

6TH SEPTEMBER 2020

FERINTOSH PARISH CHURCH

WORSHIP AT HOME



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"Just as Christian came up to the Cross, his burden loosed from off his shoulders, fell from off his back, and began to tumble down the hill, and so it continued to do till it came to the mouth of the sepulchre. There it fell in, and I saw it no more!"

(John Bunyan, The Pilgrim's Progress)

HYMN

O Christ, He is the fountain,
The deep, sweet well of life:
Its living streams I've tasted
Which save from grief and strife.
And to an ocean fulness,
His mercy doth expand;
His grace is all-sufficient
As by His wisdom planned.

O I am my Beloved's,
And my Beloved's mine;
He brings a poor vile sinner
Into His house of wine!
I stand upon His merit;
I know no other stand.
I'm hidden in His presence
And held by His own hand.

The Bride eyes not her garment,
But her dear Bridegroom's face;
I will not gaze at glory,
But on my King of grace:
Not at the crown He giveth,
But on His pierced hand;
The Lamb is all the glory,
And my eternal stand!

PRAYER

Father in heaven, we thank you that Christ is the all sufficient Saviour and His righteousness is an all sufficient righteousness. Lord, we ask in Jesus' precious name that you would give us sight to see the light of Christ. Bless your Word, oh Lord, we pray. Keep Your hand upon us all and let the beauty of the Lord our God be upon us. We pray that Your grace and mercy and peace will be the abiding portion of all Your people both this day and evermore. We ask in Jesus name, 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 10:17-27 (NKJV)

17 Then Samuel called the people together to the Lord at Mizpah,

18 and said to the children of Israel, "Thus says the Lord God of Israel: 'I brought up Israel out of Egypt, and delivered you from the hand of the Egyptians and from the hand of all kingdoms and from those who oppressed you.'

19 But you have today rejected your God, who Himself saved you from all your adversities and your tribulations; and you have said to Him, 'No, set a king over us!' Now therefore, present yourselves before the Lord by your tribes and by your clans."

20 And when Samuel had caused all the tribes of Israel to come near, the tribe of Benjamin was chosen.

21 When he had caused the tribe of Benjamin to come near by their families, the family of Matri was chosen. And Saul the son of Kish was chosen. But when they sought him, he could not be found.

22 Therefore they inquired of the Lord further, "Has the man come here yet?" And the Lord answered, "There he is, hidden among the equipment."

23 So they ran and brought him from there; and when he stood among the people, he was taller than any of the people from his shoulders upward.

24 And Samuel said to all the people, "Do you see him whom the Lord has chosen, that there is no one like him among all the people?" So all the people shouted and said, "Long live the king!"

25 Then Samuel explained to the people the behaviour of royalty, and wrote it in a book and laid it up before the Lord. And Samuel sent all the people away, every man to his house.

26 And Saul also went home to Gibeah; and valiant men went with him, whose hearts God had touched.

27 But some rebels said, "How can this man save us?" So they despised him, and brought him no presents. But he held his peace.

SERMON

The new king has been chosen for Israel but there was an immediate problem: “when they sought [Saul], he could not be found” (1 Sam. 10:21). We can imagine the scene: “And finally, God’s choice to be king of Israel, Saul the son of Kish! I said, ‘Saul the son of Kish!’ Has anyone seen Saul the son of Kish?” The answer was that “when they sought him, he could not be found” (1 Sam. 10:21). Where was Saul? Saul knew he was going to be chosen, having received advance notice through his anointing, which was then confirmed through three divinely revealed signs. So, shouldn’t Saul be standing by for his grand entrance onto history’s stage? Instead, Saul was hiding under the baggage!

So, the people ran to the baggage, found Saul and hauled him out. We read, “When he stood among the people, he was taller than any of the people from his shoulders upward” (1 Sam. 10:23). If Samuel had worn a smug look of irony, we could not blame him. “There is the man you have sought, the man chosen by the Lord as your king, the bold leader who was hiding under the baggage during his own coronation – isn’t he tall and handsome?” The people, recovering themselves as well as they could, shouted in response, “Long live the king!” (1 Sam. 10:24). Regardless of his timid behaviour, Saul looked like just the kind of king they were hoping for – tall, handsome, and outwardly impressive. The issues of character and faith were easily brushed aside, and Israel applauded the king they had desired.


The main point of these verses is God’s continuing sovereignty. The people demanded a king, but they were not able to achieve independence from God. It was the Lord who chose and revealed Saul. God’s sovereignty was not set aside, even as He relented to Israel’s demand for a king to replace Him. Likewise, Christians will find that no matter how we may strive to grab the reigns of our own lives, deciding for ourselves how we will think and live, God remains sovereign and He apportions all our circumstances. Either in faith or in unbelief, we will have God as our Lord and He will exercise His sovereign prerogatives.

Another way that God emphasised His sovereignty was through Samuel’s immediate application of God’s law to the new kingship. “Then Samuel told the people the rights and duties of the kingship, and he wrote them in a book and laid it up before the LORD” (1 Sam. 10:25). Israel could have the king they desired, though God would select and reveal this new ruler. The kingship was to be subject to God’s law and to the word of God’s prophet.

There is a vital distinction made in the text, which speaks of the rules, or “justice”, not of the “king” but of the “kingship.” In other words, Samuel was placing the new institution under the authority of God’s Word; he did not highlight the authority of the king over the law, but rather the authority of the law over the king.

There can be little doubt that the commandments that Samuel read aloud and then wrote down were taken from God’s teaching on the kingship in Deuteronomy 17. Not only was the king forbidden to accumulate massive treasures or devote himself to excess luxury (Dt. 17:16–17), but more importantly he was to observe God’s Word. The king was to hand-write his own copy of God’s law to keep with him at all times and to read daily, “that he may learn to fear the Lord his God by keeping all the words of this law and these statutes, and doing them” (Dt. 17:19). If the king would carefully observe God’s statutes and commandments, then Israel would enjoy success and the king’s reign would be long (Dt. 17:20).

