

**The Cost of a King
1 Samuel 8:10-18**

A young girl named Mary sat in her house built into a cave in a tiny city in the northern part of Israel. She was engaged to a man from her hometown named Joseph. Suddenly an angel appeared, with a messenger from the Lord that was unexpected and troubling but would also change the world:

Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus. He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. And the Lord God will give to him the throne of his father David...

Luke 1:31-32

And you may know the son conceived in Mary's womb was Jesus. The first time we hear the Son of God, the Savior of the World, the King of the Cosmos described in the Gospel of Luke, he is compared to man named David. We are told he will sit on David's throne.

God chose to be compared to a man.

And this man wasn't reigning now. He wasn't king currently. When the angel visited Mary, David had been dead for 1,000 years. Imagine comparing someone today to Charlemagne or William the Conqueror or Genghis Khan—all of whom lived around 10 centuries ago.

David cast a long shadow. God's people waited a long time for another David to come along. In fact the prophets even said that the Messiah, the Savior of God's people would be born in the city of David—Bethlehem.

When Jesus was walking toward the cross, His final earthly journey, passing through the city of Jericho, a blind man cried out:

Jesus, son of David, have mercy on me!

And the crowd tried to quiet him down—shut him up! But he cried out again.

Son of David have mercy on me!

So David casts a long shadow—so much so that when people talk about God, they talked about David.

Who was David? David lived the in 11th century BC and was Israel's second and greatest king. He wasn't born into a royal family but was a shepherd who was just a boy when God plucked him from the field watching his father's sheep to be king. He was a man of war. He was a poet and a musician who wrote about half of the 150 Psalms in the Bible. Famously, he was called a man after God's own heart.

We'll spend the next few months discussing his life. And, spoiler alert, we won't say David was righteous, blameless and perfect.

He wasn't. Far from it. He was a sinner—every bit the sinner that you and I are and, unless we are hiding a crime from the police, probably more. The Bible doesn't hide how very human David was.

But God used him. And God used him because David trusted Him. The Lord was his king.

When David's kingship was established, at the height of his reign, the Lord recounted his faithfulness and made this promise with David. It's the perfect summary of God's great work in His life and a promise that from David's family, will come the Messiah, who will reign forever, Jesus.

Thus says the LORD of hosts, I took you from the pasture, from following the sheep, that you should be prince over my people Israel. And I have been with you wherever you went and have cut off all your enemies from before you. And I will make for you a great name, like the name of the great ones of the earth.

2 Samuel 7:8-9

God took David from being a nobody, the skinny-armed, red-faced, youngest of eight brothers sleeping under the stars with his father's sheep to King of God's people, and not just any king, but one who would be compared with the King of Kings and Lord of Lords, God's only Son, Jesus. The Lord gave David a pivotal role in the history of the cosmos—but it began with the Lord's people rejecting Him.

Before the name of David was even known, God's people went to a man named Samuel. Samuel was someone known as a judge, meaning a ruler that God raised up for a specific purpose for a temporary amount of time for a specific purpose. And when that purpose was over—like defeating a nation oppressing them. The theology of God's people was that, unlike all the nations around them, they didn't need a human king because they had a Heavenly King—a King who had set them free from slavery in Egypt, a king who had made the six foot thick forty foot high walls around Jericho fall, a king who defeated every nation opposed them and gave them a land to live in that was prosperous and fruitful and abundant.

When we think correctly about God we see Him as One who fights and defends and conquers for us. Centuries before David, God's people sang:

**The LORD is my strength and my song,
and he has become my salvation;
this is my God, and I will praise him,
my father's God, and I will exalt him.
The LORD is a man of war; the LORD is his name.**

Exodus 15:2-3

But God's people didn't want the Lord to fight for them. They wanted a man, warrior, a king they could look to and call their own like all the other nations of the world. They went to Samuel to say "Give us a king."

Then all the elders of Israel gathered together and came to Samuel at Ramah and 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."

1 Samuel 8:4-5

First, as someone that had a birthday this week, being told you are too old had to hurt Samuel a little bit but it didn't hurt as badly as having sons who didn't walk with the Lord. But Samuel knew that already because the Word tells us that his sons took bribes, were unjust and used their power and position to get rich.

So it makes you wonder why, if they had seen corruption in Samuel's sons, because we know that power often corrupts, God's people would want to invest even more authority in a man, who by definition is sinful and flawed.

But that's exactly what they wanted. And the reason they offered is because they wanted to 'be like all the other nations.'

What does that mean? What does it mean to be like all the other nations? Is it bad to want to be like everyone else? Don't we want to have unity with other people and not be separate and aloof? Aren't we all just part of one big family?

No, we're not just part of one big family. The Bible is the story of two families, two peoples—a people who follow God and people who do not, a people who are trapped in the death of sin, and a people who know life, a people who will know shame and contempt and others destined to shine like stars in the sky. God empowers His people to stand apart. And we're not supposed to have unity with a world mired in sin. We are called to something greater, something higher, something that's not always easy, something that puts us at odds with co-workers, friends and neighbors, powers and principalities, and even our family. That's a hard truth but there it is. We are not supposed to be like all the other nations.

But we are also called to something that sets us free—something that sounds almost too good to be true.

You are the sons of the LORD your God...For you are a people holy to the LORD your God, and the LORD has chosen you to be a people for his treasured possession, out of all the peoples who are on the face of the earth.

Deuteronomy 14:1-2

And here is how man named Peter put it for followers of Jesus thousands of years later:

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 marvelous light. Once you were not a people, but now you are God's people.

