

The Rise of the Kingdom

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[0 : 00] Well, this morning's message is going to be a little bit of an oddball compared to some of the ones that we've had in the past couple of weeks.

We've been working through some of Jesus' parables about the kingdom of heaven, all in Matthew chapter 13. And the last one, which I was going to do today, is the parable of the net and the fish, and very much has the same meaning or interpretation as the parable of the weeds, which we looked at already.

Different, same meaning, just a different analogy. So we're going to do something a little different this morning. We just wrapped up our last Sunday school as we break for summer here, and in Sunday school we've been looking at the story of Samuel, King Saul, David.

And in two weeks we're going to be starting a new summer series during our morning services. I'm titling it Man on the Run, and we're going to look specifically at the psalms that David composed while he was on the run.

And just what was going on in his head and his heart as he did. And so what I'd like to do this morning is to just tie all of these things together a little bit.

[1 : 25] Because all of these things have one thing in common. And that's the thread or the theme of kingdom. The parables of the kingdom. We've been looking at the rise of the first human king of the nation of Israel in Sunday school.

It's been really good to work our way through that book in 1 Samuel. Especially with those who have been regular with the class, you'll know the story and what we've discovered there.

But where is it all going? My text this morning is the whole book of 1 Samuel, so it would be a little hard to follow along. But it's in there.

Those of you who have been in Sunday school will know what most of the things I'm referring to are. Where is it all going, though? What's the point of this story?

It's quite the story. I'll start off with just kind of reminding us of a little bit of how the story goes. It begins with the people of Israel in times of trouble.

[2 : 33] Things are not going well. They're living in the land of Canaan, the promised land, along with all of the Canaanites that they failed to conquer. And over the generations, since they first entered the promised land, they have slowly just moved back into worshipping the gods of the people that were there in the land, doing the kind of things that they've been doing.

The spiritual condition of the people is not well. Many have forgotten about the Lord, the God who brought them out of Egypt, rescued them from slavery.

Many are worshipping idols, false gods. And the Lord has been gracious. He's given them leaders. Every time they've called out to him because their enemies are closing in or coming to attack, he's given them these leaders who have been a help.

They've had victory over their enemies for a period of time. But then as soon as that leader would die or that judge would die, men like Samson and Gideon and others, they would slowly just go back to their old ways, forgetting the Lord and worshipping other gods.

The history of this period is found in the book of Judges, of course, and it ends on a really ominous note. In those days, there was no king. Everyone did what was right in his own eyes.

[4 : 02] To make matters worse, even the religious leaders are corrupt and immoral. And that's what we saw at the beginning of 1 Samuel.

Those entrusted with the tabernacle and the priesthood, they're using their positions to take advantage of the people. The people would come to bring sacrifices to the Lord and the priests, they were to get a portion of the sacrifice for themselves, but they were treating the sacrifice with contempt.

They were demanding parts that weren't theirs or parts for themselves before they were supposed to get them. And if you're not going to give it to me, I'll take it by force. They were doing... Some of the men, the priests, were sleeping with the women at the entrance of the tent of meeting. There was all kinds of things going on. The leadership, the spiritual leadership was corrupt and immoral.

And these were the sons of Eli and their father on the whole. He knew it was wrong, but he pretty much turned a blind eye. He had the odd conversation, the odd rebuke.

[5 : 11] What are you guys doing? But he didn't do anything to stop it. And so the question that we're faced with, with this story of 1 Samuel that we've been looking at is, what is God going to do about all of this, about this mess that his people are in?

He's made promises to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob about building a people, a great nation through whom he will bless the world, even a kingdom.

And yet, the people of this nation, this kingdom, are a mess. Their leadership is corrupt.

Well, God's grace and mercy oftentimes comes in small and unexpected ways. A woman named Hannah was barren. She was brokenhearted because of her barrenness.

And she prayed and asked the Lord to give her a son. And the Lord did. He gave her a baby boy, and his name was Samuel. She promised God that if he gave her a son, she would give her son back to the Lord.

