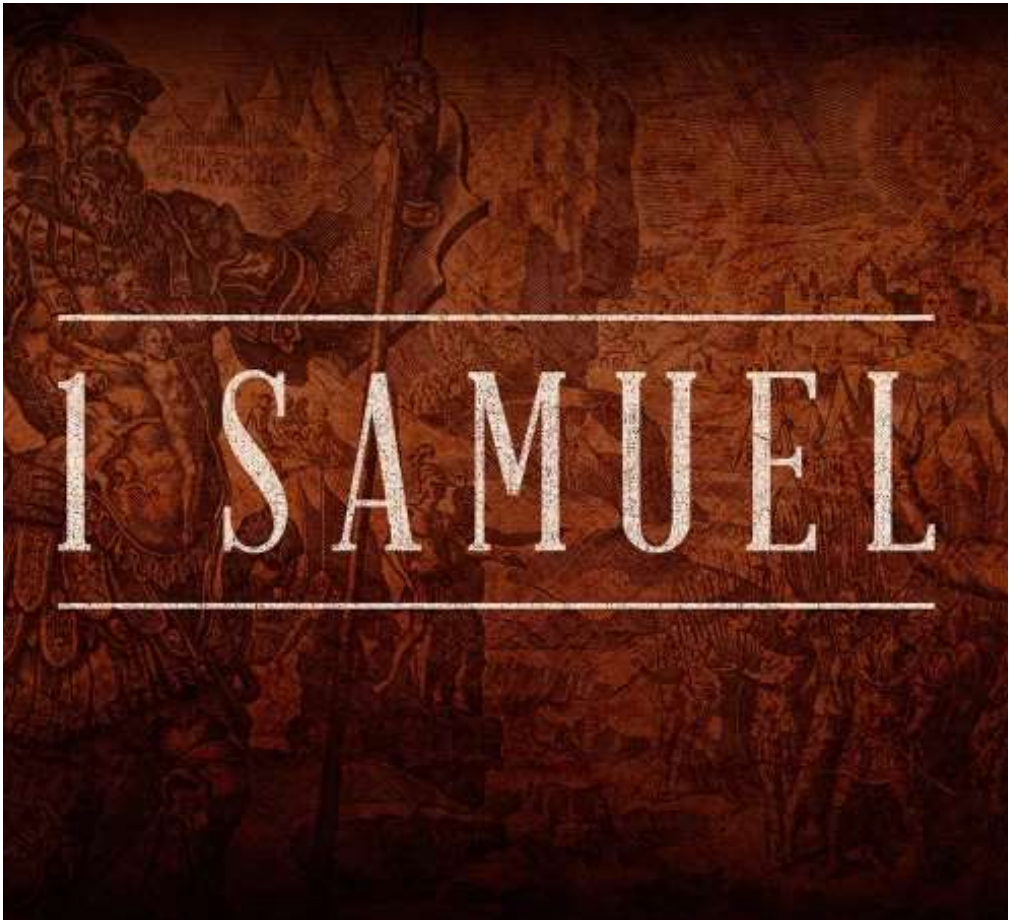


Let's Worship God

29th June - 4th July 2020

1 Samuel



1 SAMUEL

Monday - 1 Samuel 10:17-27 - Complex People

Coronations are normally joyous events. In 1953 at the coronation of Queen Elizabeth II, medals, stamps, and medallions were issued. And alongside all the fireworks and street parties a new chicken dish was invented (Coronation Chicken). Canada really celebrated: they had a national holiday, in Newfoundland 90,000 boxes of sweets were given out, some dropped to remote locations by the Royal Air Force, and shells used in the Korean War were filled with red, white and blue smoke. This was a time of celebration! These verses today may or may not be Saul's coronation. It may be now, or it may be later in 11:15. If it's not his coronation it is at least his public announcement or selection as king. In chapter 9 he was privately anointed; now he is publicly presented, the answer to the people's request - this should be a time of joy.

