

The Story of Israel's King

Every Kid Has a Plan

One of my favorite parts of what I do is hearing about the **plans** Kids have for their life. I haven't met a kid who doesn't get excited when you ask them, "What do you want to be when you grow up? You get all kinds of fun answers like astronaut, monster truck driver, construction worker, firefighter, professional athlete, police officer, pilot etc. Usually it is something that has something audacious and cool that goes along with it. Yet, in my limited experience working with kids in a broad age range, I have noticed something: Overtime those dreams have a tendency to change as a result of the influences surrounding that child.

As I began to chat with teenagers and even pre-teens I realized that on the opposite side of these big childhood dreams lies another plan. This observation showed me that my least favorite thing about working with kids is realizing that along with a **kids plan**, the **parents** also have a plan. The audacious dreams of being an astronaut or baseball player quickly become discussions about grades, colleges, and achieving recognition. The excitement of dreams quickly fade and kids begin to simply try to meet expectations. When these two plans collide it creates a tension that often results in sacrifice. Both parties end up moving from dreams to the most **desirable reality**.

The World Wants a Plan

We move from dreaming big dreams to embracing the most desirable reality because we live in a world that tells us we need a **plan**. Without a realistic plan, we are led to believe that even our best intentions will be misguided and ultimately come up short. We live in a world that teaches us to have a plan. It also teaches us that the **older** we get, the more **realistic** we need to be about our plan. At face value this seems like a statement that we could all get behind where we get into trouble is that we ultimately succumb to our flawed nature and we let our insecurities define what is realistic. We unintentionally allow our childhood dreams to be influenced by a flawed view of ourselves and the potential we have.

The argument can be made that generations of people have been affected by this world view and that means for many of us we are simply perpetuating a cycle. Our parents wanted us to make the "Safe" choice so we did and before we know we are asking our kids to do the same thing. We sacrificed our own "dreams" for "reality." We gave up on our big plans and we went with the safe plans. We weren't willing to gamble on our future so we stayed safe. We chose the most desirable reality. It's provided a good life for us, so maybe it is not all that bad after all. While this approach makes sense to our world, for people of faith it begs a question: Are we leaving **God** out of this equation? Are we letting our insecurity and doubt keep us from embracing our faith and trusting that God is at work in our life?

What About God's Plan?

The text for today is jumbled story full of Donkey's, Ancient Desert, Prophets, Religious Services, and Kings but in all of its perceived absurdity it teaches us on thing: **God always has a plan and that plan always comes to be. His plans always have a purpose to them.**

God never intended for Israel to have a king because **He** was their king. Last week we heard Pastor Richard share about how Israel's desire for a king was ultimately a rejection not of their human leader but of God. Israel had several different versions of strong leaders but these men lead with authority from God. A king would be a civil leader who controlled the armies, collected taxes, and

“restrained” the people of Israel. It was never God’s plan for Israel to have a king, but out of his great compassion he responded. **God gave them what they asked for; he gave them a “Realistic Option.”**

'There was a man of Benjamin whose name was Kish, the son of Abiel, son of Zeror, son of Becorath, son of Aphiah, a Benjaminite, a man of wealth. And he had a son whose name was Saul, a handsome young man. There was not a man among the people of Israel more handsome than he. From his shoulders upward he was taller than any of the people.'

- 1 Samuel 9:1-2 (ESV)

The man God chose to be Israel’s first king was exactly what a king should be: tall, handsome, rugged, rich, and from a good bloodline. **Despite this description, he was not perfect and they day he became king Israel moved from being ruled by God’s perfect plan to being controlled by the flawed vision of a human leader.** God still had supreme power over Israel, but Israel would move from being a theocracy to a monarchy. Saul was everything an earthly king should be, but early on we see that his spiritual direction was lacking from the start and this would ultimately be his downfall. A quick glance a little farther down in 1 Samuel 9 gives us some insight in to Saul’s spiritual condition.

When they came to the land of Zuph, Saul said to his servant who was with him, "Come, let us go back, lest my father cease to care about the donkeys and become anxious about us." 'But he said to him, "Behold, there is a man of God in this city, and he is a man who is held in honor; all that he says comes true. So now let us go there. Perhaps he can tell us the way we should go."

