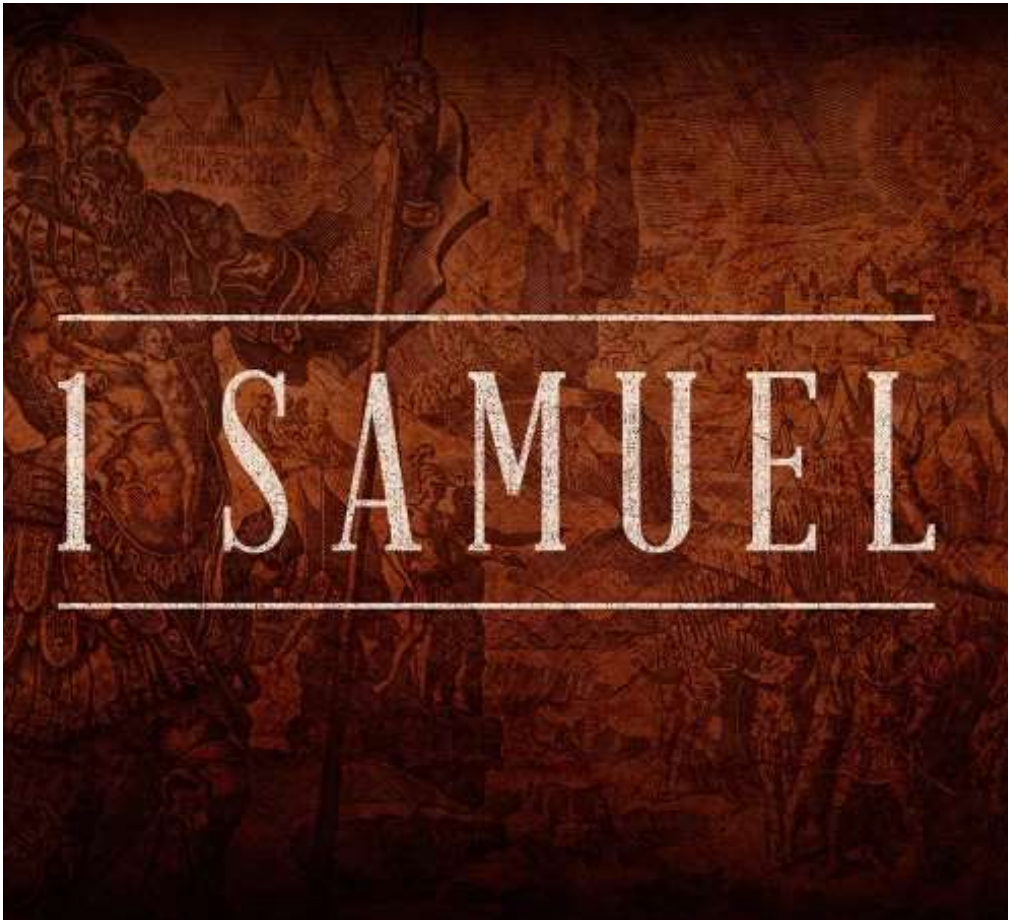


Let's Worship God

13th - 18th July 2020

1 Samuel



1 SAMUEL

Monday - 1 Samuel 12 - Samuel's Final Warning

Today brings us to the end of a section within 1 Samuel. It began in chapter 8 with the people's request for a king, and ends now with Samuel's farewell speech (v2). It is a climactic moment and needs to be understood against the backdrop of all that has happened so far. It is the end of an era. For around 400 years God's people have been ruled by Judges - people empowered and equipped by God to save his people and rule them in justice. Samuel has been the greatest of these judges, decisively breaking the Philistine stranglehold, bringing justice to the towns and leading the people back to God. In chapter 8 the people decided they didn't like this arrangement anymore and asked for a king. God gave them Saul, and after an unpromising start, he led them to a great victory in the battle of Jabesh-gilead. The people gather at Gilgal to rejoice, worship God, and confirm Saul as King (11:15).

