

# A Human King

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Preacher: Malcolm Hazell

[0:00] Can I offer you a very warm welcome this morning, whether you're joining us in person or whether you're joining us remotely. My name is Helen and I'm a member here at Union Baptist.

This morning we're coming to the book of Samuel and we're looking at both listening to God and also focusing on his kingship. So I wonder this morning, do you hear the call of the kingdom? As we gather, are you ready to lift your eyes to the king? If you are, and if you are ready to let your song rise to him, then I invite you to stand as we sing together, hear the call of the kingdom.

Please stand. Hear the call of the kingdom, lift your eyes to the king.

Let his song rise within you as a fragrant offering. Of how God, rich in mercy, came in Christ to redeem all who trust in his unfailing grace.

[1:28] Give the call of the kingdom to the children of light. With the mercy of heaven, the humility of Christ.

Walking justly before him, loving all that is right. And the light of Christ may shine to us.

The kingdom of heaven. We will answer the call. We will follow. Bringing hope to the world.

Filled with passion. Filled with power to proclaim. Salvation in Jesus' name.

Salvation in Jesus' name. In the call of the kingdom to reach out to the lost. In the Father's compassion in the wonder of the cross.

[2:30] Bringing peace and forgiveness and a hope yet to come. Let the nations put their trust in him.

King of heaven. We will answer the call. We will follow. Bringing hope to the world.

Filled with passion. Filled with power to proclaim. Salvation in Jesus' name.

Lift it down. Now, we've just sung about hearing the call of the kingdom. And answering that call.

And the question I have this morning is how well do we listen? I mean, really listen. Listen and hear.

[3:53] Listen and understand. Now, I'm just going to look at the team at the top. No. So, you're going to love the irony. We had prepared a whole all age on listening.

And the sound isn't working this morning. Which, we've got to listen to that and wonder why. Now, I'm looking at my team. Can we?

Yes? Yes, we can do this, you see. Never put off. So, we were going to play sound files of everyday sound to see whether you could listen and discern.

Listen and understand. So, the team here are going to do some sounds. Very ad hoc. Very last minute. To see whether you can understand. I think we need to get everyone to close their eyes and do an honesty system.

Love an honesty system. So, are you ready? Work with me on this. Can we close our eyes and see if you can listen and discern what you hear?

[4:58] Okay. First one. Okay.

That was number one. Any clues? Talk to a partner. Someone near you. You can do it again. Are you ready? Eyes closed.

Oh, some ideas. Any clues? What are we thinking? Yes, what do you think? Oh, good.

So, rattling. Anyone want to work on that? At the back. Oh, lovely. A maraca. It wasn't.

Okay, Jess. No. Oh, good. Sounded like paper, Reuben. Reuben, well done.

[6:02] So, it was actually... See? An everyday object, but wasn't that hard. Okay, closing eyes again. Okay. Oh, what are we thinking?

Number two. What are we thinking? What do you think? I think it might be paper. Paper. Brilliant.

It was. It was paper being rattled. Do we have another? Yeah, we do. We do. So, eyes closed again. Number three. Okay. Whoa.

I can actually see the thinking. It's great. Okay. Any ideas? Grace. Grace?

Say again, Grace. Hannah. Hannah. I like that. It's not right. Any other thoughts? Closing something. Closing something.

[7:07] Good. I was just going to say that it was all the children doing all the heavy lifting here, Linda. Okay. Oh, Katie. A box. A box. A box. A box. A box.

A box. Well, do you know, Katie, we're absolutely going to give it to you because it was a glasses case. There we are. I'm going to say thank you to the France team for stepping in with no notice to do that.

Well done. Well done. They often say to me it's awful being a teacher's daughter. And I think it applies on a Sunday too. So, doesn't it just show that everyday objects and actually that we grabbed at no notice, when we close our eyes, we don't always, we might listen, but do we hear? Do we discern? Do we understand? Well, this morning we're coming to 1 Samuel and we are actually focusing on listening and kingship.

We have Hannah at the beginning of 1 Samuel who prayed fervently to God and he heard and he answered her prayer. But then we have Eli and his sons who, despite God's warning, did not listen, did not understand, did not obey.

