

30TH AUGUST 2020

FERINTOSH PARISH CHURCH

WORSHIP AT HOME



www.ferintoshparishchurch.org.uk

"The whole life of a Christian should be nothing but praises
to God."

(Richard Sibbes)

HYMN

1 A wonderful Saviour is Jesus my Lord,
a wonderful Saviour to me;
He hideth my soul in the cleft of the rock,
where rivers of pleasure I see.

Refrain:

He hideth my soul in the cleft of the rock
that shadows a dry, thirsty land;
He hideth my life in the depths of His love,
and covers me there with His hand,
and covers me there with His hand.

2 A wonderful Saviour is Jesus my Lord,
He taketh my burden away;
He holdeth me up, and I shall not be moved,
He giveth me strength as my day. [Refrain]

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
who trespass against us.
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 9:1-10:16 (NKJV)

Saul Chosen to Be King

9 There was a man of Benjamin whose name was Kish the son of Abiel, the son of Zeror, the son of Bechorath, the son of Aphiah, a Benjamite, a mighty man of power.

2 And he had a choice and handsome son whose name was Saul. There was not a more handsome person than he among the children of Israel. From his shoulders upward he was taller than any of the people.

3 Now the donkeys of Kish, Saul's father, were lost. And Kish said to his son Saul, "Please take one of the servants with you, and arise, go and look for the donkeys."

4 So he passed through the mountains of Ephraim and through the land of Shalisha, but they did not find them. Then they passed through the land of Shaalim, and they were not there. Then he passed through the land of the Benjamites, but they did not find them.

5 When they had come to the land of Zuph, Saul said to his servant who was with him, "Come, let us return, lest my father cease caring about the donkeys and become worried about us."

6 And he said to him, "Look now, there is in this city a man of God, and he is an honorable man; all that he says surely comes to pass. So let us go there; perhaps he can show us the way that we should go."

7 Then Saul said to his servant, "But look, if we go, what shall we bring the man? For the bread in our vessels is all gone, and there is no present to bring to the man of God. What do we have?"

8 And the servant answered Saul again and said, "Look, I have here at hand one-fourth of a shekel of silver. I will give that to the man of God, to tell us our way."

9 (Formerly in Israel, when a man went to inquire of God, he spoke thus: "Come, let us go to the seer"; for he who is now called a prophet was formerly called a seer.)

10 Then Saul said to his servant, "Well said; come, let us go." So they went to the city where the man of God was.

11 As they went up the hill to the city, they met some young women going out to draw water, and said to them, "Is the seer here?"

12 And they answered them and said, "Yes, there he is, just ahead of you. Hurry now; for today he came to this city, because there is a sacrifice of the people today on the high place.

13 As soon as you come into the city, you will surely find him before he goes up to the high place to eat. For the people will not eat until he comes, because he must bless the sacrifice; afterward those who are invited will eat. Now therefore, go up, for about this time you will find him."

14 So they went up to the city. As they were coming into the city, there was Samuel, coming out toward them on his way up to the high place.

15 Now the Lord had told Samuel in his ear the day before Saul came, saying,

16 "Tomorrow about this time I will send you a man from the land of Benjamin, and you shall anoint him commander over My people Israel, that he may save My people from the hand of the Philistines; for I have looked upon My people, because their cry has come to Me."

17 So when Samuel saw Saul, the Lord said to him, "There he is, the man of whom I spoke to you. This one shall reign over My people."

18 Then Saul drew near to Samuel in the gate, and said, "Please tell me, where is the seer's house?"

19 Samuel answered Saul and said, "I am the seer. Go up before me to the high place, for you shall eat with me today; and tomorrow I will let you go and will tell you all that is in your heart.

20 But as for your donkeys that were lost three days ago, do not be anxious about them, for they have been found. And on whom is all the desire of Israel? Is it not on you and on all your father's house?"

21 And Saul answered and said, "Am I not a Benjamite, of the smallest of the tribes of Israel, and my family the least of all the families of the tribe of Benjamin? Why then do you speak like this to me?"

22 Now Samuel took Saul and his servant and brought them into the hall, and had them sit in the place of honour among those who were invited; there were about thirty persons.

23 And Samuel said to the cook, "Bring the portion which I gave you, of which I said to you, 'Set it apart.' "

24 So the cook took up the thigh with its upper part and set it before Saul. And Samuel said, "Here it is, what was kept back. It was set apart for you. Eat; for until this time it has been kept for you, since I said I invited the people." So Saul ate with Samuel that day.

25 When they had come down from the high place into the city, Samuel spoke with Saul on the top of the house.

26 They arose early; and it was about the dawning of the day that Samuel called to Saul on the top of the house, saying, "Get up, that I may send you on your way." And Saul arose, and both of them went outside, he and Samuel.

Saul Anointed King

27 As they were going down to the outskirts of the city, Samuel said to Saul, "Tell the servant to go on ahead of us." And he went on. "But you stand here awhile, that I may announce to you the word of God."

