

The Rejected King

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 09 February 2020

Preacher: Jonathan de Groot

[0 : 00] Well, please do keep your Bible open at the passage just read for us from Mark chapter 6. And if you're joining us for the first time today, then we're glad to have you with us.

My name is Jonathan DeGroot, Minister of Christ Church Glasgow. And what we've been doing in the months since we launched, which was back in September last year, we've been looking at the Gospel of Mark.

And Mark is writing about the life of Jesus Christ. And we're looking at who Jesus is, why Jesus matters, and what it means to follow him. And so if you've never been to church before, or never thought much about Jesus, then you're in a good place just to think through for yourself who he is and why he came, and what it means for us to follow him.

So let's look down at this passage, Mark 6, verse 1 to 13. And let me pray and ask for God's help before we start. Thank you, God, that you speak to us through your word.

We thank you that your word is truth. And so we pray today that as we encounter the Lord Jesus Christ, as he, in a sense, walks off the pages of Mark's Gospel, help us to hear what you're saying to us, and help us to see why Jesus is worthy of our faith and trust.

[1 : 12] We ask this in Jesus' name. Amen. Well, you've probably heard over the past couple of weeks about the Franklin Graham UK tour. If you've never heard of Franklin Graham before, Franklin Graham is a famous US evangelist, and he had planned a tour to come over to the UK in May, June of this year, and he was going to go around different venues, big cities, and tell people the message of Jesus Christ.

And so he had an event booked at the Hydro here in Glasgow for May the 30th this year. But it was cancelled following pressure from various groups, as well as Glasgow City Council, who didn't want him to come.

And so the SMT council leader said that the event should go ahead because it could be breaking the law. And she said that permitting Franklin Graham to speak in Glasgow could, and I quote, fundamentally breach the council's statutory equality's duties.

And so the Hydro withdrew the booking for Franklin Graham to come. And his visit to Glasgow, as I said, was part of a UK-wide tour. So eight cities, Glasgow, Newcastle, Glasgow's the first, of course, Glasgow should always be first in any accounting of cities.

Glasgow, Newcastle, Sheffield, Milton Keynes, Liverpool, Cardiff, Birmingham, and London. And as of last week, all of these events have been cancelled due to petitions and due to protests from various groups putting pressure on the venues to cancel his booking.

[2 : 49] So why? Well, it's thought that Franklin Graham's Christian beliefs are offensive, and so they've got no place whatsoever in today's United Kingdom society.

Now, I don't know what you think about Franklin Graham's visit, but media attention makes one thing very, very clear, and that is that the true message of Jesus Christ is highly offensive to people in our culture today.

So this is not just about Franklin Graham and his tour, but this is something that impacts all Christians and impacts all churches who follow Jesus Christ and who want to make Jesus known to the people in this world.

And so this kind of hostility isn't a new thing, because Jesus Christ has always been rejected. And so if you follow Jesus Christ, if you profess to be a Christian in today's world, then you will be rejected too.

And that's clear from this passage in Mark 6, verse 1 to 13. So the point is, Jesus is rejected, and if you follow him, you will be rejected too.

[4 : 02] Jesus is rejected, and if you follow him, then you will be rejected too. Even if you're not a follower of Jesus and you're here today, you might be considering becoming a follower of Jesus, and if that is the case, then not everybody you know is going to like that.

In fact, some people will hate you for it, and they'll even reject you if you want to follow Jesus for yourself. And so today I'd like us to look at three things.

First of all, Jesus is rejected. We see this in verse 1 to 6. Secondly, Jesus prepares his people to be rejected. In verse 7 to 13. And thirdly, why the rejection is worth it.

So first, Jesus is rejected. Second, Jesus prepares his people to be rejected. Thirdly, why the rejection is worth it. So first of all, let's look at Jesus being rejected.

Verse 1 to 6. Jesus here is rejected in his hometown. But before we look at this, there's been a pattern of rejection emerging through the Gospel of Mark.

[5 : 05] So what have we seen so far? Well, it started with the civic and religious leaders from Jerusalem. Chapters 2, chapters 3 of Mark's Gospel. They are not oppressed by Jesus Christ.

