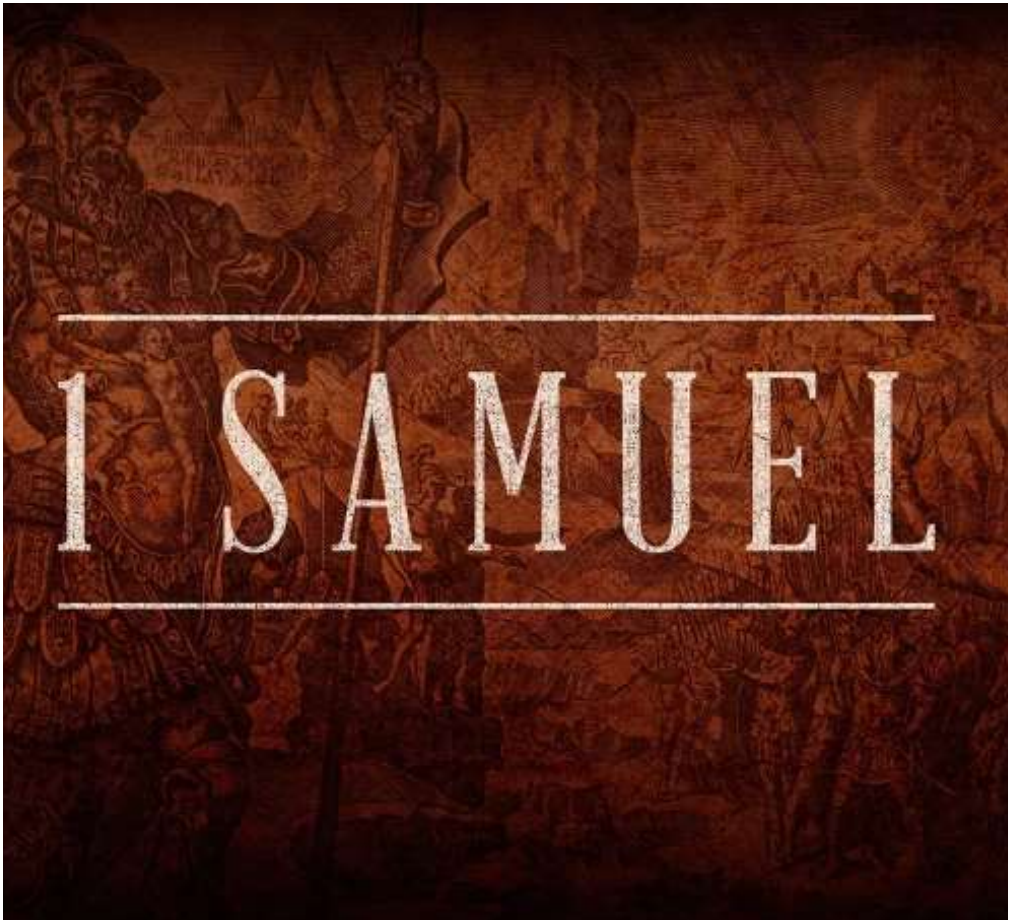


Let's Worship God

4th-9th May 2020

1 Samuel



1 SAMUEL

Monday - 1 Samuel 2:11-3:1 - We Need a Priest

Hannah's prayer, the theme tune of 1 Samuel, showed us that the story was all about the rise of a king. God is raising up a king after his own heart to lead and govern his people, bringing God's blessing by his rule. Yet the story started strangely in chapter 1 with the story of the domestic struggles of an insignificant family in rural Israel. And after the opening theme music (Hannah's prayer) finishes, the scene still doesn't shift to royal palaces and government chambers. Instead, the next scene begins at a religious site, focusing on religious activity, and particularly on a group of priests. It begins and ends with Samuel "ministering" (2:11 and 3:11), a sacrifice related word. It takes place at Shiloh, the centre of religious activity, like Mecca, Rome, or Canterbury. It relates details of sacrificial rituals, religious defilement, and priestly corruption. The climax is a prophecy and promise about a family line of priests. This book about the rise of a king, begins with the religious establishment. This would be like the biography of the Prime Minister beginning with details about the family of the archbishop of Canterbury, and their prospects. It seems to start in the wrong place. Why are we reading about three-pronged forks, priestly robes (ephods), and boiled meat?

