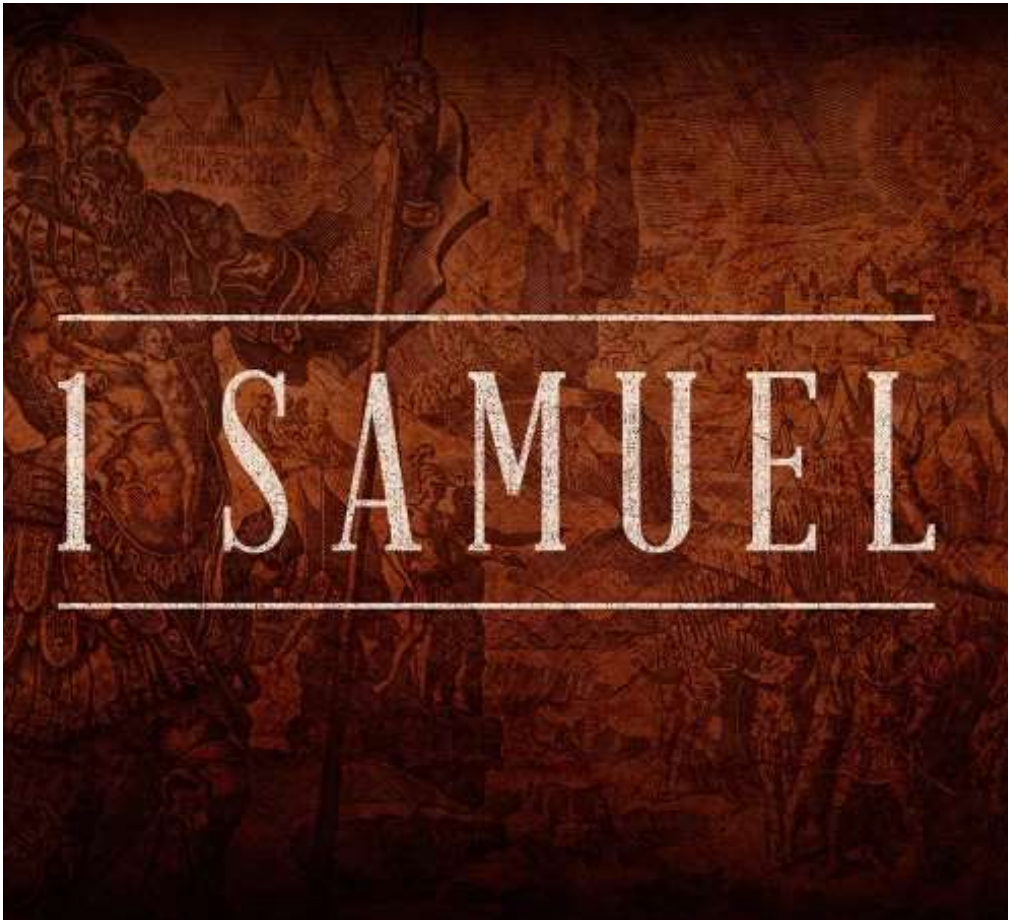


Let's Worship God

8th-13th June 2020

1 Samuel



1 SAMUEL

Monday - 1 Samuel 8 - What is Wrong with the World?

What is wrong with the world around us? This is a question with a thousand answers. It depends whom you ask, and when, and where you ask them. Some will explain the oppression, inequality, harm, and pain of our world as caused by a lack of education - people do wrong because they are ignorant, and education will lift them out of poverty and pain. Others blame inequalities, discrimination, and lack of access to services. Others put the blame at the door of the elite at the top who control it all. Greed is blamed for the destruction of the environment and oppression of minorities. Depending on your politics you might blame capitalism, 'those ravenous wolves' of Wall Street and the Square Mile. Or alternatively, socialism and those 'liberal lefties'. Or maybe it is simply "them us", ie, whoever is not us. Hate-fuelled radicalisation has undoubtedly done much harm. Some might even see religion as the root problem in the world, responsible for blinding and binding the poor and stupid. One atheist writer wrote: "The very concept of an omniscient God has profoundly damaged humanity".

