

Jesus - The Unexpected Leader

1. Intro & Context

- Returning to John's gospel
 - John provides wonderfully rich portrayal of Jesus
 - So far John 1-5 has shown us that Jesus is
 - Word of God, Lamb of God, Son of God, Bridegroom, Temple, Saviour, Source of eternal life, source of satisfaction, Over-comer of death, Lord of the Sabbath and the Judge of all

- Picking up our series where we left off in chapter 6
- It's a great section of John's gospel ... Ch 5-10 that continues to outline the identity and work of Jesus
- As we get into Ch 6 ... going to see what Jesus has to say and what he does is challenging
 - John 6:60 - *On hearing it, many of his disciples said, "This is a hard teaching. Who can accept it?"*
 - John 6:66 - *From this time many of his disciples turned back and no longer followed him.*
 - This is not popular > this is hard teaching
 - This is not the best passage to be preaching if want to grow a congregation!
 - Jesus not into winning votes in a popularity contest like The Voice
 - He speaks the truth about himself and it's often confronting and challenging

- So the next seven weeks as we look at John's gospel ... we're going to be challenged to take the Jesus we believe in and test it

- Because different people will have different views of Jesus
- Often those views have been shaped by

- Culture > long forgotten scripture classes > Hollywood movies > Discovery Channel documentaries > along with our own preconceptions and agendas
- As a result, some people like to think of Jesus as [SLIDE x4]
 - Baby Jesus – this is the Jesus who is meek and mild and because it gives them warm and fuzzies
 - Revolutionary Jesus – this is the Jesus who’s ready to save people out of their social oppression
 - Gangster Jesus ... who’s ready to judge the scum of the earth
 - Buddy Jesus ... this is the Jesus who’s your best mate and who's got your back no matter what
- The question is ... have I created my own version of Jesus
 - Or is the Jesus I believe in the Jesus of history
- As we look at John’s gospel over the next few weeks, we're going to see if we understand, believe in and follow the real Jesus ...
 - or have we somehow skewed our idea of Jesus into to
 - something that suits our agenda
 - someone we're more comfortable with
- Relevant for us whether you're non-believer or a believer
- This morning we're going to be looking at Jesus the Unexpected Leader
 - the power of the king
 - the rescue of the king
 - the kingdom of the king

2. The Power of the King [SLIDE]

- These verses in chapter 6 clearly portray the divine power of Jesus
- But before we can get into the detail of the account ... we need to address the issue of miracles

- Because there'll be many that hear a story like this and dismiss it out of hand ... because in their worldview miracles like this just don't happen
- It defies logic and their experience
- So it's either just a myth or an allegory made up by the disciples

- But I want to show that we're meant to understand this account as a real event of history and why we can trust it to be so

- Firstly ... it is one of the only miracles recorded in all four gospels
 - M, M, L & J
 - There are four independent accounts of this happening

- Secondly John gives us lots of detail here that place it in real time and a real place
 - Where told where it happened
 - On the shore of the Sea of Galilee ... also known as the Sea of Tiberias¹
 - John describes the location
 - Mountain / hill
 - v10 - plenty of grass

- When it happened ... it was spring time > nearing the time of the Passover festival

- Given lots of detail of what happened
 - 5,000 men, not including women and children
 - Men named > Phillip, Andrew, Simon Peter's brother
 - Detail about the bread and fish
 - barley loaves ... this was the staple food of the poor
 - fish were small > like little pilchards > just a mouthful

¹ Reason it was also known as the Sea of Tiberias because the city of Tiberias was established there around 10 years earlier in honour of the Roman Emperor Tiberias

- You get the picture ... this reads as eye witness material
 - It doesn't read as myth
 - Myths tends to generalise and lack historical detail because the detail is unknown... the writer wasn't there
- John's account has much detail
 - It's historical narrative
 - It happened in real place, in real time, with real people ... these are real, events

- Now there are some scholars who will try and explain this story away and say
 - Jesus didn't really feed the crowd with the five loaves and two fish
 - What really happened was
 - Everyone was hungry
 - This little boy got out his lunch and shared it with those around him
 - This inspired everyone else to share their lunch too
 - And this is why everyone was able to be fed
 - A little like having a pot luck lunch on the hillside
 - And over years, the story grew and grew into the story Jesus feeding everyone

