

Confidence in King Jesus

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[0 : 00] We'd love for you to keep that open in front of you as we spend time in God's Word together. And just to praise the Lord, on the first day of this month, David was going through surgery, and on the last day of the month, he's reading God's Word to us.

So we want to praise God for his kindness to you and to us, David. Let's pray. Heavenly Father, we praise you for your kindness to David in bringing him through surgery.

And Father, we praise you for your Word to us this morning. We ask that you'd help us to understand it, Lord, to be changed by it, to be made more like our Savior. Help us to see him. It's in Jesus' name that we pray.

Amen. Well, just a quick reminder, if you were with us last week, you'll remember that Israel was just after asking God for a king.

And at face value, that didn't seem like such a bad thing, to ask for a king. If it was a king who was under God's rule and under God's law, well, yes, that would have been a good thing.

[1 : 05] But God saw through their request, and he realized where their hearts were, that in fact what they wanted was a king to replace him. He had been their king.

He had been the one who had delivered them from Egypt and had brought justice and fairness to the people. And he had led them. He had fought their battles. And so them asking for a king was essentially them saying, we want somebody instead of you, God.

God warns them that if you get a human king, you will essentially end up in slavery. And in spite of God's warnings, they insist this is what we want.

And so God says, okay, I will give you a king. I wonder if you were in God's shoes, what kind of king would you give them? It would be tempting, wouldn't it, to just turn your back on them because they had turned their back on you and just say, you want a king, you find your own king.

Or it would be tempting to choose for them a king that was really, really bad. So a king that was going to do a terrible job, who was going to fail catastrophically, and then you could say, look, I told you so.

[2 : 29] It would be tempting to do those things. Well, whatever we might do this morning, we're going to see what God does in choosing this king for the people.

We're going to see the type of king that God chooses to rule over his people. In verse 16, we realize, as God says, that he's going to deliver them from the hand of the Philistines, that he's heard their cry, that he's looked on his people.

We realize God isn't going to treat them the way they deserve. God isn't going to turn his back on them the way they've turned their back on him. And so let's have a look and see what happens, what kind of king God chooses for his people.

We see, first of all, that this is a king of character. He's a king of character. In verse 1, it says, there was a Benjaminite, a man of standing, whose name was Kish, son of Abiel, the son of Zeror, the son of Bekorath, the son of Ephiah, of Benjamin.

And as you hear that and the genealogy, you realize this is getting us ready for somebody important. This is getting us ready for a king. You might remember back at the very first verse of 1 Samuel, there was a genealogy, and you were thinking, okay, we're getting ready for a king, somebody important.

[3 : 51] And where the genealogy in chapter 1 lands is with Hannah praying for a child. And you realize she was somebody very, very important.

Here, though, it seems like we're making more progress towards a king. In verse 2, Kish had a son named Saul, as handsome a young man as could be found anywhere in Israel.

And he was a head taller than anybody else. And you're thinking, well, let's just pop a crown on him now and have a party. He's wealthy, he's handsome, and he's a head taller than anybody else.

What more could you want in a king? But first, donkeys. In verse 3, the donkeys belonging to Saul's father, Kish, were lost.

And Kish said to his son, Saul, take one of the servants with you and go and look for the donkeys. And you're thinking, okay, this is one step forward, two step backward towards getting a king because the supposed king is now going to have to go looking for his father's donkeys.

[4 : 59] And we're kind of given this holiday slideshow of Saul's travels following the donkeys around. Maybe you've come back from a holiday and shown your family and friends hundreds of photographs and they're bearing with it, but they're starting to think, why are you showing us all these photographs?

And in a sense, when we're told in verse 4 that they passed through the hill country of Ephraim and through the area around Shalisha, but they did not find them, they went on to the district of Shalim, but the donkeys were not there.

Then he passed through the territory of Benjamin, but they did not find them. You're wondering, why is the author telling us this level of detail about the donkeys' holidays and Saul trying to find them?

You realize that actually, we're being told more about Saul than about the donkeys. Because the donkeys were important to his father.

You may have heard during the week of the sad case of a farmer in Cork who had 30,000 euros worth of his cattle stolen, which is an awful thing to happen to anybody.

[6 : 08] These donkeys would have been important to Kish Saul's father, and yet, why are we being told in such detail what it is telling us more about Saul than about the donkeys?

