



Sermon-based Guide for Reflection and Discussion

Week of
March 20

Scripture: 1 Samuel 8:4-22 & Psalm 72

Sermon Title: *“Seductive Power”*

The passage from 1 Samuel is one of the great object lessons in scripture about our human weakness for earthly power. The Israelites are no longer content for God appointed judges and prophets. They want a king like the other nations. Why? Because they are jealous of the wealth and power that the kings of the other nations provide. Because they want their own worldly power. Because they fear the loss of their status in the world. Because they do not trust God. They don't really believe that God is sufficient, or that God's plans will cause them to prosper. They want a king they can see, rather than a God they cannot.

That's God's reply back to Samuel: it's essentially God saying, "it's not a you thing, it's a me thing. God will grant them their wish, but he will tell them the price that they will pay. This king will be self-serving and vain-glorious. It's a heavy tax to pay.

This is such a lens into the human condition. We want that demagogue rather than the true God. We want the "Big Man," the charismatic leader. We see this in our country and we see it in the church. We will surrender much for the security that an earthly king will bring. And, as the famous saying goes, "power corrupts." Why are we surprised when powerful leaders fail? Why are we so eager to go after powerful leaders?

There is a different kind of king. He is described in Psalm 72 as a king that shows mercy, justice, and compassion. This psalm is attributed to both Solomon and David, both of which are described as "good kings." But their goodness faded, their legacy contained sin and foolishness.

What kind of king can live up to the standards of Psalm 72? Is there a human king that can practice a divine rule? Is there a king that can provide for us what we need instead of what we think we want? Is there a king that can bring to life the beautiful kingdom?

Questions:

1. Read I Samuel 8:4-22. What do the elders want, and why? What is it about a "king like the other nations" that is attractive to the elders? What do they see in these other nations that they don't have in Israel?
2. How does Jesus demonstrate the power of a king in a way that is different from a "king like the other nations," both then and now?
3. What are some "kings" in our time that people look to for protection and power?
4. Describe, from your own life, ways in which you are tempted to place something or someone on God's throne instead of God. Why is that so tempting?