

1 Samuel 9:1-10:16 “A ruler must rule under God’s rule!” CCH Sermon 18JAN26

Read 1 Sam 10:1 p281

- I wonder if you know the word “**ambivalence**”.
 - Sometimes people say, “I’m feeling very ambivalent about artificial intelligence”.
 - “I’ve got conflicting feelings towards it.”
 - On the one hand: It’s very useful and very clever
 - But on the other: I’m nervous about where it’s going to lead”.
- **There’s** the Cambridge University Press **definition** “*The state of having two opposing feelings at the same time or being uncertain about how you feel*”.
- Last week we **picked up** our studies in 1 Samuel from where we left off in 2019.
 - And we come in particular a section where Israel gets its first **Messiah**: Saul (Messiah means anointed King).
 - But after last week we are feeling **ambivalent**.
- A king **wasn’t wrong** in and of itself.
 - Deuteronomy 17 allows for a King in God’s law.
 - But the King had to fulfil certain conditions, especially to obey God!
 - You could say that a King had to be under God’s Kingship.
 - Or “A ruler must rule under God’s rule”- which is our title today.
- And last week we saw the people’s **motives** for a King.
 - #1) To be like all the other nations
 - #2) because they were dissatisfied with the leadership at the time
 - But ultimately because #3) they wanted to reject God as their King.
- Well as we work through the Saul narrative in 1 Samuel 8-16 we’re going to have this ongoing feeling of **unease** about the King.
 - But stick with it, it’s going to be very instructive in teaching us
 - About **ourselves** and our wayward hearts
 - About **leadership** especially through negative example
 - And ultimately about **God’s Son Jesus** who is THE Messiah.
- We’ve got a long but wonderful story today which we’ll read in **three** parts.
- Here’s the placeholder headings I’ve put in place as we see **God Gives the people their King**:
 - 9:1-24 **Find my Iphone!**
 - 9:25-10:8 **Listen Closely 007!**
 - 10:9-16 **Wonders Never Cease!**
- **So Beth if we can have 9:1-24 read please first.**

1) FIND MY IPHONE (9:1-24)

- Let's walk through the **story** and then let's learn the **significance**.
 - In **v1-2** we are introduced to **Saul**. He's a funny mix.
 - He's from the **smallest** tribe: Benjamin
 - Yet he's the **tallest** man "a head taller than anyone else".
 - (spoiler alert: in the last chapter I'm afraid his head is going to be **cut off**, like others in this book who lose their head).
 - His name means "asked for". Do you remember, the ppl ask for king!
 - Then we have the **donkeys**. (**v3-5**)
 - And I just love this don't you.
 - Isn't life so full of ordinary events?
 - But the God of the extraordinary loves to use ordinary events.
 - I'm sure you'll think of some examples for your lifegroup this week.
 - Delayed trains,
 - emergency hospital trips,
 - broken down cars (!)
 - God can use them all.
 - By the way those donkeys likely represent a big chunk of the family wealth, so they needed finding,
 - 3 times we read that they can't be traced.
 - I love **v5** "Come let's go back or my father will stop thinking about the donkeys and start worrying about us".
 - But next we have **the cunning plan**. (**v6-10**)
 - The servant knows there's a prophet or seer nearby.
 - Someone who knows God's mind and speaks God's word
 - So it turns into an 11th century BC equivalent of "Find my Iphone".
 - Well off they trot to Zuph and the timings are perfect.
 - Samuel is coming to bless the sacrifice
 - And then there'll be a feast.
 - They should be able to catch him just in time (well what did you know!)
 - So the quest for donkeys becomes a quest for Samuel.
 - But a bit like an episode of Traitors the viewers (or in our case the readers) are let into **the secret**. And it's two revelations in **v15-17**. KEY VERSES.
 - God has revealed to Samuel that this very day at this very time a Benjaminite will come. Q for donkeys, Q for Samuel, Q for ruler.
 - And as he comes, God tells Samuel, "this is the man".
 - Well, before Saul has a chance to ask for help with the donkeys,
 - Samuel is telling Saul that the donkeys are fine, v20
 - telling him that all the desire of Israel is on him, (namely the desire for a King).
 - and he's invited with his servant as guest of honour at the **feast**. (**v18-24**).
 - He must have been flabbergasted.
- Well that's the story. What's the significance?