SERMON

The opening words of 1 Samuel 9 indicate that a new section of the book has been reached. When we read, "There was a man of Benjamin whose name was Kish" (1 Sam. 9:1), we recall the opening words of chapter 1: "There was a certain man of Ramathaim-zophim" (1 Sam. 1:1). The first section of 1 Samuel (chapters 1-8) relates the rise and rule of Samuel as Israel's judge, ending with the elders' demand for "a king... like the nations" (1 Sam. 8:5). Chapter 9 begins a new section (chapters 9-31) by presenting this king, whose entry parallels our earlier introduction to Samuel.

This reminds us that the books of Samuel deal with the question of leadership for God's people. The elders demanded a different kind of leadership than what God had given through the judges - men called forth by God as need arose. Instead, they desired the kind of hereditary kingship the other nations possessed: "There shall be a king over us, that we also may be like all the nations" (1 Sam. 8:19- 20). Samuel warned that such a king would take all that they had and reduce them to the status of slaves. But when the elders insisted, the Lord instructed Samuel to "obey their voice and make them a king" (1 Sam. 8:22). Samuel responded by sending the elders home until God

should reveal this king. In chapter 9, God provides Saul the son of Kish, through whom Israel will learn their folly in demanding to be "like the nations."

The first thing we learn about Saul is his lineage: "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" (1 Sam. 9:1). This is not a distinguished family tree - none of these names hold any distinction in the Bible - although Saul's father possessed a degree of prominence and wealth. Also, Benjamin was the smallest of Israel's tribes, its namesake being the last of Jacob's twelve sons.


The name Saul means "asked for." This corresponds to the elders' request for a king. Saul was, in fact, exactly what Israel had asked for: the kind of person admired according to worldly standards. The world admires someone who looks and acts like a leader, and Saul was "a handsome young man." Indeed, "there was not a man among the people of Israel more handsome than he" (1 Sam. 9:2). The word translated as "handsome" is simply the word "good". The point is that Saul made a very good impression, both in his appearance and bearing. Ralph Davis quips, "People would have voted him Mr. Israel had there been such a contest." In a world that values physical stature, Saul was something of a giant: "From his shoulders upward [Saul] was taller than any of the people" (1 Sam. 9:2). The fact that Saul is the only Israelite identified in the Bible for his height shares how physical stature was always a mark of Israel's enemies (cf. Num. 13:33; Dt. 1:28; 2:10; 9:2; 1 Sam. 17:4) and amplifies the impression that Saul is precisely the kind of king who would be chosen "by the nations."

We should notice that three times in his message to Samuel, the Lord refers to Israel as "my people." Saul will be prince "over my people Israel;" Saul will "save my people," because "I have seen my people, because their cry has come to me" (1 Sam. 9:16). This shows that however rebellious His people might be, God had no intention of relinquishing His ownership of or His love for them. Later, Samuel refers to Israel as the Lord's "heritage" (1 Sam. 10:1).

This expresses the permanency of God's ownership of Israel, since a heritage is "an indisputable possession that cannot be transferred to another." The people would get their king, but they would never replace God with Saul or any other human ruler. What an undeserved blessing it was for Israel - as it is for the Church and for Christians today - to be named the heritage of the Lord, held in God's love by unwavering, sovereign grace.

Saul knew nothing of God's message, nor did he know who Samuel was. But Samuel knew him, and he responded to Saul's greeting by summoning the young man to come with him to the sacrifice. First, Samuel informed Saul not to worry about the donkeys that were missing because they had been found. Samuel then alluded to Saul's destiny. "For whom is all that is desirable in Israel?" he asked. "Is it not for you and for all your father's house" (1 Sam. 9:20). This likely refers to the plea of the elders for an impressive man to be king. Saul was puzzled, given his humble origins. He answered: "Am I not a Benjaminite, 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 had you spoken to me in this way?" (1 Sam. 9:21).

Israel's elders had demanded a worldly king and God sent Saul as His answer. Saul was the Messiah (i.e. 'anointed one') and king for unbelieving Israel, and he would bring relief from the heavy Philistine hand. To this end, God sent His Spirit to equip Saul for the task ahead. 1 Samuel 10:9 says that as Saul departed from Samuel, "God gave him another heart." Then, when Saul encountered the band of prophets at Gibeah, "the Spirit of God rushed upon him, and he prophesied among them" (1 Sam. 10:10). Those who previously knew Saul were surprised. They marvelled, "What has come over the son of Kish? Is Saul among the prophets?" (1 Sam. 10:11). This saying became a local proverb, meaning roughly the same as our expression, "Wonders never cease!" One man mocked Saul's new association, asking, "And who is their father?" (1 Sam. 10:12), probably alluding to the fact that Saul did not come from a family that typically produced God's prophets. At first reading, all this might encourage us to conclude that God had sent a true Messiah to lead His people into a golden era of faith and spiritual power.



The problem with this view is seen in the final verses of this passage, which relate Saul's subsequent actions. According to the Bible, the way to evaluate an alleged spiritual rebirth is to observe the lifestyle that follows. Ezekiel foretold that God "will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh" (Eze. 36:26). Is this what had happened to Saul: a true spiritual transformation? According to Ezekiel, God gives the new heart of the rebirth for a purpose: "I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes and be careful to obey my rules" (Eze. 36:27). So, did Saul's new heart result in a new zeal to serve God and obey His Word?