What's it telling us about Saul? It's telling us that he's the kind of guy who keeps going. He keeps going after those donkeys.

He keeps doing what his dad asked, doing what he's supposed to do. I mean, he could easily have given up. He could easily have gone for coffee with his servant and said to the servant, listen, when we get back, just tell dad that we tried really hard to find the donkeys.

He could have done that, but he doesn't. He keeps going. And not only does he keep going, he listens. In verse 6, the servant replies, look, in this town there is a man of God.

He is highly respected, and everything he says comes true. Let's go there now. Perhaps he will tell us what way to take. And Saul takes this advice on board.

[7 : 12] He hears this advice from his servant. Not only does he keep going, not only does he listen, but he's also caring. So in verse 5, the only thing that prevents Saul from going further with the donkeys is care for his father.

In verse 5, he says, come, let's go back, or my father will stop thinking about the donkeys and start worrying about us. And so this picture has been painted for us of Saul, that he's caring, that he keeps going, that he listens.

He's generous. In verse 7, he says to his servant, if we go to this man of God, what can we give him? The food in our sacks is gone. We've no gift to take to the man of God.

What do we have? If you're from Ireland, you might say, we can't go with one hand as long as the other. In other words, we have to be bringing something with us, says Saul to his servant.

And not only is he generous, but he is kind. In verse 10, when the servant says, in verse 9, I have a quarter of a shekel of silver, I will give it to the man, so that he will tell us the way to take.

[8 : 22] Saul says, good, in verse 10. And you could actually translate that as, well said. Well said. It's just such a simple kindness on the part of Saul to his servant that he commends the servant for this good idea.

Years ago, when I was doing an internship with the Christian unions, one of the things that they impressed upon us was that we were to encourage the good wherever we find it.

To encourage the good wherever we find it. It is so easy for us to be cynical, to be pessimistic, to be negative about everything all the time. But they said, encourage the good wherever you find it.

And Saul is a man who encourages the good in his servant. Well said, Saul said to his servant. Now it's amazing, as this picture of Saul's character is being painted for us.

Nobody sees this, except his servant. Nobody sees that Saul keeps going, or that he's caring, or that he's listening, or that he's generous, or that he's kind. But now we see it.

[9 : 32] We're shown this by God through his word, so that we can see the type of king that God chooses. That he is a king of character.

A man of character. And for the people at the time, to hear this, and to see this in Saul, would have given them confidence in the type of king that God chooses.

Here is a man who is faithful in little, faithful in a few donkeys. We can have confidence that he will be faithful in much. God had given them a king that they could have confidence in.

You know, God is giving this the best shot. They'd wanted a king. God had said, not a good idea, and yet God is giving them the best shot.

And you know, God has given us a king we can have confidence in. He has given us Jesus. You see in Jesus a king who keeps going. Not with donkeys, with his people.

[10 : 35] We come to church this morning and maybe the question on your mind is, can I keep going? And that's a good question, but it's not the most important question.

The most important question is, will Jesus keep going? And we are assured that he will. He will finish the good work that he has begun in us.

That is where our confidence lies in the character of Jesus as a king who keeps going. Not only that, but he is caring. You see this all the way through the Gospels.

He's caring enough to stop a crowd of people to listen and speak to one woman. He's caring enough to ask a man up a tree to come down and have tea in his house.

He's caring enough to cross a lake to get to one man who is possessed by demons. He's caring enough that he has brought you and I to know him.

[11 : 35] He is this type of shepherd who goes after one sheep. He goes after one coin, one son. He doesn't trample over people to fulfill his plans. And not only is he caring, but he listens, just like Saul listened to his servant and said, well said.

Isn't it an amazing thought that Jesus is a 12-year-old in the temple? What's he doing? He's listening. This is what Luke says about Jesus, that he's sitting among the teachers in the temple listening to them and asking them questions.

And all who heard him were amazed at his understanding and his answers. Jesus in his humanity grew and learned knowledge and part of the way in which he did that was by listening to people and he continues to listen to his people, not because he needs to know what we know, but because he wants to know.

He wants to hear us, our prayers and our petitions. Jesus is generous. Jesus is kind. Just as Saul says, well done to his servant, Jesus will say, well done, good and faithful servants, to those who walk closely with him.

