

23RD AUGUST 2020

# FERINTOSH PARISH CHURCH

WORSHIP AT HOME



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*"Hope fills the afflicted soul with such inward joy and consolation, that it can laugh while tears are in the eye, sigh and sing all in a breath; it is called "the rejoicing of hope" (Hebrews 3:6)."*

(William Gurnall)

# HYMN

Rock of Ages, cleft for me,  
Let me hide myself in Thee;  
Let the water and the blood,  
From Thy riven side which flowed,  
Be of sin the double cure,  
Save me from its guilt and power.

Not the labour of my hands  
Can fulfil Thy law's demands;  
Could my zeal no respite know,  
Could my tears forever flow,  
All could never sin erase,  
Thou must save, and save by grace.

Nothing in my hands I bring,  
Simply to Thy cross I cling;  
Naked, come to Thee for dress,  
Helpless, look to Thee for grace:  
Foul, I to the fountain fly,  
Wash me, Saviour, or I die.

# PRAYER

*Gracious God and Father, thank you for the joy of your presence with us. We praise you that you are a God of joy and of infinite grace, a Father to your children. We praise you that you have given up your own Son for us on the cross that all the privileges of your grace might be ours this day. So, make us holy through your truth, your Word is truth. And this we pray for Jesus Christ our Saviour's sake. Amen.*



# LORD'S PRAYER

*Our Father, who art in heaven,  
hallowed be thy Name,  
thy kingdom come,  
thy will be done,  
on earth as it is in heaven.  
Give us this day our daily bread.  
And forgive us our debts,  
as we forgive our debtors  
And lead us not into temptation,  
but deliver us from evil.  
For thine is the kingdom,  
and the power, and the glory,  
for ever and ever. Amen.*

## SCRIPTURE READING

### 1 SAMUEL 8: 1 - 22

#### (NKJV)

- 1 Now it came to pass when Samuel was old that he made his sons judges over Israel.
- 2 The name of his firstborn was Joel, and the name of his second, Abijah; they were judges in Beersheba.
- 3 But his sons did not walk in his ways; they turned aside after dishonest gain, took bribes, and perverted justice.
- 4 Then all the elders of Israel gathered together and came to Samuel at Ramah,
- 5 and said to him, "Look, you are old, and your sons do not walk in your ways. Now make us a king to judge us like all the nations."
- 6 But the thing displeased Samuel when they said, "Give us a king to judge us." So Samuel prayed to the Lord.
- 7 And the Lord said to Samuel, "Heed the voice of the people in all that they say to you; for they have not rejected you, but they have rejected Me, that I should not reign over them.
- 8 According to all the works which they have done since the day that I brought them up out of Egypt, even to this day—with which they have forsaken Me and served other gods—so they are doing to you also.
- 9 Now therefore, heed their voice. However, you shall solemnly forewarn them, and show them the behaviour of the king who will reign over them."

# SERMON

10 So Samuel told all the words of the Lord to the people who asked him for a king.

11 And he said, "This will be the behaviour of the king who will reign over you: He will take your sons and appoint them for his own chariots and to be his horsemen, and some will run before his chariots.

12 He will appoint captains over his thousands and captains over his fifties, will set some to plough his ground and reap his harvest, and some to make his weapons of war and equipment for his chariots.

13 He will take your daughters to be perfumers, cooks, and bakers.

14 And he will take the best of your fields, your vineyards, and your olive groves, and give them to his servants.

15 He will take a tenth of your grain and your vintage, and give it to his officers and servants.

16 And he will take your male servants, your female servants, your finest [a]young men, and your donkeys, and put them to his work.

17 He will take a tenth of your sheep. And you will be his servants.

18 And you will cry out in that day because of your king whom you have chosen for yourselves, and the Lord will not hear you in that day."

19 Nevertheless the people refused to obey the voice of Samuel; and they said, "No, but we will have a king over us,

20 that we also may be like all the nations, and that our king may judge us and go out before us and fight our battles."

21 And Samuel heard all the words of the people, and he repeated them in the hearing of the Lord.


22 So the Lord said to Samuel, "Heed their voice, and make them a king." And Samuel said to the men of Israel, "Every man go to his city."

The period of history covered by the books of Judges and Samuel were dominated by leadership crises. The book of Judges laments, "In those days there was no king in Israel. Everyone did what was right in his own eyes" (Jud. 17:6; 21:25). God raised up judges to lead, and the people tried to make at least one of them king. Gideon rejected this offer, reminding them of the privilege of having the Lord as their king: "I will not rule over you, and my son will not rule over you; the LORD will rule over you" (Jud. 8:23). But the kingship of the invisible God strained the peoples' faith, so through Samuel God provided a human kingship where He established His sovereign rule over His people.

