

Found Donkeys and a Lost King

1 Sam. 10:17-27

(preached 5/6/15; Pine Grove BC Wed PM)

Introduction

Last October, the Washington Post published an article on the top fears of average Americans...

Coming in at #5 was blood and needles...

#4 was drowning....

#3 was bugs/snakes/spiders or other animals...

#2 was heights...

And #1 was.....

Public speaking.

Jerry Seinfeld famously said “To the average person, if you have to go to a funeral, you’re better off in the casket than doing the eulogy.”

And why is that?

Why are most people fearful of public speaking?

Most experts say it is the thought of being pulled from the comfort of a group...

And being put on display in front of that group.

Others say it stems from pride, and the anxiety that comes from wondering what others are thinking when they look at us.

Whatever the reason, the fear of public speaking consistently outranks the fear of death for most people...

Well tonight, we are going to see Saul be publically chosen as the first king of Israel.

Yet, he is not going to run to receive the crown and the power.

Instead, when his name is read, he is going to hide behind some luggage.

Now whether this was stage fright or a fear of public speaking or simply an incredible display of humility, I'll leave that up to you to decide.

Regardless of how you describe Saul's strange behavior in the verses tonight, I think it is safe to say that he was overwhelmed at the prospect...

Of being Israel's first king.

And whether he hid out of fear or humility, I think it is clear that he felt unworthy and even unprepared to lead Israel.

Even though God had given His Spirit to Saul and even though Saul was a changed man according to the first part of chapter 10...

He was still very unsure of his qualifications to serve...

And so let us look at verses 17-27 of 1 Samuel 10 tonight...

I have entitled this message...

Found Donkeys and a Lost King

IF you remember from last week, Saul became king as he searched for his dad's lost donkeys...

But tonight, even though the donkeys have been found, now Saul the king is going to go missing for a short while...

I have divided these verses into four parts....

I. A Final Rebuke (17-19)

II. A Missing King (20-22)

III. A Joyous Reception (23-25)

IV. A Clear Division (26-27)

I. A Final Rebuke (17-19)

And so, let's begin in verse 17 of chapter 10...

17 Thereafter Samuel called the people together to the Lord at Mizpah;

Ok, let's test your memory...

When was the last time that the people gathered at Mizpah?

Well, that would have been in chapter 7 when the nation gathered to repent before God...

They had suffered two defeats at the hands of the Philistines...

So, Samuel gathered them all together in chapter 7 to call them back to the LORD.

And the people confessed their sins at Mizpah and then asked God to fight for them...

And then immediately afterwards, the Philistines pick another fight with them..

But this time, Israel wins because they turn to the LORD to help them...

So, they are at Mizpah here again....

And you can't miss how different the situation is this time..

Last time, they gathered to acknowledge their true king, the LORD God.

This time, they gather because they are ready to replace God with another king.

And so, the people are all gathered to welcome a new king here in Mizpah.

Then verse 18....

18 and he said to the sons of Israel, "Thus says the Lord, the God of Israel, 'I brought Israel up from Egypt, and I delivered you from the hand of the Egyptians and from the ^[g]power of all the kingdoms that were oppressing you.' 19 But you have today rejected your God, who delivers you from all your calamities and your distresses; yet you have ^[h]said, 'No, but set a king over us!' Now therefore, present yourselves before the Lord by your tribes and by your clans."

Now this is an interesting occasion.

On one hand, it is a joyous celebration.

The people are finally getting the king that they want.

They are going to be like the other nations.

They are going to have that visible warrior king to take their nation into battle.

There is no question that the people are filled with anticipation as they arrive at Mizpah.

They have talked about as they walked there.

It has been the talk around town and around the dinner table for some time now.

People are certainly wondering who this king will be.

And so, they have packed their belongings , gathered up their families and make the road trip to Mizpah for this occasion.

And now they all gather together and Samuel steps up to the podium..

And the first thing out of his mouth is a stinging rebuke for what is about to happen.

Talk about throwing water in the fire.

The people were probably expecting a really nice..

“Thank you for coming all the way to Mizpah today to choose your king.”

“I am so happy to see all of you.”

Instead, they get “Welcome to the ceremony where you are showing your complete rejection of God.”

Samuel does not sugar coat what is happening before the people’s eyes today.

They are replacing God with a human king.

And Samuel is reminding them that God is the one who has brought them this far in their history.

