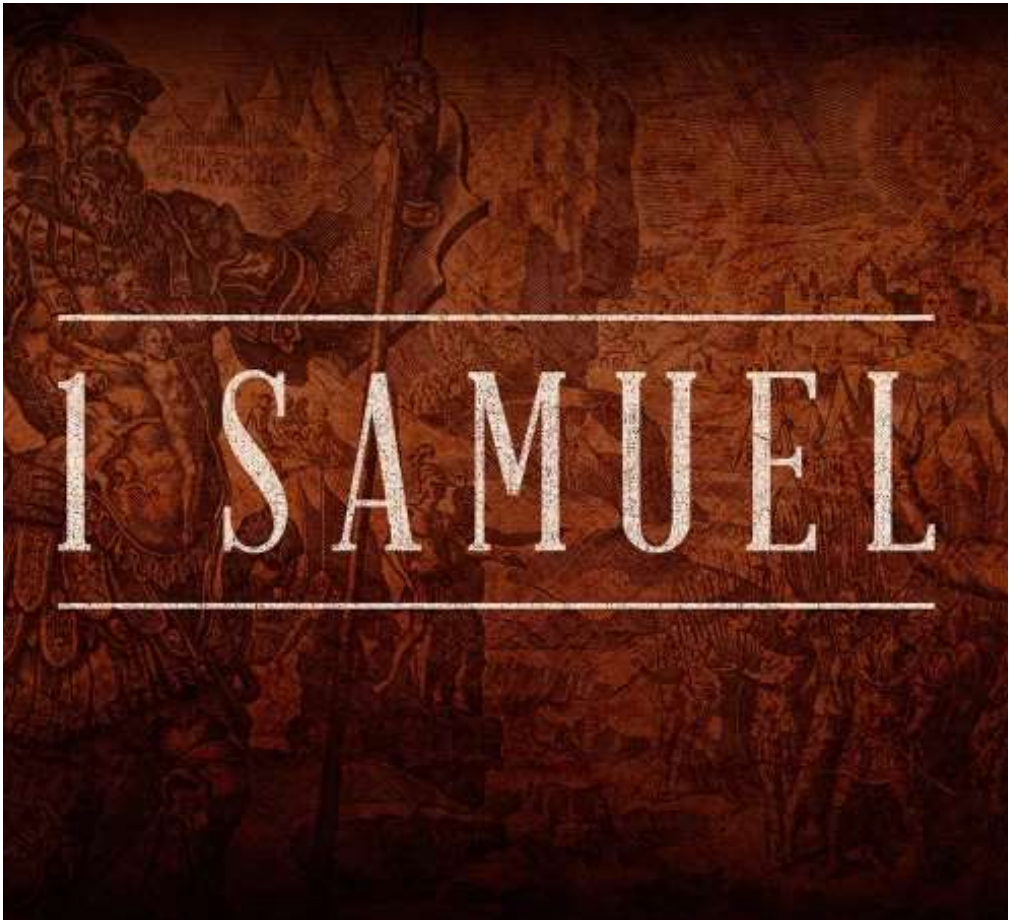


Let's Worship God

15th-20th June 2020

1 Samuel



1 SAMUEL

Monday - 1 Samuel 9:1-21 - The Asked-for King

Israel, having experienced the blessings of God's rule under Samuel (7:13-14), have rejected God's rule and wanted a king of their own choosing (8:7) - specifically, a king like the nations (8:5). They are being squeezed by the Philistines to the West and the Ammonites to the East. These strong military nations are pressing and probing. The Philistines even have a garrison deep in Israel's territory (v5). So they want a king to go before them and fight their battles. They will put their hope and trust in him to deliver and protect them. They want a strong and mighty warrior king like the nations. In chapters 9 and 10 we're introduced to their longed-for deliverer. Re-read verses 1 and 2 to see the description of him. His name means 'asked-for' - he is the asked-for king. He is what and whom they think they need. He is the desire of their hearts: "to whom is all the desire of Israel turned...if not to you" (v20). File away that phrase in verse 20. It's crucial to understanding Saul. He is the king after their own hearts.