[6 : 23] And she did that. When he was born and after he had been weaned, she dropped him off at the tabernacle, and he grew up serving the Lord there. And God did something amazing with this little boy, Samuel.

He revealed himself to this boy. He revealed himself through this boy. Samuel became the Lord's prophet, the person through whom God would speak to his people.

For any who were willing to listen, God's grace was there. His counsel was there. His guidance was there in these perilous times. God established Samuel as both a prophet and a leader in Israel.

He cleaned house on the nation. As we read in Sunday school, in one fell swoop, he removed Eli and his sons, this corrupt religious leadership from power.

He gave them into the hands of the Philistines who defeated them in battle. Eli and his sons died. And then the unthinkable happened. The Ark of the Covenant was captured.

[7 : 32] It took all this for God to get through to Israel, to finally get their attention, that they would come to the place where they would stop and turn back to him and acknowledge their sin, be ready to get rid of their idols.

And Samuel was the Lord's man that he had raised up for that very moment to guide the people and counsel them and help them know, how do we do this?

How do we turn back to the Lord? What does he require of us? Things went well for a time. Israel was at peace with her enemies. But then the cycle began to repeat itself all over again.

Samuel grew old. His own sons became corrupt, just like Eli's. The people of Israel altogether decided that their solution to this problem was a change of government.

We've seen how things go. What's really going to solve our problems is this. We need a king. Just like the other nations around us. They have kings. Things seem to go well for them.

[8 : 48] We need a king. That's going to make the difference here for us. We need someone who will lead our men out into battle. That's going to solve our problems.

But sadly, the Lord had made it clear to Samuel that the reason they wanted a king was because they had rejected him, the Lord, as their king.

The Lord warned the people through Samuel that a king was not what they needed. They had him as their king. And that if they went through with this, this would have awful consequences.

Eventually, it would come to the day where they cried out to the Lord for relief from the king himself that they had chosen. But they didn't listen.

They said, we want a king anyway. Give it to us anyway. So the Lord agreed to give them what they wanted. He gave them a king.

[9 : 50] He had Samuel anoint a man, the first ever human king of Israel, Saul. And this is how the nation of Israel became the kingdom of Israel for the first time.

It was a sad day for Israel because it was a day in which God's people rejected the words that he gave them through his prophet.

It was a day on which they rejected their true king, the Lord, and sought a man, someone that they could look to and see to be their leader in his place.

And yet, even here, we saw God's grace. God was, not only gave them a king, but he was with that king.

He gave grace to Saul. He did some work in Saul's heart and changed his heart, it says. He gave him his spirit, an unexpected gift of mercy for an undeserving people.

[10:56] Well, how did Saul do as the first king of Israel? At first, things went really well. He won a couple battles for the people.

Everyone seemed to recognize and affirm that he was the guy. He stood a head taller than the rest of other people. He was a good-looking guy.

Loyalty was there. God even put it in the hearts of some men to follow him and to be loyal to him. At first, things went really well. But then Saul's true colors began to show.

And he disobeyed the Lord. And he did it again. And this became a pattern. As a consequence for Saul's disobedience, God promised to take the kingdom, first from his family line and then out of Saul's own hand.

Saul cared more about what other people thought about than what God thought of him. He didn't listen to Samuel, God's prophet.

[12:08] And so he didn't listen to God. He was so concerned with his own reputation. He was determined to hold on to the power and the position that he had risen to.

And he began to do everything to protect his rule and to hang on to this kingdom. He made rash decisions. He used threats of violence to motivate his people and his men to do what he wanted them to do.

And he was just eaten up with anxiety trying to protect his kingdom. Already what the Lord had warned the people about was coming true.

The king that they had chosen for themselves was making life difficult for them. They didn't trust him. They didn't trust his judgment. But they had to obey because they were afraid of the consequences if they didn't.

And here again we find Israel in a mess. A mess of their own making. So what is God going to do to fix this?

[13:17] How is he going to get his people out of this mess? Well the Lord had a plan. Not just to take away the kingdom from Saul. But to give his people a new king.