[8:26] Then we have Samuel. Samuel who heard God in the night and at first didn't understand and then said, speak Lord, your servant hears.

And then today we come to 1 Samuel 8 where we look at Israel, God's people. They didn't listen to God. They wanted, they looked at the kingdoms around them and wanted their own king.

I wonder which we identify with this morning. Do we listen? Do we hear? Do we understand?

Do we understand? We're going to enter a time of confession and I want us to just reflect on our own lives. Where are we?

God of love, you know us inside and out.

[9:34] We confess. With you we cannot hide or pretend. Help us to focus on you and listen. We confess.

We confess that we often forget to listen to you. We hurry about with our minds and hearts and ears closed.

Help us to focus on you and listen. We confess that there are times when we have not listened to those who are lonely or in pain or need our help.

Help us to focus on you and listen. We confess that we have not listened to the earth. We have not heeded the warnings of the changing climate.

Help us to focus on you and listen. Please God, teach us to be generous in our listening and lift our eyes to your kingdom.

[10:42] Help us to focus and listen. Amen. Now in a moment, children and young people are going to go to their groups.

So I'm going to pray for them. Shall we pray together? Father God, be with our children and young people as they go to their groups. Help them to listen to you and truly hear what you are teaching them this morning.

Amen. Now, as they go, we will be singing our next song, I the Lord of Sea and Sky. And the chorus is a real response based on Samuel.

Here I am, Lord. Is it I, Lord? I have heard you calling in the night. Shall we make that our prayer this morning?

As we stand together and we sing. Please stand. In the older noble of heaven where whether they are in their world or whether they are in the profession or whether they are in it? Yes, amen. Please stand. No, continue to learn. Thank you, sir.

[11:49] And I have heard you sing. You stand. I'm the Lord of sea and sky, I have heard my people cry, All who dwell in darkness in my hand will sing.

I've made the stars of night, I will make their darkness bright, I will speak my word to them, whom shall I send?

Here I am, Lord, it is my Lord, I have heard you, You call it in the night.

I will break their hearts of stone, give them hearts full of love, I will speak my word to them, whom shall I send?

Here I am, Lord, it is my Lord, I have heard you calling in the night.

[14:09] I will go, Lord, if you leave me, I will hold no people in my heart.

I'm the Lord of wind and flame, I will tend the poor and lame, I will set a feast for them, my hand will save.

By this bread I will provide, till their hearts are satisfied. I will give my life to them, whom shall I send?

Here I am, Lord, it is my Lord, I have heard you calling in the night.

I will hold no people in my heart.

[15:40] Thank you, you do sit down. So we've just sung to the Lord of sea and sky. We've sung to the one who set the stars in the sky and made their darkness bright.

And part of how we respond is how we listen to the world he created and gave us. How we hear to how we should be good stewards of the world.

Now, Chris Manktelow, member of our church, is also a member of the Young Christian Climate Network. And he was sponsored to go to COP26 this week.

Now, we have a fabulous interview with Malcolm, but guess what? We won't be able to hear it. So Malcolm's going to come and share a little bit about what you would have heard from him this morning.

Thank you. This is an interview without the other person. It's quite novel, really, isn't it? So I caught up with Chris during the week and asked him a few questions.

[16:46] First question I asked was, how come you got an invite to COP26? And it was because he was part of the Christian network for those concerned with the environment. And he's made some nice contacts with other people from other countries who are Christians, who have a similar concern, too.

I then said, you know, what's been the most exciting thing that's happened to you since you've been at COP26? And it was only on Tuesday, so we may have an update from Ian when he comes to bring the intercessions.

But he said to me that he met Al Gore, ex-president of the United States, and his daughter, which was very nice. They had a cup of tea together. But he said that, although that was great, that wasn't the best thing.

The best thing was the fact that he'd met others involved in those concerns for the environment in other countries. And particularly, there was one from an African country, which escapes me, and they're hoping that they can actually keep that contact going over the coming years.

So that was really exciting for him. I said, what would you like us to pray for? And he said, one thing which is quite difficult is it's not always possible for delegates to get to the conference because of COVID restrictions.

[17:57] I think we heard just recently that there was the one representative from Afghanistan has not been able to get to the conference, which is quite concerning, isn't it? So I think we should pray for people who are not represented or countries not represented.

