



Grain

And the Lord said to Samuel, 'Listen to all that the people are saying to you; it is not you they have rejected, but they have rejected me as their king.'"

1 Samuel 8:7

Field

³³ Then Pilate entered the headquarters again, summoned Jesus, and asked him, "Are you the King of the Jews?" ³⁴ Jesus answered, "Do you ask this on your own, or did others tell you about me?" ³⁵ Pilate replied, "I am not a Jew, am I? Your own nation and the chief priests have handed you over to me. What have you done?" ³⁶ Jesus answered, "My kingdom does not belong to this world. If my kingdom belonged to this world, my followers would be fighting to keep me from being handed over to the Jews. But as it is, my kingdom is not from here." ³⁷ Pilate asked him, "So you are a king?" Jesus answered, "You say that I am a king. For this I was born, and for this I came into the world, to testify to the truth. Everyone who belongs to the truth listens to my voice." John 18:33-37

Thoughts by Reverend James Lynch

The people wanted a king. We'll feel safer. We'll feel better that someone is really in charge. It's what we all need – even if not all of them really wanted or needed a king. Even if not all of them felt they would be safer, they would feel better if the leadership they were used to would change.

Still, the loudest – maybe not the best and the brightest but certainly the most vocal – made themselves heard. God relented. They had Samuel anoint Saul. How'd that work out? David followed. He was better, but not nearly as perfect or as effective as they would have us believe. Then came Solomon. Maybe not the wisest choice after all, as he became more of a pharaoh with no accountability to anyone than a benevolent ruler with the peoples' best interests at heart. His legacy was that of a divided kingdom ruled by a motley collection of monarchs who served themselves, not their God or their people, that became easy pickings for their enemies. Wishing for a king? Be careful what you wish for.

Fast forward to David's descendant Jesus. He had ample opportunities to put himself on a throne, plenty of chances to revel in earthly glory. If that was what he wanted. It wasn't. He turned his back on it all. He wouldn't claim to be a king if his life depended on it. Which, standing in front of Pilate, it did.

The stories of the kings of Israel – especially the first three – are more than just a recitation of names, places and events. They are a warning about what happens when the people – as too many have done today – stray too far from the path God has put them on in search of what Jesus turned his back on – a throne, earthly glory in all its many debilitating forms.

They show what happens when the people settle on someone who wants unfettered power without any accountability, who promises them they will get everything they want if they give in to temptation, if they just ignore the warning signs and cast their lot with him.

The people needed to make room for Jesus, not King Jesus, because he didn't want that, but for their sibling, Jesus, who has always reached out to everyone everywhere at all times. Happy Monday!

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Many blessings upon you,

Pastor Jim