

Serving the King of Kings

We turn now to the farewell speech that Samuel gave in 1 Samuel 12. Now this wasn't a farewell speech where he said goodbye for good that he was departing the land, or going to be with the Lord. He would remain, serving as a prophet, giving counsel to King Saul, and also anointing David in the years to come. But he was saying goodbye as their judge. With a new king over them, Israel did not need his political leadership. The kings would be rulers and judges from that day onward.

[Let's read the first few verses of 1 Samuel 12](#)

With the old age of judges passing and the new age of Kings beginning, God would renew his covenant with his people. And with it he gave a command, "If you will fear the Lord and serve him and obey his voice and not rebel against the command of the Lord, and if both you and the king who reigns over you will follow the Lord your God, it will be well."

Samuel had reminded Israel of all the great things that God had done for them in the ages past. Now, with the dawn of the age of kings upon them, it is critical for Israel to know that it will only go well for them if they obey the Lord. There is a triple exhortation here, "to fear, to serve, and to obey," which characterizes the basic condition for a good relationship between God and his people. This is what the King of Kings, the Creator of all things expects from his people. Receiving a king from the Lord in no way removes that requirement.

Hand in hand with the assurance that it will be well comes the covenant curse. If you do not obey but rebel against the commandment of the Lord, then the hand of the Lord will be against all of you. The covenantal blessings and curses are brought to the front again as Samuel reminds Israel that they are to follow the Lord their God. Receiving a king in no way deters from that.

And the Lord God, in his wisdom, gave to his people a sign that day. At the time of wheat harvest, a dry season, there would have been little rain, much less a mighty thunderstorm. When Samuel called upon the Lord, he responded in kind and sent thunder and

rain. The result? All the people greatly feared the Lord and Samuel. Not in a “fear the Lord” type of way that Samuel was just describing but being truly afraid for their lives. They were compelled to acknowledge the hand of God, and his ability to act in wrath against sin.

For all the people begged Samuel to pray to the Lord on their behalf. They recognized the anger of the Lord against their sin. They finally acknowledged that to ask for themselves a king was an evil request. To request a king is to deny the kingship of God, it is to be in rebellion against him, a sin worthy of death. All the people recognized that, and they also saw that if God so desired, he could destroy them in his righteous fury. What a start to the era of kings that would be!

But it’s here we find the great deed of the Lord on that day. It was not found in the thunder or in the rain, as mighty though that might be. That God controls the weather is certainly testimony to his power! But the great deed of God is that he spared his people! As Samuel responded to them, “the Lord will not forsake his people.” They would not be destroyed for their sin, for God in his infinite love and compassion had a plan that included their salvation! As Samuel said, “It has pleased the Lord to make you a people for himself.” That is the great deed of the Lord! That is what he does that is so worthy of praise. Despite sin, despite rebellion, the Lord God Almighty loves his people and has compassion on them. That is the foundation for Samuel’s commands to serve the Lord with all their heart.

As you reflect upon all that has happened in your life, recognize your sins and your shortcomings. Your secret plans and ambitions and self-centered motivation only turn after empty things that cannot profit or deliver. Think about the countless sins that God could confront you with in his wrath, may that drive you to your knees in prayer, praying to the Lord your God that you may not die. And rise, knowing that the response of your Lord is the same response your Lord God gave to Israel so long ago, “The Lord will not forsake his people, for his great name’s sake, because it has pleased the Lord to make you a people for himself.”

These words point ahead to their ultimate culmination of Christ and his redeeming work. Because it has pleased the Lord to make a people for himself, so he has carried out a plan of salvation. A plan that involved the redemption of sinners into the covenant people of God.

The same power that commanded the thunder and the rain to come that midsummer day was the same power that enabled Christ to bear the wrath of God against sin, against our sin. Our Saviour went to the cross in love for his people, sinners like you and me. The beloved Son of God bore the burden for sinners, he died for sinners, laid to rest as the Messiah still and all alone. But Christ did not remain in the grave for our sins, but he rose victorious!

His victory over sin and Satan also marked a transition from one era to another. His victory defeated the prince of this world and firmly established the conquering Christ as the ruler of all. He has ascended into heaven where he is seated at his Father's right hand, actively gathering, defending, and preserving his church, his body, his people. With his blood he ransomed us body and soul to be his people, that we might fear the Lord and serve him faithfully with all our hearts.

The same charge is laid before us as we look ahead to the rest of our days. Fear the Lord and serve him faithfully with all your heart. For consider what great things he has done for you! If all Israel acknowledged their sin on account of God sending the rain and thunder, how much more ought we to acknowledge our sin on account of God sending his Son to die for them! If Israel was given the command to fear the Lord and serve him faithfully on account of God delivering them from the hands of the Egyptians and Philistines and Ammonites to make them a people for himself, how much more ought we to fear him and serve him faithfully on account of God delivering us from our sins, and slavery to sin to make us into a people for himself?

The same covenant blessings and curses Samuel spoke in verses 14 and 15 are given to us. "If you will fear the Lord and serve him and obey his voice and not rebel against the commandment of the Lord, and if both you and the king who reigns over you will follow the Lord your God, it will be well. But if you will not obey the voice of the Lord, but rebel against the commandment of the Lord, then the hand of the Lord will be against you and your king." Even more so for us, for our king is not a sinful man who rules imperfectly, for our king is the just and perfect Jesus Christ who submits to his Father perfectly.

Your plans for your future need to be made with this in mind. Life may seem on hold because of the pandemic, but it is still a future that is ours from the Lord. Do not hold the call of

the Lord in light regard. In serving the Lord, he assures you that it will be well. He has been pleased to establish for himself a people, for his great name's sake. If you reject him and do not obey his voice, if you still do wickedly, you will be swept away. God will have nothing to do with you, and will forsake you.

Yet if we do fear the Lord and serve him faithfully with all our heart, he is faithful and true. Consider what great things he has done for us! We spoke about what Christ did by humbling himself even to death on the cross, but he continues to work wonders for us throughout the ages. He is actively ruling us as the King of Kings, and is gathering us into his own people, in the words of the apostle Peter, 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; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy. As we look ahead to the future, let us rest in the hope of Christ! Thank you for listening!