Now, in chapter 12, God's prophet Samuel speaks. It's his farewell speech. But there's an undercurrent: a courtroom drama is being played out. We could easily miss the legal language that the original readers would pick up: calls to testify (v3); references to witnesses (v5-6); use of legal formulas and oaths; pleading a case (v7). Samuel, God, and Israel are in the courthouse. The question is: who is responsible for this turn of events and on whose head will the consequences be. Samuel presents the case (v1). His words are feisty and fiery. In the midst of a celebration Samuel gets confrontational. He might seem like the grumpy old grandpa who brings up the family feud at the four year old's birthday party. But this is not a birthday party - this is a defining period in Israel's history. The next 500 years would be decisively shaped by the kings. So, for the third time, Samuel rebukes them for requesting a king (v12). God speaks to us repeatedly about our serious sins. Have you been listening?

Questions

1. What sin has God been speaking to you about repeatedly?

Prayer Points

1. Ask God for a heart sensitive to his warnings and rebukes.
2. Use prayer points from your congregation.
3. Pray for family matters.

Memory Verse

“Only fear the Lord and serve him faithfully with all your heart. For consider what great things he has done for you.” 1 Samuel 12:24

Praise: Psalm 141:1-5 - See www.rpglobalalliance.org for Psalm tune helps.

1 SAMUEL

Tuesday - 1 Samuel 12:1-12 - The Blame Game

In chapter 12 Samuel gives his third and climactic rebuke to Israel for requesting a king. God is pinpointing the seriousness of sin and pinpointing the human condition. Two points in particular come across: our inclination to blame others for sin, and our tendency to underestimate sin. First of all, we are inclined to blame others for our sin. But God will not let us.

Samuel puts himself on trial first (v3). The people are called to testify against him. The witnesses and prosecutors are the people of Israel. The Jury is God and his king. In verse 4 they clear him of all charges, and verse 5 and 6 have the form of an official court order. Samuel is not to blame. In verse 3 the word "take" is repeated. Samuel is contrasting himself with the actions of future kings, who will 'take, take, take' (8:10-18). Samuel has not taken power or possessions for himself. His point is this: "I have not forced you into calling for a king."

Next, God is put in the dock (v7). Samuel looks at God's history and notes the pattern there. When they were in Egypt the people were oppressed (v8). They cried out to God, and he sent deliverers who brought them to safety. When they were in the promised land they were oppressed at various times by Sisera, the Moabites, or the Philistines (v9). Again, they cried out to God, and he sent them deliverers - Jerubbaal (Gideon), Barak, and Jephthah - who brought them to safety (v10-11). This pattern could be seen in Samuel's own life and work. There is a clear pattern, which they break - v12. God is in the dock, and the verdict is that he is not to blame either. The point is this: there is nothing lacking in God's deeds. The problem is not in Samuel or in God. The problem is in them. They have no-one to blame but themselves for the situations they will find themselves in.

We'll think about the practical implications of this tomorrow.

Questions

1. As you look back on life, can you see any areas where you have assumed God or other people were at fault, but can now see your own sin as the main cause instead?

Prayer Points

1. Ask God to show you where you have been blaming others for self-made problems.
2. Use prayer points from your congregation.
3. Pray for family matters.

Memory Verse

"Only fear the Lord and serve him faithfully with all your heart. For consider what great things he has done for you." 1 Samuel 12:24

Praise: Psalm 99:4-8 - See www.rpglobalalliance.org for Psalm tune helps.

1 SAMUEL

Wednesday - 1 Samuel 12:1-12 - Our Inclination to Blame Others

As we saw yesterday, these verses put their finger on our inclination to blame others for our problems. Samuel skilfully prosecutes his case, clearing himself, and then God. The finger of blame is left pointing only at Israel. Israel stands before us as a window into our own hearts, and God's Word skilfully exposes the human condition here: we blame others.