As we're introduced to him we see that he is indeed a king like the nations. His father, Kish, is a man of wealth (v1). He has money, means and might. He is a man of influence. He may even be part of the nobility - the word used can carry that connotation. Saul is physically impressive too - "a handsome young man" (v2). He has looks and youth on his side. He is in his prime: attractive and strong. He's taller than anyone else in the land - he caught your eye. What a combination: money and might. Here is everything you could look for. One writer notes: "If a king were to be distinguished by outward appearance, Saul is every inch the king." Here is the 'asked-for' one - the chosen one.

What king does your heart ask for? Someone or something with good looks, physical strength, money, or the means to make life easy? Be careful what you ask for.

Questions

1. What king is your heart asking for?

Prayer Points

1. Pray that the desires of our hearts would be set on the right thing.
2. Use prayer points from your congregation.
3. Pray for family matters.

Memory Verse

"For I have seen my people, because their cry has come to me." 1 Samuel 9:16b

Praise: Psalm 78A:14-15 - See www.rpglobalalliance.org for Psalm tune helps.

1 SAMUEL

Tuesday - 1 Samuel 9:1-21 - The Unsuitability of Our Choice

Saul is the king that Israel's hearts desired (v20), and the one they asked for (the meaning of his name). Rich and handsome, he was all anyone could want. But from the start there are hints of weaknesses and flaws that show his unsuitability.

First, there is his height. He is the only Israelite ever noted for his height. Being tall is not a bad thing in itself. But in the Bible's story it is a frequent feature of Israel's enemies in the nations around them. Remember they wouldn't enter the Promised Land in Numbers because they seemed like grasshoppers compared to the native residents? Soon we'll meet another tall man, Goliath. He too is an enemy of God's people. It's not wrong for Saul to be tall, but to the reader it is ominous.

Second, the search for lost donkeys reveals Saul to be a pretty useless shepherd. Someone wrote: "Saul couldn't track and find a few fairly large animals that ultimately found their own way home." Again, not a sin, but ominous. In these times kings were often depicted as shepherds, and the great leaders of God's people (Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Moses, David) were skilful shepherds. Saul can only wander aimlessly around (v4) before being told that the donkeys found themselves.

Third, his lack of religious knowledge is worrying. Samuel is the political and religious leader of Israel. He is the hero that delivered them from Philistine oppression. He is known through all Israel (3:20). Saul lives just 5 miles from him, in a region Samuel was known to travel round (6:16). And Saul has no idea who he is, not even recognising him when he is pointed out (v11-13, 18-19).

Fourth, all the way through the story, it is his servant who shows the initiative. The servant knows about Samuel, suggests going to see him, provides the means to pay him, and insists on going. Saul is passive. Do you see the picture that has subtly built up of Saul? Passive, a bit incompetent, ignorant, and unspiritual. He seemed a great choice as king. He wasn't. This is always the case when we choose our own 'king'. You'll be faced with a choice sometime today: serve a 'king' of your own choosing, or obey God. Remember Saul.

Questions

1. What 'king' do you often try to choose over God? Think of it in terms of: whom do you obey and where do you seek happiness?
2. What are the weaknesses of that 'king'?

Prayer Points

1. Ask God to show you the unsuitability of the 'kings' you've chosen - the weaknesses that lead to our ruin.
2. Use prayer points from your congregation.
3. Pray for family matters.

Memory Verse

"For I have seen my people, because their cry has come to me." 1 Samuel 9:16b

Praise: Psalm 119:Part 2A - See www.rpglobalalliance.org for Psalm tune helps.

1 SAMUEL

Wednesday - 1 Samuel 9:1-21 - The Ordinary Ways of God's Mercy

Saul looks every inch the King, but as we looked closer yesterday we saw cracks. These cracks will grow into disastrous fractures in time. But despite all this, God is going to show his mercy to his people - v16. Given the request for a king was personal rejection and rebellion, God's mercy is extraordinary. But extraordinary mercy dresses in ordinary clothes. This is a meandering story about a rural lad looking for lost donkeys, failing to find them, worried about his parents' worry, and turning up in the locality of a famous prophet during a feast. It might meander, but it is being pushed by the hand of God, and this is suddenly revealed in verse 15-16. Here is God's hand at work in very ordinary affairs, bringing mercy in the midst of ordinary life. God will mercifully save his rebellious people. As one author writes, "Israel's stupidity cannot wither God's compassions." We saw this at the start of 1 Samuel too. God's mercy coming through the family fighting and a barren womb. This is the usual channel for God's mercy - ordinary life.

