A Costly Trade | 1 Samuel 8:1–22

The lecture discusses Israel's request for a human king in 1 Samuel 8 as a search for security, contrasting it with Jesus, who gives rather than takes.

Automatic Shownotes

Long Summary

The Cost of Choosing Another King | 1 Samuel 8 Main Point: Israel's demand for an earthly king reveals a lack of trust in God. The passage warns against seeking security and identity in worldly powers, and points to Jesus as the giving King. Outline: 1. Israel asks for a familiar king instead of trusting its faithful God (1 Samuel 8:1–9) Samuel's sons pervert justice, and Israel's elders ask for a king "like all the nations." The sermon distinguishes the request itself from the distrust behind it: Israel seeks visible leadership and security despite God's past provision. 2. A human king takes what God gives (1 Samuel 8:10–18) Samuel warns that a king will take the people's sons, daughters, land, harvest, servants, and livestock. The sermon applies this warning to worldly sources of security, success, control, and comfort, which can become masters that leave people unsatisfied. 3. Israel trades its distinct calling for conformity (1 Samuel 8:19–22) The people insist on being like the nations and having a king fight their battles. Israel was called to trust God rather than rely on the powers other nations trusted. The sermon connects this calling to the New Testament instruction not to conform to the world but to be transformed. 4. Jesus is the giving King The sermon connects Israel's rejection of God as king with the rejection of Jesus before his crucifixion. Unlike a king who takes, Jesus gives his life, eternal life, his word, and the Holy Spirit. The lecture closes by asking whether Christ is truly king in the listener's life.

Brief Summary

The Cost of Choosing Another King | 1 Samuel 8 Israel seeks security in a human king; Jesus gives rather than takes.

Tags

1 Samuel 8, Israel, human king, security, choosing a king, kingship, Jesus, giving, taking, leadership

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Transcript

[0:31] Well, as we open God's word, would you pray with me and bow your head? Lord, we thank you for your word, which guides us into truth. You are the source of truth. You have the words of life. Where else would we go? I pray today that as we study this Old Testament passage, that you might, make it real for us in our lives today, shine a light on the areas of our hearts that might need sweeping, and do a work that only you can do to bring us more into conformity with your Son, Jesus Christ. We ask for your blessing in Jesus' name. Amen.

[1:26] Well, you don't have to be a sports fan or even a baseball fan in any kind to, have heard of what is possibly the worst trade of all time. The worst trade of all time. In 1919, Babe Ruth was playing for the Boston Red Sox at the time. He was a three-time World Series winner for the team. He's a 24-year-old rising star, and the owner of the Boston Red Sox at the time, Harry Frazee, needed some cash. He was in a bind and had some other businesses that were falling apart and needed the cash and sold Babe Ruth, to the New York Yankees for $100,000, which at the time was a lot of money.

[2:21] But Ruth goes on to become a bona fide star for the Yankees and a dynasty is born. Yankee Stadium is known as the house that Ruth built and he goes on to win seven titles with the Yankees. They win 27 over the period of time where the Red Sox go for an 86-year drought and it becomes called The Curse of the Bambino, as many of us know here in the Boston area. Bad trade, really bad trade.

[2:56] And what might have felt good in the moment when Harry Frazee took that check and put it in the bank and cashed it might have felt like a, short term security for him and for his interests, turned out to be a long term, disaster that would impact generations to come. And as we come to 1 Samuel chapter 8, we're going to see the Israelites make some really bad trades in a desire for short-term security, for short-term satisfaction, and it will not work out for them.

[3:38] We find ourselves here 400 years or so before the book of Nahum, in which we've been studying, Where leading up to this point, this is an important shift in the historical, account of the Israelites because we're leaving the time of the judges when God would appoint a judge and they would rule over the people. Now we are entering into a historical shift of the time of the kings in 1 Samuel 8. If you rewind the tape a little bit, what is going on leading up to where we find ourselves as we kind of parachute into the middle of 1 Samuel chapter eight. There has been battles raging all throughout the beginning of Samuel already. In first, God calls him in chapter two. In 1 Samuel chapter four, the Israelites go into battle using the Ark of the Covenant almost as like a bargaining chip or a tool they can use to gain victory instead of treating it as God's presence and his power to go into battle with. It's captured by the Philistines, their enemy, and they hold it in one of their temples with their gods, their God, Dagon.