But that's not quite the sense we get as we read it. Sure, there are joyous moments (v24 "Long live the king!"). But there are also tense moments - it is nearly spoiled by some rotten apples at the end (v27). There are bizarre moments - what on earth is Saul doing among the baggage (v22)? There are stern words (Samuel's speech in v17-19) and there are kind words (v24 - "There is none like him"). This is hard to get a handle on - it's complex.

Some events and people in the Bible are like that - complex. They are not easily categorised as goodies or baddies. Their motives are mixed and things are not black and white. The Bible is not as simplistic as: 'heroes to emulate and villains to repudiate'. There is, of course, good and bad, right and wrong. That is simple. But people and their actions are not simple. We are messy and complex. We want to know if Saul is a goodie or a baddie, but the picture is more nuanced than that. That should be comforting as we look at our own hearts. There we see both good and bad motives in the same action. We see both the admirable and the repulsive - hearts of gold purified by grace, and feet of clay.

Questions

1. What do you see in your heart, by God's grace, that is admirable and good?
2. What do you see, because of our own sin, that is ugly and repulsive?

Prayer Points

1. Pray that in our lives the God-like would grow, and that the sin-spoiled would die.
2. Use prayer points from your congregation.
3. Pray for family matters.

Memory Verse

"Do you see him whom the Lord has chosen? There is none like him among all the people." 1 Samuel 10:24b

Praise: Psalm 72:1-5 - See www.rpglobalalliance.org for Psalm tune helps.

1 SAMUEL

Tuesday - 1 Samuel 10:17-21 - Samuel's Speech (v17-19)

Saul has been introduced to us and marked privately as the new king (9:1-10:16). Now it is time for his unveiling and Samuel calls a national assembly. However, it is not quite the joy-filled celebration we might anticipate. Samuel begins with a prophetic thunder: "Thus says the LORD" (v18). Prophets don't tend to begin happy messages like that; it is often a portent of judgement. He tells them, again, that their request for a king was wicked, underlining that it has been God who rescued them again and again. God rescued them, they rejected him. Laying bare the root of the problem he declares that this has been a royal coup, the throne being snatched by revolt and rebellion against God.

We've heard this before. Samuel is again hammering them with God's rebuke. This message is so important, Samuel is willing to spoil the party; reminding them of the true nature of the event.

So I make the point again: the root of our problems in society and personally is sin - rejecting God's rule. Sin is self-serving, self-pleasing, self-rule. Every problem in our world can be traced back to this, directly or indirectly. But the fact that sin is rejecting God's rule is what makes it so serious. His rule is gracious, good, and great. The great goal of his rule is love. We are to love him and love others, as he is love and shares his love between Father, Son, and Spirit. And sin is us saying to a God who is nothing but good and loving, "I know best and I choose better." It's the child saying to the Father after eighteen years of provision and protection, "I hate you, I hate what you've done for me, I hate who you are." It's rejecting the one who gave us life, who gave us everything. This is the wickedness of the people's request, and this is the wickedness of our sin.

Questions

1. Why does God keep repeating this message?
2. Think through the different parts of this scene - rejection of a good and loving God by people who think they know better. How do we see this first played out in the garden of Eden?

Prayer Points

1. Ask God to give you an increasing sense of the wickedness and un-loveliness of sin.
2. Use prayer points from your congregation.
3. Pray for family matters.

Memory Verse

"Do you see him whom the Lord has chosen? There is none like him among all the people." 1 Samuel 10:24b

Praise: Psalm 2:1-4 - See www.rpglobalalliance.org for Psalm tune helps.

1 SAMUEL

Wednesday - 1 Samuel 10:17-21 - Saul's Selection (part 1) (v20-21)

So far this week we've seen that situations are complex - this is both joyful coronation and ominous portent. We also see that God's ways are complex.

There is a sense in which God giving them their request (a king) is judgement. In spite of the warnings, they have asked for one in an act of clear rebellion. God told them directly that it was wrong, but they persist. So God says, "Here you go", and disciplines them by giving them what they asked for, giving them over to their own desires. This is underlined to the discerning reader by a subtle parallel. In verses 19-21 they choose the king by drawing lots. It echoes the procedure used to identify the troublemaker Achan in Joshua 7: tribes, clans, and families are whittled down by lots until one person is left under God's judgement. This is a judicial process, and God is judging his people.