"The thing displeased Samuel when they said, 'Give us a king to judge us,'" but instead of acting in anger, "Samuel prayed to the LORD" (1 Sam. 8:6). He provides an example of wisdom, reminding us to respond to every challenge or need by first turning to God in prayer.

The Lord's answer was somewhat surprising, especially since He did not seem as indignant as His prophet. God had three replies for Samuel. First, He ministered to His servant by assuring him that the fault did not lie with him. Samuel had not failed Israel and the people were not rejecting him: "they have not rejected you, but they have rejected me from being king over them" (1 Sam. 8:7). In fact, this was merely the latest in a long history of Israel rejecting God's rule: "According to all the deeds that they have done, from the day I brought them up out of Egypt even to this day, forsaking me and serving other gods, so they are also doing to you" (1 Sam. 8:8). From the moment Israel stepped free from the bondage of Egypt, the Lord had been their king. Unbelief and rebellion were recurrent problems, so Samuel should not think himself the cause.

Secondly, God knew how to answer the elders: by agreeing to their request. God frequently responds this way to rebellion among His people: demanding a substitute for God, the Lord will allow them to experience worldly and unbelieving rule. This is not because God was thwarted by the elders' obstinacy or that God found Himself at His wits end. Rather, God intended a humbling lesson that might result in future repentance and restoration.



This reminds us that we should not always be encouraged when God seems to answer our prayers. Here, God's relenting was a sign not of His blessing but His chastisement. The more we realise how sinful our hearts are and how frequently our thoughts and desires run awry, the more we will humbly desire God to overrule in our prayers so that His wisdom will overcome our folly, and His holiness will correct our sin.

God's third response was to command Samuel: "Now then, obey their voice; only you shall solemnly warn them and show them the ways of the king who shall reign over them" (1 Sam. 8:9). This was remarkably patient of God to provide His obstinate people with a detailed warning of what they were demanding. Accordingly, "Samuel told all the words of the LORD to the people who were asking for a king from him" (1 Sam. 8:10).

Undoubtedly, Israel wanted to have their cake and eat it too. They were willing to observe God's religion only if they had a secular government; they wanted a faith of private piety, not one of public reliance. Likewise, the trappings of religion are permitted by secular governments today, enlisting God's endorsement of man's sovereign rule, so long as God agrees not to have any say in our affairs. But God does not accommodate such a scheme. He told the Israelite elders that if they wanted a human king, they would have to rely on him without help from the Lord: "in that day you will cry out because of your king, whom you have chosen for yourselves, but the LORD will not answer you in that day." (1 Sam. 8:18).

This scenario played out within two generations, as Israel experienced the very oppression Samuel had predicted under King David's son and successor, King Solomon. Solomon spent seven years building the Lord's temple (1 Ki. 6:38), but he took thirteen years building an even more spectacular palace for himself (1 Ki. 136 7:1). To accomplish this, Solomon pressed much of Israel into forced labour (1 Ki. 5:13-18). Solomon took and they served, and when Solomon died the elders appealed to his son, Rehoboam, for leniency. They pled, "Your father made our yoke heavy. Now therefore lighten the hard service... and we will serve you" (1 Ki. 12:4). Rehoboam responded as any king would, refusing to begin his reign with a sign of weakness.

He boasted, "My little finger is thicker than my father's thighs. And now, whereas my father laid on you a heavy yoke, I will add to your yoke" (1 Ki. 12:10-11). In this way, God gave His people over to the misery of their own unbelieving folly, and their cries for relief went unanswered. "No!" they had insisted, as they rejected Samuel's warning. "There shall be a king over us, that we also may be like all the nations, and that our king may judge us and go out before us and fight our battles" (1 Sam. 8:19-20). The Lord relented, sealing on them His judgment: "Obey their voice and make them a king." So, Samuel dismissed the elders, saying, "Go every man to his city" (1 Sam. 8:22).

This episode reveals two related aspects of faith in the Lord and, correspondingly, two related forces that act against our faith. The first aspect of our faith is our calling to be exclusively devoted to the Lord. Moses commanded, "You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might" (Dt. 6:5). Jesus referred to this as "the great and first commandment" (Mt. 22:37-38). At the heart of the covenant relationship was this obligation of mutual devotion: God has shown His love to you, now love and honour Him in all things. Thus, the demand for a king was an affront to the very heart of their covenant relationship with God.

The second great obligation of the old covenant was Israel's calling to holiness: "For you are a people holy to the LORD your God, and the LORD has chosen you to be a people for his treasured possession, out of all the peoples who are on the face of the earth" (Dt. 14:2). This meant that they were to be different from the nations in practically every way: their way of thinking, their patterns of behaviour, their goals, and their methods were to be godly and not worldly. By demanding a king "like all the nations" (1 Sam. 8:5), the Israelite elders rejected God's call for them to be holy and set apart from the unbelieving world.

