

Keynotes from Steven Drivers am Sermon on 26/6/2022

1 Samuel 8: Series: "The real King"

"What happens when you have a wobble"

Scripture references from the ESV

1 Samuel 8: 1-9 When Samuel became old, he made his sons judges over Israel.

²The name of his firstborn son was Joel, and the name of his second, Abijah; they were judges in Beersheba. ³Yet his sons did not walk in his ways but turned aside after gain. They took bribes and perverted justice.

⁴Then all the elders of Israel gathered together and came to Samuel at Ramah ⁵and said to him, "Behold, you are old and your sons do not walk in your ways. Now appoint for us a king to judge us like all the nations." ⁶But the thing displeased Samuel when they said, "Give us a king to judge us." And Samuel prayed to the LORD. ⁷And the LORD said to Samuel, "Obey the voice of the people in all that they say to you, for they have not rejected you, but they have rejected me from being king over them. ⁸According to all the deeds that they have done, from the day I brought them up out of Egypt even to this day, forsaking me and serving other gods, so they are also doing to you. ⁹Now then, obey their voice; only you shall solemnly warn them and show them the ways of the king who shall reign over them."

NB See p4 for the rest of the chapter

A wobble refers to those times in your life when you get a bit worried or anxious whether at home, in church or some other area of your life. A problem comes up and you are not sure how to deal with it, but you know it needs fixing. We might have wobbles over what is happening in church, given the huge change our church has gone through over the past few years. These wobbles can quickly build up and can lead to a crisis of faith.

When we have a wobble, whether it be spiritual or practical, it exposes our heart, revealing our true nature, as we will see from what is happening with Israel in this chapter.

Israel have recently come out of what can only be described as a kingdom overhaul. God has sovereignly re-established himself as their glorious King, removing Eli and his sons who stole his glory and led the people to take God less than seriously. God dealt with them by asserting his glory and showing them how seriously he was to be

taken. Israel repented and Samuel was appointed to be the voice of God to the people. Samuel can be regarded as the last judge, and he appointed his sons to be judges thereby establishing a hereditary leadership.

This is a new idea, and perhaps it might have been what Israel needed, but it was not God-ordained so it could not be a good thing. Samuel had done this on his own initiative. Eli and his corrupt sons were going to be replaced by Samuel's sons, who were also corrupt. They were taking bribes and perverting justice (v3 above).

1. **The wobble (vv1-5 above).** It seems like a big wobble. Samuel's sons are wicked and are going against the law. Samuel has not dealt with this, and he is old and might not have long to live. When the elders decide to seek a different solution (vv4-5 above), it is surely the right thing to do. However, it is not that simple!

- Samuel is not dead yet. There is still time for him to rebuke his sons, correct his own mistake and repent of his sin. He is still the leader of Israel.
- It is not for the elders to fix this problem. It is up to God to fix it. He is the King and we have already seen that he will step in to ensure Israel's leadership is following his ways. God may well have this in hand!

Israel has jumped the gun because they have had a wobble. Things don't look right so they have done what humans always do and come up with their own solution.

When we wobble, we don't think or wait. Most importantly, we don't rely on our King Jesus. We look at the situation and we have to come up with the solution. We try and fix something before it even happens.

We may say that we rely entirely on God, but so often we try to make God do what we want when a problem arises or we think we foresee a problem that actually may never happen. Jesus' instruction not to worry about tomorrow (**Matt 6:34** see p4) gets pushed aside. Instead, we do what Israel does next.

2. **The rejection (vv6-9 above).** The solution born out of this wobble is seen in v5. You might notice the irony that Israel's answer to bad hereditary leadership

(Samuel's sons) is to want a hereditary leadership with more power! We are not good at finding our own solutions!

For Israel to have a king is not a bad move. Indeed, God has spoken about the introduction of a King for his people. It is the motive that is wrong here. This is born out of a wobble, and the rejection of their identity as God's people.

- Israel wants to be just like the other nations.

They are not asking for a King to unite a holy nation under God in a way that would lead them to be more clearly set apart as his people. Their motive was not to make a way to become more holy.

- Israel just wanted to be like everyone else

They did not want to be God's people, set apart as a missional people through whom God would reveal himself to the nations. Instead, they wanted to learn from the other nations!

They have rejected God (v7 above).

What did they think a king would do for them? They tell us clearly: **'that our king may judge us and go out before us and fight our battles.'** (v20 see p4). Again, there is an irony here. God has been doing precisely what they want from a human king! He has fought their battles for them and he has judged them as we have seen in the previous chapters.

Israel does not want a King, however divine, that they cannot see. That is the heart of their problem.

They cannot live by faith in their Godly King. They want to live by sight. As humans, we all fall into this trap. We reject God when we have wobbles because, in reality, we lack faith. It is too hard and we want to live by sight. We think we need something we can sense. In doing this, we reject God and thus reject our identity.