The answer is simple: it starts here because we need priests. We need someone to bridge the gap between us and God, standing as our representative and making peace. Even pagan religions understood this instinctively. We cannot wander into the presence of deity. We need someone to open the door and bring us in. Eli puts his finger on this in v25 - read it again. If we sin against each other, God can reconcile them. Either by his law and its penalties, or by being a third party judge. But if we sin against God - there is no one to reconcile, no go-between, no neutral third party. Someone in contempt of court is solely at the mercy of the judge. By our sin we are in utter contempt of the holy heavenly court. We are solely at the mercy of God. We need a priest to open a door and make peace. We have one in Christ Jesus (Heb 4:14)

Questions

1. How would you explain what a priest did in the Old Testament to a child?
2. We do we need God's priest before we need God's King?

Prayer Points

1. Give thanks that we have someone to intercede for us in our sin against God.
2. Use prayer points from your congregation.
3. Pray for family matters.

Memory Verse

“And I will raise up for myself a faithful priest, who shall do according to what is in my heart and in my mind. And I will build him a sure house, and he shall go in and out before my anointed for ever.” 1 Samuel 2:35

Praise: Psalm 99A:1-4 - See www.rpglobalalliance.org for Psalm tune helps.

1 SAMUEL

Tuesday - 1 Samuel 2:12-22 - The Failure of the Priests

Hophni and Phinehas, the sons of Eli are priests of the LORD at Shiloh. In verse 12 they are described as worthless men. This word was used by Hannah of Eli's perception of her as drunk, and the gang at Gibeah who acted like Sodom risen from the ashes in Judges 19. These are the men representing God to the people, and the people to God. In verses 13-17 their "very great sin in the sight of the LORD" is described. What was it? Though entitled to a share of some sacrifices (Lev. 7:31-32), as was the worshipper, God was to get the fat - the best bit: "fat equals flavour". These worthless, wicked men were not happy with the remaining succulent breast and thigh, but sent a lackey with a trident fork to poke out whatever he fancied (v13-14). Going further, they even demanded the raw meat, fat and all (v15-16). Even ordinary worshippers were shocked at such behaviour, but threatened into silence. Why was this "a very great sin"? Simply put - God had regulated how he was to be worshipped in the book of Leviticus, and they weren't following the regulations. They were serving themselves, not God and the people. Stealing from God, they showed utter contempt for his offering, and for him (v17). Oh, and by the way, they were sleeping with the woman who served at the entrance of the Tabernacle (v22). Worship sin and moral sin. And which one is given more attention and labelled "very great in the sight of God"? Not their promiscuity and infidelity, but treating the LORD's offering with contempt. That's searching isn't it? The sins in worship were more serious than their moral sins. Our cold hearted, thoughtless singing. Our stoney faced mumbling of his praises. Our wandering thoughts and mindless repetition of the same old prayers. Our keeping back the tithe for ourselves. It's all "treating the LORD's offering with contempt". We need to repent. All in all, these are dark days in Israel. The priests are failing to lead the people in worship, to show the holiness of God, to make peace through sacrifice, to bring the people into God's presence in prayer. A better priest is needed.

Questions

1. Some churches think we are free to worship God in the ways we think best. How does this chapter illustrate the regulative principle of worship: that we worship God only according to his commands?
2. What sins of worship do you need to confess and repent of?

Prayer Points

1. Confess your sins of worship and seek God's mercy.
2. Use prayer points from your congregation.
3. Pray for family matters.

Memory Verse

"And I will raise up for myself a faithful priest, who shall do according to what is in my heart and in my mind. And I will build him a sure house, and he shall go in and out before my anointed for ever." 1 Samuel 2:35

Praise: Psalm 50:7-8, 12-13 - See www.rpglobalalliance.org for Psalm tune helps.