They don't like what Jesus is saying or what Jesus is doing. And then we're told in chapter 3 at verse 6 that the Pharisees, religious leaders, and then the Herodians, secular leaders, they began a plot about how they might kill Jesus.

Mark 3, verse 6. Now these two groups, the Pharisees, Herodians, hated each other, religious and secular, right wing and left wing, but they both agree that Jesus Christ has to go.

And in chapter 3, the religious leaders thought Jesus was possessed by demons. So they thought he was evil and wicked. And then in chapter 5, Jesus goes into Gentile territory, away from Jewish territory, and the Gentiles just want Jesus to go, to get out of their region.

So everywhere that Jesus goes, everywhere he went, all the different people groups he encountered, he faced rejection. He offended people, and so he was rejected.

[6 : 16] But now Jesus comes to his hometown, which is Nazareth. Nazareth was a small village in Galilee, really tiny, insignificant town, like Clydebank perhaps, just outside Glasgow.

No really wants to go there. Nothing much ever happens there, but it's just there. And so that was like Nazareth. And we don't know anything about Nazareth. It's so small, except that that's the town where Jesus came from.

Now, at this point, Jesus had become a bit of a celebrity. So people were amazed by Jesus' miracles. And so you'd think that when he goes to his hometown, he'd be welcomed like a hero, wouldn't you?

The hero comes back, the lad from the small town, makes it big, comes back home, massive welcome party. But it doesn't happen. I wonder if you've ever been to Dunblane before.

Dunblane is, I guess, an averaged-sized town, central Scotland, but it's the hometown of Andy Murray, Wimbledon champion. And everywhere you go, if you've ever been in Dunblane, there's always something that highlights the fact that Andy Murray is from Dunblane.

[7 : 25] The local lad made it big in the world stage of tennis, the tennis champion. And so there are banners on shops. There are shops that say, Andy Murray used to buy his sweets from this newsagent.

Everybody's winning a claim on a piece of Andy Murray. Even the postbox in Dunblane and the high street painted gold because of his gold medal in the Olympics. So he's known and he's loved.

And now Jesus returns to his hometown where they saw him grow up, but he's rejected in his hometown too, just like he's been rejected everywhere else.

Yes, there was amazement, but they rejected him. And we see it in their questions. Look at verse 2 and 3. Where did this man get these things?

They asked. What's this wisdom that has been given him? What are these remarkable miracles he is performing? Isn't this the carpenter? Isn't this Mary's son and the brother of James, Joseph, Judas and Simon?

[8 : 24] Aren't his sisters here with us? And they took offence at him. Notice that they don't even mention his name. How insulting is that? But they ask, Where did this man get these things?

So they're sceptical and they're suspicious. They're basically saying, Who does he think he is? Coming back home, who does this big shot think he is?

He might have wisdom. He might do miracles. But we knew him as a kid. We know who this boy is. We know his family. We know he is nobody special.

He's ordinary. And so they're asking, Isn't this the carpenter? It's a way of saying, Jesus is just a common labourer. He is nobody special or significant.

So why should we be amazed at his teaching if he's just a carpenter? It's a sneering comment. Because they're saying, Jesus hasn't got the right religious or academic credentials.

[9 : 25] He's never been on the Cornell training course. He's not been to Edinburgh Theological Seminary. So who is he coming here teaching us? And yet the insults get worse because they ask, Isn't this Mary's son?

Do you know what they're saying when they ask that question? Because this was a society where the name and the lineage of a person always was traced through the father, never through the mother.

And it might be that Joseph was dead at this point. But even if a man's father was dead, he was still his father's son. And so by calling Jesus Mary's son was to insinuate, we're not even sure who your father is.

Remember, Nazareth was a small place. And like any small place, everybody knew everybody else and everyone knew everyone else's business.

And so people remember in small times, don't they? And so Mary, being pregnant, before she was married to Joseph, would have been hot gossip in Nazareth.

[10 : 38] And it's not the kind of thing people forget. So to call Jesus Mary's son was a huge insult. It's saying that Jesus was illegitimate.

