

“The Birth of a Kingmaker”

19 December 2021 - Led by Rev. Sam Mawhinney

Welcome & Call to Worship

Hymn of Preparation: Hark! the Herald Angels Sing

Prayers of Adoration & Confession

Lighting of the Advent Candles

Hymn: It Came Upon the Midnight Clear

Reading: 1 Samuel 1

Sermon:

At our dinner table this week we had a conversation about the lack of merit for the British Royalty. The British Royals are divisive, loved by some and hated by others! Royalty brings many privileges and responsibilities and when they or indeed others in authority act in ways that are oppressive, shameful, disregard their subjects, fail to serve or are just immoral then trust goes and there is a clamour for change or their abolition.

I. The Desire for a King

Israel consisted of twelve tribes. The glue that united them was their ethnic ties because they had originated from the same family. They all believed in the one God, and they all followed a moral code which had been given by God and written down by his servant Moses. However, when the religious life of the nation was in the doldrums, such as during the period of the Judges, when *“the Israelites did evil in the eyes of the Lord”* then the moral code and belief in God ebbed and they tended to drift towards other gods and their beliefs.

Last week we heard of Samson, who was officially the last of the seven judges of Israel. These judges aroused the faith of the nation and enhanced the sense of national pride and unity but their reigns were short-lived, haphazard in nature, each was from a different tribe, from various parts of the land, and they all had different gifts and abilities. With Samson gone there was clamour for a king among the people of Israel.

Interestingly the idea of Israel’s king goes back to Abraham, Genesis 17:6 *“I will make nations of you, and kings will come from you,”* was the promise from God to Abraham. What that really meant was not explained at that time, but it begins the thought about Kings and Israel. Moses outlines in Deuteronomy Ch 17:14-20 the criteria for Israel’s King because he is firmly convinced that one day, they will want a king to reign over them. When that happens, these are the rules he said, the king, must

1. be chosen by God
2. come from your own people
3. not acquire lots of horses or wealth
4. not return to Egypt
5. not accumulate many wives
6. write out the law, read it daily and obey it
7. not consider themselves greater than their fellow citizens

So, the idea of the King is growing in Israel. In the time of the judges when Gideon had won a great battle against the Midianites, the people begin to cry for a king (8:22) *“Rule over us-you, your son and your grandson-because you have saved us out of the hand of the Midianites.”* The clamour is growing, the people want a king. Today we will focus on Samuel’s part in bringing it about.

II. Samuel’s Birth

Samuel’s father Elkanah was a descendant of Joseph, an Ephraimite, Ephraim and Manasseh were Joseph’s sons born in Egypt. He came from the mountain area North of Jerusalem from a town called Ramathaim. His family history is documented, and he is rich enough to support two wives, Hannah and Peninnah. (As in other stories the two wives are an issue, because it contradicts the Bible’s teaching on one man and one woman in marriage)

He was though a faithful man who went up to the shrine at Shiloh at the three appointed feasts to offer the appropriate sacrifices. This is worth noting because the state of the priesthood and religious life currently in Israel was shocking. The current priest Eli was weak and undoubtedly complicit in the sins of his sons, who were gluttons and abused their role and the express written commands of God when they feasted on the parts of the sacrifice they shouldn’t have and who are described as *“wicked men; they had no regard for the Lord”* (2:12)

Hannah was loved by Elkanah, but childless and this was a deep source of tension and distress in the household. She expresses the depth of her situation and feelings to God in v10, *“In bitterness of soul Hannah wept much and prayed to the Lord.”* She promised God that if the Lord gave her a child, she would dedicate him to the Lord as a Nazirite. She meets Eli, the priest at the shrine in Shiloh and Eli initially thinks she is drunk. However, she assures him, *“I have not been drinking wine or beer; I was pouring out my soul to the Lord. Do not take your servant for a wicked woman; I have been praying here out of my great anguish and grief. Eli answered, “Go in peace, and may the God of Israel grant you what you have asked of him.”* Hannah was then given a deep peace, broke her fast and got on with her life when she went back home to Ramathaim in the hill country. In time she becomes pregnant and gave birth to a boy called Samuel. Whose name means “heard of God.”