They have won freedom from Egypt by the hand of the Lord.

And they have escaped their enemies and their troubles because God has led them.

And now, they have all gathered together to get rid of their true source of help, strength and wisdom and get a king like the other nations.

What do we learn from what Samuel does here?

I would offer this to all of us.

Truth always triumphs over ceremony.

For instance, I have performed a couple weddings and funerals in my time here at Pine Grove.

Now weddings and funerals are completely different ceremonies..

One is filled with joy and the one is filled with sadness...

And even though I always rejoice with those who rejoice and mourn with those who mourn, I never pass up the opportunity for truth at either event...

That doesn't mean I have to ruin the mood at either one, but it does mean that there is a truth that needs to be shared at both.

And that is the truth of the gospel.

But this principle goes beyond the preacher.

As believers, you must always speak the truth when given the chance regardless of what people may think.

That doesn't mean we are rude or pushy.

It doesn't mean that we take center stage at every event.

But we must keep the truth of the gospel on our tongue even when it may not be socially acceptable to speak it.

Samuel knew the people gathered to find a king, but he wasn't going to put on a nice smile and ignore the truth for the sake of not offending the crowd.

He stood up and spoke the truth even when the people probably had no interest in hearing it.

Martin Luther described himself as one who was held captive by the truth of God's Word.

And that is a good way to think of our lives.

We are prisoners of the truth.

Our hearts can't escape the truth.

And our mouths can't help but speak the truth even when it may not be the "socially acceptable" thing to do...

And so Samuel preaches and then he calls the people to gather by their respective tribes and clans.

And that brings us to verse 20...and the case of...

II. A Missing King (20-22)

Verses 20-21...

²⁰ Thus Samuel brought all the tribes of Israel near, and the tribe of Benjamin was taken by lot. ²¹ Then he brought the tribe of Benjamin near by its families, and the Matrite family was taken. And Saul the son of Kish was taken

When all the people were gathered by their tribe, the lot was cast and it fell on the tribe of Benjamin.

The when all of Benjamin was gathered, the lot fell on the Matrite family..

And then it fell on Saul.

Since the people believed that the lot was at the direction of the Lord, they felt sure that God was the one responsible for selecting Saul as king.

And so the lot falls on Saul, but Saul can't be found.

Look at the end of verse 21...

but when they looked for him, he could not be found. ²² Therefore they inquired further of the Lord, "Has the man come here yet?" So the Lord said, "Behold, he is hiding himself by the baggage."

Now, what is going on here?

Is this stage fright like we talked about earlier?

Is this incredible humility in that Saul doesn't want the recognition?

Is this because he was fearful of being the next king?

Most people tend to say that Saul was showing incredible modesty and humility here, and I wouldn't disagree...

But I think the greater point of this is to show how utterly helpless Israel is without God..

Not only do they need God to pick their next king for them by controlling the casting of the lot....

They also need him to point out Saul even after he has been chosen by the lot.

Israel is not only in the dark, they are blind as well.

From what I hear some husbands are like this....

For instance, they will ask their wife where the chips are...

The wife will point out the cabinet where the chips are located.

The husband will then proceed to that cabinet...

And reply with "I don't see the chips."

To which the wife reply, “They are on the 3rd shelf.”

To which the husband will reply, “I still don’t see them.”

To which the wife will reply, “they are right behind the bread.”

To which the husband will reply, “Come help me. I still don’t see them.”

That is a close analogy of the utter helplessness of Israel..

God, we want a king.

But we don’t know how to choose one.

So, you choose him for us through the casting of lots...

Ok, we know it is Saul.

So, where is he at?

We need you to point him out to us.

Even though we may see Saul’s humility here, it may be a better picture of Israel’s helplessness apart from the Lord’s mercy.

And that is so true in our lives as well.

You may think that you will be fine on your own,
but you aren't.

We are a dependent people, but praise God he is a
merciful and gracious God.

And God displays his mercy by pointing out Saul to
the crowd...

And so they go to grab Saul bring him out from
hiding....

And now, we are going to see...

III. A Joyous Reception (23-25)

Verse 23...

²³ So they ran and took him from there, and when he stood among the people, he was taller than any of the people from his shoulders upward. ²⁴ Samuel said to all the people, “Do you see him whom the Lord has chosen? Surely there is no one like him among all the people.” So all the people shouted and said, “[i] Long live the king!”