And so they're not just questioning his identity. They're saying, you don't even have an identity. You're a nobody.

And so when we read verse 3, they took offense at him. They just didn't want him to be a right. The word there for offense, verse 3, comes from the Greek word scandalizo, which of course is where we get our words scandal, scandalized from.

And it means to cause, to stumble, or to offend. And so it's saying that they were scandalized by Jesus. Jesus was an offense to them. And so they rejected him.

And yet there's nothing subtle about this rejection either. Because what they did, they didn't do the distinctively British thing, which is you speak positively to somebody's face, but as soon as they've turned around and walked away, you stab them in the back.

[11 : 42] Brits are good at that. No, they reject Jesus to his face. And so Jesus says in verse 4, a prophet is not without honor except in his own town, among his relatives and in his own home.

So get this, it's not just the people of the time who took offense at Jesus. He's rejected by his relatives and even in his own home. So Jesus is rejected by his own family.

Isn't that startling? Can his own family reject him? So verse 5 and 6, the response is also startling. He could not do any miracles there except lay his hands on a few people who were ill and heal them.

He was amazed at their lack of faith. Doesn't mean that Jesus was unable to do miracles, but because the people lacked faith, he didn't do any miracles.

Their unbelief prevented them from seeing the signs of the kingdom that had come in Jesus Christ. Jesus wasn't going to perform for them because they had rejected him. It's interesting.

[12 : 49] Mark never mentions Jesus going back to Nazareth ever again. I don't know if he did, but it's telling, isn't it? The people had been given opportunity, but they refused to believe and they rejected Jesus.

Isn't it the case that familiarity breeds contempt? Mark, when he shared his testimony, had been familiar with church for years and yet still had rejected Jesus. So for these people, Jesus was just too ordinary to be the Messiah.

How could this ordinary man from a small town with a questionable identity be God's chosen king? It didn't make sense to them.

And so when we see why they were offended by Jesus and why they rejected Jesus, we can see why Jesus continues to be offensive today and why today he still is rejected by people.

It's because the ordinariness of Jesus is offensive to people. Because it sounds crazy to believe that Jesus of Nazareth is Lord of the universe and Saviour.

[14 : 02] And so the human heart can be too proud to bow the knee to Jesus as Lord and to admit our need of him as Saviour. Because we want to be our own Lord and Saviour.

We don't want to be accountable to anyone. And we expect that we are able to find our own way of salvation, whatever that is, ourselves. We don't need any help. And so Jesus has dismissed us just being too ordinary, too plain, too straightforward, too simple.

And so it's insulting to suggest that somebody needs Jesus Christ. And that's why Jesus is rejected. That God's way of grace subverts our human thinking.

It subverts everything we expect. And so people will say, how can you expect me to believe that God came into our world as an ordinary human being?

That he was born as a baby? That he was brought up in an insignificant town? That he worked as a carpenter? That he died as a common criminal? And yet you're claiming that he is the Lord of the universe who came to save us and who will one day return to judge us.

[15 : 17] People say, you're telling me I'm to believe all this stuff? Really? That in Jesus' sacrificial death on the cross, I can be forgiven for all the wrong things I've done and God will accept me into his family.

I'll receive a place in his kingdom which lasts forever and I'll be saved from eternal damnation in hell. You're telling me that's it? And all I have to do to be saved is put my faith in this man, Jesus?

Too simple, too ordinary. That's why so many people are offended by Jesus. The message about him seems too far-fetched for intelligent, sophisticated people.

How can Jesus be the key to everything? And so Jesus offends religious people because it's not about your religious performance and it's not about your moral living and Jesus offends irreligious people because it's not about finding your own way by doing your own thing because we can only come to God through the free grace of Jesus Christ.

And so the gospel of Jesus Christ offends everybody. It offends their pride because it says you can't do it yourself. You need help. And so Jesus is rejected because the human heart doesn't want to accept that God came as a simple carpenter for Nazareth, son of Mary.

[16 : 51] Okay, that's the first point. Jesus is rejected. But secondly, as we move on, Jesus prepares his people to be rejected. We see this in verse 7 to 13.