And the other thing he was really concerned about was those indigenous groups who feel they're rather left out of the main decisions. And they kind of feel their voice isn't really being heard.

They're the ones who produce the least CO2, but actually are the most affected by climate damage. So they were the main things. And for him, he said he'd like our prayers in order that he doesn't get too tired.

I think he's not the most extrovert kind of person, is he really, Chris? And he's there networking with the entire world. This is quite a challenge. So they're the things that he asked us to pray for.

At the deacons meeting on Thursday, we were talking about climate change and concerns for the environment. And we just thought it would be worthwhile just asking, are there those here who have a real heart for this, a real concern for this, that would want to perhaps gather together and look at how we can think about this at times other than COP26?

[19:15] Do you follow me? We as a church are concerned for the environment. We've been changing bulbs to energy efficient bulbs and so on. But it would be good for us to think about this going forward. So if you are somebody who's like, yeah, I'm really concerned about this.

I feel God's put this on my heart. Then we'd love you to come and speak to Sheena. Where is Sheena? Oh, there she is. She's waving up the top there in green. And Sheena will be coordinating that.

I think, Ian, would you like to come out and lead us in our prayers for Chris, for COP26 and no doubt for lots of other things. Bless you. Thank you. Thank you.

Thank you. Thank you. OK, let's bring our prayers to God and let's focus on our world.

The writer of Genesis tells us that at the end of the sixth day, God saw that all that he had made and it was good.

[20:14] Father, forgive us that the world that you've made so perfect, we are damaging through our actions, through the way that we live our lives. We are fundamentally changing the climate in a way that's threatening the lives and livelihoods of millions of people around the globe.

So, Lord, we are thankful that the COP26 talks provides an opportunity for the world to come together to agree how to tackle the climate crisis. We thank you for Chris and for the other Christians from around the world who've come together under the auspices of the Christian Climate Observers Programme at the COP26 conference.

We thank you for their presence in and amongst the delegates in Glasgow. Lord, give them the strength they need to be effective witnesses for you. And I pray that through the conversations they have and what they share with their communities as they return home, you will inspire leaders and inspire each of us to action.

Help them to be able to maintain the connections and contacts they've made, including that connection that Malcolm was talking about with, I think, the church and the Christians in Uganda. And help them also to be able to reflect on what you've really been saying to them and be able to share that with others too.

We thank you for the news of progress this last week at COP26 on matters such as deforestation, energy use, methane emissions and finance, how things are paid for.

[21:50] But we are conscious that not all countries will be able to sign up to all the various agreements. So we pray for world leaders, negotiators, diplomats that they will be united in their determination to find far reaching and effective solutions.

Grant them vision, ambition and perseverance as they work towards finalising agreements and making key decisions by the end of this week. In doing that, we pray in particular that the voices of those that may be less well represented at the talks will be heard.

The voices of less well developed countries that are at risk of suffering the most from climate change. The voices of those indigenous groups.

The voices of young people, the next generation. Lord, in short, we pray for a just solution. And we pray for ourselves too and our own personal response.

As we know this is about our own individual lifestyles and not just about international agreements. Challenge us and guide us, we pray. And we pray for us as a church too.

[23:08] And in particular that you would raise up people to lead us in examining the impact we have as a church and how we should respond. And as we desire a lasting and just solution to the climate crisis, we continue to live through another global challenge, the coronavirus pandemic.

And Lord, I pray in particular for a more equitable distribution of vaccines across our world. And in particular in Africa. And pray for all those, including Tier Fund, that are working to try and achieve that.

And Lord, remember those missionaries on the ground that we support who are playing our part locally in this. We pray in particular for Mark and Andrew Hodgkin at Barday Hospital in Northern Chad.

And for Clare Bedford at Guinea-Borne Hospital as well. We pray especially that local people will accept the vaccines when they become available in these places. And they will cooperate with the need to wear face masks and for testing and for self-isolation.

We pray for more staff, especially nurses. And pray for wisdom for the government of Chad and those in charge of hospitals as they administer vaccines and seek to keep the cases low.

[24:25] And Lord, if we think of those missionaries we lift up to, the other missionaries that we support around the world. Just uphold them in the support they provide to their local communities.

