

Now that we've concluded our season of Self Denial what's ahead? Today we're going to look at a text for ordinary time. Next week is Bible Sunday beginning with Morning Tea at 10:00 am. David Anderson speaks on July 24th and on July 31st, the Lord willing, we're going to recommence our journey with Luke.

There are two main ways churches follow the time between Easter and Christmas.

One says from Easter Day until Christ the King Sunday is Ordinary Time. It lasts for 33 Sundays and is the time between the great acts of Jesus' death and resurrection and the end of the Christian Year. Remember the Christian Year begins on Advent Sunday.

The other sees the time from Easter to Pentecost as the Easter season – 8 Sundays and from Trinity Sunday until Christ the King Sunday there are 25 Sundays referred to as the Sundays after Pentecost.

We're not talking about biblical truth here; we're talking about a way of seeing the year as we live before the Lord.

I like the expression 'Ordinary Time.' We live mostly in ordinary time. In the Christian connect it's the time between the great salvation events – Calvary, Resurrection, Pentecost and Incarnation. One of the interesting texts from ordinary time is this:

1 Samuel 8:4-20

4 So all the elders of Israel gathered together and came to Samuel at Ramah. 5 They said to him, 'you are old, and your sons do not follow your ways; now appoint a king to lead us, such as all the other nations have.'

6 But when they said, 'Give us a king to lead us,' this displeased Samuel; so he prayed to the Lord. 7 And the Lord told him: '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. 8 As they have done from the day I brought them up out of Egypt until this day, forsaking me and serving other gods, so they are doing to you. 9 Now listen to them; but warn them solemnly and let them know what the king who will reign over them will claim as his rights.'

10 Samuel told all the words of the Lord to the people who were asking him for a king. 11 He said, 'this is what the king who will reign over you will claim as his rights: he will take your sons and make them serve with his chariots and horses, and they will run in front of his chariots. 12 Some he will assign to be commanders of thousands and commanders of fifties, and others to plough his ground and reap his harvest, and still others to make weapons of war and equipment for his chariots.

13 He will take your daughters to be perfumers and cooks and bakers. 14 He will take the best of your fields and vineyards and olive groves and give them to his attendants. 15 He will take a tenth of your grain and of your vintage and give it to his officials and attendants. 16 Your male and female servants and the best of your cattle and donkeys he will take for his own use. 17 He will take a tenth of your flocks, and you yourselves will become his slaves. 18 When that day comes, you will cry out for relief from the king you have chosen, but the Lord will not answer you in that day.'

19 But the people refused to listen to Samuel. 'No!' they said. 'We want a king over us. 20 Then we shall be like all the other nations, with a king to lead us and to go out before us and fight our battles.'

And later in Chapter 11 - **1 Samuel 11:14-15**

14 Then Samuel said to the people, 'Come, let us go to Gilgal and there renew the kingship.' 15 So all the people went to Gilgal and made Saul king in the presence of the Lord. There they sacrificed fellowship offerings before the Lord, and Saul and all the Israelites held a great celebration.

I'd like to comment on three parts of this text. What I share isn't complete, it never could be, so when we come to the end we'll be putting a comma; this will indeed be, in a much lesser way, like Schubert's unfinished symphony.

I. they said to him, 'you are old, and your sons do not follow your ways; now appoint a king to lead us, such as all the other nations have.'

The people wanted to be like everyone else. For king read power, authority, materialism, looking after your mates, inequality etc.

The people wanted to be like the other nations who exhibited military economic political power in a range of ways; this was to be instead of prophets, prayers and covenants.

We live our days with king-type arrangements – we rely on the government heavily – especially when we turn 65 and for many before then too:

- Central government provides health, education, welfare, safety – but not apparently for little children who get beaten up mostly by men, who get from my perspective, ridiculously light penalties for their behaviour.
- We rely on our local council to provide roads, amenities, drainage (especially for the people of South Dunedin), building consents and animal control.
- Central government also protects us militarily through alliances and agreements **and** our exceedingly powerful Air Force!

Note, we're much better provided for than 99% of the world's population. At Make and Mingle on Thursday Pete and Christine Johnstone's story made for compelling listening. They've been serving God in a truly poverty-stricken country in West Africa where there is one Christian to every 1000 people - 12 pastors in the nation. I can hear some of you thinking – that's quite a cheap way to do church, maybe we should try it.

Pete and Christine's faith and sense of being enabled and protected by God was riveting. After hearing them on Thursday and then reading Ian Harris' column on Friday, I thought I know whose God I believe in. Anyway what I started this paragraph to say was that despite all it costs, in having a king (represented for us by central and local government, we have much to be grateful for. **But** it comes with a price.

The challenge for us is to live in this nation which is like all the nations and yet hold on to Jesus' way. DIFFICULT!

II. '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.'

God longed for the people then to trust him and see him as their king. We read the Old Testament and understand that Israel was chosen by God to be a covenant community; their nation **wasn't to be like** the other nations. Israel was to order its life in the ways of Torah and to rely on God's inexplicable love and remarkable promises.

It's so sad that Israel never could catch the big picture about God and in many respects it's pretty much the same today – you could hardly say that the way the secular nation of Israel lives is in line with Torah and is a response to God's love and promises. They behave very much like the other nations.

God loves us and wants to be our king, he longs for us to trust him. In that sense we live in two kingdoms but we face exactly the same issue as the nation of Israel; are we going to truly trust the Lord God or are we going to try and work it out for ourselves.

When Samuel outlined what living under kingship would cost they still said 'NO! We want a king!' and we live with that inheritance.

III. Samuel told all the words of the Lord to the people who were asking him for a king. 11 He said, 'this is what the king who will reign over you will claim as his rights:

...he will take your sons and make them serve with his chariots and horses, and they will run in front of his chariots. 12 Some he will assign to be commanders of thousands and commanders of fifties, and others to plough his ground and reap his harvest, and still others to make weapons of war and equipment for his chariots. 13 He will take your daughters to be perfumers and cooks and bakers. 14 He will take the best of your fields and vineyards and olive groves and give them to his attendants. 15 He will take a tenth of your grain and of your vintage and give it to his officials and attendants. 16 Your male and female servants and the best of your cattle and donkeys he will take for his own use. 17 He will take a tenth of your flocks, and you yourselves will become his slaves. 18 When that day comes, you will cry out for relief from the king you have chosen, but the Lord will not answer you in that day.'

When I read the conditions I thought:

Governments don't come cheap – we pay for what we get, we get what we pay for.

There are something like 27-29 000 young men whose remains lied buried and burnt in Europe and the Pacific because of kings; and as a consequence there were 27-29000 women who never had the opportunity to marry - I'm not saying they'd take it, I'm saying they were never given the opportunity.

We pay taxes over and beyond 10% - GST, Income Tax, Rates, and Registration for everything – that's what kings and what represents them today cost.

And isn't this what many Aucklanders must be crying out at the moment, **'you will cry out for relief from the king you have chosen, but the Lord will not answer you in that day.'**

The temptation is always to be like others.

An old Spanish Proverb begins, **'God says take what you want and pay for it.** Another has added, **'you can have anything you want, as long as you accept that there is a price and you will have to pay it.'**

Reminds me of the words in John:

But they shouted, 'Take him away! Take him away! Crucify him!'

'Shall I crucify your king?' Pilate asked.

'We have no king but Caesar,' the chief priests answered.

Who is our king? Who is your king?

And at this point I place my comma in this message.