And we will be amazed. We will think, this wasn't my doing, this was your doing. And he will still say, well done. And so we can have confidence in the king that God has chosen for us.

[13 : 09] And not only that, but we can become like him. We can keep going because he keeps going. We can be caring because he is caring. We can listen because he listens. We can be generous because he is generous.

We can be kind because he is kind. He is a king of character and we can have confidence in him. He is the king who God has chosen.

We see, secondly, that the kind of king that God chooses is a king that is guided by God. He's a king that is guided by God. Now in one sense, it is Saul's godly character that guides him.

Isn't that interesting that it is Saul's character that guides him through life, in a sense. As he's presented with all these forks in the road when he's following the donkeys, what's guiding him is, is this right or wrong?

Is this wise or unwise? And that is helping him to make the decisions that he needs to make. Do I keep going or do I give up? Do I listen to my servant or do I ignore him?

[14 : 15] Saul doesn't look for signs or writing in the sky to find his way through life. He does the right thing or the wise thing as best he can.

And just as an aside, it's similar for us if we're trying to find our way through life. How do we find our way through life? What job should I choose? What friendships should I cultivate?

How should I spend my time? Sometimes we want God to give us writing in the sky or a big sign from him. But he's already told us how to find our way through life by doing what is right, by doing what is good, by doing what is wise.

And as we choose those things, amazingly, he will guide us to the job or to the friendship or to whatever we might need.

God is more concerned about our character primarily than about the job that we choose or other factors in life.

[15 : 19] And so in one sense, Saul's character guides him. In another sense, it is God who guides him. They go in verse 11 up the hill to the town. They meet some young women coming out to draw water and they ask them, is the seer here?

Is the prophet here? Now that's a yes or a no answer, isn't it? Either he is or he isn't. But look at the answer that they get. Verse 12, he is the answer and you think, okay, let's go find him.

But then they go on. He's ahead of you. Hurry now. Okay. He has just come to our town today. Okay. For the people have a sacrifice at the high place.

Okay. As soon as you enter the town, you will find him before he goes up to the high place to eat. Okay. The people will not begin eating until he comes.

Okay. Because he must bless the sacrifice. Okay. Afterwards, those who are invited will eat. Okay. Go up now.

[16 : 22] You should find him about this time. Okay. And you're thinking, why this long answer from these ladies? Maybe they're chatty, but it could have been summarized for us, but we're given the whole answer.

And you start to think, why is that? And you realize the timings that are involved here for Saul to meet Samuel.

Look at the timings in verse 12. Hurry now. He has just come. Verse 13, as soon as, before.

The people will not eat until he comes. Afterwards, go up now. You should find him about this time, which could be translated, you'll find him immediately.

And you start to realize the timings here are quite remarkable. That Samuel is the one that Saul is looking for. And all these things have come together so that just as Samuel is arriving in verse 14, sorry, just as Saul is arriving in verse 14, there was Samuel coming towards them on his way up to the high place.

[17 : 37] Now this is amazing because, on the one hand, Saul is just making these decisions as best he can. He is finding his own way through life.

And on the other hand, something deeper is going on here. This is too much to be just a coincidence.

And that is confirmed in verse 16 when God says to Samuel, about this time tomorrow I will send you a man from the land of Benjamin.

And then you realize that it is true that Samuel, or sorry, that Saul went but it is also true that God sent. So Saul went but God sent.

And you would say to Saul, Saul, did you feel coerced or forced or led by a chain to make all those decisions? No. I freely made those decisions.

[18 : 37] But as I look back on it now and the timings of how all these things unfolded, I realize that God was sending. Saul went but God sent.

God gives us confidence in King that He chooses because He guides the King that He chooses. God doesn't put a thousand monkeys in front of a thousand typewriters and hope that Shakespeare will be produced.

even as Saul is freely making these decisions, God is guiding his steps. You think of the proverb that says the King's heart is a stream of water in the hand of the Lord.

He turns it wherever He will. Saul went but God sent. That didn't make Saul a robot and we find it hard to get our heads around it and that's okay because we're human and our heads are limited and our brains have only so much capacity but it is great confidence for us that the King that God chooses, God guides and God has given us a King that He guides.

Jesus went here and He went there and He went to the other place in the Gospels but what is very clear from the get-go is that Jesus was sent. The voice of one crying in the wilderness prepare the ways of the Lord.