Where will you experience God's mercy? In the ordinary rhythms and routines of work, family and leisure. It will dress in plain clothes, and you will often miss it. But it's there, pervading your home, your office, your friendships, your family. Where will unbelievers come into contact with God's mercy? In your ordinary life. They will see God at work as they see our lives. Often we compartmentalise outreach - it happens during set times and set activities: Youth Club, Mission Week, Parents & Toddlers. But God works his mercy into our ordinary lives. And people will see it and begin to feel it as they enter into normal life with us, sitting on our sofas, eating at our dinner tables, seeing how we respond to troubles, seeing how we deal with stresses, seeing how we speak to our family. God showed Israel his mercy through wandering donkeys.

Questions

1. How can you involve others in ordinary everyday life, to display God's extraordinary mercy?

Prayer Points

1. Ask God to show you where you can display his mercy in ordinary life.
2. Use prayer points from your congregation.
3. Pray for family matters.

Memory Verse

"For I have seen my people, because their cry has come to me." 1 Samuel 9:16b

Praise: Psalm 103:1-3, 10-11 - See www.rpglobalalliance.org for Psalm tune helps.

1 SAMUEL

Thursday - 1 Samuel 9:15-10:16 - The Equipping & Encouraging of God's Word

Extraordinary things begin to happen in Saul's ordinary life. He is told that the donkeys are found, and all Israel have set their heart on him (9:20). Bizarrely, he finds himself as the guest of honour at a feast he wasn't invited to (9:22). It is a fulfilment of 2:8 - Benjamin is the 'least of the tribes' (9:21). He receives a message from God (9:27) and is anointed with oil (10:1). This marked him as set aside by God for a certain task and was a symbol of the Holy Spirit being poured upon him for that task. This is crucial - God's word, brought by God's prophet, appoints him to his task.

To confirm God's word the prophet gives three very precise signs (10:2; 3-4 and 5-6). "All these signs came to pass that day" (10:9). Thus, God confirms his appointment as king through his word and confirms his presence with him. But why is so much space devoted to predicting this (10:2-8) and reporting it (10:9-13)? It is, to us, weirdly detailed and meandering. But look closer at the key verses, 9:27 and 10:1. Samuel says in 9:27, "I will make known to you the word of God." That 'word' makes Saul king (10:1). Three signs are then given to confirm God's word. Each sign reflects some aspect of Saul's initial encounter with Samuel in 9:19-10:1. Samuel informs Saul that the donkeys are found (9:20). So do the first group of people in 10:2. In 9:23-24 Samuel gives Saul sacrificial food. The second group of people give Saul sacrificial food (goats, bread and wine) on the way to the house of God at Bethel, the place of sacrifice. In 10:1 Saul is anointed in the presence of a prophet, Samuel! In 10:10 he is anointed by the Spirit in the presence of prophets. Three parallels between the signs and the encounter with Samuel. What does it all mean? The writer is underlining in bold italics that Saul is king because of God's word (through the prophet), under his word, and empowered by his word. It is saying, "God has made you king through his word." God's word equips and encourages Saul for this daunting task.

Where will you find encouragement and equipping for your daunting tasks today, tomorrow, next week, and next month? From God's word. Don't neglect it. Feast on it.

Questions

1. What did God's word say to you last Lord's Day that was encouraging and equipping for today's issues?

Prayer Points

1. Give thanks that he has already equipped and empowered you by his Spirit through his Word.
2. Use prayer points from your congregation.
3. Pray for family matters.

Memory Verse

"For I have seen my people, because their cry has come to me." 1 Samuel 9:16b

Praise: Psalm 119:Part 1A - See www.rpglobalalliance.org for Psalm tune helps.