A man after his own heart. With a heart like God's. A man who would do what God wanted him to do and what he asked him to do.

And that young man was David. The young shepherd from Bethlehem. The youngest of his brothers. By the Lord's wise working he brought David into the king's palace.

To become a servant of the king. He got David into the military. David had victory as we all know against Goliath. The Lord gave success to David in all the battles that he went to fight.

And eventually Saul realized just what the Lord was doing. He was giving. Taking the kingdom from Saul. And giving it to David. This man. Who was rising up in prominence.

[14:28] And popularity with the people right before his eyes. But rather than humble himself before God. Saul was consumed with holding on to his kingdom.

To this power and position. And so he went after David. He went after the one whom the Lord had anointed. And he tried to use any and every means to get to him.

He slaughtered innocent women and children. He was willing even to kill his own son. For taking David's side. And pleading David's case.

He hunted David. He chased him through the hill country. He chased him to the outskirts of the desert. Even after David and his little band of outlaws.

Went and rescued one of the Israelite towns. When it was being raided by the Philistines. Saul was ready right after that to just pounce on him. And kill him. Yet he escaped.

[15:30] Saul became this obsessed. Murderous. Maniac. And David was his obsession. Even after David had two opportunities.

To kill Saul. The man who was hunting him. And yet didn't. He still didn't stop the hunt. And saw David as a threat. To his kingdom.

Finally came the day. When the Lord did as he promised. Which we read about this morning. When God took the kingdom from Saul. And his family. God allowed the Philistines to conquer Israel.

And Saul watched as the kingdom. Was torn out of his hands. Until he could watch no more. And then he took his own life. There's many things that we can.

Learn or take from this story. We've been challenged and encouraged. By David's faith. And his character. In the midst of trials. We talked about that this morning. We'll see even more of that this summer.

[16:37] As we look at some of the psalms. David wrote while he was on the run. But this morning. I want to ask the question. What's the greater meaning. Of this whole story. Why is it here?

What's the big lesson from it? What's it pointing to? What's the story? What's the story? At the surface. It may seem like just a story of two rivals. A hero and a villain.

The hunter and the person being hunted. The prey. But it's so much more. 1 Samuel is the story. 1 Samuel is the story. Not just of a king and his kingdom.

But of a God and his kingdom. Not just of people who are trying to build their own kingdom. But of a God who is at work building his own kingdom.

A kingdom that we've been talking about through Jesus' parables. But there's some big problems here. As we've seen. As we've been going through this book.

[17:42] Even with the grace that God has given through Samuel the prophet. And very personally to Saul. There's some big problems here. At least two of them.

The people had a prophet. They had one who was speaking the very words of God to them. A reliable prophet. A guy whose words came true time and time again.

And yet they didn't listen to him. They didn't do what he said. They didn't accept his word. They refused to listen to him.

They refused to listen to God. There was a problem with the people. The problem with the people is that they kept turning away.

From God. They kept ignoring him. They kept disobeying him. They wanted a king. They wanted a kingdom. But they were going to try to build that kingdom for themselves.

[18:44] With the king of their choice. We'll do it with or without your help. God. Have they done a king of the people. But they did not. And even when they come to see the error of their ways.

Their repentance is short lived. It's not long before they're back into their old ways. And they repeat the cycle again. 1 Samuel only hints at what's needed.

It's not an outward fix. it's not a change of government it's not a good looking leader but a change of heart a change of attitude and one that lasts where do you get that from?

Samuel pushes us to seek after and look for that and the solution is not here in 1 Samuel we see little glimpses of how to get that David shows us how to seek after that heart but it's something that we'll have to continue on in the story to find out the second problem there's a problem with the people they have a prophet but they won't listen to him the second problem is with the king they wanted a king they wanted a kingdom and despite the fact that they had God a true king they wanted a man to be their king God gave them what they asked for but there was a problem with the king that they chose he was not a good king he loved himself he was all tied up in his kingdom he reigned through fear he took advantage of his people he was rash he perverted justice and killed innocent people to get what he wanted he ruled for himself and not for God he was cowardly he didn't listen to God any more than the rest of Israel did there was a problem with the people there was a problem with the king and if this kingdom that God is building is to succeed or to work then we need a king who is better than Saul a king who doesn't just look really good on the outside but a king who is truly good on the inside a man after God's own heart a king with a heart like God's a heart of love for his people a heart of wisdom a heart of justice a heart of integrity there's need for a king who's not just the people's favorite but a king who is God's choice a king who will do according to the will of the Lord even if it's hard the question that we come to ask as we've been going through this story and we haven't seen the full answer yet because there's more to the story

