

Give Us A King

1 Samuel 8:1-22

Have you ever wanted something that you thought was a good idea, but it turned out to be very different than you thought it would be?

When I was eight years old one of the things I really wanted to do was cut the grass with the riding lawn mower.

Not because I was interested in helping out around the house or because I had a good work ethic, I just wanted to drive something.

It was a silver craftsman, a classic square boxed hood, and I believe it had five speeds.

I begged my dad to let me cut the grass, but he said I was too little.

Of course I didn't see it that way. I was full of confidence and believed without a doubt that I could do it.

I don't remember how many times I asked or how many different ways I tried to argue my case, but I do remember what I said to change my dad's mind.

I said, "Dad please let me cut the grass, if you let me cut the grass then I promise I will cut the grass every time it needs to be cut from now on."

That one got his attention and he agreed to let me cut the grass.

He gave me the instructions and guidelines and off I went driving the lawnmower.

It turns out I was right about being able to do it and man was I excited the first time I got to drive that thing.

I'm fairly certain I enjoyed it several times, but I was wrong about how long that excitement was going to last.

I never imagined a time when it would get boring and I'd rather do something else.

Eventually when my dad would point out that the grass needed to be cut I would respond with, "Do I have to?"

Why can't Robert do it he never has to cut the grass?

That's when my dad would remind me of the deal and for the better part of ten years with a few exceptions it was my job to cut the grass.

[Does that ever happen to you? Do you ever get something in your mind that you think is a great idea, but the idea is not as good as you think it is? That happens to the people of Israel from time to time and we find one of those occasions in our text this morning **1Samuel 8:1-22**. Here the people make a demand from the prophet Samuel, they say "Give us a king!" They are convinced that a king is the solution to their problems because they are seeking worldly solutions. Their seeking of earthly things has at least four important lessons for our own lives. Number one is this...]

Point #1 – Real problems can lead people to seek worldly solutions. (Verses 1-5)

Whenever we have needs whether they are perceived or real we will seek out a way to fulfill those needs in someone or something. The default human condition is to try and meet those needs in created things rather than the creator.

At the beginning of chapter eight in the book of 1 Samuel we find the people of Israel are facing a real problem that needs to be addressed. (Verse 1-3)

The nation had enjoyed the leadership of Samuel for a long time.

From the time of his youth the Lord had been speaking through him.

Through his ministry the people turned from idolatry to the one true God.

Because the nation had turned to the Lord they enjoyed peace from their enemies.

Furthermore they enjoyed justice under Samuel as he travelled on a regular circuit to rightly administer everyday legal matters among the people.

It was a relatively good time for the nation, but Samuel suffered the effects of time as almost all people have throughout history.

He has become old (or as I like to say he is wearing out fast).

It's not clear here exactly how much responsibility he has handed over to his sons, but what is clear is that the people see where the future is headed and they are rightly concerned.

Samuel's sons are not living up to their names.

His firstborn is named Joel which means "Yahweh is God!"

That is a fantastic name. It reminds us that Yahweh alone is worthy of our worship and allegiance.

His second born is named Abijah which means "Yahweh is by father."

A name that declares dependency on the LORD but also says something of His love for those that belong to Him.

Great names, but they men themselves fall short of their names.

We don't know how long they were on the job for, but at some point they turn towards corruption.

As soon as that happens justice goes out the door because right and wrong are traded in for money, property, and power.

That is a real problem. It's a problem we see every day in our own time.

Their complaint here is legitimate, but they don't come to Samuel to seek out the LORD for a solution.

They come with statements and a command (**Verse 4-5**).

They don't ask Samuel to deal with his sons. The text doesn't tell how long this has been happening or if Samuel even knew about it before the elders come to him.

They don't ask for him to inquire of the LORD because they have the solution, "Give us a king like the other nations."

A King is the answer, but not one like the other nations.

They look at their godless neighbors and say, "Let's solve our problems by being like them!"

[The Bible tells us to build our lives on the rock of God's word. Have you ever tried building something on rock? It's hard. Breaking and shaping rock has real challenges. Man is it ever tempting to look over at someone making what seems to be great progress building their house on the sand and want to imitate them.]

When we are going through struggles and trials and we look at our unbelieving neighbor and everything seems great for them we are tempted to say "let's do what they are doing!"

I've got money problems. Let's work more hours and never see my family because I have to have everything they have.

I've got marriage problems. Let's blame the other person, make them look as bad as possible, and move on to someone else.