And as they try to bring the good news of Jesus to those places. Remember especially the McNulty's in Australia. The Halliday's in France. And the AI team in Tanzania.

Creator God, help us to better treasure the world that you've given us. To seek justice. But also to rejoice in the hope that you've given us through your Son, Jesus Christ.

The one who is the real hope of the nations. Amen. Now we were going to have a time of reflection to a YouTube clip on the Getty Music Speak O Lord.

You won't be able to hear it so we won't share it. But can I really encourage you that through the week or maybe this afternoon that you download it. It's on.

[25:40] Is it going to play? No. I hoped. Briefly. But can I really encourage you to have a look at that and make that your prayer. Our prayer.

Our prayer. How powerful if as a church we are focusing on that idea of God speaking to us this week. So I'm sorry we can't share it now.

But if we could make it our prayer this week, I think that would be great. So I'm going to invite Sarah up to do the reading. Today's Bible reading is 1 Samuel chapter 8.

Israel asks for a king. When Samuel grew old, he appointed his sons as Israel's leaders. The name of his firstborn was Joel, and the name of his second was Abijah, and they served at Beersheba.

But his sons did not follow his ways. They turned aside after dishonest gain and accepted bribes and perverted justice. So all the elders of Israel gathered together and came to Samuel at Ramah.

[26:50] They said to him, you are old and your sons do not follow your ways. Now appoint a king to lead us, such as all the other nations have. But when they said, give us a king to lead us, this displeased Samuel.

So he prayed to the Lord. And the Lord told him, 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.

As they have done from the day I brought them up out of Egypt until this day, forsaking me and serving other gods, so they are doing to you. Now listen to them, but warn them solemnly, and let them know what the king who will reign over them will claim as his rights.

Samuel told all the words of the Lord to the people who were asking him for a king. He said, this is what the king who will reign over you will claim as his rights.

He will take your sons and make them serve with his chariots and horses, and they will run in front of his chariots. Some he will assign to be commanders of thousands and commanders of fifties, and others to plough his ground and reap his harvest, and others to make weapons of war and equipment for his chariots.

[28:08] He will take your daughters to be perfumers and cooks and bakers. He will take the best of your fields and vineyards and olive groves and give them to his attendants.

He will take a tenth of your grain and of your vintage and give it to his officials and attendants. Your male and female servants and the best of your cattle and donkeys he will take for his own use.

He will take a tenth of your flocks and you yourselves will become his slaves. When that day comes, you will cry out for relief from the king you have chosen.

But the Lord will not answer you in that day. But the people refused to listen to Samuel. No, they said, we want a king over us. Then we will be like all the other nations, with a king to lead us and to go out before us and fight our battles.

When Samuel heard all that the people said, he repeated it before the Lord. The Lord answered, listen to them and give them a king.

[29:12] Then Samuel said to the Israelites, everyone go back to your own town. So just before Malcolm comes to exudate that text for us and look

at the king the people want, we're going to sing to the king of kings, the lord of laws, majesty.

Please stand to sing, King of kings, majesty. God of heaven, living in me. God of heaven, living in me. I am a king of kings, majesty.

I am a king of kings, majesty. God of heaven, living in me. God of heaven, living in me. Gentle Savior, close as bread.

God of heaven, living in me. Gentle Savior, close as bread. God of heaven, living in me. God of heaven, living in me. God of heaven, living in me.

Gentle Savior, close as bread. Strong deliver, beginning and end.

[30:33] All within me falls at your throne. Your majesty, I can't bow.

I aim my own before you now. In royal love, I don't deserve.

I dare to serve your majesty. Earth and heaven, worship you.

Love eternal, faithful and true. Through all the nations, ransomed souls.

Lord, it's hidden, and near to your throne. All within me, Christ, out in grace.

[31:57] Lord, it's hidden, and near to your throne. I am your majesty. I am your majesty. I have a crown. I lay my own before you now.

In royal love, I don't deserve.

I live to serve your majesty. Your majesty. Your majesty. Your majesty. Your majesty. I can't bow. I lay my own before you now.

I lay my own before you now. I lay my own before you now. In royal love, I don't deserve. I live to serve your majesty. Your majesty.

Your majesty. I can't bow. Your majesty.