David hasn't become the king yet but is David that king? is David that king? we're kind of left hanging at the end of the book Saul commits suicide and David is not yet the king it remains to be seen he's much better than Saul we've seen that so far he has great moments of integrity he didn't take Saul's life when he had the chance he's a man who who refuses to murder the man who is hunting him but even David is just a man from among sinful people there were times that he blew it too and we saw that David at one point was ready to kill a whole household he was angry he was frustrated these were innocent people many of them and God thankfully by his grace put a stop to it and sent Abigail out to speak to him

[23 : 10] David would later go on to serve as a wonderful king a good king a gift of God's grace to his people but not a good enough king not good enough for Uriah the guy that he killed so that he could steal his wife there's a problem with the people there's a problem with the king there's a problem with even the best of kings so how can we have a kingdom if there's no king among the people who is worthy to rule in this kingdom we can fast forward from 1st Samuel through the story the kingdom continues more kings come many of them much worse than Saul ever was the kingdom which at one point becomes united under David and Solomon is divided then it's conquered and in a sense it's obliterated it's people are carted off into exile by other nations and empires when they finally get back to their homeland things are in shambles and they pretty much remain under the rule of foreign empires almost that entire time until a thousand years later from the time of David the Roman Empire is in charge what's to become of this kingdom and again it's almost surprising just how similar things are as they were before

God sends them another prophet a baby boy miraculously conceived a son who will grow up one day to challenge the corrupt religious leaders of his day and bring God's word to his people again a prophet who will take up a similar message to Samuel repent turn back to God for the forgiveness of your sins God sends them another priest who like Samuel will intercede on behalf of people when they do repent but the thing that we want to look at most here is how a thousand years later after this time of David and Samuel and Saul God sends them another king another one born in Bethlehem another son of Jesse but not a king like Saul but a king like David a shepherd of his people and still better than

David the good news of God is this while the best laid plans of mice and men fail our attempts to build our own kingdom a kingdom for ourselves fail God is still graciously at work with undeserving people building a kingdom for himself and for his people and his son Jesus is the prophet is the priest and is the king that this kingdom needs Jesus is the ultimate prophet he came just as Samuel did to speak God's word and he does it with perfect faithfulness he is the ultimate seer Samuel was fooled for a moment and thought maybe the eldest and best looking of Jesse's sons might be the next king Jesus is not fooled by the outward appearances of people he knows exactly what's going on in the heart of each person

Jesus is also the high priest that we need one who like Samuel will represent us faithfully before God but Jesus is even better because he brings the lasting and permanent solution to the problem with the people in here he brokers a new covenant with God one that will bring a permanent and lasting change of heart for God's people one that will lead to the removal of the punishment that we deserve for our sins and finally Jesus is the king that we need if there's anything that first Samuel points to it's this we need a good king we need a man after God's own heart to lead us and to rule over us Jesus is that king think of

Saul and think of Jesus it's amazing when you compare the two of them Saul was a man after the people's own hearts but Jesus like no other was a man was a king after God's own heart being himself the son of God and God in human flesh Saul would do anything to save his own skin he put himself first over his people time and time again but Jesus would do anything for his people even lay down his life for them to save them Saul was so concerned with his own reputation he cared more of what other people thought than what God did but Jesus gave up his reputation he bore the shame of a convicted criminal and he cared more of what God thought than what anyone else did Saul refused to humble himself before

