

# Like All The Nations

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[ 0 : 00 ] In the direction of the dead, and the life of the world to come. Amen. For our God and Father, we ask that as we turn our minds and hearts to your word, that you will speak clearly to us, and that we may be given the great grace, not of listening to the mumblings of some preacher, but of listening to your word as you by your spirit speak it to our hearts.

We ask this in Jesus' name. Amen. Amen. 1 Samuel 8 seems a fairly ho-hum passage in the Old Testament.

You might be somewhat revived to know that next week, David will be preaching on a royal scandal. And that seems very contemporary.

But in order to hear him, I think you ought to check out the royal scandal in 1 Samuel 13 and following, so that you will have read it over several times.

I tend to think coming to church and hearing the lesson read is not sufficient. It would be a big help if you had read it several times and try and chart on a little piece of paper what on earth you think David is going to say.

[ 1 : 40 ] And then you can go home and be surprised. This passage, in fact, is terribly incisive.

Embarrassingly so. It is a brilliant illustration of the wisdom and the patience of our God. It takes us like a fish being filleted and cuts down the middle and lays us open on the slab so you can see clearly what we are.

It clearly analyzes the futilities and frustrations of the century in which we have all been called to live.

It very graciously and firmly reminds us that the gospel of Jesus Christ is the only good news there is.

And if we will accept the invitation, it calls us to take our world very seriously.

[ 2 : 56 ] Not instead of God's kingdom, but because of God's kingdom. But first look at the text. In verse 1 of chapter 8, you will see how our world is analyzed.

It begins, Samuel grew old. Last week's valiant hero of the faith is this week's old man.

And a generation has moved along and there is increasingly less patience for the old man. I'm not speaking with any personal bitterness.

I am. I'm basically speaking to warn the young man. What happens?

But last week, it was Samuel as priest and as prophet and as judge gathering the people around him and leading them through profound repentance to a place of faith and understanding and raising up their Ebenezer.

[ 4 : 17 ] You know, the Lord has helped us hitherto. And that was the great pinnacle of the passage we read last week when Moses, when Samuel did that.

Well, this week, the generation has come and they're back to the old business of us can do it ourselves, us can.

And we're back to trying to do it in our own way. Samuel was an old man. Second thing it tells you in this in verse 3 is that righteousness is not inherited because the two sons of Samuel have both been corrupted because of the high office which they have been called to.

And they have got themselves caught in the web of bribery, dishonest gain, and perversion of justice. And that's normative.

That's what happens to people when they get in positions of wealth and power and significance. They are easy prey to bribery, dishonest gain, and the perversion of justice.

[ 5 : 37 ] The miracle is not that somebody of good family got caught in such a situation, but that somebody might not have got caught in such a situation.

The news is not that there is scandal connected to somebody in high office, but the really big news would be if there wasn't scandal connected to somebody in high office.

And that's what happens. So it even happens to the judges of Israel. The next thing you see is one of the and this is in verses 6 to 9, but particularly in verse 7.

Samuel is disappointed at the perversity of the people whom he has led now for many years. He's disappointed and that religious leaders and leaders generally become very disappointed in people and find them stubborn and perverse and willful and unaware of what's in their best interests.

But the great thing about verse 7, if you look at it, the Lord told Samuel, listen to all that the people are saying to you. Go on listening to them.

[ 7 : 03 ] It's not you they have rejected as their king, but me. And they have done this from the day I brought them out of Egypt until this day, forsaking me and serving other gods, so they are doing to you.

They're acting according to the pattern which is long been established. It's it's the God is used to this, that they reject him and go their own way.

Generation after generation, our Lord has experienced his people rejecting him and going their own way. Always, that's the constant flow of events that we reject our God and go our own way.

And it's it's what these people did. And the Lord knew that and understood it. But you see, the miracle of the gospel is that though that happens generation after generation after generation, you will see here and you will see consistently in scripture that God has not rejected us.