[33:04] We stand. Let us pray. Your majesty. Your majesty. We bow before you. For you are king of all kings.

Lord of heaven and earth. Everything seen. Everything unseen. You are lord of all. And we are your people. We invite you now to speak to us from your word.

And we pray, Holy Spirit, you'd apply that word to our lives. And that we would live and walk in your ways. Hear our prayer in the strong and powerful name of Jesus.

Amen. Amen. Do take a seat. Thank you so much, musicians. Heather. Helen. Helen even. And all of those doing sound and on the audio visuals this morning.

Well, we start a new series today, which will take us up to Christmas. It's going to be in 1 Samuel and also in the book of Matthew. And we're going to be thinking broadly on the theme of kingship.

[34:07] And today we're going to be focusing in on 1 Samuel chapter 8, where we see the people of God longing for a human king. And I guess it's quite a natural reaction to have good leadership.

I'm sure we pray for our leaders and want good people in leadership and in power in our land and in our world. In one sense, it's a very simple narrative.

At another level, it's an utter tragedy that we're about to look at. Can you imagine for a moment, Samuel, that one who'd heard the Lord calling him as a little boy, didn't understand God's voice, and eventually realized when Eli pointed out to him, it's the Lord speaking, say, speak, Lord, your servant is listening.

And then throughout his life, he'd served the Lord, Yahweh, had tried to be faithful to him, had tried to lead a stubborn people, and he's getting to the end of his life.

Just imagine what it was like for him as all the elders came up and said, we want this and we want that, and your sons are rubbish and you're too old. Nice things to say, isn't it, after a lifetime of service.

[35:22] And there we are with Samuel wondering, what should I be listening to? Just going on to the next slide. Is he going to listen, as he's learned from a young boy, is he going to listen to the voice of the Lord?

Or is he going to listen to the voice of the elders? Saying, come on, give us a king. I wonder whose voice is loudest for you.

Are you listening to the voice of the king of kings? Or are other voices getting really loud at the moment in your ears? I wonder which voices you're hearing, which voices you're listening to, and

which voices you are responding to.

Well, that was the concern of Samuel. Whose voice should I listen to as I'm getting old? We go on to the next slide.

We see, I don't know if you like cartoons whether you can read this actually. I'll just read it to you. We want a king over us, say the people, say the elders. And then we'll be like all the other nations, with a king to lead us, and to go before us to fight our battles.

[36:41] That's what they said to Samuel. Now in one sense, you could say, well, it does sound a logical choice. But have you ever thought what that meant for this people, this people of Israel?

Just going on to the next slide. You see, the people of Israel weren't like any other nation. In fact, they'd been chosen specifically to be not like other nations.

They were to be a sign and a symbol and a people that other nations would look to and follow. And now they're saying, we want to be like the other nations and follow them.

Can you see how it's like, oh no. What would Samuel have thought when they asked for this? You know, have I been with you so long and now you want a different king than the king?

The king of all kings, Yahweh. What a terrible thing. You see, Israel has forgotten the Lord. And here in this request, they have rejected the Lord.

[37:49] Let me read to you from verse 5 through to verse 7. They said to him, to Samuel, do you like this subtlety? You are old.

You are old. Your sons do not walk in the ways of the Lord. They were getting bribes. They were corrupt. What they were saying was both these things were true.

He was old and his sons were not walking with the Lord. Now appoint a king to lead us such as all the other nations have.

When they said this, give us a king to lead us. This displeased Samuel. I wonder whether he might have said it more strongly than that.

I don't know. It displeased Samuel so he told them, you know, do you not think he might have wanted to give them a bit of his mind at this point? You know, it displeased Samuel so he didn't give them a big what he thought.

[38:56] He prayed to God. Isn't that powerful? Must have been so frustrating. But in his frustration he prayed to God. And he said to the Lord, you know, he said, so he prayed to God and the Lord told him, listen to all that the people are saying to you.

It is not you they have rejected. They have rejected me as their king. God. Those words are very powerful, aren't they?

The God who loves his people, called his people, protected his people, provided for his people in the wilderness. They're saying we don't want you anymore. We want a king of our own so we can be like all the other nations.

Well, God chooses to warn, warn the people. This is a bad choice. So he warns them in verses 10 to 18.