[29 : 27] God and hand over a kingdom that was not rightfully his anymore Jesus humbled himself and laid aside a throne that was rightfully his to come and save his people Saul was a coward he hid fearfully under the pomegranate tree at Migron while his son had to go and start the battle at the end of his life he killed himself to avoid suffering at the hands of his enemies but Jesus is a courageous king he knows full well what the power of God can do and he goes head to head with the enemy of his people unflinchingly he embraced suffering at the hands of his enemies Saul motivated his men with threats of death Jesus cherishes the lives of his people and holds out promises of life to his followers

Saul was a king for himself and his own kingdom but Jesus was and is a king for God and God's kingdom Saul shows us clearly that we need a good king a man after God's own heart to rule and Jesus is that king David was good yes but where David failed Jesus did not even David was ready to do evil in a moment of weakness and anger and frustration hanging out in the desert like a fugitive where he longed for some of Nabal's food Jesus was hungry out in the wilderness for 40

days and yet he looked the devil in the eye and said no David disobeyed God he committed adultery with Bathsheba he perverted justice by murdering her husband so that he could steal Bathsheba away to be his own wife but Jesus obeyed God and would do no other he never once disobeyed his father he was obedient unto death even death on a cross David's heart was better than Saul's but he was a sinner just like all of us are he had the problem of the people love he is worthy to rule the kingdom of God where all others have failed Jesus succeeded just as David was opposed and schemed against by Saul, by his enemies, so too was Jesus.

Just as God was rejected as a king by his people, on the whole, Jesus was rejected as a king by his people. Yet just as God watched over and protected the life of his servant David and kept him from death at the hands of his enemy, so too God watched over the life of his son, his chosen king. And though he died, God raised him back to life and rescued him from death. He lives today at the right hand of the Father in heaven until the day when Jesus returns to bring the fullness of God's kingdom to this earth.

[33 : 23] And so where do we find ourselves in all of this? Several thousand years later, all of us here today have the same problem that the people of Israel had way back then.

It's not that we don't have a prophet. It's not that we don't have one who has come from God to speak the word of God to us.

But do we listen to the prophet that Jesus has sent, that God has sent? Do we listen to Jesus? Do we listen to God? Or are we like the Israelites and think that we know better what we need?

We may face all kinds of different problems today in our lives, different situations, different relationships. We certainly don't have any Philistines knocking on our door.

But what's the solution to our problems? Is it a change of government? Is it a new leader? Is it a change of job?

[34 : 38] If I could just get that thing that I've been wanting, that I've been trying to get my hands on, or do we look first to what God has said through the man, through the men he has sent in his word?

The problem with the Israelites wasn't that they had no king. It's that they didn't realize the king that they had. They didn't trust and listen to the king that they had.

All of the nations around us, look at what they have. Things seem to be going well for them. I wonder how often we do that same thing.

Instead of looking to God, and listening to him, we look to all the peoples around us, and everything that they're saying will make our lives better, and will fix our problems, make us happy, help us manage better with our kids, and our marriages, and our finances, and so on and so forth.

Self-help books, energy stones, access bars, the power of positive thinking. And all along, God has given us this gracious and incredible gift, a prophet, one who gives his words to his people, Jesus, a priest, one who deals with the problem that we have, and a king, not a bad king like Saul, but a good king, a wise king, a loving king, a king after God's own heart.

[36 : 15] The kingdoms that we have sought to build for ourselves have failed, but God is building his kingdom, a kingdom that will last forever, a kingdom that it will be a joy to be part of.

And so the question that I leave you with this morning is, will we own him as our king? Will we listen to our king and submit to our king and prophet?

Or will we go our own way and do what's right in our own eyes? Let's pray. Father in heaven, as we think of your word and the truth that's come to us, we admit right at the outset that we don't often see you and what you're doing with our eyes.

Many times it seems as though our prayers may go unanswered or the changes that we hope will come don't. Things don't go the way that we've planned. But you are still there.

You are still on your throne and you are still our king. We trust you. We love you. And we ask that you would deepen our loyalty to you and our faith in you.

[37 : 49] For the praise of Christ's name. Amen. Amen.