- But this doesn't work ... for a number of reasons
 - Look at John 6:26 ... Jesus is speaking the next day to the crowd who have followed him to the other side of the lake and he rebukes them for their materialistic motive
 - *"I tell you the truth, you are looking for me, not because you saw miraculous signs but because you ate the loaves and had your fill"*
 - Clearly ... there **had** been a miraculous feeding the previous day and that's why the crowd were keen to come to Jesus the next day
 - If it hadn't been Jesus feeding them ... then they wouldn't have been so interested

- In addition ... John records there were over 5,000 men there that day ... plus women and children
 - So ... this was a very public miracle > seen by thousands of people
 - It was commonly accepted that the gospel accounts of Jesus life began circulating within 30-40 years of Jesus life
 - And so ... if the miracle hadn't happened ... there would've been people who could've refuted it and Christianity would not have got off the ground
 - The gospels would've had no credibility

- When it comes to the miracle of Jesus walking on water
 - Some will try and explain what happened by saying that Jesus was walking on spit / sand bar
 - He wasn't really walking on water ... he was just walking in ankle deep in water along a sand bar and the disciples didn't know about it, Jesus did

- Problem with this theory of course is disciples had been lifelong fishermen in the region and would've known that lake like the back of their hand
 - If there'd been any sand bars or spits in that lake they would've known about it and been careful to avoid it so as not to run their boat aground

- **Application**

- There will be some who are sceptical of such events and made the decision that these things just don't happen
 - They won't allow this evidence to be considered as evidence
 - And they'll have made the decision that this cannot possibly have happened on the basis of how they see the world

- To be fair ... this is not a very rational way to assess evidence
 - That is ... I decide what is admissible as evidence before I even consider it and weigh it up

- Here is historical evidence ...
 - an account of people who were actually there
 - set in real time and history ...
 - who speak of something extraordinary about an extraordinary man who has divine power
 - Jesus Christ, the Son of God

- God has broken into our world fully God, fully man in history
- And unless you are prepared to say
 - "well I'm not going to consider the evidence because I've already made up my mind" ... which is scientific prejudice ...
 - then we must at least think about it and wonder whether it might give us food for thought (pardon the pun)
- This is a solid fact > Jesus is the king with divine power

3. The Nature of the King [SLIDE]

- As we read the gospels they're revealing to us who Jesus is, what he is like and what he came to do
 - We're not free to make stuff up about Jesus and who we think he is
 - We need to see what the evidence says about him
- And the evidence here is revealing something very particular about the nature of Jesus

- The first clue we get here is that John tells us in v4 that the Passover was near
 - The Passover was the most significant religious festival for Jews held each year in the spring
 - It was a festival to commemorate the rescue of Israel out of slavery from Egypt under the leadership of Moses
 - Then God brought Israel through the Red Sea, through the desert and into the promised land

- And on the way through the desert to the Promised Land, God miraculously provided them with manna
 - For forty years ... God in is sovereign power sustained them and provided them with bread from heaven
- From that time onwards, every Jewish family celebrated the Passover with a special meal, words and rituals to remember God's amazing rescue of them

- **Illustration – ANZAC Day**
- If you want a modern day equivalent ... like our ANZAC Day
- On ANZAC Day we remember a very significant day in our history
 - Words are read > Ode
 - Rituals are performed > Last Post, wreaths laid; march, two-up

- So at the time that Jesus does this miracle, every faithful Jewish family was anticipating the Passover meal and looking forward to an even greater rescue from God's judgment
- John wants us to know that this is the context for Jesus miraculous feeding > it's nearly time for the Passover

- Now key to the Exodus rescue was the prophet Moses
- It was Moses who
 - led them through the water
 - fed them with bread from heaven and
 - led them out from under God's judgement ... to freedom from God's judgment in the promised land

- And just before Moses died he gave a series of speeches to the Israelites in Deuteronomy [SLIDE]
 - *Deuteronomy 18:15-19* ¹⁵ *The LORD your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among your own brothers. You must listen to him.*

¹⁶ For this is what you asked of the LORD your God at Horeb on the day of the assembly when you said, "Let us not hear the voice of the LORD our God nor see this great fire anymore, or we will die." ¹⁷ The LORD said to me: "What they say is good. ¹⁸ I will raise up for them a prophet like you from among their brothers; I will put my words in his mouth, and he will tell them everything I command him. ¹⁹ If anyone does not listen to my words that the prophet speaks in my name, I myself will call him to account.

