imagined you could have in knowing Jesus, but also of his power. It's like playing with a [thunderstorm](#). [Click](#).

Now I don't need to remind you that it's possible to get the wrong side of a thunderstorm- there are trees that have been knocked down in the Oxmoor over the last couple of days.

Jesus is a wonderful King, but he is a GREAT King, one to be feared, one to be respected. Not a little plastic figure you can put in a box, but one who we should bow down and worship.

I don't think we've really understood Jesus until we can say with John the Baptist, "one more powerful than I, the straps of whose sandals I'm not worthy to untie.

But in case we stop there...There's a third voice in the final paragraph, and it's the most important of all, because it's God's voice.

3) GOD'S VOICE

Let's read on. V9. *At that time Jesus came from Nazareth in Galilee and was baptised by John in the Jordan*

That's surprising. Baptism is for those aware of their sin who need washing, but Jesus who never sinned is so close to his people, and he comes to be with them.

But then an amazing thing happens v10

Just as Jesus was coming up out of the water, he saw heaven being torn open and the Spirit descending on him like a dove

Here is God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit acting together, and v11. The Father says, "You are my Son, whom I love; with you I am well pleased."

I want you to see from this verse (which Ben helped us to learn) what a **Good King**, King Jesus is.

We see it in the warm relationship between Father and Son. Never think that God is dull or boring, a kind of Victorian headmaster who is always shouting. God is a loving Father who loves his Son.

Within God's being there is a family of love and kindness and delight. And we can be brought into that family too.

And if we were to look up Isaiah 42, our last reference today, we would discover something amazing...

Turn to page 72. Check you are awake! Isaiah 42v1-3...

*'Here is my servant, whom I uphold,
my chosen one in whom I delight;
I will put my Spirit on him,
and he will bring justice to the nations.*

*²He will not shout or cry out,
or raise his voice in the streets.*

*³A bruised reed he will not break,
and a smouldering wick he will not snuff out.*

Here's the person who has the Holy Spirit resting on him, the one who God delights in. He's a servant! He's full of kindness and compassion, and he's come to wash *our* feet. He's totally good and just v1. And he's totally gentle v3.

He's a GOOD KING.

Just how important is this King? Well he's

THE GOD KING, the GREAT KING, The GOOD KING.

I don't know what's going on in your life at the moment...

- Maybe there are great sadnesses,
- maybe there are great joys.
- Maybe there are great worries or fears or anxieties.

But do you see what a difference it would make if THIS Jesus was with you in them? We are only half a chapter into Mark's gospel, and we see that God is sending his King.

- He's GOD on earth, so we better bow before him.
- He's GREAT- so we shouldn't treat him as a piece of plastic.
- He's GOOD!- full of love and compassion, a servant who is gentle and kind, and has come to help you.

Next week we will see a bit more clearly how we should respond to him, but for the moment, will you put your joys, fears, sadnesses, anxieties in his hands?

He is real, and he turns lives around. Don't you want to get to know him more?

He's so powerful, so good, so kind, so loving. And he's come into this world to save us from our sin. He really can set us free in a way that has never happened before in history.

I don't know who went past in that police escort in Brussels those years ago, they didn't stop to say hello. But Jesus does want a relationship with each one of us. He is interested in us. Let's pray.