But this is also mercy. The tribes are whittled down to Benjamin, the last tribe anyone would have expected. They were responsible of a monstrosity of a crime at Gibeath (Judges 19), a place described as the new Sodom. They were almost wiped out in the ensuing civil war. When Saul said they were the "least of the tribes" (9:21), it was not hyperbole. Israel had met at this very place, Mizpah, to plan to exterminate them (Judges 20:1), and 25,000 had been killed in one day. But now, the Benjamites, the least, are honoured. This is God's mercy in action - the weakest are exalted, the poor raised from the dust, the least deserving showered with honour (2:4-8).

This is the gospel foreshadowed. We rebels, who have committed vile acts, while thinking that we would be better on the throne than the all-wise, all-loving one, are raised from the rubbish dump and exalted to the highest, most honoured, place. We are raised from rebels to sons and daughters of the King.

God's ways are not as simple as they seem to simple people like us. Judgement and mercy come in the same cup - the one act brings both. Is the coronavirus God's judgement, or God's mercy? I think it's both.

Questions

1. Where do we see the ultimate example of God's ways of mercy and judgement coming in the one act?
2. Think what ways can you see the coronavirus and lockdown to be both a judgement and a blessing?

Prayer Points

1. Ask God that his purposes would be mercy, more than judgement, in our time and place.
2. Use prayer points from your congregation.
3. Pray for family matters.

Memory Verse

"Do you see him whom the Lord has chosen? There is none like him among all the people."

1 Samuel 10:24b

Praise: Psalm 113A - See www.rpglobalalliance.org for Psalm tune helps.

1 SAMUEL

Thursday - 1 Samuel 10:17-27 - Saul's Selection (part 2 - v21-24)

The king the people want is chosen by lot, but he is nowhere to be found (v21). And like the previous chapter, this is an ominous portent of his suitability. He knows what the end result of the selection process will be (i.e. him), and he hides. It's a comical image. The baggage, or tents would have been at the perimeter of the gathering - at the edge of proceedings lurks Israel's king-elect, a peripheral figure. The KJV notes Saul was hiding among the "stuff". Whatever it meant in the 1600s, it's quite a good translation now - it's vague and generic. Picture this bean-pole of a man, hiding, his feet sticking out past the bags. As one author says, "It's hardly an auspicious start for one who will lead Israel into battle."

This is not humility - he has been anointed by the Holy Spirit and told to do "whatever his hand finds to do" (10:7). He has been promised the necessary strength for his task. And here he is cowering beside the cases and carts. He is not fit to be king. This is a foreshadowing of the future, when Saul will habitually vacate his responsibilities.

But he is the king that they want. Again, his height is emphasised (v23). It's almost like Israel are saying, "He's tall, so he must be a good king." He is the very embodiment of their request - a king like the nations. He is everything they want - their choice.

But he is also God's choice - v24. Herein lies the complexity of God's ways. He is God's choice, on their terms. Saul's rule will be like a grand experiment: "Here's what you want, let's see how that works out for you." Saul is the Burger King king - the "have it your way" king. This should make us careful about over-reading guidance by circumstances. An open door is not necessarily God telling you to go through it. Maybe God is saying, "You keep ignoring my word, so have it your way; let's see how that works for you."

Questions

1. Why is Saul's response wrong? Can you see any parallel situations in your life?
2. Can you think of times in your life when an open door of opportunity would have been the wrong door to go through?

Prayer Points

1. Ask God to help you read circumstances through the lenses of his Word.
2. Use prayer points from your congregation.
3. Pray for family matters.

Memory Verse

"Do you see him whom the Lord has chosen? There is none like him among all the people." 1 Samuel 10:24b

Praise: Psalm 72:6-11 - See www.rpglobalalliance.org for Psalm tune helps.

