

The King Sought - 1 Samuel 9:1-27  
Pastor Michael Engle, Clearcreek Chapel

I wonder if you have ever found yourself asking what God is doing in your life? Ever feel like things are just spinning along in some random sense that you are just unable to figure out? Ever look back on your life and think, wow, I wasted all that time doing this, or that? Hmm. Often in our lives we are asking the wrong question. Questions like, What is God doing? Why is God doing this, or that? When we should be asking, “God, what would you have me to do”? Or, “God, please help me trust you in all the things going on around me”. Because even though things seem to happen at random, and often, at exactly the wrong time from our perspective, God is not surprised and he will, as he always has, work things out for our good and his glory. Remember that as we walk through this ninth chapter of the book of Samuel. Remember that God is sovereign and his ways are often hidden and mysterious to those of us trapped in time and space. *(Prayer)*

The title of this sermon is “A King Sought”. I want you to forget that for a moment. I want you to feel what the characters are feeling as we go along. So don’t think about the end of the story before we get there. Remember, these are real people, just like us, trapped in time and space with no clue what is happening in the bigger picture until God reveals it.

There’s one thing I want you to keep in mind. Remember back in 1 Samuel 8 that the people of Israel had asked for a King and God instructed Samuel to give them what they asked for. Remember what Samuel did at the end of the last chapter right after God told him to give Israel a King. Do you remember what he did? He sent everybody home, right? Yeah, cause that’s what you do when God commands you to find them a King. You send the all home. So, that’s where we will start this evening. Israel wants a King and they have asked their prophet for one. God has given the go ahead to Samuel and Samuel has sent everyone home.

Look down at your Bibles in 1 Samuel chapter nine and verse one, this is what the word of God says,

*1 There was a man of Benjamin whose name was Kish, the son of Abiel, son of Zeror, son of Becorath, son of Aphiah, a Benjaminite, a man of wealth. 2 And he had a son whose name was Saul, a handsome young man. There was not a man among the people of Israel more handsome than he. From his shoulders upward he was taller than any of the people.*

Well there’s an abrupt switch. We were all looking for a king when Samuel sent everyone home and now we are introduced to a rich guy with a good looking son. Okay, or as my kids would say, “Wow, random”. Since we’re here though, let’s look a bit deeper. Our rich guys name is Kish and he is a man of Benjamin. Not only that, but he has a son. Not just a good looking son, he is the best looking man in all of Israel. Not only that, he is tall. A full head taller than anyone else. You can imagine this guy is no fun to be friends with right. Who wants to hang around with the great looking, well built, rich kid? Oh, and side not, his name is Saul and that means “asked for”. Wait what. Yeah, his name is “asked for”. Like, dear God we are “asking for” a King. A tall, dark, rich and handsome one wouldn’t hurt. No, no, forget about that. No one has said anything about a king in these first two verses. This is all very random, right?

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Look down with me at verse three of our text and we'll move on in our story. God's word says this,

*3 Now the donkeys of Kish, Saul's father, were lost. So Kish said to Saul his son, "Take one of the young men with you, and arise, go and look for the donkeys." 4 And he passed through the hill country of Ephraim and passed through the land of Shalishah, but they did not find them. And they passed through the land of Shaalim, but they were not there. Then they passed through the land of Benjamin, but did not find them.*

Um okay, now our story has turned to lost livestock. Donkeys. Donkeys that have, unsurprisingly, wandered off. Beyond that though, we see that our man Saul is an obedient son. His father has given him a task and he has gone out with one of "young men" to look for the donkeys. He doesn't just take a cursory look around the property but appears to make a good go of it and looks around a few places within the hill country of Ephraim.

Let me catch you up on what we know now. Saul is young, rich, handsome, tall, obedient and has "young men" around to do his bidding. Also, when given a task, he attempts to get it done. Oh, and they didn't find the donkeys. Again, random, but we press on.