[4:55] God shows up miraculously and night after night, he continues to fall over. The Philistines come in and they find that he's missing an arm. Like what's going on here? And they put the arm back and then they come back the next day. And now Dagon is on his face. And then all of a sudden a persecution breaks out in the land around the Philistines. They start to get diseases and things like

that and God is persecuting them for having the ark and he uses two Philistine cows to bring that ark back to the people of Israel. In 1 Samuel chapter seven, the people repent. They recognize that they have gone and done wrong and worshiped other gods and they repent. And God leads a unbelievable battle at the battle of Mizpah, where the Philistines come up against the Israelites and Samuel cries out to the Lord for the people and says, please have mercy. And God shows up in a thunder. And it's almost as if the Philistines just bump into each other and all die. There's confusion that takes place in first Samuel seven, and there's a massive victory. And an Ebenezer stone is set up as a remembrance to say that God is our help. We've sung that song, come now fount of every blessing. Here I raise my Ebenezer. This is the Ebenezer stone reminding them God is our help.

[6:24] 1 Samuel chapter 7 is what reminds us what happens when God is their king and his word is trusted. And now we come to 1 Samuel chapter eight. Time has passed. Samuel is old. The succession plan looks bad and the people start to fear.

[6:50] Pick it up with me in the first verse. When Samuel became old, he made his sons judges over Israel. The name of his firstborn son was Joel, the name of his second, Abijah. They were judges in Beersheba, yet his sons did not walk in his ways. They turned aside after gains. They took bribes and perverted justice. Not good. Then all the elders of Israel gathered together. They came to Samuel at Ramah and said to him, behold, you are old. Tough, tough start there, but your sons do not walk in your ways. Now appoint for us a king to judge us like all the nations. But the thing displeased Samuel when they said, give us a king to judge us. And Samuel prayed to the Lord and the Lord said to Samuel, obey the voice of the people in all they say to you, for they have not rejected you. They've rejected me from being king over them.

[7:46] The first trade that we see, the costly trade that the Israelites make here in 1 Samuel chapter eight is that they want to trade a faithful God for a familiar king. A king that they can know, a king that they can see. They wanna trade a familiar God for a faithful king. Samuel's sons, Joel and Abijah are not walking with the Lord. And they go after gain. Just as a side point to this that is really encouraging to me, because parents, you might look at this and say, if even Samuel can't get his kids to walk with the Lord, what hope do we have? That's kind of a difficult bar, just to encourage you as we see God's hand of sovereignty and faithfulness that encourages me, and I hope it does for you.

[8:41] In grandson, Samuel's grandson, Heman, son of Joel, is appointed to be the leader of music in the house of David, one of the head Levites. And it says that the Lord blesses him and was with him. And then if you fast forward to 1 Chronicles chapter 25, it says the Lord blessed him so much that he gave him 14 sons and three daughters, all of which followed their father in the music, in the leading of music in the house of the Lord. I just love that picture of Heman, Samuel's grandson, leading music with his 17 kids up in front of the church on Sunday. What a beautiful picture. You thought the Jackson 5 was a musical family? Like how about the Heman 17? They have nothing on him, but it's just a reminder of God's faithfulness and providence in our kids and in the saving of them. And it reminds us that even if you didn't come from a godly family where Heman had a dad that was up to no good, make sure a godly family comes from you. That's the encouragement. There's a godly family that flows

in a generational descendant from them. And so praise God for that. The problem as we come to this chapter is not that they're asking for a king necessarily. necessarily.

[10:03] Earlier in the book, in Deuteronomy chapter 17, we see that God not only tells them that they would have a king, but actually prescribes for the people of Israel what they should look for when they appoint a king. And so it is not necessarily their request of which they are asking for a king. And even for us to look at the circumstances and say, yeah, those circumstances don't look great. I could understand why they might be wanting to ask for one. But what we see underneath the ask is the motivation for why they're asking. And that's what you see come out in verse five, that they say, we want a king, appoint for us a king to judge us like the other nations. And the Lord says, obey their voice. They haven't rejected you, Samuel. This is a rejection of me. This reveals the motivation behind what the request is being made for they look around they see that their future doesn't feel secure, and they say the moabites have a king the egyptians have a king, the assyrians have a king the amalekites have a king all these nations around us they have a king we want a king we want our future to be secure we would like some accessible leadership here. That's what they're asking for.

