

THIS WEEK'S MESSAGE

SEPTEMBER 16TH-17TH, 2023 // 1 SAMUEL

A KING (1 SAMUEL 8:1-5)

DECADES LATER

At this point, Samuel is probably around 60 years old when he appoints his sons as judges over Israel. Unfortunately, Sam's sons don't seem very different from Eli's.

- Judges were appointed over tribes and towns to be fair and impartial mediators of the law, but Joel and Abijah were corrupt.

AUTHORITY CAN CHANGE PEOPLE

It would be fair to assume that Sam raised his sons correctly and that he saw nothing to lead him to believe they would abuse their power.

- **Even if we lead others well, they have to make a personal decision to honor God.** Also, **power corrupts even seemingly good people if they don't know God.**

IMPROPER PATHS OF COMMUNICATION

Complaints must have reached the elders in Israel. But, because they did not want to face Sam directly out of fear of conflict, they gathered behind his back.

- **Matthew 18:15-20** tells us how we are to address conflict. **When we fail to use Jesus' process, people get hurt.**

"APPOINT A KING TO JUDGE US"

There was no praying about the future when they decided they wanted a king. **They looked at what the world around them was doing and took the easy route of blending in.**

- **Even though the surrounding people were immoral and broken, the liberated people of God wanted to fit in.**

GOD'S DESIRE FOR OUR DISTINCTION

Jesus wants us to live distinctly because we are miraculously made (Psalm 139) in His image to do amazing things.

- **If we are saved and understand we are more than accidents or animals, we should live in a way that honors the complexity and beauty of our creation by a loving Creator!**
- **Distinction from the ways of the world is a fundamental principle of Christianity.** Peter tells us to be a **peculiar and holy** people so we may proclaim God's goodness (1 Peter 2:9), and Paul tells us to come out and be **separate from "unclean" things** (2 Corinthians 6:17-18).
- **True faith is holy, noticeable, and distinct.**

THE PRICE (1 SAMUEL 8:6-18)

THEY WERE FOLLOWING THE WRONG LEADER

The Israelites wanted the ease of having an earthly king over the trust and relationship of following God and His Word.

- It's not that we shouldn't have human authority in our lives; we should. But **ultimately, we must follow the laws and principles of God and trust they work for our good.**

"THEY HAVE NOT REJECTED YOU..."

Sam knew this request was wrong, and he felt rejected. **The rejection of one speaking the things of God is actually a rejection of God.**

- **If we are teaching AND living the Bible, we can have peace knowing the aggression of the world is not really about us but about a God that can handle it.**

HOW SAM WAS TO RESPOND

Instead of acting out, Sam took time to pray. God told him to listen to the people and respond in three ways: **1) Because God had them delivered from slavery, their desires were selfish. 2) To warn them about following any king but Him. 3) To tell them the cost of following earthly authority over God.**

DELIVERING TRUTH

Sam told the people exactly what he heard from God. The reality of **their choice to follow their desires and selfishness would lead to being controlled and abused for someone else's selfish pursuits.**

- **Man-made systems enable power-hungry people to abuse the populous.**
- Moving from judges over territories that mediate the law to a monarch that would put all power in a very small group's hands would result in **military drafts and unnecessary wars, over-taxation, opulent lifestyles for the elite, and the seizing of land. In other words, it would enslave the people again.**

OUR SELFISHNESS ACTUALLY RESTRICTS US

The world sells a manipulated version of freedom that actually leads to greater slavery.

- In a culture that promotes boundary-less "freedom," **we've become the most anxious, depressed, angry, irresponsible, and selfish people in history. Has the pursuit of self yielded what we really want?**

LIKE EVERYONE ELSE (1 SAMUEL 8:19-22)

"WE MUST HAVE A KING OVER US."

Even after hearing the warnings of God from a trusted prophet, the people turn to their wants and desires to fit in with a broken world.

- **Why do we, as people who have heard truth and may have been rescued from previous mistakes, still reach out to the destructive temptations of our culture?**

A GIVING OVER TO WHAT WE WANT

A sobering principle throughout the Bible is that **if we know truth and still pursue self or have no desire to know truth because it may contradict our feelings, God will eventually give us over to our pursuits.**

- **Our lives and eternity will be the fruit of the invitation or denial of God's presence.**

DISTINCTION

- **Christians are called to be counter-cultural in a biblical way.** This calling honors God and shines a light to others that the truth works and God loves us.
- Our calling to "come out and not touch anything unclean" reminds us **we are a miraculous creation from a perfect God!**
- In how we think and act.
- In what we engage in and allow to feed our minds and hearts.
- **The Bible must be the lens by which we view all things:** people, culture, authority, and how we address tension with others and in the world.

THE DANGERS OF FOLLOWING THE CROWD

- The danger of blending with the world is both temporary and eternal.
- **If we choose not to be distinct in this life, we will suffer the ramifications of decisions made without God's will, wisdom, or provision. In eternity, it will be permanent separation from God's presence.**

THE PURSUIT OF SELF IS A LIE (GENESIS 3)

- The lie that the pursuit of self will lead us to a better place is the oldest lie in history, and the results of buying into it have always been the same.
- If we think about it rationally, **do we want what the world is selling? If not, why do we keep buying it?**

CHOOSING TO BE LAST WORKS (MATTHEW 20:16)

- Living by the teachings and principles of Jesus and the Word isn't easy; it's against the grain. But **in a world of people dying for distinction but only looking/living the same, don't we want to live in the uniqueness and beauty of what God intended us to be?**
- If we will choose to put God first (Matthew 6:33) and trust that He has a distinct path for us (Jeremiah 29:11), we will not only honor our Creator, we will also grow closer to Him.
- **How often do we forget the focus is Him, not us?** Do we live to honor the one Who has saved and set us free?
- In putting God first and building a relationship with Jesus, we become **distinct in how we live. We flourish because we walk in God's wisdom, grace, and provision, and we bless those around us because we have chosen to pursue God over self!**