Look down at verse five. This is what God's word says,

*5 When they came to the land of Zuph, Saul said to his servant who was with him, "Come, let us go back, lest my father cease to care about the donkeys and become anxious about us." 6 But he said to him, "Behold, there is a man of God in this city, and he is a man who is held in honor; all that he says comes true. So now let us go there. Perhaps he can tell us the way we should go."*

We see here again that Saul is a good son. He is concerned more about his father worrying about them than he is about the donkeys. I can totally see any parent feeling as Saul is imagining his father might feel. Then, seemingly out of nowhere, our "young man" with no first name needed, breaks in and starts talking about men of God. Would this be your first thought for finding lost livestock? He doesn't appear to have had any opinion on where they should look or how long they should stay out, but now that Saul wants to turn back, he knows all about a "man of God in this city...who is held in honor; [and] all that he says comes true". Wow! If you are Saul, what do you say? But wait, he's not finished, he thinks this "man of God" might be able to "tell us the way we should go". Note that he doesn't say he knows where the donkeys are. Just that he might tell us the way to go.

This is getting weirder and weirder. First the rich kid, then donkeys and now a "man of God" who says things that come true. If I'm Saul, I'm gonna try to get out of this lickity split. The "young man" here doesn't even know this "man of God's" name. What makes him think he's going to know where the donkeys are? 'Sides, it's late and Dad is probably worried. I'm guessing what's going on in Saul's mind here, but the next few verses lead me to believe I'm not far off.

Look down in verse seven. God's word says this,

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*7 Then Saul said to his servant, "But if we go, what can we bring the man? For the bread in our sacks is gone, and there is no present to bring to the man of God. What do we have?" 8 The servant answered Saul again, "Here, I have with me a quarter of a shekel of silver, and I will give it to the man of God to tell us our way." 9 (Formerly in Israel, when a man went to inquire of God, he said, "Come, let us go to the seer," for today's "prophet" was formerly called a seer.) 10 And Saul said to his servant, "Well said; come, let us go." So they went to the city where the man of God was.*

Saul lays down his only escape plan, but is trumped by a "quarter of a shekel of silver" that suddenly appears in the "young mans" pocket. Random? I'm beginning to wonder, aren't you? And the "young man" keeps saying the "man of God" will tell us our way, but all Saul wants to do is find Dad's donkeys. Why does he keep saying that?

Then we have this interesting interruption in the story from the narrator. Kind of like Waylon Jennings used to do before the commercial breaks for the Dukes of Hazzard. We now know that "Seer" and "Prophet" can be used interchangeably. Thank you Waylon.

Saul has run out of reasons to leave and decides to go with the "young man" to the city where the "man of God was". Hang with me here 'cause the randomness is about to go through the roof. Wait until you see what's next.

Look down at verse eleven. God's word says this,

*11 As they went up the hill to the city, they met young women coming out to draw water and said to them, "Is the seer here?" 12 They answered, "He is; behold, he is just ahead of you. Hurry. He has come just now to the city, because the people have a sacrifice today on the high place. 13 As soon as you enter the city you will find him, before he goes up to the high place to eat. For the people will not eat till he comes, since he must bless the sacrifice; afterward those who are invited will eat. Now go up, for you will meet him immediately."*

Now I know what you're are thinking. These girls were not about to pass up the most handsome, rich, tall bachelor in Israel, but I would like for you to think further. Could it be that they just wanted to stop and say hi to Mr. Eligible? Sure. But remember what happened to Isaac, Jacob and Moses when women came out to draw water. Let's just say that things change dramatically in their lives. (Genesis 24:10–61; 29:1–20; Exodus 2:15–21; cf. John 4:1–42). If we know our Bible we are certainly starting to wonder what's up. But remember, we have the added benefit of the whole story. Saul has no idea what's happening. There's no foreshadowing for our handsome friend.

You might notice that I didn't read all the way through the paragraph. I wanted to save the surprise for last. Look down with me at verse fourteen. God's word says this,

*14 So they went up to the city. As they were entering the city, they saw Samuel coming out toward them on his way up to the high place.*

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What!? You mean all of these seemingly random events have been leading us back to the end of chapter eight all along. Yes! Yes! That's exactly what's happening. Samuel is our "man of God"! He sent everyone home after they asked for a king and the King of the Universe led some donkeys off to get lost in order to lead "asked for" to be the answer for what they "asked for". Ha! you may think your life is a random series of unlinkable events, but you are only seeing it from this side of Heaven. On the other side God has painted the most brilliant picture ever imagined and it all comes together looking like the glorified Christ. You are not on a pointless hunt for donkeys, lead around by a guy who, not so randomly, finds money in his pockets. The God, Sovereign and Wise God over all is leading you where he wishes for your good and his glory! Do you believe that?

But back to our dear Saul who has no idea what's going on, but has just meet the "seer/prophet" Samuel. Oddly, if you ask me, he doesn't seem to have any frame of reference for this man who has been the prophet over Israel since he was a boy.