Despite Samuel's negative opinion and God's own condemnation of the elders' motives, it was not strictly contrary to God's Word for Israel to have a human king. The sinfulness of the elders' attitude is obvious, yet their idea for a king may well have come from God's Word. For instance, God had told Abraham, "I will make you into nations, and kings shall come from you" (Gen. 17:6). Moreover, Moses' final directions included God's instructions for future kings in Israel.



We know that God saw the elders' demand as a rejection of Himself and a plea for worldliness (vv. 7-8), yet earlier He had anticipated this very event: "When you come to the land that the LORD your God is giving you, and you possess it and dwell in it and then say, 'I will set a king over me, like all the nations that are around me,' you may indeed set a king over you" (Dt. 17:14-15). This allowance was designed to promote godliness, not worldliness in Israel's kings.

God's true plan for reigning over His people involved a man who would reign as king forever. Indeed, the last tasks of Samuel would be to anoint young David and guide him in his struggling first steps. But David was but a forerunner of the true and great king, who would arise from his own line. God promised David: "I will raise up your offspring after you, who shall come from your body, and I will establish his kingdom... Your throne shall be established forever" (2 Sam. 7:12, 16). The very heart of the Old Testament is the promise of this saving Shepherd-King, who would fulfil the prophecies by being born both son of David and Son of God. Isaiah sang, "For to us a child is born, to us a son is given; and the government shall be upon his shoulder, and his name shall be called Wonderful Counsellor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace" (Isa. 9:6). Micah foretold: "But you, O Bethlehem Ephrathah, who are too little to be among the clans of Judah, from you shall come forth for me one who is to be ruler in Israel, whose origin is from of old, from ancient days" (Mic. 5:2-3). These prophecies were fulfilled, and our King provided, in the coming of Jesus Christ, who was born of woman and also "Son of the Most High... the Son of God" (Lk. 1:32, 35).

What a contrast there is between Jesus and the kings described by Samuel! Jesus is not a king who takes, but a king who gives. He said, "The Son of Man came not to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many" (Mt. 28:20). He gave His own life on the cross, dying in our place, that we might be freed from the guilt of our sin. He is the king "who loves us and has freed us from our sins by his blood" (Rev. 1:5).

And when our King Jesus stood before the powers of this age, with the wounds of their scourges deep in His flesh, He stated clearly to Pontius Pilate: "My kingdom is not of this world" (Jn. 18:36). Jesus Christ is a king not "like the nations," a king who serves the least in His kingdom and gives eternal life to those who love and trust in Him. If we will take Him for our king - this man who is also God - then we will enter with Him into the glorious realm long prepared by His Father, and He will share with us the marvels and blessings of God, treasures that are not of this world but that will endure forever in the Promised Land of the age that is to come.

## HYMN

Amazing grace! how sweet the sound,  
That saved a wretch; like me!  
I once was lost, but now am found,  
Was blind, but now I see.

'Twas grace that taught my heart to fear,  
And grace my fears relieved;  
How precious did that grace appear  
The hour I first believed!

The Lord hath promised good to me,  
His word my hope secures;  
He will my shield and portion be  
As long as life endures.

When we've been there ten thousand years,  
Bright shining as the sun,  
We've no less days to sing God's praise  
Than when we first begun.

## PRAYER

*Heavenly Father, bring us, we pray, by our Lord Jesus to enjoy the riches of our inheritance and in every dark hour to cry "Abba! Father!" that we may know that we really are the sons and daughters of God. This we pray in Jesus' name. Amen.*

## BENEDICTION

***And now may the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the Love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with us all this day and forevermore, Amen.***



## WORSHIP UPDATE

It is now 5 months since we last gathered for worship at Ferintosh Parish Church. So much has taken place since then and the world we ere used to will be different from now on.

Given the necessary restrictions imposed on us all and the limits on numbers able to gather it is not possible for us to meet as a congregation and this position is likely to last for a number of months yet.

In order that when we are able to meet as a congregation we do so safely and in a controlled manner a small group of our Kirk Session Elders are working on plans and risk assessments for the use of our church and hall. This work is a requirement of Ross Presbytery in order that any use of a church building has been given proper consideration. These plans and assessments will be important to have for the point where the Government and Presbytery consider it possible for congregations to meet subject to certain limits and behaviour. The group will present their plan to the Kirk Session and then it will be implemented or amended as required by the current advice at that time.

In the meantime please continue to support those around you and share the Worship at Home with friends or neighbours.