



The Setting

Let me set the scene for our next chapter in The Story. Last week Pastor Matt took you through a beautiful interlude, the story of Ruth and Boaz. Amidst all of the violence of the day, there is a beautiful love story of redemption. Chapter 10 picks up at the beginning of the biblical book of 1 Samuel. Before looking there read with me the last verse in the book of Judges. This is the setting.

In those days Israel had no king; all the people did whatever seemed right in their own eyes. Judges 21:25 (NLT)

There is a crisis of leadership and everyone is doing what seems right in their own eyes.

Wow this sounds like today doesn't it? I know you thought I was talking about 2011 in America, but this is the situation 3110 years ago. There is a lack of leadership (a king) and everyone is doing what seems right in their own eyes.

The amazing thing today is not that people are sinning. People always have and always will fall short of the standard. But today people determine for themselves what is right and what is wrong.

A problem in the priesthood.

God set up provisions for leadership amongst the priests. These people were to administer sacrifices on behalf of the people unto God. They were to advise and teach the people the ways of God.

The crisis had arisen because of the sin's of Eli's sons.

Eli seems oblivious to sin's of his own sons, Phinehas and Hophi. The Bible tells us "they were wicked men; they had no regard for the Lord." (1 Samuel 2:12) Their disregard for the Lord evidences itself as they took from the offerings of the Lord. They were involved in immorality with women in the sight of God. And though Eli rebuked his boys they did not change their ways. All the while God was raising up a prophet.

Chapter 10 zooms in on the story of Hannah who prayed for a son.

God would answer the prayer of this woman at the same time he would bring an answer to a leadership crisis in Israel.

"And the boy Samuel continued to grow in stature and in favor with the Lord and with men." 1 Samuel 2:26 (NIV84)

Samuel is a transitional figure in Israel's history.

He is the last of the judges and the first amongst the prophets. Samuel would learn to hear the word of the Lord and proclaim to God's people. I love the account of Samuel learning to recognize the voice of the Lord. (1 Samuel 3) He kept hearing a voice as he was ministering in the tabernacle. When he would hear the voice he would run into Eli and wake him to see what he was wanting. Eventually Eli realized it was God speaking to Samuel and taught him to listen to the voice of the Lord. It makes me wonder, what does God's voice sound like to you? When you first begin to hear the voice of the Lord you might not recognize it as God. But if you open your ears and your heart God will speak to you and through you.

¹⁹ The Lord was with Samuel as he grew up, and he let none of his words fall to the ground. ²⁰ And all Israel from Dan to Beersheba recognized that Samuel was attested as a prophet of the Lord. ²¹ The Lord continued to appear at Shiloh, and there he revealed himself to Samuel through his word. ¹ And Samuel's word came to all Israel. 1 Samuel 3:19–4:1a (NIV84)

The Full Effect

The full effect of the evil of Hophni and Phinehas would bear when the Ark of the Covenant was lost to the Philistines.

The army of Israel was being defeated in battle when they called for the Ark of the Covenant to be brought into battle. The ark was the presence of God in their midst, or so they thought. They were sure that when they would bring the ark it would turn the battle in their favor. They shouted as the ark was brought into battle and yet it had no effect. That day the ark (the presence of God) was lost. Phineas and Hophni were killed in battle. And when Eli heard the ark had been lost he fell over and died. The wife of Phinehas gave birth at that moment, naming her son Ichabod, which means, the glory has departed. She died shortly there after.

The glory of God departs when the Word of God is not honored.

Fresh Word for a New Generation

Samuel would lead the people into battle after battle against the Philistines. He had good success.

When Samuel got older he appointed his sons as judges for Israel.

1 Samuel 8:1–5 (NIV84)

¹ When Samuel grew old, he appointed his sons as judges for Israel. ² The name of his firstborn was Joel and the name of his second was Abijah, and they served at Beersheba. ³ But his sons did not walk in his ways. They turned aside after dishonest gain and accepted bribes and perverted justice. ⁴ So all the elders of Israel gathered together and came to Samuel at Ramah. ⁵ They said to him, "You are old, and your sons do not walk in your ways; now appoint a king to lead us, such as all the other nations have."

There seems to be a major struggle in passing on the ways of the Lord from one generation to the next.

Let me put it this way.

You have to learn the voice of the Lord yourself. God speaks a fresh word to every generation.

Give The People What They Want

The people of Israel had a solution in mind. They wanted a king. They wanted to be like all the other people around them. They wanted a king.