[11:31] What makes this request all the more stunning for us is that when they did not have a king and God was their king, the Red Sea is parted and the Israelites walk through on dry ground and watch their enemies swallowed up. When they did not have a king and they trusted God as their king, they walk the walls of Jericho and the walls of Jericho topple down and they go into the city. and God gives them the victory. Over and over, time and time again, just the previous chapter, we see God lead them in such an amazing, amazing victory. And yet we're getting to the heart of why they are asking this, that they do not trust God. All the way back, God says, to their desire to go back to Egypt once they first left. Oh, we liked the food back there. Life was better back there.

[12:31] Moses has gone for just a few extra days on the Mount of Sinai, a little bit longer than they thought he should be. And they say, Aaron, let's make a golden calf that we can worship. It's time and time again, what this is revealing about their hearts is they are continuing to show God's promises are just not good enough for them. They do not trust God in his promises. They say, yeah, we have your word. We have you. We don't trust it.

[13:05] And God considers this to be a rejection of him. He says to Samuel, God longs to be king over his people and that his people would follow him and love him and trust him. They don't want a faithful God. They want a familiar king. Something they can see, something that doesn't require so much faith on their behalf.

[13:38] What is it for us that as we look into the future and we say, I have to have this to feel secure. I have to have a certain number in the bank account. I have to have my health. I have to have the safety of my kids. I have to have this degree so I can get into this school to get this job, to set up the life that I have planned for myself.

[14:07] All can be good things by the way, but not in the place of God. What is it that you might be out of fear saying, no, I have to have this. God, I'm not trusting your promises for the future. I'm not trusting what you've done in the past will take care of me into the future. For some of us who are sitting in church and you say, well, I'm not rejecting God, but maybe you are adding to him. God, you're great as the Israelites did often. No, we want to serve. We just also want the golden calf. We just also want these other things in addition to you and your promises. I just need more than that for my safety, in my significance, in my satisfaction. What is it? If you filled in the blank and you said, I need God plus this to be secure, to be safe, to be satisfied. What is that? You may have found your king.

[15:09] We want to be able to say, like David, the Lord is my shepherd. I have all that I need. I have all that I need. As Psalm 16 says that, I say to the Lord, you are my Lord. Apart from me, I have no good thing. The boundary lines have fallen in pleasant places for me. You are my inheritance forevermore. This security, this satisfaction, this safety in the promises of God for you and for your life. And yet the Israelites trust a familiar king over a faithful God. The second trade that they make is they trade the king who saves them for the king who takes from them. We see it in verses 10 through 18.

[15:58] So Samuel told all the words of the Lord to the people who were asking for a king from him. 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. And he will appoint for himself commanders of thousands, commanders of fifties, some to plow his ground, 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 10th of your grain and of your vineyards and give it to his officers and to his servants. He will take your male servants, your female servants, the best of your young men and your donkeys and put them to 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 yourselves. But the Lord will not answer you in that day. God is so merciful.

[17:16] That if he's going to give the people what they ask for, he says, at least I want to warn you what you are asking for, what it's going to give you, what it's going to bring on you. And then Samuel reads this almost like a prescription drug commercial on TV. That's like, Hey, here's all the side effects of the remedy that you are desiring, and it won't go well for you. You think this king is going to give you what God cannot give you. And yet all this king is going to do is take, take, take. Do you notice that? Take over again. Take. He's going to take. He's going to take. He's going to take your family. He's going to take your freedom. He's going to take your finances. This king is going to be a taking king.

[18:08] Oh, but he's going to offer so much potential to you. Like Saul looked so good. The king that they are going to eventually get, he looked impressive. The scriptures tell us he was handsome. He was tall. He stood out among men. He would have looked great on the cover of Israel's weekly magazine. And yet he's going to take from them. And yet he's going to, if you fast forward to the end of the story, he's going to die in battle to the enemies of God. The very thing that they wanted the king

for, the result is going to be the complete opposite of what they're asking for. Samuel says, be careful what you wish for. He's going to be a taking king.