1 SAMUEL

Friday - 1 Samuel 10:17-27 - Complex Ways (v21-25)

God's ways are not simple. We should expect that the overflow of an infinite mind, full of infinite wisdom, would be hard for us to unpick. God gives them Saul as king as an act of Judgement. But it is also tempered with mercy. We see this in how Samuel hedges the king in with God's law (v25). Samuel is probably following the procedure from Deuteronomy 17, where God said "You can have a king, but only on these terms." Samuel works to bring their sinful desire into line with God's plan. Or another way to look at it, as one writer puts it, "God out-manoeuvres the people." It's like this: they want space for 'freedom'; in that 'freedom' they will get hurt; God hedges them in with his law. Look at his relentless mercy to sinful people! This is your God. So often we disappoint even ourselves, never-mind our precious blood-bound Saviour. But God's mercy and goodness follow us all the days of our lives, hedging us in.

Do you see the complexity of the situation? These events are God's judgment on his people, but mercy is at work at the same time. Saul is God's choice, but yet not suitable to be king. His rule is like a grand experiment. Indeed, the main focus of this whole book is the contrast between Saul and David - the king the people wanted versus the king God wanted. Beware of reading situations like they are black and white. Moral black and white do exist, but you are not necessarily positioned, nor qualified, to make an infallible judgement. We need to have both wide grace and discerning judgement. Discerning judgement because we cannot be naive and blind to facts, and love disciplines where there is wrong. But we need wide grace also, mindful that we do not see hearts, we do not see as others saw, and we do not see all that God sees. Beware of reading situations like they are black and white.

Beware too of reading God's acts in your church and your life as though they were simple and black or white. The incomprehensible God does far more than we can ever expect or imagine. We hear but "the outskirts of his ways" (Job 26:14). What we consider to be his harshest cross to carry may be his greatest mercy.

Questions

1. What situations do you need to re-evaluate in light of this reminder of the complexity, or manifoldness, of God's ways?

Prayer Points

1. Pray for discerning judgement and wide grace.
2. Use prayer points from your congregation.
3. Pray for family matters.

Memory Verse

"Do you see him whom the Lord has chosen? There is none like him among all the people." 1 Samuel 10:24b

Praise: Psalm 147A:1-3 - See www.rpglobalalliance.org for Psalm tune helps.

1 SAMUEL

Saturday - 1 Samuel 10:17-27 - Saul Splits Opinion (v26-27)

As we said yesterday, Saul is a foil to David in 1 Samuel. But he is not simply the bad-die to David's goodie. It's not that simple. There is in Saul a shadow of Israel's true king, he points positively to God's perfect king, Jesus.

We see this in the final incident in these verses. Saul, as God's king, causes division. Some people, with hearts touched by God, attach themselves to Saul (v26). Others see nothing to get excited about (v27). Some of his own people despise and reject him.

Maybe they see truer than the others, seeing little to warrant confidence. But they neglect to see the Spirit of God equipping and empowering him (10:10). It is God who will make Saul useful, and their question will be answered in the next section when Saul saves a city in the power of the Spirit.

An outwardly uninspiring, Spirit-empowered saviour - ring any bells? The obscure Jewish carpenter from a family of little standing, hard to pick out in a crowd, who died penniless, alone, betrayed, and hated by popular opinion - "can this man save us?" Maybe your heart is asking this question, "what's the big deal?" Maybe you despise him - he is nothing to you, worthless and useless, and you refuse to honour him (v27). But this seemingly 'worthless' man is a great Saviour, in whom judgement and mercy combine. At the cross God's judgment is poured out on him, and mercy is shown to rebels like us.

Saul's response in verse 27 paints a picture of this great Saviour. He holds his peace and does not crush his despisers, showing mercy and giving time for them to see what great salvation God works through him. If you are currently despising him, realise he is currently holding his peace, giving time for you to bring the 'present' of your life to him. Here is mercy for you. Do you see the one whom the LORD has chosen? There is none like him among all the people. Long live the King of Kings.

Questions

1. How does Saul point forward to Jesus in these final verses?

Prayer Points

1. Give thanks for a king, chosen by the LORD, of who there is none like among all the people (v24).
2. Use prayer points from your congregation.
3. Pray for family matters.

Memory Verse

"Do you see him whom the Lord has chosen? There is none like him among all the people." 1 Samuel 10:24b

Praise: Psalm 34 - 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!**

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