

When a child has a problem who does he go to? Inevitably the child will shout for Mum or Dad or run to them in tears. When we become adults we may still take the same path, though with bigger issues we may have to go elsewhere, the Police, MP, even the Vicar or whoever.

However, there will be plenty of issues that Mum and Dad or the police or the doctor can't sort out and then where do we turn?

If we are God's people, followers of Jesus, then it will be to God we turn.

We are looking way back in the Old Testament at the book of 1 Samuel and in the first of this series we saw how Hannah unable to have a child turned to the only one who could help, to God.

Things have moved on. Hannah was granted a child, Samuel.

Samuel has served God's people well as their spiritual leader. We can see that if we just look back to chapter 7 where in the face of the threat of the Philistines 1 Sam 7:5, "Then Samuel said, "Assemble all Israel at Mizpah, and I will intercede with the Lord for you."" Later, in fear, the people of God came to Samuel and said, ""Do not stop crying out to the Lord our God for us, that he may rescue us from the hand of the Philistines." (7:8). The people under Samuel's leadership were looking to God for help.

That was about to change as we shall see in chapter 8.

Samuel, v1, was getting old and while he had appointed his sons to succeed him. They clearly weren't up to much.

Faced with the problem of Samuel's impending death and the unsatisfactory nature of his replacements the people of God had a problem. So they came to Samuel as God's representative to sort it out.

However as we will see what in effect they were doing was beginning on a path to remove God from being King over his people and instituting a human king, which God saw as a shorted sighted action. Let's see how it happened.

1. Give us a King (8:4-8)

The leaders of the people came to Samuel and said "appoint a King to lead us such as the other nations have" (v5).

Now what was going here?

One of the reasons given was that they wanted to be like the other nations around them. But what else were they looking for in a King? It was possibly security and prosperity. Someone to lead them into battle and to help secure their borders. Indeed if we look at v20, "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."" We see that the

picture has changed from chapter 7. Now they seem to be looking to a king to rescue them and not to God.

It was a historic moment in the life of God's people. In the next chapter we see how God brought Saul to Samuel to be the first King. However, it should be seen as a step away from God.

As we have seen in chapter 7 it was God they looked for to rescue them now they want a king to do that. It was a case of misplaced trust. It wouldn't be too long into the reign of king Saul that God's people would be faced with the threat of the Philistines and their giant champion Goliath and God would have to act not through the king but a shepherd boy David to rescue his people. A misplaced trust, a trust placed in humans rather than in God.

This was why God was concerned. It was not a huffy response to being ousted. Last weekend we were looking after the grandchildren while our daughter and son in law were away preparing for one of the Christian summer camps. When they returned the children who had previously been happy to sit on our laps didn't want to know us they just wanted mummy and daddy! I could have felt huffy but this was right. However, this situation in 1 Samuel is different. These are God's people, who God had brought out of slavery in Egypt and established in his land under his rule, fulfilling his promise to them made to Abraham, God's people in God's place under God's rule.

But now they were saying we want a king to act as rescuer. They had seen what God had done both way back in the past in the amazing way God had brought them out of Egypt and more recently as he had defeated the Philistines, but now they say no let's have a man as our king and rescuer.

It was a clear case of misplaced trust.

I know some decisions are difficult such as the ancient one from the McCain chips advert of daddy or chips, but this was a no brainer. God had shown himself able to defend and rescue his people yet they decided to opt for just the kind of king God had been defeating left right and centre – duh!

However, this kind of choice and misplaced trust is exactly what we humans continue to do.

Imagine that you were to die tonight and get to the gates of heaven and God were to say to you "why should I let you into my heaven". I wonder what you would say?

Having done countless funerals I know what many people will say. It will be things like, I have lived a good life, I have never done anyone any harm, I have kept some of the 10 commandments. It is all about what I have done. In other words our trust for eternity is centred upon ourselves upon humans. We are trusting in what we have done to make ourselves acceptable to God.

But friends that is not how God sees it. The holy God makes it clear in the Bible that none of us is perfect and therefore none of us is fit for heaven. "All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God." (Rom 3:23)

Our sin, that is our rebellion against God and refusal to let God be God in our lives, is a huge barrier between us and a holy God.

If we are looking to ourselves to overcome that barrier then the Bible tells we are looking in the wrong place – a misplaced trust.

But the good news is that what we can't do God has done for us in Jesus. On the cross Jesus took the punishment you and I deserve for our rejection of God and our wrong doing so that through his death God might justly declare us forgiven and free from sin and its consequences.