I'm unhappy so I'm going to adopt every self-help philosophy I can. I don't like the way society is, so I'll put my hope in a politician who says he will solve my problems.

[These are all real problems that need to be addressed, but how we address them is critically important. The people of God must resist the temptation to look for life solutions in the people and things of this world. If we do that it will not work out in the long run. The people and things of this world will eventually disappoint us. In addition to worldly solutions eventually failing, we see in the next few verses another important lesson. We see that...]

Point #2 – Focusing on worldly solutions moves people away from the Lord. (Verses 6-9)

When we get it into our head that the answer to our problems rests with people and things and we chase after them we will be creating distance between ourselves and God.

Keep in mind that Samuel has spent his whole life serving God and the people of Israel as we listen to his reaction in **verse 6**.

What the people say here is a command to Samuel.

This is not a conversation starter, there is no sense they have a desire to listen to Samuel's wisdom or seek God's will.

This is what we want and you are going to give it to us, is the attitude they have.

The NIV says, "This displeased Samuel" which can be translated "it was evil in his eyes."

Samuel sees the worldliness of this and he hates it. Notice what he does here though, he turns to the LORD in prayer. (**Verse 7-9**).

Samuel being upset is understandable. He has given his life in service to this people and they are ready to kick him to the curb when things become a little problematic.

God says, "It is not you they have rejected, but they have rejected me as their king."

They are seeking from a man what they are supposed to seek from the LORD.

God reminds Samuel that it has been that way ever since they left Egypt.

When they are in the wilderness without food (a real problem) they grumble against God and tell themselves it was better in Egypt.

They get thirsty, same thing.

Moses takes a while coming down from the mountain and they build an idol and worship it.

That is what happens when we chase after worldly things, we move away from the LORD.

[Anybody ever take a boat ride over to Pelee Island? I've done the trip a handful of times. If you leave from the Kingsville harbor and you can see the island when you start the trees look very tiny and as you get closer they begin to look bigger and bigger. As the trees on the island begin to look bigger and bigger the trees on the mainland start to look smaller and smaller.]

That is how it is when we are moving towards something we are moving away from something else.

It is very important to remember that our closeness to God is not a matter of geography, it is a matter of relationship.

God is everywhere so we can never get away from Him geographically, but the space that He occupies in our hearts can vary.

The more we set our hearts on worldly things, the less they are set upon the LORD.

Jesus is crystal clear on this point when He says in Matthew six, "No one can serve two Masters."

[The people here are right to be concerned about their situation. A society without justice is doomed to be sure and there is a great deal of pain along the way. They are right to think they need a king, in fact I've titled this series through the book of 1 Samuel "People Need The King".

A worldly king though will do them no good in the long run and their desire for one is moving them away from the LORD. Our hearts cannot be drawn to the world without being drawn away from God. If we persist at that there is something else that happens. This is the third lesson from our text, that...]

Point #3 – Chasing after the world dulls the ears to God’s warnings. (Verses 10-20)

The Bible is full of caution signs and stop signs for our life. The Lord often brings godly people across our path to say you better turn around cause were your headed is destructive, but if we are bound and determined to pursue earthly satisfaction we will have cotton balls in our ears.

God tells Samuel in verse 9 to listen to the people and give them the king they want, but He also says to, “warn them solemnly and let them know what the king who will reign over them will do.”

Verse 10 says this of Samuel...

As a faithful prophet Samuel tells them everything. **Verses 11-18** allows us to listen in on the warning God gives to the people, listen with me.

This king that you want so badly is going to take your sons.

They will serve in his army and run before his chariots.

That would be of no surprise. The men likely thought of themselves as having to fight in the army no matter what.

The warning here isn’t about going to battle, the warning is what is this king going to ask you to fight for.

The sense is he is going to be concerned about his own wellbeing rather than the wellbeing of the nation.

On top of fighting in the army, he will force men to work his land, to make weapons and equipment for him.

This king will also conscript the daughters of Israel to be perfumers, cooks, and bakers.

So this king is going to force the sons and daughters of the nation to provide him with a cushy life.

The warning is that the solution they are seeking is going to cost them their children.

He goes on to warn them that it will cost them more than their children.

This king will take the best land, a tenth of your produce, a tenth of your livestock, your own servants, and either give it to his buddies or use it for himself.

And on top of all that you will be his slaves and when you finally realize how bad things are and call out to God He is not going to listen to you.

