

Finding Your Story in HIStory:
The Longing to be Like Everyone Else
1 Samuel 8

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Text Introduction: We are attempting in this series of messages to give an idea of the story of God. Here is a story that begins in creation. Creation gives indication that God created us for relationship. But, as we have learned, our sin has broken that relationship. We do not fully understand what God is doing in history until we see that God pursues us to restore that relationship. So, we have been considering the major mile posts that show us that history. I hope what you are understanding with me is that whether we are talking about Adam and Eve, Abraham, Issac, and Jacob, Moses, Joshua, or the whole nation of Israel, we see a similar cycle of relationship, rebellion, and a pursuit to restore that relationship. Our next major milepost is to see how the nation of Israel came to be governed by a King. For that, we turn this morning to 1 Samuel 8.

Samuel is the leader that serves as a bridge between the time when Israel was ruled by judges and the time when rule would be transferred over to kings.

Text: ¹ When Samuel grew old, he appointed his sons as judges over Israel. ² His firstborn son's name was Joel and his second was Abijah. They were judges in Beer-sheba. ³ However, his sons did not walk in his ways—they turned toward dishonest gain, took bribes, and perverted justice.

⁴ So all the elders of Israel gathered together and went to Samuel at Ramah. ⁵ They said to him, "Look, you are old, and your sons do not follow your example. Therefore, appoint a king to judge us the same as all the other nations have."

⁶ When they said, "Give us a king to judge us," Samuel considered their demand sinful, so he prayed to the LORD. ⁷ But the LORD told him, "Listen to the people and everything they say to you. They have not rejected you; they have rejected Me as their king. ⁸ They are doing the same thing to you that they have done to Me, since the day I brought them out of Egypt until this day, abandoning Me and worshiping other gods. ⁹ Listen to them, but you must solemnly warn them and tell them about the rights of the king who will rule over them."

¹⁰ Samuel told all the LORD's words to the people who were asking him for a king. ¹¹ He said, "These are the rights of the king who will rule over you: He will take your sons and put them to his use in his chariots, on his horses, or running in front of his chariots. ¹² He can appoint them for his use as commanders of thousands or commanders of fifties, to plow his ground or reap his harvest, or to make his weapons of war or the equipment for his chariots. ¹³ He can take your daughters to become perfumers, cooks, and bakers. ¹⁴ He can take your best fields, vineyards, and olive orchards and give them to his servants. ¹⁵ He can take a tenth of your grain and your vineyards and give them to his officials and servants. ¹⁶ He can take your male servants, your female servants, your best young men, and your donkeys and use them for his work. ¹⁷ He can take a tenth of your flocks, and you yourselves can become his servants. ¹⁸ When that day comes, you will cry out because of the king you've chosen for yourselves, but the LORD won't answer you on that day."

¹⁹ The people refused to listen to Samuel. “No!” they said. “We must have a king over us. ²⁰ Then we’ll be like all the other nations: our king will judge us, go out before us, and fight our battles.”

²¹ Samuel listened to all the people’s words and then repeated them to the LORD. ²² “Listen to them,” the LORD told Samuel. “Appoint a king for them.”

Then Samuel told the men of Israel, “Each of you, go back to your city.”

Introduction: “Then we’ll be like all the other nations.” Every generation has a longing to be like everyone else.

- The longing to be like everyone else shows up in what we wear.
- The longing to be like everyone else shows up in music we want to listen to.
- The longing to be like everyone else shows up in how we listen to what we listen to.
- The longing to be like everyone else shows up in the toys our children want.

In each of these generations, *we think we’ve just got to have it*. Then, those things become out of style and useless.

But, at the moment, when everybody else has it or everybody else is doing it, we don’t want to be left out. When this happens to us spiritually, it is a signal of a deeper problem—it signals another form of our rebellion against God. That’s the story of our text today.