- So when you consider
 - This event happened just before the Passover > a ritual instituted under Moses
 - That Jesus miraculously feed the crowd > just as Moses has fed the people with bread from heaven
 - Here then is the new Moses generously feeding and providing for Israel

[SLIDE]

- So it's not surprising when the people see the miracle ... they join the dots and say in v14
 - "Surely this is the Prophet who is to come into the world."
 - Here's the one like Moses that he told us about
 - This is what we've been waiting for
- On the face of it ... the crowd has nailed it
 - In performing this miracle ... Jesus is serving notice ...
 - "I am the great one with power > I came where the manna came from"
- And the crowd are pretty pumped about this
 - Here's the prophet we've been waiting for; here's the Messiah
 - God's kingdom is about to break in
 - The time of restoration and renewal is upon us

- But they misunderstand the nature of Jesus and his kingship
 - They have a false view of Jesus
 - *v15 Jesus, knowing that they intended to come and make him king by force, withdrew again to a mountain by himself*
- They rightly identify Jesus as the one who will come and rescue and deliver them into God's kingdom
- But they think Jesus is going to do it by political or military power like
 - Babylonians had done under Nebuchadnezzar
 - Greeks under Alexander the Great
 - Romans under the Emperors
- They think Jesus is a political / military leader who is going to overthrow their Roman overlords by force and establish a political rule over them
- You can imagine ...
 - 5,000 men taking Jesus to Jerusalem ... announcing him as their king ... at Passover ... is a massive, massive statement
 - Here he is ... here's our ruler ... he's going to save us
- Jesus knows this is the intent of the crowd who are there
 - He'll have nothing to do with it
 - And so he withdraws from the crowd to be by himself
- While the crowd has correctly identified Jesus as the new and better Moses ... they've misunderstood what type of leader he's come to be
 - They've misunderstood his nature
 - Jesus hasn't come to be a political or military king who would rescue them like Moses from slavery and oppression of the Romans
 - He's come to bring rescue from slavery and oppression of sin, Satan and death
- And he wasn't going to allow the crowd to hijack his agenda for theirs
 - Jesus came to be king not by being raised up on a throne ... but by being raised up on a cross

- He would go to Jerusalem not to wield a spear and bring judgment ... but to receive the thrust of a spear and bear judgment
- And so he withdraws so the crowd are unable to impose their agenda on him

- **Application**
- You see how the crowd have misunderstood the nature of Jesus
- They want him to conform to their preferences and agenda

- **Left Wing Jesus**
- Many Christians in third world think like the Jews of Jesus day ... they'll see Jesus as the means for liberation from dictatorial regimes and oppressive life circumstances
- That Jesus died to bring us freedom ... and so the thing Christians need to do is free those who are oppressed

- But that's not really our context here in Sydney
 - We're more likely to think of Jesus as in other ways, like ...

- **NRMA Jesus**
- Jesus is like the NRMA man ... you only call on him in an emergency
- Life is going well for you ... no need for Jesus > put him on the shelf
- Hit a rough patch > lose your job, rough time with illness or kids, life's tough
 - "Hey Jesus ... I really need you > Help me!"
 - Just bring him out when you need him

- **Vending Machine Jesus**
- The idea that Jesus is some kind of vending machine
- It's not about what you can do for Jesus ... it's about what you can get from him or out of him

- Vending machine Jesus tells you that if you pray to and worship Jesus ... he will give you what you want
 - healing from sickness > happy marriage > well adjusted kids > material prosperity > be successful > realise your dreams
 - You just need to come to Jesus and he will bless you with all the things you need for a happy life