Look down at verse fifteen where we'll pick up our story. God's word says this,  
*15 Now the day before Saul came, the Lord had revealed to Samuel: 16 "Tomorrow about this time I will send to you a man from the land of Benjamin, and you shall anoint him to be prince over my people Israel. He shall save my people from the hand of the Philistines. For I have seen my people, because their cry has come to me." 17 When Samuel saw Saul, the Lord told him, "Here is the man of whom I spoke to you! He it is who shall restrain my people."*

If you doubted what I said about God being sovereign in our last section, there can be no doubt now. God has given us the great reveal. God has "moved that bus", right! We see now that God had revealed to Samuel that Saul was coming the day before he got there!

Notice a few other things as well. What does God say Samuel will anoint? A prince. A leader of sorts, but not a King. That's interesting. And what is he going to do as Prince. He is going to "save my people from the hand of the Philistines". Who's people? God's people. Most Kings would think of the people as their own. But not these people. God has been saving these people from the beginning and just because he is going to work through this man Saul, doesn't mean that he is not in total control of their salvation. Why he saves them is also worth pausing over. He will save his people through Saul "because their cry has come to me." God is not deaf to his people's cry. He is moved by the cries of his people. If all this talk of sovereignty finds you in a place of great suffering and you are asking, "How could God let this happen to me"? My answer to you is, "I don't know. I'm not God". But here's what I do know, he has given you people to walk through this suffering with you in your church family and he hears the cries of his people. It says so right here. God has also told us, and it's worth being reminded of that it's for your good and his glory. I do not know how that will work itself out and I'm not going to guess, but I know this is true and I'm willing to bet my life on it because I believe that the word of God is true. Do you believe that?

We see as well that God, by his own words, reveals to Samuel that this is the man he was told about yesterday. Samuel can be sure this is the future King. God told him by his word.

Look down at verse eighteen with me. God's word says this,  
*18 Then Saul approached Samuel in the gate and said, "Tell me where is the house of the seer?" 19 Samuel answered Saul, "I am the seer. Go up before me to the high place, for today you shall eat with me, and in the morning I will let you go and will tell you all that is on your mind. 20 As for your donkeys that were lost three days ago, do not set your mind on them, for they have been found.*

Stop there. Saul has found this man that only says things that come true and he immediately invites him to dinner. That's cool. But the next lines has got to be unnerving for our handsome friend, "*in the morning I will let you go*". Huh, am I being held captive. And then this gem, "*and will tell you all that is on your mind.*" BTW, your donkeys aren't lost anymore. Saul has to be thinking, but the donkeys were all that was on my mind. Who is this guy? And if that weren't enough Samuel goes on.

Look down again at the last part of verse 20. God's word says this,  
*And for whom is all that is desirable in Israel? Is it not for you and for all your father's house?" 21 Saul answered, "Am I not a Benjamite, from the least of the tribes of Israel? And is not my clan the humblest of all the clans of the tribe of Benjamin? Why then have you spoken to me in this way?"*

The New Living Translations helps us with the end of verse twenty, it reads this way, "*And I am here to tell you that you and your family are the focus of all Israel's hopes.*" You can see by his response that it's starting to sink in that things are not as they seem on this donkey hunt. We've gone from donkeys, to dinner, to the hope of all Israel. Saul's head has got to be spinning. And it won't stop anytime soon.

Look down at verse twenty-two. God's word says this,  
*22 Then Samuel took Saul and his young man and brought them into the hall and gave them a place at the head of those who had been invited, who were about thirty persons. 23 And Samuel said to the cook, "Bring the portion I gave you, of which I said to you, 'Put it aside.'" 24 So the cook took up the leg and what was on it and set them before Saul. And Samuel said, "See, what was kept is set before you. Eat, because it was kept for you until the hour appointed, that you might eat with the guests."*

Saul was invited to dinner. That's cool. Now he is at the head of the table. He is the guest of honor. He's not just invited, he's the point of the dinner. To make that all the more clear to everyone in attendance Saul gets the choices piece of meat. This is the hour appointed for him. Whoa! Where is Rod Serling. I'm just a Benjamite looking for donkeys. Oh no you're not Saul.