Now keep in mind that Samuel has been serving as a prophet for many decades at this point.

Because he is a true prophet of the LORD we know that everything he told the people was proved true by the power of God.

So they know that when Samuel gives them a word from the LORD it is truly the word of the LORD.

The warning here is severe to say the least, but we read this in **verses 19-20**.

They “refuse to listen”, they stop up their ears and continue on the course they have set.

What they say here is quite telling. They want someone to lead, someone to go before them and fight their battles.

That is exactly what God had promised to do, if they would simply love and trust Him.

What they are doing is trading in the LORD for a human king and they are so fixated on that goal that they have stopped up their ears to any kind of warning.

[My dad told me many years ago that it is a bad idea to pull nails out of a board with a wooden handled hammer. It’s a bad idea because the handle will break. I’d like to tell you that I’ve never broken a hammer because I listened to my dad, but sadly I’ve broken a few. I always have a reason for not listening. I don’t have a crowbar, I’m sure it will be fine this time, I have to get that nail out right now, and on it goes. I get the idea in my head and I don’t listen.]

That is what we can be like with the LORD.

People who carry the name Christian fix their eyes on worldly things and completely ignore the warnings of the Scriptures and fellow believers.

I’ve seen it many times when people who say they are believers get into a romantic relationship with and unbeliever.

The Bible is crystal clear that we are not supposed to do that, but people stop up their ears and say, “He’ll change once we are married”, “She is a good moral person”, or “I’m in love so it can’t be wrong!”

Or the person who trades in Church on Sunday for something else.

The Scripture tells us to meet with other believers to be encouraged towards righteousness and warns us that we will drift away if we don’t worship with other believers.

People will say, “Don’t come at me with your self-righteous hypocrisy, being at church doesn’t save you!”

[The bible warns us about pride, about immorality, about greed, gossip, and alike. Are we people who justify sin and refuse to listen to God's warnings? It is an easy trap to fall into and the sobering reality that we need to pay attention to is that God warns us for good reason. We will not be the exception to the rule, we will suffer the consequences of ignoring God. In fact, God will see to it and the way He does it may surprise us. That is the fourth lesson of our text today. Here is the lesson...]

Point #4 – If people keep chasing the world they might get it. (Verses 21-22)

We know the old saying, “Be careful what you wish for, you just might get it!” Why is that saying so true? Because often the things we want most are bad for us in the long run. That is 100% true when we look to created people and things to do for us what only God can do.

What we are told here in verses 21-22 should make us seriously consider the things we are chasing after in life.

God says, “Give them what they want. Give them a king like the other nations.”

If you are familiar with Romans 1, then you know that is one of the ways God pours out his wrath on people.

He simply gives them over to ungodly desires.

What really jumps out to me in these verses is the very end.

Samuel tells everyone to “go back to his town.”

It's a way of saying, “There is nothing more to say, you are getting what you want.”

The reason that jumps out to me so much is I can't help but wonder how they went home.

How do most people act in the moment they get what they want?

We are generally happy right?

Think about that. These people are likely happy about something that is going to cause them misery in the future.

The reason why that is concerning to me is because of how easy it is to be deceived in a moment in time.

How easy it to think that we have gained when we have really lost.

There is a powerful warning for us here.

The warning is to be careful about being too easily satisfied in simply getting what we want in a given moment.

We have to be careful that we want what is right.

They were right to think they needed a king.

Every single one of us needs that.

That is who Jesus is, He is the king of kings and the LORD of LORD's.

We need him to go before us, to fight our battles, to rescue us from being condemned to hell for eternity on account of our rebellion against God.

He will do that if we embrace Him by faith.

He will do that if we acknowledge our sins, if we put our trust in the death that He died for sinners, and believe that He has conquered the grave

He will do that if we look forward to the day when He will come and establish His glorious everlasting throne upon the earth.

He will do that if we make Him our King.

You see if we are not careful, if we chase after the things of this world we might just get them and in the process miss out on enjoying the rule of Jesus forever.

The Lord said it best when He said, “What good is it for a man to gain the whole world, yet forfeit his soul?”

It is not a king like all the other nations have that we need.

It is a King like no other that we need.

Life is filled with real challenges and problems, but listen the real solution cannot be found in worldly things.

Looking for answer there only moves us away from the Lord, it only stops up our ears to His word, and hurts us rather than helps us.

So instead of saying in our hearts “Give us a King” Let us praise the Lord for “Being the King.”