[20 : 11] This has been predicted and prophesied from years and years and years before, hundreds of years before. God had prepared the way for this one who He was sending so that when Jesus appears to the disciples on the road to Emmaus after He's risen from the dead what does He say to them?

What does He do for them? He opens the Scriptures and shows them everything that was speaking about Him in Moses the Law and the Prophets.

God had prepared the way for the one that He would send and what that does for us is it gives us confidence in Jesus.

Jesus isn't a flash in the pan. Jesus isn't a guy who has come along with notions in the first century. Jesus had been sent by God so that we can have confidence in Him.

And you know this careful guiding of God in the life of Saul gives us confidence as well because this is what God does in our lives. If this happened in your life what happened with Saul here where it is just so coincidental it seems that He meets Samuel at just the right moment you would maybe say oh that was a God thing or that was of God or God showed up.

[21 : 36] But we need to realize that God always shows up. He always shows up in the life of His people. He always guides us. He isn't standing in the corner like a piece of furniture in our lives doing nothing awkwardly leaning against the wall.

He is always guiding us whether we realize it or not. During the week I was meeting a friend we're going to call him Person A so try not to confuse myself.

So Person A I was meeting for coffee and me and Person A had gone back and forth a little bit on the timings. So we tried for 2 o'clock that didn't work tried for 12 that didn't work let's go for 11 okay we'll go for 11 and we were freely making these decisions and then on the morning he texted and said I'm actually going to be 15 minutes late so I said fine so we met outside the church building at 11 15 and as me and Person A met we were just about to walk away to get our coffee and then Person B came along okay so I knew Person B and I knew Person A but Person A did not know Person B so I introduced Person A to Person B Person B says oh you're Person A I've heard about you from Person C and I'm thinking this is a bit odd so anyway he says that to Person A and then Person A says I'm meeting Person C at 12 o'clock and I'm thinking this is very coincidental so anyway

Person B went on about their day and me and Person A go for coffee as we're getting coffee Person C texts Person A and says I'm actually a little bit early so I'm here now but I can wait for you and we say fine at the end of me meeting Person A I go over I'm just intrigued by Person C who is this person and why is God orchestrating things like this so we go over say hello to Person C and I say you don't know me but I know Person A and I know Person B and she says really that's so interesting and then she says really warmly I've heard such lovely things about the Baptist Church and I say wow now sometimes you hear things like that being said and sometimes you don't this isn't this Baptist Church primarily is another Baptist Church and I think wow that's amazing and then I learned where she worked and so I said to Person C do you know

Person D and she said I have known Person D for years and I'm thinking this is just too good to be true this is a God thing God showed up and so I don't know what else God is going to do through all those connections and we are tempted to get ahead of God and say well because all that happened then this is going to happen it might or it might not what I do know is that I'm praying for Person C I've invited Person C to the carol service now if Person C shows up to the carol service please don't go over to her and say I heard you were Person C who knows what God will do through all of those connections now here's the thing sometimes we see those so clearly and so in our face and we say God showed up but God always shows up God always guides his people you know that from when you came to faith and you are making these decisions you confess your sin you repent you believe you go to

[25 : 16] Jesus and then you look back and you realize it wasn't so much that I went to Jesus I was sent to Jesus God was opening my eyes God was bringing life where there was death Jesus was irresistible to me yes I freely chose him but he was irresistible to me like Peter where else would I go Lord this is what the psalmist says isn't it if I go up to the heavens you are there if I make my bed in the depths you are there if I rise in the wings of the dawn if I settle on the far side of the sea you are there like an awkward piece of furniture no even there your hand will guide me your right hand will hold me fast God chooses a king who is guided by him and that gives us great confidence in Jesus and he guides us through our lives whether we see it or we don't and that gives us great confidence in him let's think lastly about how

God chooses a king so he chooses a king that he honors now we have got way ahead of Saul Saul is still looking for donkeys Saul is not looking for a place at the table he's not looking for fame he's not looking for recognition he's not looking to be king he's still looking for donkeys when he meets Samuel in verse 18 Saul approached Samuel and said would you please tell me where the seer's house is he doesn't even know yet that this is Samuel Samuel says I am the seer isn't it striking that Saul is still looking for donkeys he could have been out there thinking but I'm so wealthy what am I doing out here or I'm so good looking what am I doing out here I'm so tall what am I doing out here but he wasn't he was thinking about the donkeys and you know what that is called that is called being humble it is called being humble as Tim