That's what the whole story is about. Our pattern of life is commonplace. It goes on all the time. You can see examples of it on every hand.

[ 8 : 30 ] The miracle is that God has not rejected us. Well, as they asked for a king, Samuel took the role of the prophet and told them what would be involved in being given a king.

The people seek to give authority over their lives to people who will inevitably abuse that authority. And the pattern of the abuse may sound familiar to you.

Samuel tells them it will involve conscription of your young people, the building up of military might. It will involve enforced labor.

It will produce among the important people extravagant lifestyles. It will involve the expropriation of land and heavy taxes and a large and expensive civil service.

Does that sound to me? That's what Samuel told them would happen. And that's what happens again and again and again.

[ 9 : 58 ] And that's why, as you know, that this century of ours is strewn by the wreckage of kings we have made and empires that have fallen.

And there it is. And yet people in their perversity are still saying, give us a king. king. I mean, it's, you see, when people lose their spiritual moorings, that's what they do.

They ask for a king, someone who will lift them out of their circumstances. Samuel goes on to warn them, if you look in verse 17, of what happens.

they come to the place where they acknowledge that they cry out for relief from the king that they themselves have chosen.

They cry out for relief from the government they have elected. And having done it, they then want relief from it.

[ 11 : 10 ] And they're very surprised to find that the Lord will not answer when they cry. They have not listened to him.

So, when they cry out, he will not listen to them. That's why listening is so important. Almost anybody can stand up on a soapbox and make a statement, as I am doing now.

But, the great honor and the great miracle is if we can listen, if we have ears to hear what the Lord is saying.

They didn't listen to the Lord and the Lord didn't listen to them. And then you see in verse 18 of chapter 8, you see where they the people refused to listen to Samuel and said, we want a king over us.

after the children were done this morning, we should have all gone home. That said it all. They did a good job.

[ 12 : 22 ] We want a king over us in verse 18. Like other nations, a king to lead us, to go before us, to fight our battles.

us. And so that's one of the amazing things about people. They're almost totally blind to what they have been given and consumed with jealousy for what others have been given.

They cannot be satisfied with what they have. they want a new home, a new church, a new wife, a new toy, something like that.

They cannot appreciate it. I mean, let me, with some sobriety, mention to you, the city that you are in this church, in this city, in this town, in this time, in this year, you are in doubt among the most privileged people in the whole of the world.

And yet our hearts are gnawed by jealousy to be something else, somewhere else, to be other than we are. And that was the consuming passion of these people.

[13:53] And it goes on and on. And so they said, look in verse 18, we want a king.

Now, the intriguing thing about this chapter is that this is the point of convergence. Because they said, we want a king and a kingdom.

And the Lord said, I have a king and a kingdom. Isn't it splendid? we can agree.

You want a king and a kingdom? I have a king and a kingdom. So, instead of this being a great point of divergence, it becomes the great point of convergence between them.

kingdom. They long for a king and a kingdom and God too has prepared a king and a kingdom. The Lord's kingdom is not marked by, let me remind you, conscription, the building up of military might, enforced labor, extravagant lifestyle, expropriation of land, heavy taxes, and large and expensive civil service.

[15:16] No, it's a different kind of a kingdom. It starts, blessed are the poor in spirit. The kingdom belongs to them. They didn't know that, but that's the kingdom that God had prepared for them.

And so, the Lord gives them a king in order to make them aware of another kingdom. They got Saul, whom they chose because of his stature and his appearance, and he looked good to them, and he was a disaster.

And then they were given a king after God's own heart in David. And David was to be the model through all the centuries of the king that God had for them.

The king was to be of the line of David. And that's, you know, what brings us to the person of Jesus Christ.

Well, when you get on to chapter 10, verses 17 to 19, and you see what happens there, you get this statement.