I think we see that **GOD GIVES THE PEOPLE THEIR KING**

1) WITH **COMPLETE CONTROL**

- Do you see how God is in control of all the events?
- He's appointing a ruler, the ruler that the people want,
 - But actually HE is the ruler.
 - He is the one that organises.
- Now I know that there's an ambivalence about this ruler, as we'll see as we go on, but
 - God is very gracious (he hears the cries of his people v16)
 - God is very merciful (for all Saul's flaws he does act as a Saviour up to a point)
 - And above all God is completely sovereign.
 - That means he's in complete control.
- He's the God of the details.
 - Sometimes we see that.
 - Sometimes we're let into the secret so we can see what he's doing.
 - A lot of the time we just have to trust him through all the mess and the uncertainty.
 - Lord why did I have to get ill
 - Lord why did I lose my job
 - Lord why did you put me through all that?
 - ▲ One of you was telling me that recently you got moved out of one team and into another team at work, and you were a bit disappointed.
 - But then that whole team got made redundant.
- Sometimes we don't see what's going on behind the scenes. And so...
- We've got to **trust God's HAND. His perfect control of the details.**
 - And that's the application of this section I think.
 - Seeming chance events. Scholars call it **meticulous providence**¹.
 - Next time you lose your Iphone or leave your coat on a train
 - First you can call on God to help find it
 - Don't just treat him as a cosmic butler there to fix your problems
 - But trust him deeply with your life and eternity, And whether you find it or not, trust his absolute sovereignty in working out his purposes.
 - Look for opportunities to bless the person in lost property office.
 - Perhaps the Lord is leading you to share the gospel with them.
- What are you going through at the moment?
 - **He's completely in control in**
 - Donkey searches, job searches, health check ups, disappointments,
 - In **choosing a King**.
 - And he organised everything for the arrival of King Jesus.
 - From centuries of prophecy
 - To a Roman Census
 - To a virgin birth

¹ See a great talk on this from Warboys Baptist by Matthew Bingham. Search "meticulous" [here](#).

Well let's move to part 2 of the story.

2) LISTEN CLOSELY 007! (9:25-10:8)

- Let's look at the **story** as before, before the **significance** and the application.
- There's a strong emphasis all the way through on **Samuel's directions**.
- We don't know exactly what they talked about on the **rooftop (v25-27)**, which in that climate would be a nice place to chat after the day's events, but it looks like Saul has to wait for the next day for a message from God that will explain everything.
- 10:1 is really important as we see **the Anointing (v1)**.
 - **V1.**
 - This must have come as a big surprise to Saul.
 - The oily goodness of Extra Virgin Olive Oil poured all over his head.
 - He must have wondered what was going on.
 - This had happened before to priests set apart for serving God
 - But not Mr Tall from Tribe small.
- But the Message from God was going to explain it all.
 - V1 "Has not the Lord anointed you ruler (or prince- the word King isn't actually mentioned yet) over his inheritance".
- (I got a bit geeky with the history of the Coronation when I did a talk on it for the men's breakfast² a couple of years ago. It's still on our website).
 - And although Charles became King **when his mother died**.
 - And perhaps the **placing of the crown** or coronation is the "crowning moment" certainly visibly and publicly.
 - There's a point where the individual **goes behind screens** (because it's considered sacred) and is anointed with oil
 - That's the point before God where someone is set apart for his service.
- A random donkey chase that leads to Mr tall being made RULER!
 - What's clear is that (even though Saul is a flawed leader) it's GOD who has made him the leader. And he needs to listen to GOD'S DIRECTIONS.
 - That's the case all through Scripture.
 - The King in Deuteronomy 17 is to write a copy of the Law and he's to *"read it all the days of his life so that he may learn to revere the Lord his God and follow carefully all the words of this law"*
 - And in the Psalms: the Psalm 2 King needs to be a Psalm 1 man who obeys the law of the Lord.
 - A RULER MUST RULE UNDER GOD'S RULE!
- Samuel goes on in the rest of the section to give some more **directions** from the Word of God **(v2-8)**. Listen closely Saul.

²https://christchurchhuntingdon.co.uk/Media/Player.aspx?show_popout=true&show_media=305223&show_file=335896

- I won't go into all the details here,
 - But there are **3 signs**, very specific, including:
 - specific numbers of people and goats and loaves of bread
 - all of which come true,
 - and a prophetic empowerment (which we'll come onto)
 - 3 signs But there are also **2 commands**.
 - V7: "Do whatever your hand finds you to do".
(that's a bit cryptic but likely refers to the fact that Saul was due to deliver the people from their marauding enemies the Philistines, so it's likely a reference for Saul to engage in battle against them. That's also what the phrase meant in Judges 9)
 - THEN command 2 v8: More clearly go to Gilgal and wait 7 days.
 - Tragically we are going to see that the signs happen but the commands aren't obeyed, or not fully.
- For now, let's think about the lesson.

GOD GIVES THE PEOPLE THEIR KING

2) **WITH CLEAR COMMANDS**

- A King is under the command of God.
- Ever since the garden of Eden where Adam and Eve were to be God's viceroys ruling over the world, us humans are to rule **God's way**.
 - And he tell us his way in HIS Word.
 - That word is found for us in the Bible.
- Samuel is a book about leadership.
 - Wouldn't it be great if all the leaders of the world prioritised God's word?
 - And for us whether people follow us as a
 - A parent
 - A friend
 - An elder
 - Or on Social media
 - We need to represent God well by living under his Word, speaking of Jesus.
Speaking graciously, with the Fruit of the Spirit we learn about in God's word.
- The application is we need to **PRIORITISE GOD'S WORD**.
 - We're going to see this again and again in 1 Samuel.
- We are looking for a new Assistant minister to join the staff team.
 - He must be a man who loves and lives God's word.