In some ways, we could agree, to an extent, with all those statements. All carry a degree of culpability - even religion. False religions, perversions of true religion, and hypocrisy have all done immeasurable harm. But none of these explain all the problems and get to the root. And none of the corresponding solutions have completely cured the world. We've tried wealth redistribution. We've tried cutting trade barriers. We've tried universal free education. We've tried tolerance and relativism. We've tried technological development and scientific progress. We've tried ditching God. We've tried all sorts of parties in power, and even mixed them up a bit. Yet people still die. People still hurt each other. People still oppress minorities. People still hoard wealth and neglect the poor. People still starve. People still get abused. Just watch the news today. Is most of the time spent lamenting our problems or celebrating our progress? What is the root of the problem and how do we cure it? 1 Samuel 8 will show us this week.

Questions

1. What do you think is the most basic problem in the world? If you know the Bible's answer, what would you say if you didn't know that answer?
2. As you look back on 1 Samuel 8 today, pick out the key verse that you think pinpoints the problem with the world.

Prayer Points

1. Pray that our current Covid-19 crisis would show many the limitations of the world's answers to this worldwide persistent problem.
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 49:1-5 - See www.rpglobalalliance.org for Psalm tune helps.

1 SAMUEL

Tuesday -1 Samuel 8:1-9 - The Roots of Our Problem

The events of chapters 4-6 showed God's rule over false gods and pagan lands. Chapter 7 showed the beauty of life under God's rule: rescue from powerful foes and peace with him. It was a picture of the good times under God's rule, through Samuel.

But, v1, all good things come to an end, and all good people come to an end. Death brings an end to the best times in this world. Blissful, earthly days cannot continue. And the problem is compounded by the issue of succession (v1-3). Samuel's sons couldn't carry the baton they were handed. There's a sad echo of Eli's wicked sons: greedy priests taking their cut and perverting justice (2:13). Israel are almost back to the dark place they were in at the start - wicked sons setting them on a path to disaster. Succession is a tricky issue for God's people. One writer says, "The best of leaders can have the worst of sons", and we could add "and the worst of successors, sons or not". The point is, the root problem resurfaces with every new generation. Progress can be reset, because the root remains in the world.

In response to Samuel's impending death and the unsuitability of his successors, the people ask for a king (v4). "Behold, you are old" - it's hard to see this ending well! The crucial phrase in their request is, "a king...like all the nations" (v5).

Asking for a king was not wrong. Deuteronomy 17 permitted them to request a King. It may not have been the best thing, but it was not wrong. The problem here is motive. Israel were not to be "like the nations" (Exodus 19:5-6). They were to be holy - different, separate, and set apart, like God (Deut 7:6). Here we are getting close to the root - people don't want to be different.

God says to us, "This is what I am like; be like me" (that's what his commandments are - reflections of himself). And we say, "No, we want to be like the nations". For God's people, being like God is our greatest honour. But our motive so often is to blend in as much as possible, in our speech, hobbies, and dress. We want to be like the world, not like God.

Questions

1. Where are you trying to be "like the nations", blending in as much as possible?

Prayer Points

1. Ask God to graciously overrule in situations where successions are important - in church, in the nation, and in work. Ask God to forgive us for wanting to be "like the nations".
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 106:26-30 - See www.rpglobalalliance.org for Psalm tune helps.

1 SAMUEL

Wednesday - 1 Samuel 8:1-9 - THE Root of Our Problem

The good times under God's direct rule are coming to an end. Samuel is old and soon to die. The people have seen the unsuitability of Samuel's sons to rule over them. They want to be like everyone else and have a king. Yet we still haven't got to the root of our problem that this chapter exposes. Even the desire to blend in is merely a symptom, not the disease.