So much of our politics is about the blame game - apportioning blame or avoiding blame. The coronavirus crisis hasn't even passed and already politicians are aligning their chess pieces for the blame game. Wider than pandemics, so many blame the Government over there, down there, or up there for their problems. Or else society as a whole gets blamed for denying fair and equal opportunities. We lay the blame at our family and parents for not loving us enough. We blame our genes, cause we were "born this way". We blame God. The victim mentality is hardwired into us. It is nearly always someone else's fault. Often the finger of blame can be rightly pointed elsewhere, but it almost never points back to ourselves. We are excuse factories.

But before we point the finger of blame we must put the hand up of individual responsibility. James 1:14 - "But each person is tempted when he is lured and enticed by his own desire." Yes, God governs all actions, but we are also responsible for our actions. Verse 13 illustrates this: God has set the king over them, the king they asked for. Yes, God is responsible. But so are you.

Are there any areas of failure or pain you need to begin to take responsibility for: broken relationships, failures in responsibilities, failures to obey? For example, is your heart breaking for grown up children not walking with God? Have you ever considered if you were faithful to your duties as a parent (Ephesians 6:4) and repented if you were not? It may not be totally your fault, or even mostly your fault. But we can only start, and must start, with what is our fault.

Questions

1. . What is the correct response to seeing areas of sin and hurt that we are responsible for?

Prayer Points

1. Ask God to keep you from believing the lie that everything is always someone else's fault.
2. Use prayer points from your congregation.
3. Pray for family matters.

Memory Verse

"Only fear the Lord and serve him faithfully with all your heart. For consider what great things he has done for you." 1 Samuel 12:24

Praise: Psalm 51A:1-3 - See www.rpglobalalliance.org for Psalm tune helps.

1 SAMUEL

Thursday - 1 Samuel 12:12-19 - Our Inclination to Underestimate Sin's Seriousness

Samuel has put the people on the stand in verse 7. He's shown the pattern from their days in Egypt through to the days of the Judges: oppression, crying out for help, God sending deliverers, safety (v8-11). But in verse 12 the cycle is broken: in the face of oppression they seek a king, not God. As one writer says, "Now it is 'a king or bust', not 'in God we trust'". They do not believe that God will deliver them.

It boils down to unbelief in a good God. Which is of course a pretty personal slight to him. It's insulting to God and arrogant on our part. Samuel's last words in public office underline the seriousness of their sin. And then events from verse 16 onwards put it in bold. It's May or June, early summer and the dry season. The thunder and rain of verses 17-18 is totally unseasonal and damages the crops. It's something of a parable: the natural God-ordained order is disrupted and the result is damage. By asking for a king the people have disrupted God's order and damage will be the result. Destroyed harvests were a sign of broken relationship, unfaithfulness, the people's disobedience, and God's displeasure (Deuteronomy 28:38-40). The result of this display of the seriousness of sin is that the people fear God (v18).

As you consider sin, do you fear God? It is a disruption of his order that damages. It desecrates the relationship between us and him. It is disbelief in his goodness. It is a slap to his face, or at least an attempt to. This is the seriousness of our sin - let it sink in. We compound our sin by underestimating its seriousness. Every sin is saying to God, "I don't believe you are good, I know best, and I wish you didn't exist."

What is the correct response to an awareness of the seriousness of sin?
Verse 19 - confess it and seek mercy.

Questions

1. Has God given you any signs, or foretastes, of the seriousness of sin, like the storm in verses 16-18?
2. Where are you tempted to disbelieve the goodness of God?

Prayer Points

1. Seek God's mercy for your unbelief.
2. Use prayer points from your congregation.
3. Pray for family matters.

Memory Verse

"Only fear the Lord and serve him faithfully with all your heart. For consider what great things he has done for you." 1 Samuel 12:24

Praise: Psalm 33:1-6 - See www.rpglobalalliance.org for Psalm tune helps.