1 SAMUEL

Wednesday - 1 Samuel 2:22-36 - The Judgement of the Priests

Hophni and Phinehas, the sons of Eli and priests of the LORD, are treating the LORD's offering with contempt (v17). The LORD will not stand for it. He sends a messenger with a message of judgement. In verses 27-28 God reminds Eli of the grace & kindness he's shown: he had a privileged position and privileged responsibilities. And so God's indictment in verse 29 comes with all the more force - read it again. Eli is included in the charge. He knew what his sons were doing. Yes, he warned them, but he should have done more. He was Israel's judge - upholder of religious and civil standards. He should have cast his sons from office. But instead, it's implied that Eli has been benefiting from their corruption: they've been fattening themselves on the LORD's sacrifices (v29), and Eli too is fat (4:18). Verses 30-36 are an horrific prophecy of judgement. His house, his family line of priests, will be cut off: they will no longer have the honour and privilege of the priesthood. They will not reach old age. They will see better times in Israel but not enjoy them, left begging for scraps. Many of his descendants will be wiped out, with only one spared, spared to weep his eyes out. Most of this will be future, rippling down many generations from Eli, and Eli won't see it. But he'll be given a sign and a foretaste: both sons will die on the same day. It's horrific. But this is the horror of God's wrath at sin, and the scorning of his worship. This is what the priests are meant to save us from, but they are brought under it themselves. And this is, in some ways, Hell painted in physical terms. Beggars bereft of honour of their position as image-bearing representatives of God. Incessant weeping. No hope for the future. The pain of bereavement of children (is there any human pain worse?). But this is better than Hell. These are earthly pictures of God's righteous judgement. Earthly pictures of judgement will always be better than the reality of judgement. Flee the wrath to come. Pray for mercy for the lost. Rejoice that you have received mercy.

Questions

1. Why is the judgement so severe against Eli and his family?
2. Eli's family will be slaughtered in God's righteous wrath. They'd scorned the sacrifice that could have been slaughtered in their place. Who was slaughtered in our place?

Prayer Points

1. Pray for mercy for the lost in your family and friends. Rejoice that you have received mercy.
2. Use prayer points from your congregation.
3. Pray for family matters.

Memory Verse

“And I will raise up for myself a faithful priest, who shall do according to what is in my heart and in my mind. And I will build him a sure house, and he shall go in and out before my anointed for ever.” 1 Samuel 2:35

Praise: Psalm 50:15-19 - See www.rpglobalalliance.org for Psalm tune helps.

1 SAMUEL

Thursday - 1 Samuel 2:30-36 - The Provision of a Priest

In the midst of the vision of the destruction of Eli's priestly line in judgement, there is a wonderful little promise in verse 35 that brings us to the heart of this incident. Although Eli's priestly line will be brought to an end, God will provide a priest whose house will endure, who will do his priestly work forever, who will act according to God's will and heart. God will provide a faithful priest, after God's own heart. Here's an answer to the problem of who will represent us to God, deal with our sin, and make peace with God: the faithful priest whom God will provide.

God's provision is hinted at all through the passage. We see the conduct of the wicked priests, and contrasted with it is the conduct of Samuel. Four times they are set side by side - read again v11-12, v17-18, v21-22, v25-26. Samuel is a Levite (1 Chronicles 6:28), from the priestly family. He is "ministering" before the Lord - that is a priestly word. He is wearing an ephod, the priestly garment. Here is a priest in training. A faithful priest in training. In chapters 3-7 we'll see Samuel serving as a faithful priest: sacrificing, praying, teaching. He was the promised priest. Or sort of. The clothes fit mostly, but they're very baggy, there's room for someone bigger. Samuel's house will not endure - his sons will be unfaithful (8:1), and no-one from his family followed him as priest. The promise points to someone bigger and better. The description of Samuel in verse 26 would be echoed many years later by Luke (Luke 2:40, 52). Jesus Christ would follow in Samuel's footsteps, and surpass him as the priest of God's people. He's the only one who fits the description in v35: fully faithful to all God's law; doing according to God's heart and will; remaining a priest forever. He is the priest after God's own heart. He is the answer to Eli's question and our problem: Who will intercede for us when we sin against God? Read Hebrews 7:23-25.

Questions

1. Read Hebrews 2:17-18. Why is Jesus a merciful and faithful high priest?

Prayer Points

1. Lay your sins and temptations before your merciful and faithful high priest.
2. Use prayer points from your congregation.
3. Pray for family matters.

Memory Verse

"And I will raise up for myself a faithful priest, who shall do according to what is in my heart and in my mind. And I will build him a sure house, and he shall go in and out before me anointed for ever." 1 Samuel 2:35

Praise: Psalm 110 - See www.rpglobalalliance.org for Psalm tune helps.