1 SAMUEL

Friday - 1 Samuel 9:15-21 - A King after God's Own Heart

We've got a glimpse this week of the king after Israel's own heart - the man they wanted. Saul was the 'asked-for' king, the desire of all Israel (9:20). We all have 'kings' after our own hearts. People or things we long for, ask for, and look to in trouble. Of whom, or what, do you say, "I only need..."? What is your first thought in difficulty? A spouse or parent, and we think, "If only I could speak to them, it would all be alright". Is our first thought in trouble, "I need to get away from it all, I need a holiday? Is everything ok once we get a huge slab of chocolate, or a drink? Or maybe you just look to yourself - your talents, your strengths, your resilience. These are the delivering 'kings' we look for, the concoctions shaped by our own heart.

The problem with 'kings' after our own heart is that they are not what we need. They are the result of self diagnosis. They are unreliable and they are a rejection of God. Like Saul, they may start promisingly, but they will let us down. What we need is a king after God's heart. This is what we have in Jesus. He is a king after God's own heart. He was obedient to God's law and rules according to God's law, as God wants. We see him in contrast to Saul here: outwardly unimpressive (Isaiah 53:2), he is the shepherd king who finds his lost sheep (Luke 15:3-7). But we also see him in shadow form in this story. Through him God's mercy comes to us in the midst of our ordinary lives. Because of him, our stupidity cannot wither God's compassions. He is the King who speaks through his Word, bringing mercy to us in all our troubles. He is the king who cannot fail us or let us down.

Questions

1. How does Jesus contrast with Saul?
2. How do we see a shadow or outline of Jesus in this story?

Prayer Points

1. Give thanks for a king after God's heart, who brings us acceptance and blessing from him.
2. Use prayer points from your congregation.
3. Pray for family matters.

Memory Verse

And the Lord said to Samuel, "Obey the voice of the people in all that they say to you, for they have not rejected you, but they have rejected me from being king over them." 1 Samuel 8:7

Praise: Psalm 78A:26-27 - See www.rpglobalalliance.org for Psalm tune helps.

1 SAMUEL

Saturday - 1 Samuel 9:1-10:16 - The Wrong King?

This whole chapter raises a question - did God make a mistake in giving Saul to Israel as King. It's become clear this week that he is not the man for the job. And it will become increasingly clear as we move on through 1 Samuel. The kingdom will come crashing down from the high point of Samuel's time as judge, things will get pretty low. Why did God give them this man?

There are two things to say. First of all, God had to show these people that their hope and confidence was not to be placed in men, but in him. After the triumphs and reforms of Samuel's time it would be easy to focus on Samuel and his strengths, and forget the God who thundered from the heavens to scatter his enemies (7:10). Israel could easily have thought that the key to her long term success was in having the right man as leader. Saul shows us that we are not the best judges of what we need. Saul ticked all the boxes in the vetting and interview process: rich, handsome, strong. But Saul shows us not to put our trust in princes, nor for help on man to depend, but to look to God. The interlude of Saul's reign is to help all of us recalibrate our viewfinders on God's strength.

But secondly and more profoundly: Saul did incalculable damage to Israel, but God through him, did much good in that time and place. Read 9:16 again, slowly. God has a plan and a purpose to do good through this 'wrong choice' by the people. He is going to be the answer of his people's prayers and God's vehicle to bring blessing. Notwithstanding that much of what he does will also be a disaster. The final analysis is never so black and white as we think. The final harm is never so complete as we think. God specialises in bringing blessing through sin. You want proof? Just look at the cross.

Questions

1. What are the wrong choices in your life that you need to hold onto hope for that God will bring much blessing?

Prayer Points

1. Ask God for patience to wait on his ultimate goodness from dark situations.
2. Use prayer points from your congregation.
3. Pray for family matters.

Memory Verse

And the Lord said to Samuel, "Obey the voice of the people in all that they say to you, for they have not rejected you, but they have rejected me from being king over them." 1 Samuel 8:7

Praise: Psalm 27 - See www.rpglobalalliance.org for Psalm tune helps.

The goal of Let's Worship God is to encourage and help you in your worship of God each day.

**God tells us that
Ezra read from
the book of the Law
day after day
and that
the people of God
were filled with joy!**

Let's Worship God is produced
by the Reformed Presbyterian Church of Scotland.

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