



## *Dear Friends,*

We begin a new sermon series in 1 Samuel this Sunday. What could an ancient text like this have to say to twenty-first century people like us? 1 Samuel is, of course, no ordinary text. It is the inspired word of the living God. So, there is much to learn about God and his ways, and about ourselves. Specifically, 1 Samuel addresses the matter of leadership.

God's people, Israel, are a disorganised rabble. They are politically divided. Their leadership is corrupt. There is moral anarchy. Israel's religion is compromised. So, what Israel desperately needs is renewal. They need godly leadership to act with integrity to unite the nation, offer a moral vision and restore true religion.

1 Samuel recounts the emergence of a monarchy in Israel. God appoints a king to lead his people so that they can faithfully fulfil their calling to be God's covenant partner. God has saved Israel from slavery in Egypt to be his "treasured possession" and "a kingdom of priests and a holy nation" (Exodus 19:5-6). God's intention in calling Israel to be his very own people was not for their sake alone. God's purpose in calling Israel was always that they be "a light for the Gentiles, that my salvation may reach to the ends of the earth" (Isaiah 49:6).

1 Samuel has a lot to say about human leadership. But ultimately, it points us to God's true king, Jesus Christ. King Jesus installs God's rule, thereby fulfilling Israel's calling to make God known to the surrounding nations so that they too, can be saved and belong to his people. So, we must read 1 Samuel through the lens of the story of Jesus Christ.

Nonetheless, God continues to exercise his rule in the world via human leaders. God uses pastors, elders and ministry leaders to provide leadership in Christ's church (Ephesians 4:11-13). Christian leadership must take its cue from THE leader, King Jesus. Christian leaders will only ever be faithful and effective if they submit themselves to his leadership, and follow his example of loving and humble service of others (Philippians 2:5-11). We desperately need church leaders who are men and women of godly character and act for the sake of God's kingdom and in the interest of others (1 Peter 5:2-3).

While the focus of 1 Samuel is on leadership, it has much to say to ordinary people like you and me. That's because the concern of 1 Samuel is that God's people be faithful. Specifically, what kind of leaders will we follow? Do we choose leaders because they're the most talented and successful? Or will we choose people with godly character? When the Bible lists the qualifications for eldership in Christ's church, the focus is on character, and less so on competence, charisma or cleverness (1 Timothy 3:1-7; Titus 1:5-9). So, it's important we pray for our church leaders – our pastors, elders, ministry leaders. Pray that they will be men and women who follow Jesus Christ, are of godly character and use their gifts in the service of the Lord and his church.

God Bless  
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