

**Preaching Christ....
...by the power of the Holy Spirit
...and the authority of the Word of God**

Date: 18 September 2022
Services: *Across the diocese*
Series: 1 Samuel – In search of a King
Passage: 1 Samuel 13-15
Title: The fall of Saul

✘ INTRODUCTION

Opener: FAILURES OF LEADERSHIP – the political landscape of Australia over the last ten years

- Howard, Rudd, Gillard, Rudd, Abbott, Turnbull, Morrison, Albanese

State leaders – there have been issues here in NSW

Leaders: who do not have the backing of their party

Who listen to bad advice

Who rule according to the polls, not according to what is right...

Our political landscape is messy!

And in the ancient world of Israel – as soon as the nation, which was meant to be **different**, wanted to be like **everyone else** by having a **king**.... Things got **messy**!

God had warned them through **Samuel**: this won't end well!

But the people **insisted**, and God **let** them have what they asked for.

They **got** what they **wanted**, but they **lost** what they **had**!

Last week we heard about how **Saul** was chosen by God to be their **first king**: he was **tall, impressive, and good in battle**.

Things **look** pretty **good**! /

The people are **overjoyed** as they affirm **Saul** as their **king**.

But as **Samuel** pointed out in ch **12**, there's an **elephant** in the **room**:

By insisting on having a **king**, the people were **rejecting GOD** as their **ruler**.

There was still a possibility for good: as Samuel said in 12:14 - If you fear the LORD and serve and obey him and do not rebel against his commands, and if both you and the king who reigns over you follow the LORD your God - good! //

But what if they **fail**? //

Look at 12:15 -

*But if you do not obey the LORD, and if you rebel against his commands, **his hand will be against you, as it was against your fathers.***

We've seen the **rise** of **Saul**, now as we come to ch 13-15, we have – so **quickly** - the **fall** of **Saul**. //

So let's deal again with our **three regular questions** – I'm sure you're getting used to **these**

1. What is the passage **about**?
2. What does it teach us about **God**?
3. How does it **point** us to **Jesus**?

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1. WHAT IS THE PASSAGE ABOUT?

Taking matters into one's own hand

In ch 13, preparing to go into battle, Saul should have **waited** for **Samuel** to come and make a **sacrifice**.

That was the **deal!**

But when Samuel was running **late**, Saul stepped into the gap and made the sacrifice **himself!**

He was presuming to take on the role of **priest** as well as **king!**

And God was not **happy**.

His response: he determined that **Saul's family** would not stay on the throne beyond **Saul**; - indeed - God had **already** chosen a **replacement!**

Then in ch **14**, Saul adds **stupidity** to his **disobedience**.

A bizarre oath that prevents his soldiers from eating during the battle almost ends in **disaster**: Saul comes close to killing his own son Jonathan – until his men intervene!

Saul is looking more like the **kind of king** God **warned** them **about**. //

Now, in ch 15, we see things get even **worse**.

Saul gets a mission from God

15:1 – Samuel reminds Saul that he is not king by accident, nor by his own will or decision. GOD chose him. So, he had better listen to the message Samuel is bringing to him.

And the message is here in v2-3: Go and deal the Amalekites. **Kill every last one: adults, kids, even animals.**

That's pretty **disturbing**, isn't it?

We'll come back to **that** //

Saul and his men carry out the mission...or do they?

- So, v4-9 - Saul gets together a **huge army**.
- set an ambush for the Amalekites and attack them. They destroy them // but NOT **COMPLETELY!**
- they keep the King **alive** – King Agag
- **And keep** the **best** of the **sheep and cattle alive**
- Now compare that to **v3**... They were **explicitly** told to NOT spare **anything!** //

And so, God calls Saul to account

- V10 – God speaks to Samuel: I am **grieved** that I have made Saul / king... **devastating words!**
- Samuel goes to give God's message to Saul, finds out that he's set up a **monument** – not to **God**, but to **himself!**
- And when Samuel catches up with him, he's immediately on the front foot: v13 *I've completed my mission!*
- But Samuel is not **stupid**.
- You've completed your mission?
- Moooo-Baaaaa! What then are those noises I hear?

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- And look at Saul dodge and weave: v15, it wasn't me, it was these soldiers - (Just like Adam in the garden of Eden: it was this **woman** you put here with me...)
- And why did they spare the animals?
- "To make sacrifices to the Lord **YOUR** God" –
- whose God?
- The Lord **YOUR** God!
- You mean he's not YOUR God, Saul??
- He's digging the whole for himself further and further...
- But neither **Samuel**, nor the **Lord his God**, is fooled: Just stop **talking**, Saul.
- v16 Samuel says: God spoke to me last night and told me all about it. Why did you keep the best stuff for yourselves?
- And Saul does the predictable thing: he blames his men – Again.
- And **Samuel's** response in v22 is **so important**.
- Look at it: *"Does the Lord delight in burnt offerings as much as in obeying the voice of the Lord? To obey is better than sacrifice."* Hear those last words again: to **obey is better than sacrifice**.
- Saul finally breaks, he admits that he has sinned by fearing the **people** instead of **God**, //
- but it is too **late**.
- He may be **personally** forgiven, but it is too late for his kingdom.
- God pronounces the **judgement**.
- Saul will be **replaced** as **king**. //
- And tragically, Samuel, the old **prophet**, has to do finish the **job** by **executing** the **Amalekite king**.

Summary

Israel demanded a king 'like the other nations,' and in doing so, **they rejected God's leadership**.

The problem is, **THEIR** kind of king is just like **them!**

He **too** rejects God's **leadership!** //

And it won't do to simply make **sacrifices afterward**.

