

## **Mark 8:22- 26 Jesus Acts Outrageously**

This morning, I'm not going to go into any of the peripherals; where they were, or why Jesus led the man out of the village; not that these things aren't important, of course they are, they're in the Word. But I believe I should major on Jesus' outrageous behaviour – starting with spitting in someone's eyes.

This is the second time Jesus spits on someone, ears and now in someone's eyes. What a thing to do! Spitting is considered to be the lowest form of showing contempt and hatred – negative and cursing. Yet Jesus turns it into a positive and healing action – but outrageous.

Jesus' ministry was to usher in the New Covenant through the shedding of his blood - which is necessary to remit sin *Hebrews 9:22*. The New Covenant utterly replaced the Old – that's the point of Paul's letter to the Galatians. And Jesus sets out his stall with the Sermon on the Mount –'you have heard – but I tell you!' So just by this upheaval of religious values Jesus is outrageous. Change anything in the life of God's people and you will get outrage – even moving the chairs!

There are a lot of things Jesus did that outraged people;

He was caught talking to a woman by a well – on his own! Bad enough talking to a woman on his own, but an immoral woman. And even worse, one of those inferior mixed-race Samaritans. And yet as a result of his outrageous behaviour a whole village got saved. *John 4:1-42*

On another occasion he refused to sanction the stoning of an

adulteress and pointed out that self-righteousness is no righteousness, causing the accusers to slink away. He saved a woman's life by interfering in a legal matter, but gave her a stern injunction to behave herself in future. As an aside, why no mention of the man? *John 8:1-11*

He broke the Sabbath by eating raw grain – then used King David as an excuse. *Luke 6:1-3*

Jesus identified with the poor and disadvantaged. He even ate with sinners! *Luke 15:2*. Which disgusted the Pharisees no end.

He did an unholy, unhealthy, dangerous thing – he touched a leper. *Matthew 8:1-3*.

To our freewheeling, too liberal society 2,000 years later, much of this wouldn't matter, 'so what?' we may say, but to the strict, legalistic Jewish society, it was outrageous. And in fairness to the Jewish government they were trying to keep their national and religious identity together in the face of the pantheistic totalitarian government of the Romans, these floutings of law and custom would be absolutely outrageous.

I don't doubt that when the temple authorities were planning Jesus' execution these things loomed large in their hearts and minds.

But perhaps the worst outrage – worthy in itself of execution – was Jesus claiming to be the personal son of God, and using God's most holy name for himself, "Before Abraham was – I Am." *John 8:58*

I find it understandable and forgiveable why the religious leaders

found Jesus so outrageous, but the fact remains that they let their traditional and religious shibboleths blind them to the reality of the Messiah that they had looked forward to for so long. And that they should consider their hideboundness an excuse for political murder.

Now to the Christian Church. The central word is *Christian*. When the church lets itself be lured away from the very Son of God, the Anointed Prophet, Priest and King – and our Saviour, Friend and Brother – we should get outraged. When I read in a supposedly Christian leaflet that the only mention of Jesus was to say that the pagans were there before him, I am very troubled – yes, and outraged and can only pray that God the Holy Spirit will move over these people.

What about the Church that Jesus is building? What outrages us?

*Pause to consider*

There are things we shouldn't be outraged by and things we should.

When the church is outraged by trivia; by the breaking of non-Scriptural traditions and habits, breaking of procedures, or not doing things *our* way, then if we are outraged we need to repent, judge with right judgement, and seek to live by Scripture.

But there are things we should be outraged by;

- ❑ Any form of abuse and cruelty on people or groups or animals should outrage us.
- ❑ Corruption and dishonesty at all levels of society, but especially those

who use their power to feather their own nests.

- ❓ Dishonesty especially by governments national or local regardless of party, or by heads of organisations and commerce.
- ❓ Crime. There is no such thing as a victimless crime.
- ❓ I find myself outraged, hurt and weeping when a member of the church falls grievously and constantly into sin. We all sin and fall short of God's Glory, but we have a Saviour who will forgive on repentance.

Steve Aisthorpe says in his book 'Rewilding the Church' said that Jesus 'while not blatantly anti-institutional *is* consistently subversive.'

So if Jesus was outrageous in addressing sins and sickness, is the church not called to be bold and outrageous in the face of an increasingly sin-ridden society? A friend of mine said that all Christians should be dissenters, (To which I reply, 'no they shouldn't!') But seriously, there is so much wrong in society – and indeed in the Church that we are called to address; we are meant to be salt and light; preservative, illumination and guidance, shining as a city set on a hill.

I don't expect anyone to smash windows, throw stones, storm Parliament or pull down statues, but there are metaphorical stones to throw, organisations to storm and idols to pull down. Listen: (*2 Corinthians 10:3-5*)

- ❓ Our basic weapon is a life lived as well as we can by the Holy Spirit and grace. Spiritual warfare begins and ends with a life sold out in

love and thankfulness to our Saviour, Friend and Brother. And revealed in love of neighbour. And our weapons are wielded in outrageous love and grace; the *agape love* that is the boundless love of Yahweh; Father/Jesus/Holy Spirit. I've given over arguing about doctrine, I just want to show God's love.

- ❑ The Word of God is a two-edged sword which will cut away everything not pleasing to God – in us and in others. Wield it!
- ❑ Above all, underneath all, around all is prayer. The prayer of a righteous person is powerful and effective, James tells us.

But when we use these weapons, be prepared to be considered outrageous. Prepare to be mocked. Maybe even arrested – yes it happens in UK. No-one likes to have people feel outraged; no-one likes to be mocked – much less arrested. But if we are to follow our Jesus there are times when we may be - just as he was.

We don't go out of our way to be outrageous – we merely affirm the glorious and luminous teaching of Jesus. We hold out the Good news of Jesus. And let the chips fall where they may. That will cause outrage.

All of us were born for such a time as this. We are called to do something, but we are not called to tut or moan about the shortcomings of church, state or that person in church that irritates you. Not even the preacher – though this one has many failings worthy of tutting. God has called us to action. To repeat - anything that falls short of

God's plan for the respect – even love – that humans are called to show each other needs addressing – crime, cruelty, sexism, racism, snobbery, mistreatment of people with Special Needs, animals or people too weak to defend themselves. Or the environment.

So I give you some questions for a breakout room chat;

1. What most bugs you about the cruelty or unfairness you see and hear of?
2. What is God calling you to do about that which bugs you most?