

1Samuel 12:14-15

“Give Us A King”

Today’s message is not a political sermon. Today’s sermon is not a partisan sermon. But it is election time. It is time for early voting. The regular election is November 6. Do you know where your polling place is? Do you know anything about the people or the bills on the ballot? (pause) Our sermon this morning is not about politics. Our sermon this morning is about leadership (pause) choosing good leaders and holding them accountable. I am not going to tell you for whom to vote. (pause) I am going to spend some time talking about leadership gone sideways, the results of leadership gone wrong, and what makes the foundation for healthy leadership.

Google describes a theocracy as: “a system of government in which priests rule in the name of God or a god.”

[https://www.google.com/search?q=theocracy+definition&rlz=1C1CHBF\\_enUS717US717&og=theocracy&aqs=chrome.1.69i57j0l5.4728j0j7&sourceid=chrome&ie=UTF-8](https://www.google.com/search?q=theocracy+definition&rlz=1C1CHBF_enUS717US717&og=theocracy&aqs=chrome.1.69i57j0l5.4728j0j7&sourceid=chrome&ie=UTF-8)  
(last viewed 10-25-18).

From the time of Israel’s conquest of the Promised Land, and all through the period of the Judges Israel had been a theocracy. During the time of the Judges it was often the charismatic leaders we call judges who led Israel against their enemies. The last great judge of Israel was a man named Samuel. Samuel had lead Israel as a priest and judge nearly his entire life. Now that Samuel was getting on in years the elders of Israel became afraid of the well organized, well armed threat of the Philistines. They came to Samuel and said, **“Behold, you are old and your sons do not walk in your ways; now appoint for us a king to govern us like all**

**nations”** (1Sam 8:4-5). I don’t know about y’all, but if you come to me and want me to do something for you this is not the way to start. They begin by insulting Samuel by calling him out for being old and then they insult his children. They demand a king. Folks. The next time you want something from anyone and still want to be called a Christian – DO NOT start by insulting the person you hope to ask a favor. (pause) Samuel did not want to, but God told Samuel to go ahead and give Israel what she wants.

Samuel anoints Saul to be their king. However, when they have the ceremony to make Saul their king, Samuel gives this warning from God.

Now, I’ll bet Saul didn’t know it but there are laws concerning kings of Israel in the Old Testament.

**“<sup>14</sup> If you will fear the LORD and serve him and hearken to his voice and not rebel against the commandment of the LORD, and if both you and the king who reigns over you will follow the LORD your God, it will be well; <sup>15</sup> but if you will not hearken to the voice of the LORD, but rebel against the commandment of the LORD, then the hand of the LORD will be against you and your king”** (1Samuel 12:14-15).

**<sup>18</sup> “And when he sits on the throne of his kingdom, he shall write for himself in a book a copy of this law, approved by<sup>[a]</sup> the Levitical priests. <sup>19</sup> And it shall be with him, and he shall read in it all the days of his life, that he may learn to fear the LORD his God by keeping all the words of this law and these statutes, and doing them, <sup>20</sup> that his heart may not be lifted up above his brothers, and that he may not turn aside from the commandment, either to the right hand or to the left, so that he may continue long in his kingdom, he and his children, in Israel”** (Deut 17:18-20).

Saul did not follow this law. So far as we know David did not follow this law. Solomon, for all of his wisdom did not follow this law. Saul was insecure in his own self-worth. Saul’s insecurity lead to fear and paranoia about

David. David, in middle age, became lazy and his focus shifted away from God and onto selfish pursuits of the flesh. Solomon became more focused on his lust for power, riches and building projects than for a better relationship with the Lord. Solomon had head wisdom and not heart wisdom. Each of the kings of Israel's united monarchy lost their focus on God. They lead Israel away from God and set the groundwork for disaster. Their leadership did not direct the people to God. It was more like a car driving on ice. (pause) Things started to get sideways.

This begs the question who held the Kings of Israel accountable to God and responsible to the people. The answer is the prophets. The first prophet of the monarchy was Samuel. Samuel anointed both Saul and David. When Saul refused to be obedient to the commands of God it was Samuel who was given the task of holding Saul accountable for Saul's poor behavior. When David committed adultery with Bathsheba and arranged for the murder of her husband Uriah it was the prophet Nathan who held king David accountable for his actions. Sadly, Solomon was seen as a prophet himself and as such there was no one to hold wise king Solomon accountable for his actions. With no one to hold Solomon accountable his excesses grew beyond extravagance.

My brothers and sisters who holds our leaders accountable today? I promised I would not give a political sermon this morning; however, I do mean to talk about our leaders. Think for a minute. (pause) What might it look like if our political leaders were godly leaders? (pause) How might our country and our state be different if our leaders put God first? In the pledge of allegiance we claim to be, "one nation under God." However, most of us agree our leaders are not godly leaders. In this country we elect our leaders to be our representatives to in the capitol, Washington D.C. and to the rest of the world. It seems to me if we do not have godly- God fearing leaders it's because we put them in office. When people around the world see that we do not have God fearing leaders what conclusion can they draw, but that we must not really be a God fearing people, or truly one nation under God? (pause) My sisters and brothers, who is to hold our political leaders accountable for this failing? What plumb line are we to hold our leaders accountable to?

Here's a better question. If we want a change in our leaders what needs to change in the people who vote our leaders into and out of office? What needs to change in us so we will elect better leaders? (pause) When the judges led Israel the people only followed as long as the judge was alive. When the kings ruled, the people were only as faithful and obedient to their covenant with God as was the king. Kings have a lot of power and power corrupts. The same is true of too many churches. The people follow one vision until the pastor leaves. Then they push and wiggle against the next pastor. Whose vision was it – God's or the pastor's?

Brothers and sisters, this is the last Sunday of pastor appreciation month. Let me tell ya what you can do for me. Please pray for me and my family. (pause) Do not come to church on Sunday morning looking to be spoon fed by someone who has already done the work of digging into God's word. (pause) Search God's Word for yourselves and if I've got something wrong or you don't understand, ask me about it. I promise, I will not chew you up or spit you out. On the way out of the sanctuary today don't say to me, "Nice service," or, "good sermon." Get specific. What did you like about service today? What was it in the sermon you liked, or spoke to where you; or challenged you? Please seek God's guidance for what God is asking you to do or where God is calling you to serve. Then when you come to me for help we can find the resources you need to be obedient to God's call. Do not wait for me to ask you to serve. God is asking us ALL THE TIME to be fruitful for God's kingdom. I am called to help equip the church for the work. Where is God speaking to you? What are we doing to better listen to God together? (pause) How else are we to hold our leaders and one another accountable to God?

In the name of Jesus Christ, Amen