God demands **obedience**...sin is an **affront** to him. /////

Don't we see ourselves in Saul?

we seek to justify our sin? IT WASN'T REALLY THAT BAD...

we seek to blame others? IT WAS HIS FAULT, HE SWORE AT ME, SO I HAD TO HIT HIM!

we pretend we had noble motives. BUT I LOVE HER, I HAD TO FOLLOW MY HEART! ///

Let me guarantee you, God is not fooled by any of that! ///

So let's look second at

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2. WHAT DOES THE PASSAGE TEACH US ABOUT GOD?

There are two major things it teaches us about God.

The **first** one we have already touched on.

Look at 15:22 again:

1. To obey is better than sacrifice.

God wants people to **obey** him!

You can't buy him off afterwards by making **sacrifices**!

You can't disobey God and then think it's okay because you've **upped** your **service** to him by going to **church** more often or by putting more into the church **bank account**. He wants you to be **pure** in the **first place**.

The **second** thing it teaches us about God is

2. God hates sin.

You can see that in the judgement on the Amalekites in the first place.

You see – why did God want them all destroyed? We find that confronting.

What had they **actually done**?

It goes way back to Exodus 17.

The nation of Israel had been rescued from Egypt, still raw from their cruel enslavement to the Egyptians, and the Amalekites attacked them.

As Moses puts it in Deut 25: *Remember what the Amalekites did to you along the way when you came out of Egypt. ¹⁸ When you were weary and worn out, they met you on your journey and attacked all who were lagging behind; they had no fear of God. "*

After God leads them to victory in battle, God promises: *Then the Lord said to Moses, "Write this on a scroll as something to be remembered: I will completely blot out the name of Amalek from under heaven."*

What happens here in 1 Samuel is that God **delivers** that **judgement**.

Now, what we read in v3 here **horrifies us!**

How can this be **right**?

It's not even the **same generation!**

And even the **children** have to die?

We have to remember:

- 1 God knows everything, he knows the hearts of these people
- 2 God made and owns the universe. He alone can decide what ought to happen to these people who despise him
- 3 God's judgement on all sin and on all sinners is coming!
- 4 This is God's judgement – happening in ADVANCE of the judgement day we now await. This is God's justice at work!

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God's judgement is **real**...

And **EVERYONE** who rejects God and lives life without him will meet God's judgement.

God's righteous anger at sin is **real**.

When we look at what God did to the Amalekites, we should think, "There but for the **grace** of God go I."

There – but for the **grace** of **God** – which he in his **mercy holds out to everyone** through the **death** and **resurrection** of his very own Son – go I.

That judgement – would rightfully fall on **me** if it had not already fallen on **Jesus**...!

That is God's **AMAZING GRACE** of which we sing in that **famous hymn**.... ///

And that brings us to the third part of our sermon:

3. HOW DOES IT POINT US TO JESUS?

In two ways.

First, WE cry out for a better king.

Saul started well enough, but he has emerged as a bit of a disaster.

His repeated disobedience is a rejection of God's leadership.

And so, God has decided to **remove** him as king.

Saul's son will not carry on his dynasty.

God has already chosen Saul's replacement, and we'll meet him **next week**.

But even the great King **David** cannot carry off all of God's prophecies.

Second, a greater king must come...and WILL come – has come - from the **line** of **David**.

And of course, that is exactly who we meet in **Jesus**.

When Paul made a speech in **Acts 13**, He said:

³⁶ "Now when David had served God's purpose in his own generation, he fell asleep; he was buried with his ancestors and his body decayed.³⁷ But the one whom God raised from the dead did not see decay.

*³⁸ "Therefore, my friends, I want you to know that through Jesus the forgiveness of sins is proclaimed to you. ³⁹ **Through** him everyone who believes is set free from every **sin**, a justification you were not able to obtain under the law of Moses.*

Did you **hear** that?

Jesus, the **king** from **David's line**, will not see **decay**.

He **lives** and reigns **forever**! //

And what **sort** of **king** is he?

He is the one who **always** did the will of God, who lived in **perfect obedience**.

He **truly** is the king after God's own **heart**.

And did you hear what else Paul said?

It is **through Jesus** the **forgiveness of sins** is **proclaimed to you**!

Jesus did not **deserve** to die, and yet he **did** die, nailed to a cross like a **criminal**, taking away the **sin of the world, yours and mine**.

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We know how **seriously** God takes sin, the episode with the **Amalekites** teaches us that.

And now, in Jesus' **death**, God's **wrath** and **mercy** meet.

Jesus, God's own son, has taken God's **anger** and **exhausted** it, so that *through him everyone who believes is set free from every sin, a justification you were not able to obtain under the law of Moses.*

Application? Throw yourself on the mercy of **this** king, and **you will be spared...**

God really does hate sin. All sin is an affront to the one who made us. Because of sin, the wrath of God is coming against the world!

But in Jesus, our GOOD King, we see God's wrath and mercy meet, because he died in our place.

Although we are capable of great acts of kindness, history teaches us that we sometimes need saving from ourselves—from our recklessness or our greed. God sent into the world a unique person—neither a philosopher nor a general, important though they are, but a Saviour, with the power to forgive. The Late Queen Elizabeth

³⁸ "Therefore, my friends, I want you to know that through Jesus the forgiveness of sins is proclaimed to you. ³⁹ Through him everyone who believes is set free from every sin, a justification you were not able to obtain under the law of Moses.

I'm grateful to the Rev'd Simon Keith for permission to use some of his sermon material here.