[19:02] And before you and I are quick to wag our finger at the Israelites and say, what a bunch of dummies. They should have seen this coming. How could you not see it? After all God has done, after how faithful he has been, how could you do it? We do it all the time. With kings of our own making and our own doing. We might not live in a monarchy or have a literal king that we, serve and look to for security and satisfaction, but we're prone to seeking the kings of this world and the kings of this world will always enslave you. They will always take from you.

[19:53] The kings of success, the kings of control. I'll relax when I know everything's going to work out the way that I want it to. The kings of comfort. Well, I want Jesus and all that he offers in his kingdom, but I don't want to sacrifice for it. I don't want to give up the comforts that I might have for it. We're starting to hone in on our kings. Our kings will always enslave. Arthur Schopenhauer, a German philosopher, he says, wealth and fame are like seawater. The more we drink of them, the thirstier we become. And as I think through this, I can't help but think back to my childhood pastor singing the Bob Dylan song. You're gonna have to serve somebody. It may be the devil or it may be the Lord, but you're going to have to serve somebody. He's echoing what Paul is saying in Romans 6, verse 16, to say that all of us have a master that we serve. Everyone. We're either going to be slaves to sin or we're slaves to righteousness. And everyone serves somebody.

[21:19] But yet when you have seen the goodness of God as king, when you have seen the emptiness of the kings of this world and what they have to offer, the counterfeit nature of the kings of this world that offer so much and yet leave you empty, when you have tasted and seen, as Psalm 34 says, that the Lord is good, when you've tasted and seen that he is good belonging to christ and him being your master it is better than being your own king, it's better it's far better serving christ as your master is better, than being your own servant, it's being a servant to the other kings of this world it is so much better to have Christ as king, but you're going to have to make a choice. And what is true for the Israelites in 1 Samuel 8 is true for us, that the king that you choose will shape your whole life.

[22:29] And an earthly king cannot promise what only a heavenly king can provide. What they're looking for in an earthly king, it cannot be provided for them. It might be promised to them, but it cannot be provided for them. It is only in serving and, belonging to Christ that we can be provided by a heavenly king. And so sometimes the way that we see God break the enslavement to an idol is he gives them and gives us what we're asking for. And there's a sad phrase in the next chapter of 1 Samuel 9 that says, all the people's hearts went out towards Saul. All of the hearts of the people went out towards Saul. He gives them what they're asking for.

[23:27] The trade is a God who saves for a God who, for a king who takes, a king who saves for a king who takes. And lastly, we see them reject and trade away their unique calling for a worldly conformity, for a worldly conformity in the last verses 19 through 22. But the people refused to obey the voice of Samuel. They said, no, but there shall be a king over us that we may be like all the nations and that

our king may judge us, go out before us and fight our battles. And when Samuel had heard all the words of the people, he repeated them in the ears of the Lord. And the Lord said to Samuel, Obey their voice and make them a king. Samuel said to the men of Israel, Go every man to his own city. This whole thing is twisted backwards. Samuel's listening to the voice of the people.

[24:39] The people are not listening to the voice of God. That's a scary place to have arrived to when we are shutting off the wisdom of God's voice to say, no, my voice will be the loudest. My voice will reign in this situation. And this is where we've come to, that God's voice has been silenced only for their own voice to be turned up in volume. And after this very long warning from God, surprisingly, the people have not budged an inch from their original request. In fact, they actually kind of turn it up to say, first, they just wanted to be judged like the nations. Now they want to be like the nations.

[25:22] You see that move there? No, we want to reject the very thing that has made us different and distinct and unique. That was the whole point of being God's people is that they would be set apart. And the very thing that would make them different, they want to get rid of. They want to separate from. They were supposed to be distinct from the other nations. How? By not trusting in the same things that the other nations trusted in. By not trusting in how many men they had to go into battle with. Or their horses, or their chariots, but trusting in the Lord. And yet here they say, we don't want this unique calling. We don't want to be the royal priesthood. We don't want to be that. We want to be just like the world around us. And they lose the distinction.

[26:20] Their relationship with God was supposed to give them those things and they were supposed to be a people that live by faith. Paul in Romans 12, writing to the New Testament believer says, to not be conformed to the patterns of this world, but to be transformed by the renewing of our minds. God's call for you and me, for the Christian, the New Testament believer is that we also would not be conformed to the patterns of this world. That we would not trust in the same things that this world trusts in, that we would not have the same kings that this world sets up as kings.