A Reminder about the Timeline in God’s Story

Last week, we said that the period of the judges was a dark time. “Everybody did as he saw fit”—the last verse of Judges says. We have the book of Ruth bridging the gap to remind that there is light even in the darkest of times. The beginning of the Book of 1 Samuel reminds us of that dark time. It is in this dark time that people of Israel rise up against Samuel—the prophet of God and judge over Israel. They demand a king.

A Couple of Interesting Observations:

1. Until Saul, the first king, God has been the king of Israel. (Verse 7) Their request for a king is another rejection of God. This rebellion is a continuation of the rebellion already now a pattern. Remember last week when we said, “If you only deal with the consequences of sin and never deal with the cause (root) of sin, you will always deal with the cycle of sin.”

Look at verse 20. Hadn’t God been the God who had gone out before them and fought the battles? All they were asking for (even the judging through God’s anointed judge) had been done for them.

2. God’s Warning—God had warned Israel that the time would come when they would want a king. (Deuteronomy 17:14)

“When you enter the land the Lord your God is giving you, take possession of it, live in it, and say, ‘We want to appoint a king over us like all the nations around us.’”

Lessons from Then that Still Hold True Today:

- ***Be Careful what you long for.***

There is always going to be a slippery slope of being like everyone else. Here is the reality—God did not want them to be like everyone else. He wanted Israel to be a nation that would be set apart so that they might be an example to the rest of the nations. Today, God calls the Church to be separate to be an example to the rest. First Peter 2:9 says, “But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for His possession, so that you may proclaim the praises of the One who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light.” Our problem today is that church usually takes this to either one extreme or the other. We take it to the extreme that we try to be like the world in order to influence the world, but the world influences us. Or, we tend to be ridiculously set apart from the world that we cannot make an impact because we are too weird. God did not call us to be different to be weird; He called us to be different to make a difference. Jesus gave us the best metaphor ever of this principle when He called us to be salt and light. In order to be effective, salt and light have to be in contact to that which is opposite to them.

There is always going to be a slippery slope of ignoring the warnings. That which God warns against, we must be particularly careful. God created us. He knows what is best

- **Be Careful what you long for, *you might just get it.***

Our mind usually conceives a plan to get what our heart longs for. I see two reasons that the people demanded a king. First, they wanted a king to be like the other nations. That was rebellion. But there is another reason. They had reached a point where their judges were ineffective. Why? The environment that they had created for themselves was the kind of environment that corrupted even the judges. In a way they had planned a way to get a king.

- **Be Careful what you long for, you might just get it, *and not like it.***

So, they got a king. Saul was his name. The editorial heading in my Bible says at the top of chapter 13—the chapter that begins to summarize his reign—“Saul’s Failure.” All of those things that God warned them about, they happened.

What then?

Are you here today and you feel like Israel? You have longed for something God didn’t want you to have. You got it. Now, you don’t want it. Is there any hope? Yes! Read 1 Samuel 12:8-15.

⁸ “When Jacob went to Egypt, your ancestors cried out to the LORD, and He sent them Moses and Aaron, who led your ancestors out of Egypt and settled them in this place. ⁹ But they forgot the LORD their God, so He handed them over to Sisera commander of the army of Hazor, to the Philistines, and to the king of Moab. These enemies fought against them. ¹⁰ Then they cried out to the LORD and said, ‘We have sinned, for we abandoned the LORD and worshiped the Baals and the Ashtoreths. Now deliver us from the power of our enemies, and we will serve You.’ ¹¹ So the LORD sent Jerubbaal, Barak, Jephthah, and Samuel. He rescued you from the power of the enemies around you, and you lived securely. ¹² But when you saw that Nahash king of the

Ammonites was coming against you, you said to me, 'No, we must have a king rule over us' — even though the LORD your God is your king.

¹³ "Now here is the king you've chosen, the one you requested. Look, this is the king the LORD has placed over you. ¹⁴ If you fear the LORD, worship and obey Him, and if you don't rebel against the LORD's command, then both you and the king who rules over you will follow the LORD your God. ¹⁵ However, if you disobey the LORD and rebel against His command, the LORD's hand will be against you and against your ancestors.

It always matter what you do next!