1 SAMUEL

Friday - 1 Samuel 12:19-25 - God's Inclination to Show Mercy

Look at God's response (through Samuel the prophet) to the confession of sin in verse 19 - angry words become tender words, verse 20. The sin is not hidden, nor treated as insignificant, but there is no need to be afraid. Because God is merciful and forgiving. Look at how quick he is to turn from anger to peace. He will not forsake his people for his own glory depends upon it (v22) - there is mercy for sinful people.

This is good news. When we confess our sins there is mercy, the reason for fear is removed, and we do not need to be afraid. God promises his permanent presence with us, he will not forsake us. This is God's mercy to sinful people, which comes to us through his king. In verse 13 Samuel declares, "Behold the King whom you have chosen." These words sound again in history in John 19:14. Pilate sets Jesus before the people and announces, "Behold your King!" Behold your king - rejected, hated, mocked, beaten, crucified, the horror of God's wrath poured out on him. Here is the cost of God's inclination to mercy. The fearful wrath of God against wickedness comes crashing down on him. God can be inclined to mercy, when you confess your sin, because Jesus suffered the destruction we deserve. Behold your king, crowned with thorns and crucified, that you might know mercy.

And hear your obligations - verses 20-21. Do not turn aside from following him, even though you have your own cross on your shoulder. Do not turn aside to follow empty things that will not satisfy. Serve the Lord with all your heart. Hold nothing back, give everything in obedience to his will. And he will never leave you nor forsake you. He will be with you always, even to the very end of the age. Consider what great things he has done for you (v24).

Questions

1. What great things has he done for you?

Prayer Points

1. Give thanks for specific mercies received from God.
2. Use prayer points from your congregation.
3. Pray for family matters.

Memory Verse

"Only fear the Lord and serve him faithfully with all your heart. For consider what great things he has done for you." 1 Samuel 12:24

Praise: Psalm 103:7-11 - See www.rpglobalalliance.org for Psalm tune helps.

1 SAMUEL

Saturday - 1 Samuel 12:19-25 - Unceasing Prayer & Instruction

Verse 25 hangs like an ominous cloud over the tender words at the close of this chapter. In the next chapters the king "does wickedly" and is "swept away". In the rest of the Old Testament the nation "does wickedly" and is "swept away". Are these words still hanging over us?

Israel knew they needed help (v19). Samuel gave them help - he instructed them, and he prayed for them (v23). As always, one greater than Samuel overshadows this chapter. Jesus Christ "is able to save to the uttermost those who draw near to God through him, since he always lives to make intercession for them" (Hebrews 7:25). We have one praying for us who is always there, bringing us to the Heavenly Father. Not only that, but he is able to save to the uttermost, that is, save completely. He instructs us through his word, week in week out, day in day out. His Spirit leads us into all truth (John 16:13). We have all the help we need.

That should be a tremendous comfort to us. When we can't pray for ourselves, he knows what to pray. When we don't pray for ourselves, he does. When we've forgotten to pray for that really important situation - he was praying. When we don't know what to do, he does and will guide us. When we don't know what is right and wrong, he will show us. When we are tempted to "do wickedly" he gives us the strength to resist temptation.

Isn't that incredible? Whatever you are facing this weekend, or this coming week, you can be sure of Jesus' unceasing prayer and instruction. Tomorrow we celebrate his resurrection. This is what it means for us that he is risen! So then, "consider what great things he has done for you" (v24).

Questions

1. How is Jesus superior to Samuel?

Prayer Points

1. Bring your needs to the great intercessory, and give thanks that he already knows and has already brought them to the Heavenly Father.
2. Use prayer points from your congregation.
3. Pray for family matters.

Memory Verse

"Only fear the Lord and serve him faithfully with all your heart. For consider what great things he has done for you." 1 Samuel 12:24

Praise: Psalm 36 - 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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