This passage has played an important role not merely in Old Testament Israel but also in church and state relations ever since. We remember the influence of Saul’s coronation in Samuel Rutherford’s 1644 classic, *Lex Rex*. Rutherford wrote *Lex Rex*, which means the “law of kingship,” to oppose the idea of *Rex Lex*, the king as a law unto himself. Rutherford’s book was based on Deuteronomy 17, probably the very Bible verses that Samuel set before Saul and referred to Samuel’s placing King Saul under the authority of God’s Word. Rutherford asserted that the kings of Scotland did not have the right to make laws that were contrary to Scripture and declared that when a king conducted himself lawlessly his rights over the people were forfeited.



It is not just kings who are called to obey God's commands, but all of God's people as well. Many Christians are confused about obeying God's law, since the New Testament teaches that we are "not under law, but under grace" (Rom. 6:14). Paul says this in referring to the law as a means of righteousness. He means that Christians do not gain salvation by the law but by the grace of God in the gospel of Christ. But Paul's point in that passage was not to promote antinomianism – the belief that grace frees us from all standard of conduct. Paul makes this clear by asking: "What then? Are we to sin because we are not under law but under grace? By no means!" (Rom. 6:15). Christians are not saved by God's law, but we are saved to God's law: that is, our life as believers is to be in keeping with God's commands. This includes both the moral obligations of the Ten Commandments, the importance of which is stressed all through the New Testament, and the rules and regulations that God has given in his Word for all of life. Just as God would reign over King Saul by means of the law of the kingship, God exercises His sovereignty over our lives through the statutes and rules in Holy Scripture.

Observing God's laws does not hinder our well-being, but rather is the way believers experience the freedom of God's richest blessing. One might argue that a map constrains the behaviour of those who follow its guidance, but maps also give us the freedom to arrive safely at our destination. This is why, for a believer in Christ, the apostle James refers to God's commands as "the law of liberty" (Ja. 1:25), since God's commands order our life for good and administer to us His sovereign blessing.

1 Samuel will tell the story of how the kingship passes from Saul to David, from the tribe of Benjamin to Judah. Israel's kings were types of the true king over God's kingdom, Jesus Christ, who was born of the line of David from the tribe of Judah. In Saul's coronation we see a striking and instructive foreshadowing of Christ's installation as our King.

First, whatever we may think of Saul hiding among the baggage, Jesus also hid His royal calling from the people of Israel.

Mark records that when Jesus performed miracles of healing, He instructed the recipients not to identify Him. "Jesus charged them to tell no one" (Mk. 7:36; cf. 1:45; 5:20, 34; 8:26) about his divine power. The reason for Jesus' "Messianic secret" was not His fear or reluctance but the fact that He had come first to die for our sins and only later to return in royal glory and power.

A second comparison is Samuel's acclamation of Saul that "there is none like him among all the people" (1 Sam. 10:24). This was true outwardly of Saul, but it is true of Christ's character and being. Jesus alone is utterly pure and without sin; even Pontius Pilate said of Jesus during his trial, "I find no guilt in him" (Jn. 18:38). Colossians 1:18 says that in everything Christ is preeminent. The book of Hebrews hails Jesus as greater than the angels, greater than Moses, greater than Joshua, and greater than the high priest Aaron. It is for this reason that Scripture says to God of Christ: "You have crowned him with glory and honour, putting everything in subject under his feet" (Heb. 2:8).

Thirdly, as Saul was revealed from under the baggage, so also Jesus was presented as king to His church by His resurrection from the dead. Paul writes that Jesus "was declared to be the Son of God in power according to the Spirit of holiness by his resurrection from the dead, Jesus Christ our Lord" (Rom. 1:4). It was by means of His resurrection that God has set His Son Jesus before us as our eternal King and Lord. And whereas God manifested His sovereignty over Saul by means of His law, God works His sovereign grace through Jesus Christ as He now reigns in His gospel.

When Saul was presented to Israel, the people cried out with all the optimism they could muster: "Long live the king!" (1 Sam. 10:24). What, then, shall we say to the Lord Jesus, who comes in the glory of His grace and power? Seeing Him as one who excels all others, who died for our sins on the cross, and who reigns now forever in His resurrection life, we can surely echo the Israelites words with much greater hope. God in His anger gave Saul to Israel, but in His mercy he **has** given us His Son, Jesus Christ. If our hearts are opened by God to see Jesus in the glory of His grace, we will crown Him with many crowns, each of us gladly yielding our hearts, and crying out to Jesus, "Long live the King!" His reign will never fail and never end, and those who bow to His throne "will reign forever and ever" with Him in glory (Rev. 22:5).

HYMN

Majesty, worship his majesty
Unto Jesus be all glory, power and praise
Majesty, kingdom authority flow from his throne
Unto his own his anthem raise
So exalt lift up on high the name of Jesus
Magnify, come glorify Christ Jesus the king
Majesty, worship his majesty
Jesus who died now glorified
King of all kings.

PRAYER

Our heavenly Father, we pray as You have given us Your Word with the strong consolation of its truth, with the assurance that through faith we are anchored to Jesus Christ, we pray that you would give to each of us a gracious sense that you desire that we should be absolutely convinced of the security that You give us through faith in our beloved Saviour. Lead us into such assurance and its joy and its stability we pray for Jesus Christ our Saviour's sake. 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.

The Kirk Session will meet on-line at 7.00pm on Thursday 10th September to start considering the plans and risk assessments.

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