And it's quite a deliberate repetition in the in the Hebrew that's written here, where he keeps on repeating this is a bad idea. This king is going to do you harm.

[40:08] Let me highlight this as we go through. Verse 11. This is what the king who will reign over you will do. He will take your sons. He's going to take them into his army.

They're going to be killed. Verse 14. He's going to take your sons. Verse 13 rather. He will take your daughters to be perfumers and cooks and bakers.

He's going to take your children. Verse 14. He will take the best of your fields and vineyards and olive groves. He's going to take your fields.

He's going to take your men servants, your maidservants, the best of your cattle. He's even going to take your donkeys. And then just to finish it all off, verse 18, oh, verse 17.

And then you will become his slaves. Is this a good choice to have a king like all the other nations? He's going to take from you.

[41:19] Can you imagine the heart of Yahweh as he's saying this through his prophet? I, Yahweh, I have given to you this world. I've given to you everything for your blessing.

I've called you to be a people for myself, for my own possession. I've called you my own. And I have provided for you like a parent.

I've given you the manna and the water in the wilderness. I've taken you out of slavery and I've brought you into a land. I've given you a promised land flowing in milk and honey.

I have given to you and you want a king who's going to take from you. He's going to take everything from you. And the heart of God hasn't changed.

He carries on giving. He carries on giving. We now know that he's given the best of all. He's given of his son, Jesus Christ. He gave him, left all the glory of heaven, gave him.

[42:23] And then he died on a cross to bear our sin. God proved that he was powerful over even deaths. He's the one who gives us life. And he raised him. And then what did he do?

He gave us his spirit who lives in us, gives us life, directs our lives. Our God is a giving God. And we choose to turn away from that king.

And we want to be like everyone else. Can you imagine the heart of God as he sees this? As he sees this amongst Israel? And as sometimes he sees it amongst us.

How it breaks his heart. But how gracious. He warns his people. He warns his people. And then, moving on to the next slide, these tragic verses in verses 19 to 21.

But the people... It's hard to believe this when they've just had this warning. But the people refused to listen to Samuel. They said, no, we want a king over us.

[43:26] We're the king to lead us. And to go before us and to fight our battles. What has he been doing? He's been fighting their battles all the way through. Out of Egypt, into the Promised Land, through the judges that he'd sent.

He's been fighting their battles, but they want somebody else to fight their battles. They want their own king. And when Samuel heard all that the people said, he repeated it before the Lord.

What a brilliant thing to do. Do you get really frustrating things said to you at times? And you want to moan and tell everybody what a terrible thing it is. How about we do what Samuel did?

Go to our room. Close the door. Repeat it before the Lord, who hears us. And this is what was said. The Lord answered him as he spoke to him. Listen to them and give them what they want.

Give them a king. A king. Wow. Be careful what you ask for as you come before the Lord. Very powerful narrative, isn't it?

[44:35] Has God spoken to you as you've heard that this morning? Pray that he might have done. I've put together some reflections on how this might be applied to our lives. And I hope some of these thoughts may be helpful.

But ultimately, it's how does the word of God speak to you? Here are some thoughts or some questions you might find helpful to ask. Here's one.

What do we ask God for? What do you ask God for? They kind of got it wrong with the first question, didn't they? We want a king. Beep.

Wrong. Israel had asked for a king and it was a tragic choice. A damaging choice. A wrong request.

We need to check out the word of God to check that the things we're asking for are the things that God says are good for us. So, for example, I might go to my room after a busy day and say, Oh, Lord, give me an easy life, please.

[45:42] Anybody ask a prayer like that? Give me an easy, comfortable life. It's perfectly understandable. But what does the word of the Lord say? You're to come and to follow me and to take up your cross.

Maybe asking for an easy life isn't very good for us. I've noticed that people who have a very easy life get a bit bored. Sometimes they get a bit fat.

And sometimes they fail to love widely and their lives turn in on themselves. Maybe it's good to ask the question, Is this what I should be asking God for?

Perhaps we need the guidance. We do need the guidance of God's word and the inspiration and leading of the Spirit. Let's be careful what we ask God for.

And what are we putting our trust in? I've noticed as I read the newspapers and watch what's happening, Have you noticed that there seems to be a growing desire for strong, loud leaders?