Once Saul is located and brought before the people, they love him even more.

He is tall and handsome.

But isn't it interesting how looks can be so deceiving at times.

Though he looked the part of a brave king to lead Israel into battle, don't forget that he was just found hiding in the luggage.

Well, the people didn't care and they were happy with Saul, and so he is received to be their king with much joy...

But please don't miss verse 25, which is an important part making Saul the official king of Israel...

Verse 25 says this...

25 Then Samuel told the people the ordinances of the kingdom, and wrote them in the book and placed it before the Lord. And Samuel sent all the people away, each one to his house.

Now what does that mean?

Well before the crowning is official, Samuel simply reminds the people of the rules of the kingdom and the expectations of the king...

Most likely, this is a reference to Deuteronomy 17:14-20...

Which I have put on the screen here...

This was written to Israel years before they ever wanted or had a king reign over them...

God knew that day would come and this is what he wrote in Deuteronomy 17:14...

4 "When you enter the land which the Lord your God gives you, and you possess it and live in it, and you say, 'I will set a king over me like all the nations who are around me,' 15 you shall surely set a king over you whom the Lord your God chooses, one from among your [l]countrymen you shall set as king over yourselves; you may not put a foreigner over yourselves who is not your

[m]countryman. 16 Moreover, he shall not multiply horses for himself, nor shall he cause the people to return to Egypt to multiply horses, since the Lord has said to you, ‘You shall never again return that way.’ 17 He shall not multiply wives for himself, [n]or else his heart will turn away; nor shall he greatly increase silver and gold for himself. 18 “Now it shall come about when he sits on the throne of his kingdom, he shall write for himself a copy of this law on a scroll [o]in the presence of the Levitical priests. 19 It shall be with him and he shall read it all the days of his life, that he may learn to fear the Lord his God, [p]by carefully observing all the words of this law and these statutes, 20 that his heart may not be lifted up above his [q]countrymen and that he may not turn aside from the commandment, to the right or the left, so that he and his sons may continue long in his kingdom in the midst of Israel.

And the clear lesson to the people was that Saul was not going to be a king who did not answer to anyone.

Saul, like all of Israel, was still under the law of God.

And this is the principle that still keeps evil in check in the world.

Governments, kings, presidents and other rulers are still subject to the law of God.

No men are above God's law.

And the same was true of the 1st king of Israel.

Saul was "little k" king under the "Capital K" King.

And so Samuel reminds the people and Saul of the laws of the kingdom and the king who rules over it.

And we see prime examples of the abuse of this principle even in the news today...

Government officials who don't think that the law applies to them and even law enforcement officials who even see themselves above the law..

And this also applies to me as a pastor.

I'm not above the law of God because I am a preacher.

If anything, I am called to a higher standard in my private life.

The same was true for Saul.

He was under the law of God not above it..

And that leads us to the final verses of chapter 10, where we are going to see....

IV. A Clear Division (26-27)

At the end of verse 25, Samuel sends everyone away from Mizpah and back to their own homes.

Then we see something very interesting in verses 26-27....

²⁶ Saul also went to his house at Gibeah; and the valiant men whose hearts God had touched went with him. ²⁷ But certain ^[i]worthless men said, “How can this one deliver us?” And they despised him and did not bring him any present. But he kept silent.

Couple things to take note of here...

First, Saul goes back to his home..

Another show of humility probably is what we see here..

Saul doesn't ask to be taken to the throne room or to his own castle.

Instead, he heads back to his hometown.

The time for acting like a king will come, but now he is simply going home to prepare for what is next...

And then #2, notice that some men go home with him...

God simply moved in the hearts of some men to accompany Saul back home.

We can understand this in some ways.

Most in Israel were anxiously looking forward to having a king...

And now that they have one, they seek to care for him..

To protect him, to be of service to him..

And it is interesting to see that God changed their hearts so that they would join Saul's team so to speak...

And again we see the mercy and grace of God to provide Saul with a hedge of protection in the form of men who are loyal to the king...

Even though the people rejected God by asking for a king, God does not hold Saul responsible for their rejection.

Instead, He provides for Saul by directing some men to follow him back home...

And the need for fellowship and encouragement is important for any leader.

Saul was new to all this, but he was not alone.

God made sure to surround him with men who be that source of encouragement and protection in Saul's life...