Jesus sends out the twelve, his disciples, warning them to expect rejection because of him. And so they're sent out with the authority of Jesus in verse 7.

He calls them, calling the twelve to him. He began to send them out two by two and gave them authority over impure spirits. He gives them this authority so they can participate in his ministry because he's deploying them in a unique and in a special way in his mission.

So verse 8, he gives them instructions. These were his instructions. Take nothing for the journey except the staff. No bread, no bag, no money in your belts. Wear sandals, button up an extra shirt.

Whenever you enter a house, stay there until you leave that time. And if any, and if any place will not welcome you or listen to you, leave that place and shake the dust off your feet as a testimony against them.

[17 : 56] So Jesus is saying, leave everything behind and go with the clothes that you're standing in. Now, it's interesting that Jesus told them to take basically what God told his people to take during their exodus from Egypt way back in the Bible book of Exodus.

Because in Exodus, God instructed his people to eat a special meal called the Passover with their cloaks tucked into their belts, with their sandals on their feet and with their staff in their hand.

Exodus chapter 12. They're to leave everything behind and be ready to go. Which helps us understand why Jesus is saying this to the 12.

Because their mission was a new venture and yet at the same time it was also a continuation of God's ultimate purposes for his people. God is taking his people somewhere.

God has a mission and he's calling people into that mission and that mission is centred around Jesus Christ and it's all about him. So, the 12 were to depend on Jesus as they went out just like the Israelites had to depend on God in the desert to provide food for them.

[19 : 10] And so there's an urgency here in this mission that Jesus gives the 12 just as there was this urgency and they escaped from Egypt and the Exodus. And so the 12 had to be free from distractions so they could focus and concentrate on their mission.

And it was Jesus' mission not theirs and so the priority was the advancement of the kingdom of God and not their comfort or their security.

And so that's the context into which Jesus prepares his people for rejection. And we see that in verse 11. And if any place will not welcome you or listen to you leave that place and shake the dust off your feet as a testimony against them.

So facing rejection for Jesus was part of his mission then and it still is part of his mission today. So Jesus' instructions for their mission are a challenge to all who are called into the mission of Jesus Christ.

Because if we don't hear what Jesus is saying we won't be ready for rejection whether as individuals who call ourselves Christians or as a church.

[20 : 24] So when we follow Jesus the priority is always the advance of God's kingdom and the advance of our own kingdoms. Because it's all too easy to seek our own advancement in life or to seek our own comfort in life.

And so whether we realise it or not we can allow so many things even good things to just squeeze out our commitment to the mission of Jesus Christ. And so whether it's family or money or career or homes or possessions or sport or leisure or holidays the more we love all these things and there's nothing wrong with them the more we love them the less likely we are to be prepared to face rejection for following Jesus Christ.

Because following Jesus isn't a spectator sport it's more like a special forces operation. It will be hard because whether we like it or not people will take offence at us and so we will be rejected.

And that's exactly what Jesus prepared the twelve for. Yes they'd be accepted by some but they'd be rejected by others. And yet you notice that the rejection goes two ways here.

Because if the disciples are unwelcome anywhere if the people didn't listen to them then they were to leave and shake the dust off their feet. And this act of shaking dust off your feet for the Jews was a symbolic one.

[21 : 54] If a Jew travelled outside of Israel when they returned back to Israel they would shake the dust off their feet because the foreign dust wouldn't be allowed to contaminate their own land and they wanted to disassociate themselves from where they'd been.

And so by doing the very same the disciples were disassociating themselves from people who wouldn't receive them. Meaning that the people who had heard the message of Jesus but rejected it were accountable to God for their response.

And so the twelve went out with Jesus' authority and they did the same things that he did. Verse 12 they went out and preached that people should repent and they drove out many demons and anointed with oil to many people who were ill and healed them.

All of this testified to the fact that the kingdom of God had come near in Jesus Christ. All these things were happening. Now that Jesus had arrived the good news about him would be proclaimed and the signs that Jesus is the saviour the Messiah were that all these amazing things were happening signs of the kingdom.