The answer is No! After his brief flirtation with the prophets, Saul went home. "Where did you go?" his uncle inquired (1 Sam. 10:14). Samuel replied by saying nothing about Samuel's anointing or his experience with the prophets, noting only that he could not find the donkeys. Saul did not tell anyone about his receipt of the Holy Spirit, nor did he lift a finger against the Philistines. This indicates that whatever else happened to him, Saul did not receive eternal life or enter a true saving relationship with the Lord, for the simple reason that he showed no inclination to obey God's Word.

I wonder if Jesus had Saul in mind when he taught about the necessity of a faith that obeys God's Word. Our good works are not the cause of our salvation, but works are a necessary consequence of true and saving faith. Jesus taught that "not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven." This states that a person whom Christ has saved inevitably seeks to do God's will. Some objected to this, using the very argument that Saul might have offered: "Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and cast out demons in your name, and do many mighty works in your name?" Jesus replied, "And then will I declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from me, you workers of lawlessness'" (Mt. 7:21-23). The evidence of salvation is not given by dramatic experiences, feelings, or even great deeds, especially when there are no signs of repentance from a life of sin. Instead, the people who have been savingly known by Christ

are those whose faith trusts in His Word and whose lives are marked by obedience to God's will and in turning from iniquity.

Israel's elders had asked for a worldly king and God sent Saul as his literal answer. Saul was the Messiah (i.e. 'anointed one') and king for unbelieving Israel. But through the bitter experiences that would follow, many among God's people would cry for a true king who does God's will and not the will of the world. In time, God would provide for them a king and Messiah, and His coming would be in stark contrast to the coming of Saul.

The day that God provided His true king to Israel is remembered as Palm Sunday, when Jesus rode into Jerusalem amidst the cries of "Hosanna!" (meaning, "save now!"). It is striking that while Saul came to Ramah, Israel's chief worship centre at that time, he came in a way that is exactly opposite to Jesus' coming to Jerusalem. Jesus came riding on a donkey, Israel's royal symbol of one who brings peace. Saul arrived as one who had been unable to find his donkeys. For all his impressive qualifications, Saul simply was not able to be a true king for God's people. While Saul came to Israel with a fleshly impressiveness that masked his incompetence, Jesus appeared in a humility that cloaked His divine majesty and power.

The more foundational difference between Saul and Jesus was Saul's disinterest in righteousness before God. This is the distinguishing feature of worldly kings and empires: a concern only for the pragmatic means of earthly success, with little or no thought to what God desires or thinks. All through Saul's reign he will stumble over God's commands, finding his own will more suitable to his perceived needs. In the greatest contrast, Jesus is the king who perfectly obeys God's Word and is filled with a passion for righteousness. Jesus could honestly say, "My food is to do the will of him who sent me and to accomplish his work" (John. 4:34). Saul had a fleeting empowerment from God's Spirit. But Jesus, as God's true Son, was fully and constantly animated by the Spirit of God. "He who sent me is with me," Jesus declared. "He has not left me alone, for I always do the things that are pleasing to him" (John. 8:29).

It is His perfect, personal righteousness that qualified Jesus to ride the royal donkey of peace into Jerusalem. Zechariah prophesied of Him, "Behold, your king is coming to you; righteous and having salvation is he, humble and mounted on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey" (Zech. 9:9). Hebrews 1:8-9 says of Him, "The sceptre of uprightness is the sceptre of your kingdom. You have loved righteousness and hated wickedness; therefore God, your God, has anointed you with the oil of gladness beyond your companions." Jesus is the true king sent by God to establish righteousness on earth, and in that righteousness to give eternal peace to those who hail Him as Saviour and Lord. Jesus our King gave His life to pay the penalty for our sins, and the Spirit He sends empowers believers to obey God's will as declared in His Word. In the righteousness Jesus gives – forgiveness for our sins and power to live for God – we find the peace of God. Of His reign it is said: "He shall stand and shepherd his flock in the strength of the Lord, in the majesty of the Lord his God. And they shall dwell secure... And he shall be their peace" (Mic. 5:4-5).

HYMN

1 Crown him with many crowns,
the Lamb upon his throne.
Hark! how the heavenly anthem drowns
all music but its own.
Awake, my soul, and sing
of him who died for thee,
and hail him as thy matchless king
through all eternity.

2 Crown him the Lord of life,
who triumphed o'er the grave,
and rose victorious in the strife
for those he came to save;
his glories now we sing
who died and rose on high,
who died eternal life to bring,
and lives that death may die.

3 Crown him the Lord of love;
behold his hands and side,
rich wounds, yet visible above,
in beauty glorified;
no angels in the sky
can fully bear that sight,
but downward bends their burning eye
at mysteries so bright.



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 over 5 months since we last gathered for worship at Ferintosh Parish Church. So much has taken place since then and the world we were 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.