*So Saul ate with Samuel that day. 25 And when they came down from the high place into the city, a bed was spread for Saul on the roof, and he lay down to sleep. 26 Then at the break of dawn Samuel called to Saul on the roof, "Up, that I may send you on your way." So Saul arose, and both he and Samuel went out into the street.*

Who wants to bet Saul didn't sleep a whole lot up on the roof that night. I'll bet he slept about as well as Samuel did the night before he told Eli his family was cursed. Notice as well, there is no hesitation on Saul's part to get up and get on his way. Let's keep moving. We're almost to the end of the chapter.

God's word says this in verse twenty-seven,  
*27 As they were going down to the outskirts of the city, Samuel said to Saul, "Tell the servant to pass on before us, and when he has passed on, stop here yourself for a while, that I may make known to you the word of God."*

The intensity reaches its high-point here. Saul knows Samuel is a man of God, a seer, or prophet, but up to now Samuel hasn't told him what God has been saying. He's just invited him for dinner and told he is the hope of Israel. Which could, if you're Saul, have just been the opinion of Samuel. However, Samuel removes all doubt now. Saul, we need to be alone and I am going to tell you the very words of God. It's one thing to say this whole story looks to be the hand of God at work, it is entirely another to have his actual words. Saul is about to be given the very words of God and his life is going to change!

And like any good story we stop at cliff hanger. Chapter nine, A King Sought, ends with God's words about to be spoken. I guess you will have to come back next week to hear what God said.

## Conclusion

I want to talk with you about three things as we close. The same three things we saw in our story. God's sovereignty, God's King, and God's word.

Yes, the circumstances surrounding the finding of a King for Israel look rather random, but we have to remember that God works through men. In his sovereignty God usually works through the normal circumstances of life to achieve his purposes in this world. Circumstances like whether or not you felt well enough to come to church this evening. Your car starting when you went to get in it. Whether or not you downloaded this sermon to listen to and all the things that had to happen for that to come about. It's rather amazing that you're listening to this at all if you think about it. One moment's inattention in a complete stranger on your way here and you could be in eternity right now. One guy with a shovel and your internet connection could have been down for weeks. But it didn't happen that way. You are here, or you are listening and all of it was planned before time began that it would work out the way it has. God is sovereign over your life...even if you don't believe he exists.

And then there's this king issue we've been talking about all night. Israel wanted one like the nations and I would like to know what kind of king you would have for yourself. My guess from some years of counseling and many years listening to my own heart is that you would like to have a king that looks a lot like the man in the mirror. You would like to have a king who bows to

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your every whim. You would like to have a king that goes before you and paves the way for your success and happiness. I'm I right? You don't have to answer me. I already know. I know not because I'm so smart but because I have the very words of God given to us in the Scriptures. You would like a king who submits to your will at least and at best you would like to usurp his leadership and take the throne yourself.

God's word has something to say about those two things. God's says that you and I have sinned grievously against him. We have in fact attempted take him off his throne and put ourselves in his place, just like Satan was want to do. But in his sovereign plan, at just the right time, he sent a baby into this world, his very own son. Who lived a perfect life according to the very word of God. While we were looking to take over the kingship of our world God had sent the true King, The God/Man, who "grew in wisdom and in stature and in favor with God and all the people." But like ourselves the people hated him. They wanted a king like the Israelites. One who would rule and reign as a warrior. What they got was a servant king, and they falsely accused him, beat him and nailed him to a cross. In their hateful ignorance they yelled as they tortured him, "Hail, king of the Jews" and placed a sign above him on the cross and it read " the King of the Jews". They, and we, like the Israelites in our story, wanted a King, just not the one God had given them. He himself. They were partially right with their sign, this man they killed was The King. Only they had horribly underestimated his position. This was no king of a small people group called the Jews. This was the king of the universe. The alpha and omega, the creator and sustainer of all that is and ever was and there must have been a not-so-small celebration in Hell when they removed his dead body from the cross and laid it in the tomb. But Praise God three days later he arose from that grave in victory over sin and hell itself. A resurrection by which you can be forgiven your attempted coup of his kingdom. Do you see it. Israel wants a king and they will get one, but he will not be the real king. They will have to wait for the real king, the lord Jesus Christ. You do not have the wait. The sovereign Lord of the universe has come to be King over your life and he has told you all you need to know in his word. Cry out to God and he will hear you. He has sent your King and he will welcome you into his Kingdom if you will repent of your sin and believe in His son the Lord Jesus Christ. The long sought after King!