1 SAMUEL

Friday - 1 Samuel 2:11-28 - The Work of a Priest 1

In verse 28 the LORD describes the work of a priest. Since Jesus is our "great high priest" (Hebrews 4:14), this verse describes his work for us.

First of all, God says the priest will "go up on my altar" (v28). The reason a priest went up to God's altar was to offer sacrifices. Sin separates the worshipper from God and it must be removed. It must be punished. On the altar the animal was punished, slaughtered, in the place of the worshipper. Jesus, our great high priest, went up to the altar of the cross. He didn't offer an animal, but he offered himself. His body broken and his blood shed to deal with sin.

And he was the sacrifice, and because he was perfect, his offering suffices for all the sins of all of his people at all times. If you are repenting and believing, the sins you have committed, are committing, and will commit, are all dealt with. So stop living as if to try and appease God. HE is appeased. Stop reading your life as if he is sending punishments to you. Start living as one free from the guilt of sin. Jesus went up to the altar as your sacrifice for your sin, and has been accepted

Secondly, priests "wear an ephod" (v28). This was an outer garment with no sleeves. It has 2 stones, the Urim and Thummim, used for receiving guidance. It had 12 precious gems on its breast, each inscribed with the name of a priest. As a priest wore the ephod he was representing the people to God.

That's what our great high priest is doing now: representing his people. He rose from the grave and went up to the right hand of God. He's there now, with the names of God's people, your name, close to his heart. You have someone to speak your corner in Heaven. Why should God pay attention to your prayers? Because you have a representative right there beside him.

Questions

1. What does Hebrews 4:14-16 say we should do, since we have a great high priest?

Prayer Points

1. Draw near the throne of grace and ask for mercy and grace in your times of need today.
2. Use prayer points from your congregation.
3. Pray for family matters.

Memory Verse

"And I will raise up for myself a faithful priest, who shall do according to what is in my heart and in my mind. And I will build him a sure house, and he shall go in and out before me appointed for ever." 1 Samuel 2:35

Praise: Psalm 99A:5-8 - See www.rpglobalalliance.org for Psalm tune helps.

1 SAMUEL

Saturday - 1 Samuel 2:28-3:1 - The Work of a Priest 2

We looked yesterday at the work of a priest, as described in v28. Jesus, as our great high priest (Hebrews 4:14) went up to the altar to offer himself as our sacrifice for sin. We wears an ephod, in the sense that he carries us as God's people, into the presence of God.

Thirdly, the priest burned incense (v28). In the Bible incense was symbolic of prayer. It was the priest's job, not just to offer incense, but to intercede in prayer as the the sweet perfume rose to God. Jesus Christ is praying for us now. He lives forever, making intercession for us (Hebrews 7:25).

We have a illustration of the power of a priest's prayers in v19-21. Every year Hannah goes up to see Samuel, and Eli the priest prays for her and blesses her: "May the LORD give you children by this woman." Hannah has three sons and two daughters. We could say, in one sense, Samuel (1:17) and his siblings were conceived through the prayers of Eli. The prayers of the priest are powerful. Even a imperfect priest like Eli. How much more powerful are the prayers of the perfect and sinless Son of God.

He is praying for us right now. He is praying for exactly what we need. He knows us better than we know ourselves. His prayers are certain to be answered, because he is the delight of the Father. He is praying that your faith will not falter. He is praying that you will have the strength you need. Listen again to Hebrews 7:24-25: "The former priests [Eli and Samuel] were many in number, because they were prevented by death from continuing in office, but he holds his priesthood permanently, because he continues forever. Consequently, he is able to save to the uttermost those who draw near to God through him, since he always lives to make intercession for them." He's praying for you yesterday, today and tomorrow.

Questions

1. What does Hebrews 10:21-23 say we should do since we a great priest?

Prayer Points

1. Ask God for a full assurance of faith and grace to hold fast our confession.
2. Use prayer points from your congregation.
3. Pray for family matters.

Memory Verse

"And I will raise up for myself a faithful priest, who shall do according to what is in my heart and in my mind. And I will build him a sure house, and he shall go in and out before my anointed for ever." 1 Samuel 2:35

Praise: Psalm 21 - 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.

If you have any queries please contact - rpchurchscotland@gmail.com