[16:36] Samuel summoned the people of Israel to the Lord at Mizpah and said to them, this is what the Lord, the God of Israel says, I brought Israel up out of Egypt, I delivered you from the power of Egypt and all the kingdoms that oppressed you, but you have now rejected your God who saved you out of all your calamities and distresses, and you have said, no, set our king over us.

So he called them to assemble and to give them a king, but he gave it to them because his purpose hadn't changed.

He wasn't caving into them. He gave them what they were asking for on the one hand, but in doing that, he was preparing them for another kingdom, and he knew of their stubbornness.

I mean, the Lord knew that though he had been as their king and as their leader, he had delivered them from the power of Egypt.

He had delivered them from all the powers that had distressed them, most recently from the Philistines. He saved them from calamities and from their distresses, and yet they still wanted another king.

[18:11] They couldn't see the reality of the kingdom which was already theirs, and the king they already had in the Lord their God.

You see, that's what happens. I mean, even in such a simple verse as John chapter three, verse three, with which you are all very familiar.

here, unless you are born again, you won't see the kingdom. Unless you are baptized by water and by blood, you will never enter the kingdom.

And so, here is the kingdom which God has prepared that awaits us, and the king whom God has appointed to who is Lord, and we are not prepared to receive it.

We have, in this century, tried every possible way to set up a human kingdom, and we've ended up with Hitler and Mussolini and Stalin, and on and on the process goes, as we try and set up our kingdom in our way to fulfill our purposes, and we reject the kingdom that God has established.

[ 19 : 49 ] You see, when people lose their way, and they lose their contact with God, then they want to set up another kingdom.

That's what's happening in Quebec today, is that they want a king so that they can be a nation among the nations. It's not a finger of guilt I'm pointing at them, it's just an illustration of how we all behave.

How are the aboriginal tribes of Canada who bemoan the loss of their spirituality, and they're now looking for a king to bring them all together in a way that they have never been together.

I mean, they are as diverse of people as can be imagined, and yet they see the solution as finding a king and establishing a kingdom.

We at least have learned in the democratic system, as exemplified in the United States, that once we found a king, we fire him after four years and elect another one.

[ 21 : 08 ] That's some wisdom, isn't it? That's beginning to move in the right direction. but the purpose of it is we are meant to go beyond that, and that's why when we come together, we say, our Father who art in heaven, thy kingdom come, thy kingdom come in my life.

will you be king and lord in my life? Will you be king and lord in my home, in my family, in my city? Will you be, will your kingdom come? Will your kingdom come as the basis of my relationships to all the very people on the earth who, coming from many and diverse kingdoms of this world come together alone in your kingdom?

You see, it's, it's, it's just that, that reality that Samuel was, that this story about Samuel clearly articulates for us.

We are kingmakers and we want to be, have a king to rule over us. And implicit in that is the rejection of the king whose undoubted authority is final and absolute, and the king whose kingdom is eternal.

[ 22 : 56 ] The king of whom in revelations, it says, is the one kingdom, where all the kingdoms of this world will ultimately become the kingdoms of our God and of his Christ.

And so our business is, as those who have been born anew and see the kingdom, as those who have been baptized by water and by blood, and have entered the kingdom, it's our business, in the midst of the competing struggle to establish kings and kingdoms, which makes up our history, to make it our deliberate and committed purpose to humble ourselves under the mighty hand of God and allow him to exalt us and to cast all our anxieties on him.

That's our business, not to struggle for a place in the human kingdom, but to humble ourselves under the hand of him who rules, to humble ourselves under the mighty hand of God, that ultimately holds the scepter, and whose kingdom is the ultimate kingdom to which finally all the kingdoms of this world must come.

That kingdom, which it occupies us this morning in all the praise that we join in in the liturgy and in the hymns, is an acknowledgement of the glory of that kingdom to which we are called, and the implicit recognition that the kingdoms of this world must become the kingdoms of our God finally. Amen. Amen.