God asks us to trust him in this. That is rely on what he has done in Jesus for our salvation and not what we do ourselves. If you would like to find out more about this then I have a little booklet called 'Me? A Christian?' Please ask for one at the end of the service.

But it is not just in terms of salvation that we put our trust in the wrong place. Many of us who have been Christians for sometime still do the same. So if something goes wrong in our lives we try and work out how to put it right rather than look to God and his power. That is misplaced trust.

This request for a king was a sign of misplaced trust and looking to human effort rather than the power of God to rescue and defend them.

2. Be careful what you wish for (8:9-20)

God's response to Samuel was to tell first to listen to the people and then to ask him to tell the people what would happen if God were to give them a King (v9).

So in v10-18 he gave this graphic picture of the tyrant king with the emphasis on the word "take".

Later on in 12:3 he will set the contrast with his time as judge and ask them "whose ox have I taken, whose donkey?"

The picture of the king painted by God's words through Samuel was indeed harsh but would be borne out over and again in the history of Israel. With it came the solemn warning, v18, that, while God had often heard the cry of his people in the past and sent them a rescuer in the shape of a judge, if they embark on this path there will be no going back and no rescue by God from bad kings.

God would as it were give them up to their bad choice. Similarly if we choose to ignore God throughout our lives he allows us to do that. If we say I want to be king in my life and not God he allows us to but we need to recognise that there are consequences of that choice.

However, despite all this the people were set on having a king, v19-20.

The people were not willing to listen to God's word.

Samuel listened to the people and he listened to God. However "the people refused to listen". What God was saying did not fit with what they wanted to hear.

It is great to have this thanksgiving for the King twins but Gemma and Andrew you are going to find that out as the boys grow up that there will be some things they don't want to hear. There will be times when they choose not to listen to what you say.

This is how we respond to God. We often choose not to listen to what he says and there are things we don't want to hear.

Jesus told a story about hearing his word, the word of God. Using the image of a sower he spoke of how the seed, which represents God's word, when sown may fall on hard ground and get nowhere and many hear God's word but it has no effect on their lives. Some seed fell in rocky soil and grew but with no room for roots soon withered. Some people do make a start but the word of God doesn't really penetrate and faith becomes another passing fad. Then some seeds fell among thorns and stuff and when the plant grew it got strangled by the weeds around. This relates to those who do hear but as Jesus put it "the worries of this life and the deceitfulness of wealth choke it" (Matt 13:22). It would seem that was what was happening with God's people here. Worried by their political or economic situation they refused to hear God's word. Finally Jesus speaks of the seed or the word that fell on good soil and produced a harvest.

God's word often brings great joy and comfort to our lives. It speaks of his love, his grace, his forgiveness and his goodness. God calls us through his word to live with him both here and into eternity. However we are children and like children we often refuse to listen to God's word and think we know better but God speaks to us as a loving Father longing for us to respond for our sake not his.

If we have been privileged to be parents we know how frustrating it can be talking to children perhaps warning them of something and then seeing them learning the hard way. As we read the Old Testament that was how God's people were and we see God's frustration. But we are just the same. We hear God saying here is the way you can be saved and be sure of heaven and we think no thanks I'll do it my way. Or we hear God saying let me help you with whatever load you are carrying and we think no thanks I'll struggle on on my own.

The failure of God's people was because they would not listen. So for us here this morning or listening on download the message is that of Jesus in the end parable of the sower, "he who has ears, let him hear" (Matt 13:9).

3. Give them a King (8:21-22)

Samuel took the voice of the people back to God and God's response was "Listen to them and give them a king" (v22).

Even though it was not what he wanted for his people God allowed them to have a king and by and large as the story pans out the kings were pretty bad.

God's people asked for a king and God gave them what they wanted but as we read the history of God's people we see that every king, even the best, were flawed and failed. It meant that the people were always looking for and hoping for the true king in whom God would fulfil his promise made to Abraham of God's people in God's place under God's rule. In time that king did come, king Jesus. He is the king who is not flawed. He is the king who did not take, take, take but gave, gave, gave, even his life on a cross. This is the king we can follow and in whom we can trust.

A misplaced trust led these people of God to refuse to listen to God's word and as a result to make bad decisions.

So, wherever we are in our walk with God, he encourages us to allow Jesus be God and King in our lives, to listen to him and live his life.