But the message repent people must repent. Repent means a change of mind. In other words we're to stop living life against God change direction and live life for God.

[23 : 22] So repentance or to repent means this radical reorientating of our lives of everything away from ourselves and towards God.

And that's what it means to be a Christian. To be a follower of Jesus Christ. So Jesus prepares his people to be rejected and it is part of the normal experience of everybody who calls themselves a Christian.

If you're a Christian you'll in some sense understand the rejection that you have faced because of Jesus Christ. And that's why we should never be surprised when rejection happens.

And yet sadly I think Christians and churches fear rejection so much that we can bend over backwards so as not to cause any offence to anyone.

And of course there's a right kind of rejection and a wrong kind of rejection isn't there? So being rejected because you are living for Jesus Christ and you are speaking about Jesus Christ is one thing.

[24 : 30] And it's another thing to be rejected or cause offence because we're obnoxious, we're difficult, we rub people up the wrong way either by what we do or by what we say.

That's a wrong reason to be rejected for Jesus Christ. And so it's worth asking isn't it? If you profess to follow Jesus Christ, when was the last time you faced, when was the last time I faced rejection because of him?

Perhaps a lack of rejection shows that we're not really on mission for Jesus, that we're not really sensing the urgency of this mission that Jesus has called us into, but we're just drifting along and we're enjoying a nice, comfortable existence.

whereas the reality is that if you believe the gospel of Jesus Christ, if you live out the gospel of Jesus Christ, if you share the gospel of Jesus Christ in today's culture, you will be regarded as offensive, unloving, bigoted, narrow-minded, intolerant, and accused of hate speech.

That is just par for the course if you really want to be serious about following Jesus today. And so rejection is unavoidable if we're going to follow Jesus, but it's worth it.

[25 : 52] It's worth it. Why is it worth it? Well, our third point is rejection is worth it. Why? Well, Jesus was rejected. Jesus prepares his people for rejection.

And so if we follow Jesus today, we too will be rejected. But it is worth it. And we need to grasp this whether we call ourselves a Christian or not because anyone who fails to respond to Jesus in repentance and faith will ultimately be rejected by God.

And so it's far better to be rejected for Jesus in this world than it is to be rejected by God and spend eternity apart from him in hell.

That is a far better rejection than this rejection. rejection. And so rejecting Jesus Christ is the biggest mistake that anyone could ever make with their lives because it has eternal consequences.

And so being rejected for Jesus is worth it. But you may be thinking, well, if it is worth it, how are we meant to face this rejection? When it comes, how can we cope with it?

[27 : 06] Well, we're never going to cope with it if we're only thinking about ourselves. ourselves. That's why Jesus sent the twelve out with his authority and with his instructions and with nothing else because it forced them to put their faith in him.

And so our faith must be in Jesus because he is the one who faced the ultimate rejection for us. At the end of his life, Jesus was rejected again.

Yes, he was rejected by the religious authorities and he was rejected by the secular authorities and he was nailed to a Roman cross. He was crucified.

He was rejected, but he was also rejected by God the Father. On the cross, Jesus cried out, my God, my God, why have you forsaken me?

So Jesus experienced the ultimate rejection as he hung on the cross bearing our sin. his mission was to come and die in a place, to pay our penalty, to face our punishment.

[28 : 15] And so Jesus got the ultimate rejection from God so that we could get the ultimate acceptance from God. And so it's through faith in Jesus Christ that we are accepted forever.

And so what's the worst kind of rejection that you could face in this life? I reckon it's being killed. If somebody killed you for following Jesus, that would be bad. But that is as bad as it's going to get.

And yet if we had already accepted for eternity, then death doesn't even change that. And so knowing this will enable us to keep following Jesus no matter what we face.

Let's pray. Thank you, our God, for sending your son Jesus Christ, the one who was rejected in this world back then when he lived, the one who is rejected now, and yet he was rejected by you at the cross so that we could be accepted.

We thank you that through his willingness to suffer and die in our place, you accept us for all eternity and we find a home with you. And so we pray that that certain future hope would give us the strength for all that we face in this life now.

[29 : 33] We ask it in Jesus' name. Amen.