Samuel seems to take the request for a king (v5) as a personal insult (v6). But God brings it all out into broad daylight in verse 7. It is not a rejection of Samuel, but a rejection of him, and a rejection of him as their king, specifically. You see, the real issue is not Samuel's age, nor his sons' unsuitability, nor their desire to be like the nations. The real issue is that they want to cast God off the throne, no longer constrained by his law, or to serve him. This is what sin is at its core. In verse 8 God says this is, and has always been, the problem. And God could have gone further back in history than to Egypt - all the way back to Adam and Eve in the Garden. As they stretched out their hand for the fruit they were trying to knock God off his throne.

All that is wrong in the world is the result of this. All we see that causes pain and hardship - this is what happens when we throw off the reign of God, and do what is right in our own eyes. When people please themselves instead of God, it simply results in pain. When disaster and tragedy strike in the world, it is the result of sin - not necessarily directly, in that the people involved sinned and caused it. But in the sense that death and suffering is the curse of sin in the world. The wrecking ball started swinging with Adam and Eve. In our lives all the mess is the result of sin - either our sin or others sin, even if just Adam's sin and the curse on creation. And it is a deeply personal attack. This is what makes it so serious: we have rejected him - verse 7.

Questions

1. In what way can all pain be traced to sin?
2. Why is Luke 13:1-5 important to keep in mind?

Prayer Points

1. Ask God to give you a sense of the deeply personal attack sin is on 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 2:1-4 - See www.rpglobalalliance.org for Psalm tune helps.

1 SAMUEL

Thursday - 1 Samuel 8:9-22 - The Result of Our Problem: Slavery

The people have asked for a king to judge (rule) them (v4). Now Samuel shows them how a king will judge (rule) them (v9). Samuel acts as a witness in a trial here; his whole speech has a legal feel. As you read it did you notice the word he repeats again and again? The king will take, take, take (v11, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17). In a subtle wordplay Samuel says the very problems they are seeking freedom from - Eli's sons taking the offering (2:14,16), Samuel's sons taking bribes (8:3) - will be intensified. It will be out of the frying pan and into the fire. The king will take the privileges that belong to God. He will take the tenth of produce (v15, 17). He will take the land (v14). He will take them and their children as his (v11, 13, 17). He will take these things, but he will not give them deliverance like God did. They are swapping a king who takes much but who also gives much, for a king who will take the same and give far less in return. They will get oppression (v17b) and crying out (v18a). It's a bum deal. And it all sounds very familiar - it's the sound of Exodus 2:24 and affliction in Egypt. The king they've chosen will not deliver, but rather enslave. In chapter 7, when Samuel was their judge and God was their king, they cried out for help and God answered (7:9). But now, they will not be heard (v18). They will be slaves.

Friends, throwing off the rule of God is not the freedom we think. It is slavery. Since we tried to overthrow the throne in Eden, we have been slaves. Sin is not something we have a choice in. Sin is something we all are. We cannot not sin. We must obey. Self-rule is slavery. That's why all other solutions fail. You can educate slaves, but they are still slaves. You can empower slaves, but they are still slaves. You can make slaves go to church, but they are still slaves. You can give slaves more money, but they are still slaves. The chains need to be broken. Are you still seeking freedom in self-rule, doing your own thing? Maybe in just one area of your life you're tempted to go your own way. Your own way is the way of slavery.

Questions

1. Do you think God the King demands too much? What does he give in return?
2. Why does self-service only give slavery in return?

Prayer Points

1. Pray that God would break the chains of sin-slavery in the lives of unsaved family and friends. Pray that God would empower you to live as freed sin-slaves, and as servants of 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 106:30-34 - See www.rpglobalalliance.org for Psalm tune helps.