[27:03] But that we are to be transformed according to the person and the work of Jesus Christ. The things that we desire, the things that we consider to be the marks of a blessed life, the things that we treat as this is what it means to be successful, that needs to look different for the New Testament believer, for you and me, that those things are not dictated by the world around us.

[27:32] We spend time with god's word we spend time with god's people, we spend time with god and we let, him dictate those things to us how our list of priorities will be different, hebrews even goes as far to call us strangers and exiles here on this side of heaven, and so there should be a distinction, a difference in the way that we look versus the world around us looks. And when we start to judge those things by what others might view as successful, we need to start taking a step back to say, is this a king in my life? Is this being set up as something that I need? Am I rejecting the unique calling that God has given me? And so the people demand a king. It's not that god wants less for us it's that he wants better he wants kingdom priorities, he wants a kingdom focus for you and i a better kingdom a

better list of priorities a better king to serve, that's what you and i have, and so god gives them what they ask for it doesn't go great for Saul as you continue to read.

[28:56] And it actually can start to feel a little bit hopeless at this point in 1 Samuel, as the people have chosen to go their own way. Where's the hope going to come from? God will provide a king. The first iteration of the king after his own heart that we see is David, that he sets up as king. But ultimately, we see a king that would come, that is God himself. What we read in 1 Samuel chapter 8, it foreshadows the coming of another king, who would come in Israel. And this king would stand before Pilate.

[29:35] And this king would wear a crown of thorns on his head and a so-called kingly robe as he stood in front of Pilate on trial to be executed. And Pilate says to the people, shall I crucify your king? Shall I crucify your king? And just like the leaders of the people go to Samuel in first Samuel chapter eight, and they say, we want a king. Not God is our king. We want an earthly king, a familiar king. The people, the chief priests cry out. They say, we have no king but Caesar. We have no king but Caesar. Right back to 1 Samuel chapter 8. What's changed? What's changed? And the king of kings is put on a cross to pay the penalty that you and I deserve to pay. Even in our rejection of him, that he would give his life as a ransom for many.

[30:47] That he would give his life for sinners like you and me so that by faith, we can have a better king. We can have a better kingdom. You want to talk about the greatest trade of all time that's ever happened in the history of humankind? It's Jesus trading places with sinners like you and me. That is the greatest trade to ever happen. He is not a taking king. He is a giving king. Our God is a giving king. It says that, it says I've come to give. I didn't come to serve, to be served, but to serve and to give my life as a ransom for many. I came so that you may have life, to give life. I came, all you who are weary and burdened, come to me and I will give you rest. This is the king that we serve, King Jesus. He's a giving king. He's a great king. He is not a taking king. He says, I give them eternal life and they will never perish.

[32:04] How about he gives us his word? How about he gives us his Holy Spirit to be the comforter and the helper for us? What a king that we get to serve.

[32:20] And so who is your king? Who is your king?

[32:32] If Christ is your king, there is nothing else you need in life.

[32:44] Let the nations go their way. Let the nations do what they're going to do. If Christ is your king, you have no other needs. He will provide. Is Jesus Christ king of your life? I have to ask, is he king? Is this good giving king, the king of your life? Have you made him king? Not did you grow up in church? Not did your mom and dad worship him as king? Not do you think he's a great teacher? Is he the Lord of your life? Has it changed the way your life looks? Because he will bring transformation in your life. Who is your king? Is it Jesus? Or is there anything else that you have set up on the throne of your life that you are serving now as your king that will not lead to your security? It will not lead to your

satisfaction. It will not lead to your safety. Only Christ can do that. Amen. Let's bow our heads and pray.

[34:13] Jesus, you are king. You are king. You are the only master worthy of being served and surrendered to. you. Lord, as a people, as a church, we don't want to follow the nations around us. We don't want to take orders from them. We don't want to live a life that is, influenced by them to where we would ever bend the knee to anyone but you. Help us to follow you with joy, to take our orders from King Jesus and to follow, with faithfulness, that we would see fruitfulness come from that. Pray for those who hear today and do not know you as King. May even today they taste of your goodness and trust you as King. Help us to trust you today, we pray in Jesus' name. Amen.