- **Moral Jesus**
- Moral Jesus is the Jesus we look to for our morals
- He's the good teacher > the one without sin > taught us to love our neighbour
 - This is the Jesus non-Christian parents send their kids to scripture to hear about > want them to learn some morals so they behave well at home
 - He's the Jesus of the WWJD wrist bands
 - He's the Jesus we're in danger of focusing on when we parent our children
 - He's just a moral example for us to follow

- And these are complete misunderstandings of the real Jesus as he reveals himself in the scriptures
 - These are versions of Jesus we want to impose on him to suit our own agenda and preferences

- But Jesus didn't come with divine power for us to **use** in order to meet our own agendas and appetites
 - He came with divine power to fulfil his **own** agenda
 - Which was to be the true and better Moses who would rescue us
 - But the way he would do it was by laying down his life for us

4. The Kingdom of the King [SLIDE]

- Now the crowd had the wrong idea about Jesus and the kingdom he would reign over
 - They were only concerned with an earthly kingdom
 - They thought the kingdom of God was limited by geography, time and race
- But it's clear as you read through the rest of the New Testament that Jesus you see Jesus kingdom is far greater
- We see this in John 18:36 when Jesus is about to be sentenced to death by the Roman governor, Pontius Pilate
- Jesus says to Pilate
 - *"My kingdom is not of this world. If it were, my servants would fight to prevent my arrest by the Jews. But now my kingdom is from another place."*
- Jesus has come to bring a kingdom far greater than any earthly kingdom we could ever aspire to or imagine
 - His miracles give us a glimpse of what that will look like
 - They point to a kingdom that's
 - Not a political kingdom
 - Not an earthly realm
 - Not ruled over by political leaders or kings
 - His kingdom is eternal and it will be a complete renewal of the world as we know it
- We see glimpses of that in the divine power Jesus reveals in his miracles
 - Heals the sick, blind, lame, deaf
 - Walks on water
 - Raises the dead
 - Casts out evil spirits
 - Delivers miraculous amounts of wine, fish, and bread

- What they show is the kingdom that Jesus is king over and which he is ushering is a
 - kingdom without sin, pain, sickness or death
 - kingdom without selfishness, injustice, hurt and crying
 - kingdom of abundance and goodness and feasting
 - kingdom of joy > perfect relationships > mutual love
 - kingdom over which he has total power and authority

- Very easy here in Sydney to lose sight of that think that we're already in heaven
 - We've got it so good
 - One of the top cities in the world to live in
 - We've got the beaches, the climate
 - Social welfare, education and health care
 - Political stability and security
 - Great wealth and material prosperity

- And often it's our political leaders we look to, to provide us with all this
- I remember during the 2008 presidential elections in the US when Barak Obama was elected president
 - How whole country was swept along in a tide of euphoria and optimism
 - Obama was ushered into Washington as the saviour of USA
 - The one who was going to bring about the renewal Americans so badly wanted

- Now 8 years later
 - Donald Trump's campaign is in full swing
 - Trump is telling everybody how much of a failure Obama is ... and how he's going to fix it all
 - Once again, half of America is going nuts for him to deliver them the America they want

- Whether it's the Republicans and Democrats in USA or the Liberal and Labor parties here in Australia ...
 - Often we look to our political leaders to provide for us with our security, financial prosperity, social welfare, good health care ... all the things we need for a good life
 - And to a certain extent they can ... but
 - they can never fix all our problems
 - they can never fully deliver
 - they can't guarantee what we desire ... which is why we get sick of them and vote them out every few years

- So we need to be on our guard of thinking that Sydney is as good as it gets and our leaders are the ones who are going to deliver it for us
 - Friends, Sydney ain't heaven
 - And Malcolm Turnbull or Donald Trump are not the messiah

- But Jesus Christ is
 - And he hasn't come to win an election by promising to satisfy your materialistic and political desires
 - He's come as the king ... who has divine power to rescue you and I from judgment ... and bring us into God's eternal kingdom

- The challenge to you and I ... is to ensure we're not creating our own version of Jesus to suit our own agenda and preferences
 - Rather we need to align ourselves with his agenda and his calling
 - And heed the words of Deut 18 and listen him

- Next week ... Jesus will continue to spell out the implications of this miracle
- So do make sure you here next week as we carry on

PRAY