

## Our Sovereign and Merciful God

### 1 Samuel 10:14-26, 11:1-15

<sup>14</sup> Now Saul's uncle asked him and his servant, "Where have you been?"

"Looking for the donkeys," he said. "But when we saw they were not to be found, we went to Samuel."

<sup>15</sup> Saul's uncle said, "Tell me what Samuel said to you."

<sup>16</sup> Saul replied, "He assured us that the donkeys had been found." But he did not tell his uncle what Samuel had said about the kingship.

<sup>17</sup> Samuel summoned the people of Israel to the LORD at Mizpah <sup>18</sup> and said to them, "This is what the LORD, the God of Israel, says: 'I brought Israel up out of Egypt, and I delivered you from the power of Egypt and all the kingdoms that oppressed you.' <sup>19</sup> But you have now rejected your God, who saves you out of all your disasters and calamities. And you have said, 'No, appoint a king over us.' So now present yourselves before the LORD by your tribes and clans."

<sup>20</sup> When Samuel had all Israel come forward by tribes, the tribe of Benjamin was taken by lot. <sup>21</sup> Then he brought forward the tribe of Benjamin, clan by clan, and Matri's clan was taken. Finally Saul son of Kish was taken. But when they looked for him, he was not to be found. <sup>22</sup> So they inquired further of the LORD, "Has the man come here yet?"

And the LORD said, "Yes, he has hidden himself among the supplies."

<sup>23</sup> They ran and brought him out, and as he stood among the people he was a head taller than any of the others. <sup>24</sup> Samuel said to all the people, "Do you see the man the LORD has chosen? There is no one like him among all the people."

Then the people shouted, "Long live the king!"

<sup>25</sup> Samuel explained to the people the rights and duties of kingship. He wrote them down on a scroll and deposited it before the LORD. Then Samuel dismissed the people to go to their own homes.

<sup>26</sup> Saul also went to his home in Gibeah, accompanied by valiant men whose hearts God had touched. <sup>27</sup> But some scoundrels said, "How can this fellow save us?" They despised him and brought him no gifts. But Saul kept silent.

<sup>1</sup> Nahash the Ammonite went up and besieged Jabesh Gilead. And all the men of Jabesh said to him, "Make a treaty with us, and we will be subject to you."

<sup>2</sup> But Nahash the Ammonite replied, "I will make a treaty with you only on the condition that I gouge out the right eye of every one of you and so bring disgrace on all Israel."

<sup>3</sup> The elders of Jabesh said to him, "Give us seven days so we can send messengers throughout Israel; if no one comes to rescue us, we will surrender to you."

<sup>4</sup> When the messengers came to Gibeah of Saul and reported these terms to the people, they all wept aloud. <sup>5</sup> Just then Saul was returning from the fields, behind his oxen, and he asked, "What is wrong with everyone? Why are they weeping?" Then they repeated to him what the men of Jabesh had said.

<sup>6</sup> When Saul heard their words, the Spirit of God came powerfully upon him, and he burned with anger. <sup>7</sup> He took a pair of oxen, cut them into pieces, and sent the pieces by messengers throughout Israel, proclaiming, "This is what will be done to the oxen of anyone who does not follow Saul and Samuel." Then the terror of the LORD fell on the people, and they came out together as one. <sup>8</sup> When Saul mustered them at Bezek, the men of Israel numbered three hundred thousand and those of Judah thirty thousand.

<sup>9</sup> They told the messengers who had come, "Say to the men of Jabesh Gilead, 'By the time the sun is hot tomorrow, you will be rescued.'" When the messengers went and reported this to

*the men of Jabesh, they were elated. <sup>10</sup> They said to the Ammonites, “Tomorrow we will surrender to you, and you can do to us whatever you like.”*

*<sup>11</sup> The next day Saul separated his men into three divisions; during the last watch of the night they broke into the camp of the Ammonites and slaughtered them until the heat of the day. Those who survived were scattered, so that no two of them were left together.*

*<sup>12</sup> The people then said to Samuel, “Who was it that asked, ‘Shall Saul reign over us?’ Turn these men over to us so that we may put them to death.”*

*<sup>13</sup> But Saul said, “No one will be put to death today, for this day the LORD has rescued Israel.”*

*<sup>14</sup> Then Samuel said to the people, “Come, let us go to Gilgal and there renew the kingship.” <sup>15</sup> So all the people went to Gilgal and made Saul king in the presence of the LORD. There they sacrificed fellowship offerings before the LORD, and Saul and all the Israelites held a great celebration.*

## **Recap (1 Samuel 8-10)**

- Israel asked God for a king. Israel was a theocracy, where God was their King. But, Israel wanted to be like the other nations around her, the people thought a king would be able to solve all their problems.
- Although that was not what God has intended, and even after God warns the people of the consequences of having a king (8:11-18), they were too prideful to repent, they insisted they wanted a king.
- So, God granted the demand of the people, and He was still gracious to be involved in choosing a suitable man to lead Israel as king.
- God then orchestrated His plan in bringing Saul to Samuel with a missing donkey, and assured Saul of His calling with confirmation and the anointing to prophesy.
- All of these took place in a private setting between God, Samuel and Saul.
- In chapter 10-11, Saul is anointed as king in the assembly of all the Israelites, and God uses an opportunity to prove Saul’s appointment as king.