We abandon what has been won for us through Jesus:

- Who lived with total faith in his Father
- Who died for all
- Who unites his people as a holy nation and points them to the Father

He is the true King for whom Israel would have been waiting had their motives been right. How often do we also reject his loving rule? We look to other more visible kings in our world:

- Our career, our desire to be successful and our status in society
- Our family and friends
- Our finances

Instead of being the chosen people, the royal priesthood and holy nation that we are (1 Peter 2:9 see p4), we live according to those other kings and so show that we just want to be like everybody else too. We deserve the same warning that the Israelites get.

3. The warning (8:10-18 see p4)

What a long warning this is! It really emphasises what happens when we put anyone else in God's rightful place. No matter who they are, **they will take from us**, as God warns the Israelites over and over again. You can sum it up by saying that any other king, person or manmade construct, in fact anything we can see and trust in rather than trusting in God will **take YOU**.

We need to be constantly reminded of this:

- Having family and friends as your king will mean you often feel isolated and alone. They will take your love
- Having a king of money or materialism will mean you will feel poor and desperate. Nothing will ever be enough. It will take your sense of self-worth.
- Having a king of power will mean you feel weak. It will take your strength.
- Having a king of intellect and achievement will mean you feel stupid and worthless. There will always be someone smarter. It will take your mind and your mental health.

These kings will take your mind, body and soul and you will become their slave. This is not the fault of those things or the people involved. It comes from your own sin of rejecting God despite the warning he gives us about our hearts.

- Who or what is your king? We are all guilty of setting up other people or things as king.

How can we deal with this? We have two options.

a) We can ignore the warning (8:19-22 see p4). This is the option the Israelites choose. They refuse to obey Samuel and do not heed the warning.

Often, we fail to notice when God has warned us. We base our choices on where we think we should be going, because we are being led by the bad kings in our life and think we know better than God. We think we can see but are actually blind. Just like the Israelites, we ignore the warning God has given because the path is too hard and too narrow. Denying ourselves and following Jesus seems really hard and we can't even see him.

God will give us over to our heart's desire if that's what we really want, and if our heart's desire is a visible king to obey then that is what he will give us. If that happens, the question is did we ever really know the real King?

b) We can embrace the loving Kingship of Jesus.

The warning gives us information, but what we need is a heart transformation through his Spirit so that rather than just knowing that we need to obey our King, we have a love for King Jesus that leads to obedience. If you believe in the Lord Jesus, you need to remind yourself who our King is and let his Spirit transform your heart. He is the King who leads us, who fought the greatest battle for us, and who comforts us and gives us rest.

- He is the human King that Israel wanted, but he is also the divine King that they didn't want.

None of us are perfect. We all have lapses where we put other kings in his place, but we can come back daily in repentance to our King. He is the one who came down to serve us and to receive our punishment for rejecting him.

By the empowering of his Spirit, we can live out what we are called to be.

We can recognise and repent whenever we are not being his distinct people, and we can be the people who truly live out

the call to be a holy nation – a people delighting in God, to the glory of God, for the good of all people.

Every day, we need to choose between ignoring the warning (as the Israelites did) or embracing the loving, glorious, eternal kingship of Jesus. Many of us made this choice years ago, but we still need to make it every day.

- When was the last time you feel you made that choice?
- Are you being the distinct person you are called to be or are you wanting and trying to be like everyone else?
- Is Jesus your true King and if not, what is getting in the way and what are you going to do about it?

Take some time to reflect on these questions.

1 Samuel 8:10- 22 ^{So} Samuel told all the words of the LORD to the people who were asking for a king from him. ¹¹ He said, "These will be the ways of the king who will reign over you: he will take your sons and appoint them to his chariots and to be his horsemen and to run before his chariots. ¹² And he will appoint for himself commanders of thousands and commanders of fifties, and some to plough his ground and to reap his harvest, and to make his implements of war and the equipment of his chariots. ¹³ He will take your daughters to be perfumers and cooks and bakers. ¹⁴ He will take the best of your fields and vineyards and olive orchards and give them to his servants. ¹⁵ He will take the tenth of your grain and of your vineyards and give it to his officers and to his servants. ¹⁶ He will take your male servants and female servants and the best of your young men ^[a] and your donkeys, and put them to his work. ¹⁷ He will take the tenth of your flocks, and you shall be his slaves. ¹⁸ And in that day you will cry out because of your king, whom you have chosen for yourselves, but the LORD will not answer you in that day."

The LORD Grants Israel's Request

¹⁹ But the people refused to obey the voice of Samuel. And they said, "No! But there shall be a king over us, ²⁰ that we also may be like all the nations, and that our king may judge us and go out before us and fight our battles." ²¹ And when Samuel had heard all the words of the people, he repeated them in the ears of the LORD. ²² And the LORD said to Samuel, "Obey their voice and make them a king." Samuel then said to the men of Israel, "Go every man to his city."

Matthew 6:34 Therefore do not be anxious about tomorrow, for tomorrow will be anxious for itself.

1 Peter 2:9 But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvellous light.