[46:49] Have you noticed that? Or is it just me? I feel in our world people want to see strength in leadership. And then when they see those strong leaders taking them in the wrong direction, they want to sack them.

It's interesting isn't it how we seem to operate. Also I wonder, as we think about who are we putting our trust in, how do we know who or what we're putting our trust in?

Can I suggest a little test for you? I've noticed that if I feel that something is really, really crucial, I get very angry when that thing isn't achieved.

Do you follow me? So something I really, really want and it isn't achieved, I tend to get angry. And often that thing is a bit like an idol or a God. So for example, how about this?

See if this rings any bells with you. Let's suppose you've got a bit of an idol, a bit of a king of God, if you like, that you like really good organisation. I should think, Helen's been struggling today with one or two things not going quite right.

[47:54] You really want good organisation. What's good organisation? And then you get greatly upset when things are delayed or you can't get that appointment. And you become really angry. I wonder, what are you putting your trust in?

Good organisation? Is that the thing? I'm not saying that bad organisation is a bad idea. I'm just saying, what is it we put our trust in? Or let's suppose it's education. Let's suppose we've said education is the thing I'm going to put my trust in.

I wonder if you spend more time and resources in that area, rather than praying for your family and longing that they be brought up in the knowledge and love of God.

Have we got the wrong king? Are we trusting in the wrong things? Be careful. Or what about security? How many of you have felt in this shifting sands of this world that we want more and more security because you never know what's going to happen now, do you?

With Covid and Brexit, you just really don't know what's going to happen. And so maybe we need more insurance. Maybe we need more money in the bank. Maybe, maybe, I'm not suggesting this by the way, all these things. Maybe, maybe we need to have even more health support because you know, after all, it's a very scary world out there.

[49:07] What are we putting our trust in? We've got a God that is of security. We just want more and more security. Whereas our hope, the Bible says, must be and can only be ultimately in the Lord, maker of heaven and earth, who has, who alone holds the power of life and death.

Can you see how sometimes we subtly have placed our trust in places other than with the Lord? We place our trust in other areas. Maybe for you it's something else. What is it that we're placing our trust in other than the Lord God Almighty?

And by the way, I'm not suggesting it's a bad thing to have education or to have reasonable preparations for retirement and so on. But, sometimes, we start to see that we're giving too much weight to that and we're not leaning upon the Lord.

And when are we tempted to be like everyone else? It's quite hard to stand out, isn't it? And they wanted to be like all the other nations, didn't they? So, when do you find it?

It's hard for you to want to stand out rather than to be like everyone else. Perhaps you long to have one strong leader in the church that tells you this is the way to go.

[50:24] When we're called, aren't we, to be the body of Christ, to discern the mind of Christ as we seek the Holy Spirit's leading? A bit more complex. But we're not looking for a king.

We're following King Jesus and discerning what he is saying to us. The world wants God to back their cause, their preferences, their ways and expects God to conform to them.

And we can be like this too. Let us repent of self-will. Let us repent of saying we want to be just like the world. After all, we are called to be different.

Our verse for this year reminds us, do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind.

We're not called to be like everyone else. If you sometimes think, I feel a bit out of it at the moment. I feel like the world's going in a crazy direction. It has always been like this for the people of God.

[51:36] It's nothing new. Perhaps it's a shock to us, but it is nothing new. I love that. There's a lovely song in one of the renditions of one of the Bible stories, where Joseph is in prison.

And he says to the Lord, despite being in prison, you know better than I. And of course, God raised him up eventually and provided food for those people at that time.

We need to say to the Lord, I know that I'm out of step with this society, Lord, but you know better than I, and I'm going to follow your ways and not keep in step with the world.

I will trust in you even when I don't understand, and even when the world goes in a different direction. So there's a few questions, lessons for today.

I hope one or two of them have triggered a thought or you sense, yeah, the Lord is saying this.

Moving on. What is the gospel way? The gospel way is like we all started.

[52:40] When you became a Christian, you realized that you were bankrupt. You were a sinner in need of help. And you said to the Lord Jesus, Lord, help me a sinner.

Lord, help me. The way we started is the way we carry on. We need to call out to the Lord for help in these days and say that you know better than I.