Samuel took this personal. That's what leaders do too often, take things personally. It really isn't about Samuel, it's about God. The people don't recognize they are rejecting the leadership of God in their lives. They would rather have a king than be led by the Word of God.

Even though it was not what God wanted He would give them what they wanted, a king. Now the leadership structure would be that of prophet, priest and king. Jesus would one day come as prophet priest and king.

Things aren't always as they appear.

God would give them a king that would look the part. Saul would be chosen as the first king of Israel. He was "head and shoulders above the rest." (1 Samuel 10: 23-24)

Although Saul was chosen and at first seemed humble, he would prove to be impatient and not willing to obey the word of God. God would have to look elsewhere to find a king after his own heart.

God gave Saul very specific directions to follow.

1 Samuel 15:1–3 (NIV84)

¹ Samuel said to Saul, "I am the one the Lord sent to anoint you king over his people Israel; so listen now to the message from the Lord. ² This is what the Lord Almighty says: 'I will punish the Amalekites for what they did to Israel when they waylaid them as they came up from Egypt. ³ Now go, attack the Amalekites and totally destroy everything that belongs to them. Do not spare them; put to death men and women, children and infants, cattle and sheep, camels and donkeys.' "

Saul did not simply obey. Instead he made judgment on what should be spared.

1 Samuel 15:9–11 (NIV84)

⁹ But Saul and the army spared Agag and the best of the sheep and cattle, the fat calves and lambs—everything that was good. These they were unwilling to destroy completely, but everything that was despised and weak they totally destroyed. ¹⁰ Then

the word of the Lord came to Samuel: ¹¹ “I am grieved that I have made Saul king, because he has turned away from me and has not carried out my instructions.” Samuel was troubled, and he cried out to the Lord all that night.

Samuel goes to confront Saul. When he arrives Saul is out building a monument to himself (vs 12).

He finally catches up to him and asks why Saul disobeyed, but Saul insists that he did obey.

1 Samuel 15:20–21 (NIV84)

²⁰ “But I did obey the Lord,” Saul said. “I went on the mission the Lord assigned me. I completely destroyed the Amalekites and brought back Agag their king. ²¹ The soldiers took sheep and cattle from the plunder, the best of what was devoted to God, in order to sacrifice them to the Lord your God at Gilgal.”

Notice the contradiction. First he says that he destroyed everything. Then he says he saved the good sheep and cattle for sacrifice. And notice who the sacrifice is to be for....”the Lord your God!” Hold on a moment, whose God, Saul? Are you saying that you do not serve the same God as Samuel? Actually he is speaking the truth here. He does not serve the same God as Samuel, he is serving himself.

Look at Samuel’s reply it is so key.

1 Samuel 15:22–23 (NIV84)

²² But Samuel replied: “Does the Lord delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices as much as in obeying the voice of the Lord? To obey is better than sacrifice, and to heed is better than the fat of rams. ²³ For rebellion is like the sin of divination, and arrogance like the evil of idolatry. Because you have rejected the word of the Lord, he has rejected you as king.”

When a person rejects the Word of God they forfeit their divine calling.

Saul was more concerned with what the people thought than what God thought.

1 Samuel 15:24–31 (NIV84)

²⁴ Then Saul said to Samuel, “I have sinned. I violated the Lord’s command and your instructions. I was afraid of the people and so I gave in to them. ²⁵ Now I beg you, forgive my sin and come back with me, so that I may worship the Lord.” ²⁶ But Samuel said to him, “I will not go back with you. You have rejected the word of the Lord, and the Lord has rejected you as king over Israel!” ²⁷ As Samuel turned to leave, Saul caught hold of the hem of his robe, and it tore. ²⁸ Samuel said to him, “The Lord has torn the kingdom of Israel from you today and has given it to one of your neighbors—to one better than you. ²⁹ He who is the Glory of Israel does not lie or change his mind; for he is not a man, that he should change his mind.” ³⁰ Saul replied, “I have sinned. But please honor me before the elders of my people and before Israel; come back with me,

so that I may worship the Lord your God.”³¹ So Samuel went back with Saul, and Saul worshiped the Lord.

A person who is consumed with what people think will never do anything great for God. We must fear God more than we fear people.

The question for us to answer today is: who will lead you? God wants to lead you through His Word. Faith is simply obedience.

Do you know the voice of the Lord?
Are you living in simple obedience?
Who is your king?