Keller says being humble is not thinking less of yourself it is thinking of yourself less Saul was so much thinking about the donkeys he didn't even have a thought about being king he was thinking about himself less he interestingly Samuel doesn't ignore the donkeys in verse 20 Samuel says as for the donkeys you lost three days ago do not worry about them they have been found Samuel recognizes in Saul that he is genuinely concerned for the donkeys he doesn't say to Saul with a little chuckle Saul we all know the reason you've come to see me is to become king no he's genuinely concerned about the donkeys but what we see here is that Saul is going to be exalted by God

Saul this humble man is going to be exalted by God Samuel starts to draw attention to Saul in what he says verse 20 to whom is all the desire of Israel turned if not to you and your whole family line he draws attention to Saul and what he says and in what he does in verse 22 Samuel brought Saul and his servant into the hall and seated them at the head of those who were invited about thirty in number Samuel is possibly the most famous person in Israel at this time and he is a feast for thirty guests and he walks Saul up to the front and he brings Saul a piece of meat that he has set aside for him and the thirty guests must have been thinking who is this guy that Samuel is honoring like this well they would find out soon enough but what we see here is that

God humbles the exalted and he exalts the humble Saul was not at all thinking about being king and yet God is going to make him king God chooses a king that the people can have confidence in because he is a humble king he is not interested about himself and you know God has given us a humble king Jesus says to us that he is meek and humble of heart!

[30 : 11] and amazingly just before he has said that he has said nobody can know the father except the son and the ones to whom the son chooses to reveal him so Jesus says I'm going to make God the father known to you and then he says I am meek and lowly of heart and if you put those two things together which is what Jesus has done what you start to realize is that God is a humble God and you wonder how can that be this is God almighty that we're talking about this is the son of God that we're talking about does Jesus walk around saying to people no I'm not God I'm not that powerful I'm not that important no he doesn't but what Jesus does is he doesn't think of himself much he thinks about the father he thinks about how he can bring glory to

God the father and God the father thinks about how he can bring glory to God the son and God the spirit thinks about how he can bring glory to the father and the son and you realize that God is humble as they deflect glory to one another!

humble so that we can have confidence in him and so that we can follow him in humility that we too can be humble like our savior is humble now this is a tricky one isn't it especially in Ireland sometimes we try so hard to be humble that we end up with all the attention on us nonetheless no I'm not that tall as Saul towers over everybody around him it's a tricky one isn't it to be truly humble what would it look like at church when we come on a Sunday morning to be humble well if it means thinking not thinking less of ourselves but thinking of ourselves less what it would mean is that sometimes we will need to sit in a particular place and that's okay but sometimes we'll come and we will be thinking about what would be helpful for others in where I sit sometimes it would be sitting at the back would be helpful because

I could hand out bibles I could smile and welcome people on the way in or I could ask parents do you need a hand that's humble because it's thinking about others and here's the mind blowing one sometimes being humble means sitting at the front why is that because it means thinking of others if others are coming in late or flustered with kids they couldn't find parking the last thing they need is to be more flustered by having to try and find seats if we sit at the front and free up seats the back we are thinking of others that's a really humble thing to do these aren't the seats of honor we don't have any seats of honor all where am I sitting where am I sitting but genuinely to be humble means coming and saying what would be helpful to others and it's true not just in church life it is true in every area of life humility like

Samuel had humility like our saviour has is not thinking less of yourself it's thinking of yourself less and so amazingly this is what God does for his people he chooses a king for them that they can have real confidence in we can have so much confidence in Jesus because of the character that we see in Jesus and if you've lost sight of his character read through the gospels read through how he deals with people and know that this is how he deals with you he is meek and lowly of heart we have a king!

[34 : 30] that we can have confidence in because God sent him he guides Jesus Jesus listens to the father we can have confidence in Jesus because he is a humble king who God exalts we can trust him with our lives and so let's pray and ask God to help us to do that now father as we look into the week ahead we praise you that you have chosen for us a king who is Jesus and Lord you have given us such reason to be confident in him father grow that in us as we journey through the coming days amen