What a tremendous privilege prayer is! The bible assures us God is a strong tower, a rock and place of refuge, the one who hears our prayers. *“The Lord has heard my weeping”* Psalm 6:8. *“Cast all your anxiety on him because he cares for you”* 1 Peter 5:7

III. Samuel’s Role

When I read Samuel’s story, I noticed that he had many roles in Israel. Firstly, he was a **Priest**. He ministers, at the shrine in Shiloh, and serves under Eli the priest. He prepares the shrine for worship, keeps the lights burning, accepts the sacrifices and offers prayer. Secondly, he is a **Prophet**. He begins to hear the word of God, which is significant because in (3:1) we are told that was a rare occurrence because of the state of the nation’s faith. God begins to speak with Samuel personally and when he is directed by Eli to respond by saying, *“speak Lord for your servant is listening”* he is told that Eli and his family will be judged for their disobedience and in obedience he passed that message on and we read at the end of chapter three, *“The Lord was with Samuel as he grew up and he let none of his words fall to the ground. And all Israel from Dan to Beersheba recognised that Samuel was attested as a*

prophet of the Lord. The Lord continued to appear at Shiloh and there he revealed himself to Samuel through his word. And Samuel's word came to all Israel." (3:19-4:1) He became the voice of God to the people. He was also a **judge**. He became the leader of the people, leading them in deliverance from the Philistines and the narrator writes of Samuel, "Throughout Samuel's lifetime, the hand of the Lord was against the Philistines" and "Samuel continued as **Judge** over Israel all the days of his life." (7:13,15) Sadly, Samuel's sons like Eli's did not follow God and so the clamour for a king grew, "you are old, and your sons do not walk in your ways, now appoint a king to lead us, such as all the other nations have. Give us a king to lead us." (8:5) Samuel is upset and he prays to God, and he receives this response. "Listen to all that the people are saying to you; it is not you they have rejected but they have rejected me as their king." (8:7)

IV. Samuel, the Kingmaker

The people have come to a point of rejecting God as their King which is an incredibly significant statement because as the Psalmist says God is indeed King; "How awesome is the Lord most High, the great King over all the earth." "For God is the King of all the earth" Psalm 47:2,7 and "The Lord has established his throne in heaven, and his kingdom rules over all." Psalm 103:19 But the people of Israel have rejected God as their King.

The people of Israel having rejected God as king, want a human king and Samuel is instructed to give them what they wanted. So, Samuel anoints Saul from the tribe of Benjamin, a tall and handsome man with leadership qualities, but he fails and so David is chosen the youngest son of a shepherd from Bethlehem from the tribe of Judah, and he becomes the greatest King, Israel ever had but still he is flawed. His most visible sins were his adultery with Bathsheba and his arrangement of the murder of her husband and he ruled at the end over a divided household. But the vision remained, articulated by the prophets, of a king who would be truly great and rule with justice and bring peace to the whole world and his subjects would willingly serve and follow him.

Throughout the Old Testament God gives clues about the King and what he will accomplish, he will

1. Create a future like the garden of Eden (Amos 9:13; Psalm 72)
2. Deliver like Moses (Hosea 2:14-23)
3. Be a better King than David (Isaiah 11:1,10)
4. Be of David (Psalm 2:7)
5. Sit at God's right hand (Psalm 110:1)
6. Be divine (Psalm 45:6)

We read that hope every Advent expressed in the prophesy of Isaiah Ch 9:6-7 "For to us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the government will be on his shoulders. And he will be called Wonderful Counsellor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of peace. Of the increase of his government and peace there will be no end. He will reign on David's throne and over his kingdom, establishing and upholding it with justice and righteousness from that time on and forever. The zeal of the Lord Almighty will accomplish this."

God in his wonderful promise and plan through his sovereign power always knew that his people would reject him. Samuel was part of that plan, a bridge between the Judges and the Kings, the one who anointed the first Kings of Israel. The Israelites would in time see the folly of rejecting God as their King and long for a better King, a Messiah who would rule with

justice and righteousness. So, God in his great mercy gave them a perfect King and salvation through the birth of his only son who would triumph over sin and Satan and rise from death victorious to reign forever.

We may be disappointed by the Royals, we may be disappointed by our government, we may be disappointed by our church leaders, but we will never be disappointed by Jesus. His reign is wonderful! Let us make Jesus our King, let us allow him reign in our hearts, let us serve king Jesus with gladness, and rejoice in his perfect reign.

Praise: O Jesus, I Have Promised

Announcements

Prayers for Others

Closing Hymn: Living Lord

Benediction