Help me, Lord. Please give me wisdom. We don't even know what to ask. Help me to know what to ask, Lord, for at this time.

And sometimes when we do ask, we ask with wrong motives. It's difficult, isn't it? So we come to him and we say, help me, Lord. Help me. Help us, Lord. Secondly, we say, and we need to repeatedly say this, Jesus is King.

The first confession of the church was Jesus is Lord. That was their first confession. You can have very long confessions, but that's a pretty good one.

[53:42] If you want a nice short one, Jesus is Lord. Jesus is sovereign over his world. Jesus is Lord over my life. Jesus is Lord over my family. Jesus is Lord over his church.

This is a good confession. Jesus is our King. And that means that pleasing him is of number one importance above everything else.

If you've done everything and not pleased him and not said Jesus is Lord, you've failed dismally. But if you've achieved nothing but done that one thing, then your name is written in the book of life and your destiny is secure.

Jesus is Lord. And if he is Lord, when he speaks, we trust his word, even if the world says it's foolishness. So when he says in John 14, verse six, I am the way and the truth and the life, no one comes to the father except through me.

We don't try to contradict his word or try to squeeze it into what we'd like it to say. We simply stand on the word of God, whatever the world says.

[54:52] We may look foolish. We may look foolish. It doesn't change the truth of God's word. And thirdly, we will follow in God's ways. Even if few follow, we will follow his ways.

Jesus said the way to life is following a narrow path and few choose it. The way to destruction is broad and sadly many follow it.

So if you find yourself going with the herd, going with the crowd, be very careful. Can you see where it ends? The Bible warns us.

In here, Samuel warned his people and they still chose to go the wrong way. Jesus has graciously given us warnings. Let us trust what he has said.

Let us trust God's word when it says we've sinned and fallen short of God's glory. And delight that Jesus offers us the way to life, to forgiveness, to a new home in glory.

[55:57] Let us celebrate marriage, one man and one woman. And honour that and talk about that to people, rather than feeling we can't say anything in these areas.

Let us uphold the gift of human life in all areas. And if able to lobby, let us lobby. These are things where we're following God's way and we can be sure of it.

Finally then, as Samuel told us, let us pray. Let us pray in all sorts of ways. And I'd like us now to turn to God in prayer.

Let's pray. Let us pray in all sorts of ways. We've prayed. We Birth.

ways. Forgive and save us from our thoughtless requests that often lead us into ways that are not your ways. Forgive us when we fail to listen to your warnings and remain faithless to you when you've always been so faithful to us. Deliver us from other idols. Deliver us from thoughtlessly following the ways of the world. Deliver us from the stronghold of secularism and relativism where there is less and less room for your good and perfect ways. Deliver us from the God of science when it cannot tell us why we're here or what our purpose is for living. Deliver us from a desire for a more comfortable discipleship than Jesus called us to. And we ask you to direct us into your truth. Direct us on the path to life. Direct us to trust your word more than our fleeting doubts.

[57:49] Direct us to stand on your enduring ways in the shifting sands of contemporary so-called wisdom. We thank you that there is a way back to God from the dark paths of sin. There is a door that is open and you may go in. At Calvary's cross is where you begin as you come as a sinner to Jesus. Amen.

We're going to stand now and affirm that Jesus is our King and is our Lord as we sing, You are my vision. Thank you very much musicians. Bless you.

Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

[60:06] Thank you.

Thank you. Thank you.

Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you.

Still be my vision, O ruler of all. Out of my own heart, whatever before, still be my vision, O ruler of all.

Thank you. So just before we end with a prayer of blessing, if you are collecting children aged 3 to 11, please can I ask you to go to the Memorial Hall first and you will be directed where to go from there because we are maintaining that social distancing.

[62:33] Cresce hasn't changed, so 0 to 3, same place. And there will be tea and coffee served to my left and again we're going to flow through, so please do join us for tea and coffee.

Shall we share in a final blessing together? Thank you, Lord, that you do speak to us today. Thank you that you are our vision.

You are our king. Thank you that you invite us to help you change our world. Thank you that you set us apart to live for you.

As we go from the service today, help us to hear your voice and make ourselves available to serve you. Amen.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

[63:37] Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.