And how important is that?

Well, don't forget how Jesus began his public ministry?

What did he do first?

He surrounded himself with other men who would share in his sorrows and help bear the burden of ministry.

That is some important.

Isolation is deadly.

It leaves a man unaccountable to anyone and it keeps his encouragement tank empty.

And the same is true for all of us..

We need to keep solid, Bible believing people around us at all times.

To hold us to a high standard of living and to walk through the valleys of life with us.

Yes, we need to interact with the lost people, but we all need the blessing of other believers in our life...

And Saul certainly has that right from the beginning of his reign over Israel.

But as soon as the friends arrive in his life, so do the enemies...

That is the 3rd thing that we need to take note of here...

Verse 27 said that certain worthless men opposed Saul..

Do you remember who else were called worthless men in 1 Samuel...

Way back in chapter 2, Eli's evil sons, Hophni and Phineas, were called worthless men...

The literal translation is that they were sons of Belial...

Or more accurately, sons of Satan...

Notice how God is the one who moved the hearts of the men to follow and care for Saul...

But who is the one responsible to turn hearts away from Saul?

Well, it would be the devil.

And these men oppose Saul.

They ask the question, “How can this one deliver us?”

They are filled with doubt from the start.

They didn’t even bring Saul a present.

The assumption is that most of the people had given the new king a gift as he was chosen their first king.

But these men did not take part in that.

And that tells us something, they were opposed to Saul even before they met him.

They didn’t give a present because they hadn’t brought one with them to Mizpah.

And that tells us what we already know about people like this...

They are opposed to everything that isn’t their idea.

They are complainers filled with doubt about anything they hear.

And so Saul has quickly found friends and enemies, take note of the final thing that we need to see here...

Saul did not speak a word to his opposition.

It would have been easy to have these men immediately silenced here....

I mean Saul is king, but he doesn't let it go to his head...

He keeps his mouth closed despite the criticism.

And though that is the right thing to do at this point, it takes incredible courage.

Yet, that is what he does, and I tend to think it is because of the new man that he has become since God changed his life.

And what is the obvious comparison here?

Well, it is none other than the Lord Jesus Christ.

He had and has his friends and his foes.

Some today, just like these men, wonder exactly how "can this man save us?"

Remember when Jesus went to his hometown, what did the people say about Him?

Isn't this the carpenter's son?

And what are they saying with that statement?

How is he going to help us?

How can he be the Messiah who is going to deliver us from our enemies?

How can HE save us?

And even the silence of Saul reminds us of the silence of Jesus before his accusers.

Isaiah 53:7..

*⁷ He was oppressed and He was afflicted,
Yet He did not open His mouth;
Like a lamb that is led to slaughter,
And like a sheep that is silent before its shearers,
So He did not open His mouth.*

Conclusion

So as we wrap up this section in verses 17-27, I think it is an interesting observation that this section began with one man talking...

And it ends with one man being quiet...

And yet both examples are very instructive to us today.

Now, these were obviously two different situations...

Samuel was called to speak God's truth as a judge, priest and prophet....

And Saul was silent before critics...

But it does teach us that there is a time to speak and there is time to not speak...

And as I look at my own heart and then look at people in the church and even in the world...

There isn't a need to ask people to speak up.

Most people are more than eager to open their mouths and share their thoughts...

But I do see a shortage of folks who are disciplined enough to remain silent at times...

And why is that?

Why do we feel a need to defend ourselves in the face of criticism?

Why do we want our thoughts to be heard by everyone?

Well, when I look at Saul and more importantly, when I look at Jesus, why were they able to keep quiet?

And I think it stems from both of them having confidence in God's plan for their lives...

Though Saul was new to all this, he was quickly learning that God had chosen him to be the king.

He had Spirit of God at work in his life, and that didn't lead him to pride, but it gave him the confidence to know that whatever man may say...

He only had to answer to God in the end...

And then we see this all the more in Jesus' life..

He could be accused of all kinds of crimes, but in the He was only interested in pleasing His Father.

And I think that is helpful to us...

Critics will come and go in your life, and the best answer to them is not always your words offered in defense of what you do..

It is the testimony of a life lived with a clean conscience..

It is the testimony of a quiet and gentle spirit..

It is the testimony of a life that doesn't seek to please everyone, but understand that the only One you need to please is the Lord.

Let us pray.