1 Peter 2:9-10

We are God's people. Jesus is our King. He is our Sovereign. He is the one who protects, defends, fights, and conquers for us.

And that should be good enough. The Lordship, Kingship, reign and rule of a God who loves us enough to die for us while we were yet sinners should be all we need.

But so often we seek another king.

When God's people went to Samuel and said, "Give us a king so we can be like the other nations," Samuel prayed to the Lord and the Lord told him to give the people the king they want. They're not rejecting you from being their judge, they are rejecting me from being their king. But warn and tell them exactly what having a king will mean for them."

That's exactly what Samuel did. Samuel told them they were choosing slavery.

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. And he will appoint for himself commanders of thousands and commanders of fifties, and some to plow his ground and to reap his harvest, and to make his implements of war and the equipment of his chariots. He will take your daughters to be perfumers and cooks and bakers. He will take the best of your fields and vineyards and olive orchards and give them to his servants. He will take the tenth of your grain and of your vineyards and give it to his officers and to his servants. He will take your male servants and female servants and the best of your young men and your donkeys, and put them to his work. He will take the tenth of your flocks, and you shall be his slaves. And in that day you will cry out because of your king, whom you have chosen for yourself, but the Lord will not answer you in that day.

1 Samuel 8:11-18

It is really no more complicated than this—anytime we look to something else, anything else, besides the Lord, other than Jesus, to protect us, provide for us, defend, conquer, fight for us—that thing will enslave us. That thing, that person, that situation, circumstance, government, will enslave us. It will make us less free, less happy, more fearful, more insecure and less at peace with the world.

We don't battle a sinful and broken world by becoming like it. We don't overcome a sinful and broken world by surrendering to it ways.

And we cannot embrace something besides Jesus as the source our security, our joy, our peace without rejecting Jesus. Jesus' half-brother James put it like this:

You adulterous people! Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God? Therefore whoever wishes to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God.

James 4:4

The kings of this world enslave. The only free people are the people for whom Jesus is King.

David's reign as King was followed by his son Solomon who became the wealthiest man in the world and maybe one of the wealthiest people ever to live. The Bible tells us that he received 50,000 pounds of gold every year (worth about 160 billion in our dollars) and that silver was as common as rocks. Solomon also built the incredible temple at Jerusalem that was one of the true jewels of the ancient world. All that money came from somewhere and Solomon enslaved God's people to make it happen. He forced them to work for him. And when Solomon died at the end of a 40-year reign, the people went to his son, David's grandson, who became king. Rehoboam was his name.

The people said your father Solomon oppressed us, he made our burdens heavy, if you stop oppressing us and lighten our burdens a little bit, we will serve you. Rehoboam said give me three days to think about it.

So the people came back three days later and Jeroboam gave them an answer. It was not the answer they were looking for.

“My father made your yoke heavy, but I will add to your yoke. My father disciplined you with whips, but I will discipline you with scorpions.”

1 Kings 12:14

In other words, if you thought you had it bad under my Dad, its going to be worse with me. God had hardened Rehoboam’s heart just like he had hardened the heart of Pharaoh when the people were slaves in Egypt and now God’s people were slaves again just like they were before.

Less than a hundred years before they had cried out for a king to they could be like all the other nations, everything and more that Samuel told them came true, and within a few generations most of God’s people would be conquered and scattered with a mere remnant remaining through whom God would continue His work and fulfill His promise for a Savior.

What is your King? Who is your King?

The kings of this world enslave. The only free people are the people for whom Jesus is King. And so we are given a choice, be free and follow Jesus, and be a slave make someone else our king, our sovereign, our head. The people of God are free because they submit and surrender to Jesus.

Dietrich Bonhoeffer put it like this:

No one can discern in the followers of Jesus the uncertainty and timidity of one acts randomly. Jesus’ freedom gives to all his followers a quality of sureness, certainty and radiance. The follower of Jesus lives and acts by the will of God, not by knowledge of good and evil. The will of God is his life.

There is nothing more freeing than following the will of God and allowing Him to sort out the consequences. And there is nothing that enslaves us more than following our heart or the will of another and desperately hoping we got it right.

This is something David understood. And it sometimes caused him to do things others thought crazy.

David was the second king of Israel and before he became king, the first king, a man named Saul, tried to kill him. For several years, Saul pursued David with an army of thousands of men all throughout the wilderness—trying to find and kill David because Saul feared him. With his family and some followers, David hid among the rocks and caves and in forests and fled for his life trying to survive Saul’s wrath.

One day someone told Saul where David was hiding—in the wilderness of Ziph. And Saul pursued David there, but David saw Saul coming and even saw where he camped. So during the night David and another man went into the camp and they found Saul fast asleep with his spear stuck in the ground right by his head. The man David was with said let me take this spear and stick it in Saul and end all this and then you David can be king right now.

And David replied:

“Do not destroy him, for who can put out his hand against the LORD’s anointed and be guiltless? As the LORD lives, the LORD will strike him, or his day will come to die, or he will go down into battle and perish. The LORD forbid that I should put out my hand against the LORD’s anointed.”

1 Samuel 26:9-11

David knew his real king was the Lord. And he could trust Him. He could trust Him enough to not take matters into his own hands and take the life of the man trying to take his. He could trust Him enough to live and act by the will of God and not what he thought was good, evil, right, wrong, expedient or effective. David trusted the Lord and in that he was a free man even though his very life was in danger.