1 SAMUEL

Friday - 1 Samuel 8:9-22 - Hard Heartedness

Our rejection of God leads to our slavery to sin. We could be tempted to think that this is something that is forced upon us by God. As if he says, "Serve me, or I'll enslave you to things that will destroy you." But as we look again at this chapter we see a different dynamic at work.

Samuel, the prophet of God, speaks for God and warns the people about the dangers of earthly kings (v10-18). This is God graciously showing his people the peril of their choice while they have a chance to change their minds. But the people refuse to listen - read verse 19 again. They will not hear God's kind warning. Proverbs 12:15 comes to mind: "The way of a fool is right in his own eyes". And most awful of all, their words echo Moses' descriptions of Pharaoh's hard hearted stubbornness in Exodus. Their words in verse 19 are the revealing of Pharaoh-like hard-heartedness. It is Pharaohesque pig-headed stubbornness. You see, persistent refusal leads to hard heartedness. The more we refuse God's warnings, the harder we become, and the further down the path to destruction we go. Think of Pharaoh: if he had only refused a few times (though he should have obeyed first time!), his and Egypt's pain would have been so much less. Two or three plagues would have been awful, but much less awful than ten. Persistent refusal leads to hard heartedness, which leads to destruction.

Are you "refusing to obey" the voice of God (v19)? It comes through his Word. It comes through his appointed spokesmen, preachers. It comes with repeated warnings and pleas. It comes with second, third, and fourth chances. Persistent refusal leads to hard heartedness, which leads to destruction. To any young people sitting at the family worship table today: day by day you hear God's invitation and warning. If you, day by day, refuse to come to him, you are on the path to hardening your heart, and destroying yourself. And sometimes God says, "Obey their voice (22). Give them what they want". The warnings stop, and he lets you go down that path to destruction.

Questions

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

Prayer Points

1. Pray for a heart that is soft and responsive to God's Word.
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 81:6-7 - See www.rpglobalalliance.org for Psalm tune helps.

1 SAMUEL

Saturday - 1 Samuel 8 - The Resolution of the Problem - the Mercy of God

It's been quite a dark week. Rightly so, this is a dark chapter. But as always, God makes light arise for us in the darkness.

We get a pretty negative picture of the kingship in this chapter. And maybe you've been puzzled by that. It seems at odds with the rest of the Bible, where kings are viewed as great heroes and bringers of blessing. This is God's mercy. God takes this wicked request, and in his mercy, turns kingship into one of his greatest blessings. In his mercy he turns this institution into a vehicle of hope. The people, through the rest of the Old Testament look forward to a perfect King who would bring them under God's rule again. In his mercy he sends a king to save from the slavery we choose. In his mercy he sends Jesus Christ, the King of Kings.

Jesus is a king, not "like the nations" (v5). His kingdom was "not of this world" (John 18:36). Jesus is king who did not "take" (v11, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17), but who gave. He did not come to be served, but to serve and give his life as a ransom for many (Mark 10:45). He was a king of whom they said: "We do not want this man to rule over us." (Luke 19:14). He was a King whom they disowned - "We have no king but Caesar" (John 19:15). He was a king who wore a crown of thorns and whom they mocked with a sign stating that this humiliated criminal was "The King of the Jews". He was a King who endured all this to save his people from our self-imposed slavery. We got ourselves into this mess, socially and individually. We tried to put the crown on our own head and succeeded only in chaining ourselves up. But God, in his mercy, sent a king to deliver. He overruled our rebellion. The wickedness of man is turned into the mercy of God.

This is what we have in Jesus, our Lord and King. Deliverance from slavery and the control of sin. His rule over all things for our blessing - even our sin over ruled to bring good. This is the message we need, and our families and our society: the mercy of God through his king.

Questions

1. Was the request for a king a good or bad thing?
2. "The wickedness of man turned into the mercy of God" - where do we see this most of all? See Acts 4:10-11.

Prayer Points

1. Keep praying that God will transform sin in your life into mercy and blessing.
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 26 - 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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