## **4 groups of people: Saul, Samuel, the People of Israel & God**

### **1. Saul**

When we hear about Saul, we often hear about the great things that Saul did or the sin that Saul commits. But, in these chapters, we see a Saul that was doubtful of God’s call for him to be the king. Even after the confirmations that God gave to assure him, Saul still had his reservations. During the assembly, he hid himself. He did not want to be king. We would imagine that the person God chose to be the first king of Israel would be confident, competent, and ready to lead His people. Saul was definitely not that person.

However, God did not give up on Saul and find someone else, but God was patient and committed to make Saul the king that He intends Saul to be.

Many of us struggle with God’s calling on our lives because we feel that we are inadequate, we’re not capable, not as committed, not good enough for God or for our calling. We think we must be a certain kind of people in order to be able to serve God. But, there is a process of

becoming the person God calls us to, and God is actively involved in that process of sanctification, moulding us, breaking us, building us.

**1 Samuel 11:6**

*“When Saul heard their words [what the Ammonites planned to do to the people in Jabesh-Gilead], the Spirit of God came powerfully upon him, and he burned with anger.”*

As Saul responds to the sanctification process, he begins to recognize the work of God in his life and in his nation. Soon after, there was an opportunity for Saul to prove his leadership. The city of Jabesh-Gilead was under the attack of the Ammonites, and God puts in Saul’s heart to gather troops to deliver the people of Jabesh-Gilead.

**1 Samuel 11:13**

*Saul said, “No one will be put to death today, for this day the LORD has rescued Israel.”*

Eventually, Saul and his army defeated the Ammonites. The people of Israel became unanimous in recognizing and supporting Saul as their king. But, those who supported Saul from the beginning were vengeful and wanted to put those who were initially in doubt to death. At this point, it wasn’t Samuel who stopped them, but it was Saul who stopped them. Saul did not seek revenge. Saul came to a place where he was confident with God, not in his abilities (or fear of his lack of abilities). He knew that his victory came from God. He gave the glory to God.

That is God’s goal for us; that we know who God is, that we put our confidence and trust in the Lord. When there is victory, we recognize it was God who has helped and delivered us. Similarly, when there are challenges, we also recognize God is there to help and deliver us. We need to come to a place where we realize our calling doesn’t depend on our abilities; it depends on God, and our role is to be obedient towards God and His word.

- How are we responding to the sanctification process of God?
- What are the fears and insecurities that we have in responding to God’s calling?

## **2. Samuel**

When the people first asked for a king, Samuel was upset with the people. But, instead of acting out of his anger, he brought his complaints to the Lord. God told Samuel that the people were rejecting God, not him; and He directed Samuel. Although Samuel disagreed with the people’s choice, Samuel chose to listen to God’s instructions. He understood that his role as a prophet, as God’s messenger was to listen and be obedient to do what God tells him.

In our calling as God’s instruments to be light, salt, city on a hill, we too need to recognize our roles. We live in a world where there is so much wrong that is going on, so much that needs to be “fixed”, so much that breaks our hearts. But, we need to know that we are not here to fix these things. God is the One who fixes, God is the One who changes things, we are here to discern what God says and be faithful to obey. Our role is to point people to the Saviour.

- What is God saying to you in your situations? What are your roles?

### 3. The people of Israel

They asked for a human king.	They disregarded the warning of God about having a king.
God repeatedly reminded them that He was the One who rescued them from Egypt, but they paid no attention.	They were stubborn of their ways. They were prideful to admit their wrongs. They were willing to bear the consequences despite the harsh warnings given to them.
They knew they were set apart by Yahweh to be different and to be the lighthouse that points to Yahweh.	They outrightly admit that they wanted to be like the other nations.
They did not seek God for deliverance for their problems.	They looked at other nations and thought that a human king would save them from their problems.
They were so blinded that they couldn't see the blessing they have in having Yahweh as their king.	They were like the younger son in the parable of the lost son, who foolishly chooses to live apart from the father's presence and protection.

#### Ungrateful

The people of Israel were ungrateful of what God has done for them. Like their ancestors who complained in the desert, they were complaining that they were different from the other nations. God was not enough for them. And after they were given a king, one group of people were still not satisfied; they continued to complain. They continued to be ungrateful. And the other group who accepted Saul as king were no better either. After Saul's victory against the Ammonites, they wanted revenge to kill the first group. Again, there was no gratitude towards what God has done for them.

It is easy to look at these narratives in the Bible, and wonder how foolish these people can be. God rescued them from slavery; God parted the Red Sea; God gave them the Promised Land. What more do they want? What other evidences are they seeking? The truth is all of us are prone to this foolishness. We quickly forget the things that God has done for us. We easily think that we deserve better. The many times that God has rescued, delivered, blessed us become an entitlement for us to demand more. We think that because God has blessed us, we are better than other people. We become ungrateful. We become demanding. We are never satisfied. There is always something to complain. It never ends. All the warnings, all the advice and counsel drop on empty ears. Nothing is ever enough. What we are really doing is we are belittling God and what He does. We have no respect for God. In fact, we become our own gods. This path leads to a disastrous ending.