- 1 Samuel 9:5-6

Saul had just spent the last three days looking for some donkeys that escaped from his father’s farm. He roamed all over the desert around his home and he found nothing, no missing donkeys. He decides its ultimately time to give up, he doesn’t think to stop and pray, ask God for guidance or intercede on his behalf. He simply relies on what human intellect and labor are capable of producing. Faith seems absent from his thoughts and it is not until the servant traveling with him recommends that they seek out Samuel, a prophet for help. The irony here is that if it weren’t for the spiritual inspiration offered here, Saul would have returned home without ever being anointed as Israel’s next king. It is only when he allows God to offer direction in his life that he begins to have success in his journey. Not only do his donkeys find their way home but he becomes Israel’s very first king. **The Reign of Saul started with God’s leading, but ultimately disintegrated when Saul removed God from his plan.** In my study I came across an interesting quote about Saul,

“Although Saul had been called by God and had a mission in life, he struggled constantly with jealousy, insecurity, arrogance, impulsiveness, and deceit. He did not decide to be wholeheartedly committed to God. Because Saul would not let God’s love give rest to his heart, he never became God’s man.”

- Life Application Study Bible (NLT)

Saul’s **lack of commitment** to God’s provision for Israel serves as a foreshadowing of his plan. It was all about what **he** could or couldn’t do on his own. The life and reign of Israel’s first king was riddled of stories were he lacked faith, strayed from God, and allowed his own insecurities to destroy him. Does he have some moments of faithfulness and greatness? You bet. Did God work through him? You bet. God even chose him. However when compared to his successor Saul becomes a footnote in God’s narrative. Had he trusted God, Israel’s true leader, his story might have looked a little different.

God never wanted Israel to have a king because they shouldn't have needed one. He wanted them to have a relationship with him; they shouldn't need a leader to represent them as nation. God should have represented them as a nation. All he wanted from them was a relationship, he wanted them to worship and engage with them. When they chose not to he could of have given in and he could've watched them implode and ultimately be destroyed. He didn't. Even though the "King of Israel" was something he never wanted, he still continued to work among his people.

What do we learn from this? From our Story today we learn that even if we reject God's plan, he still has a way of achieving his purpose.

My Plan, My Kingdom or Gods Plan, Gods Kingdom ?

You see as Christians we believe that all life has purpose. Even outside of that, our world believes that life has purpose. The thing that separates us is how we answer the question : Does the plan you have for your life are impede the plan and purpose that God has for your life? Your role in this world does have purpose and every "job" you have is part of that purpose. A plan outlines how you accomplish that purpose. As you reflect on Saul consider this quote from John Goldingay

The buildup that the story gives for Saul implies he has a star future as the manager of the family farm, as the husband of a beautiful wife, and as an upstanding member of the local community. He has no need to look for a vocation, only for donkeys, but we noted in connection with Samuel's own call or summons that when God issues a vocation, it's not for the sake of the person. It's for the sake of the purpose God is pursuing.

- John Goldingay, 1 and 2 Samuel for Everyone

When you think about the life of Saul how do you relate to it? Can you relate to him in the fact that you have a safe option, but maybe your purpose is bigger than that? Can you see how your insecurity might be holding you back from a God given purpose? Are you recognizing that the purpose you are pursuing may not be the purpose God has for you? How would your life change if your plan and purpose for life aligned with Gods?

Church your biggest obstacle to embracing Gods plan and purpose is your own selfishness. When we choose the "safe" option or when we start to manipulate others to choose the "safe" option we need to ask ourselves "Whose purpose am I serving? Is this really God's Plan?" Saul made this choice and it ultimately lead him to rely on himself and then be overcome by his own insecurities. He didn't have the faith to trust that God would move in his life. Do you trust God to move in your life? Do you Trust God to move in the lives of your parents? Of your kids? Of your coworkers? Of your friends? If not, you have really got to ask yourself: Are you really serving the Kingdom of God ? or are you serving the Kingdom of Self?

A Kingdom Focused Church

God has called all churches to his purpose: Establishing his Kingdom. What does this look like? It looks us as individuals and as a community of believers, doing everything we can to help people understand that God Loves them and that he loves them so much that he has literally orchestrated a magnificent plan with the purpose to restore order to our world. That magnificent plan has been at work for thousands of years but it hit its climax when a carpenter from Nazareth was nailed to cross as a sacrifice for our evil and brokenness. If we aren't doing everything we can to help people understand

that Jesus came for them, died for them, and that he loves them unconditionally we are missing the mark. If we aren't telling the whole world about Jesus then what are we doing? If we aren't doing what we have to in order to make sure people here about the name of Jesus then what are doing?

What type of community would we be if we all lived as Christ called us to? **What type of community could we be if we all sought God's plan instead of our own?** If we were able to see set aside our own insecurity and courageously take up the purpose God has called us too, we might not feel as hopeless. We wouldn't be relying on broken men and women to fix our laws, we wouldn't be relying on broken men and women to tell us what to believe, we wouldn't be relying on anything but our faith in God and the work he is doing all around us. It's time for us to start putting our money where our mouth is. If we believe Jesus has the power to transform our community, maybe it time we started to pursue his plan and purpose for our church, our community, and our world. Then, and only then, will we see and experience peace. Then and only then will we experience the true greatness of the God we claim to serve.