- We are looking for an army of people to help rule over the Tech and the refreshments and the
 - We need to do it with obedience to God's ways.
 - If God's word says we serve the body, we do it.
 - If God's word says we do it humbly, then no task is too lowly.
 - If God's word says we keep our word, then we turn up when we've agreed.
- This book is your life! Read it, mark it, inwardly digest it.
Above all put it into practice.

The last section please Beth, which I've called Wonders Never Cease!

3) WONDERS NEVER CEASE! (v9-16)

- **The procession.** V9-13
- Well all these signs happen v9, especially the one about Saul becoming a prophet.
- A prophet is someone who speaks the Word of God
- And empowered by the Holy Spirit of God, it seems Saul was given miraculous insight (perhaps in the way that Samuel had 2 days before to know the future).
 - Not all the details are clear, but the eyewitnesses are bowled over.
- In fact it becomes a bit of a proverb or saying from that day forwards (v12) "Is Saul among the prophets".
 - I guess if something extraordinarily unexpected happens we might use the saying "Wonders never cease"
- But they used "Is Saul among the prophets". It kind of went down in history as a saying! What's happened to Saul!
- But the Spirit isn't just given for miraculous utterance and displays of impressive power.
 - The Sword of the spirit is the Word of Truth.
 - The Word and Spirit go hand in hand.
- And how did Saul get on with those commands?
 - A ruler must rule under God's rule?
 - It seems to be there's a deafening silence on his obedience.
- We'll see more next time. Tragically Saul doesn't seem to be the King after God's heart. And the book of 1 Samuel will point us to another 2 Kings. David and ultimately THE ANOINTED ONE. THE MESSIAH. Jesus.
- But can I point out another thing as we see the last paragraph. The
 - There's a little question in **v14-16**.
 - **Where have you been?**
 - It's understandable all this time.
 - Here's a volleyball set- setting up ready for
 - the truth,
 - the whole truth and nothing but the truth.
 - But Samuel only tells half the story.

- It's surprising isn't it.
 - You'd think he'd spill the beans about being made King.
 - Could it just be shyness or humility?
 - It's all going to come out anyway in next week's passage.
 - Or is there a hint here not all is well.
- Well as we leave our passage, still only 2 people (as well as we the readers) know what's going on.
 - We've had a search for donkeys which turned into a search for a prophet which turned into a search for the King.
 - And most of Israel including his own family are none the wiser.
- There's a kind of secrecy about the Kingdom.
 - It's not seen or recognised by all yet.
 - That theme will come back again later in the book, particularly after David is anointed.

GOD GIVES THE PEOPLE THEIR KING

3) WITH **SURPRISING SECRECY**

- The section reminds me of some of the people who meet Jesus in the gospels.
- How many of them recognise him as the Messiah?
 - Pharisees don't want him.
 - Some just see him as a prophet.
 - Many reject him. How could he be the one all history has been waiting for!?
- Let's not make the same mistake when it comes to THE KING.
 - Do you remember those parables from Matthew 13.
 - "The SECRET of the kingdom has been given to you".
- We need to **RECOGNISE GOD'S KING**.
 - God has anointed a King over our world.
 - He is so much better than Saul.
 - Yes Saul was going to be a help, but ultimately Saul was a failure.
 - Ambivalent!
 - But we aren't going to have mixed feelings about Jesus!
 - We have in Christ God's King.
 - The One King who did obey God's word.
 - The king we need.
 - A King who (as we are going to remember in communion shortly) paid for all our sins with his blood.
 - He died in our place.
 - The Servant King.
 - The truthful King.

- If you ask around **Huntingdon** very few people recognises him as their King, even though he is “THE ANOINTED ONE” that’s what CHRIST means.
 - Most of the world sees **him** as a swear word
 - Some **come to church** because it’s part of their culture
 - or because it gives them a warm feeling
- But the **online influencers, the celebrities, the people around us**, they are the ones who we actually let rule our lives and form our opinions practically.
- Do you?
 - Do you recognise him as YOUR king?
 - Do you submit to him as Lord?
 - Do you trust him as your rescuer.
- Let’s take a moment of quiet to look over those **3 lessons in red** and think about which one we most need to take away with us this week for the situations we are in.
 - TRUST GOD’S Sovereign HAND
 - PRIORITISE GOD’S WONDERFUL WORD
 - RECOGNISE GOD’S PERFECT KING.
- A moment of quiet prayer