- How can we learn to be grateful?

We need to reflect and meditate on the Gospel, of the salvation God has bought for us. We need to remember and be grateful of the many rescues and deliverance that God has brought. We need to recognize that God supplies us grace and strength everyday. His mercies are new every morning. We need to truly believe that being in the Father's house is a thousand times better than anywhere else.

## 4. God

### God is Sovereign

God orchestrated everything:

- The miraculous birth of Samuel
- Raising him to be a prophet
- Bringing judgment on the wicked house of Eli
- Knowing Israel wanted a human king
- Bringing Saul to Samuel to be anointed as king
- Assuring and moulding Saul
- Confirming Saul as king in the assembly with casting lots
- Defeating the Ammonites

In a bigger picture, we see how all of these pieces come into place. And at the same time when we look at the details of the picture:

God was choosing a king to lead Israel	At the same time, he was having personal conversations with Samuel and Saul separately.
God reveals His chosen king in the whole assembly of Israel through the casting of lots. (The casting of lots was a common practice in ancient Israel to seek the Lord's direction and guidance.)	God involves the whole nation for such an important matter. God wanted to make sure that everyone takes part in hearing from the Lord. God was also reminding Israel that He is still actively involved, even though there will be a human king.
When the lots were cast on someone who was not present in the assembly, the people started to doubt.	God graciously informs the people the whereabouts of Saul.
After Saul has been anointed king, there were still doubts in the people.	God uses an opportunity to prove to the people that Saul is truly His chosen king to lead His people.
In defeating the Ammonites, God was bringing judgment upon the Ammonites for their cruelty.	At the same time, God was using the opportunity to affirm Saul's kingship and leadership.

These are not random or coincidences. God orchestrated His plans, and He has thoughtfully put things together. He is sovereign, He is just, yet He is a God who cares for His people as a community, and a God who takes time to minister to each of His people individually.

### God is Merciful

It is amazing how merciful God was. He did not reject Israel for rejecting Him. Israel has rejected God repeatedly, and now they outrightly asked for a human king to replace God as their king. God also knew that the kings of Israel (and Judah) would fail, and He warns the people. But, when the people insisted, in His unfathomable mercy, God did not give up on Israel, and still graciously gave them what they asked for. The love that God has for His people is beyond comprehension.

The good news is we are recipients of the same grace and mercy. What God did for Israel, He did the same for us. In His unfathomable love, God gave us His Son, Jesus Christ. Just like Israel, we do not deserve anything. Just like Israel, we have foolishly rejected God repeatedly. But, God gave because God loves.

### Jesus the Messianic King

Israel's king eventually failed them, but Jesus did not fail. What Israel's kings failed to do, Jesus came and fulfilled them. He came as the Messianic King to deliver Israel, and the rest of the world, from spiritual slavery. He led His people, He saved them, He represented God to them, He showed them what it is like to have a relationship with God.

It was not only the kings that have failed, but the whole nation of Israel failed. The people failed. They were called to be different from the other nations, to show the world who Yahweh is; but they became like the world. Jesus fulfilled the destiny of Israel. He chose to be different even when He was persecuted and eventually crucified, He was obedient to the Father, He laid down His life so that all people would be able to know Him as their Saviour and Lord.

This is the God that we worship and serve. He is not an authoritarian monarch who loves to punish us when we make mistakes or rebel against Him. But, in His love, in His mercy, He is slow to anger, He is patient, He is in the business of making us more like His Son, He is interested to mould us into the person He calls us to be, different from the world, set apart, to be a representation of God, to show the world who Jesus is. This is the God we can trust, this is the God we can obey, because He has delivered us from damnation, because He has rescued us again and again, because He loves us, because He is good.

- How can we respond and live in God's sovereignty and mercy?

## **Prayer Items**

- Encountering the Lord in His sovereignty and mercy
- Learn to be grateful; repent of our pride and stubbornness
- Respond to God's calling and sanctification – putting our confidence in the Lord, not on our abilities
- Listen, discern and obey God's word

### **Life Church**

- Wisdom and discernment to make decisions
- Delight in the presence and the word of God
- Transformation and breakthrough
- Those who are going through challenges
- Unity in diversity
- A lighthouse to the community (Sungai Way)
- Represent Christ to the people around us (homes, schools, marketplace)
- Salvation
- Ministries: Life Explorer, Redeeming Roses, Destiny Kids & Teens, Sunday School, Lifeline, Worship, Life Seed, Cell

### **Healing**

- Bro Harold (Connie & Mel's dad)
- Si Yun: chemotherapy; Jayden: physiotherapy

### **Covid-19 Pandemic**

- Healing
- Protection
- Deliverance
- Economy

### **Malaysia**

- Leaders
- Churches
- Unity