

Grace to You :: *esp Unleashing God's Truth, One Verse at a Time*

Our King Will Not Be Mocked

Scripture: Selected Scriptures

Code: 81-101

This morning I'm going to challenge you a little bit. I'm going to go into the Word of God and I'm going to ask that you go with me and stay with me in this; and I can promise you the reward will be just exactly what you would expect when you give attention to the Word of God. But let's begin in Luke 17, verses 20 to 25. I'm going back to this passage; done that several times now. Luke 17:20, "Now having been questioned by the Pharisees as to when the kingdom of God was coming, He answered them and said, 'The kingdom of God is not coming with signs to be observed; nor will they say, "Look, here it is!" or, "There it is!" For behold, the kingdom of God is in your midst.'

"And He said to the disciples, 'The days will come when you will long to see one of the days of the Son of Man, and you will not see it. They will say to you, "Look there! Look here!" Do not go away, do not run after them. For just like the lightning, when it flashes out of one part of the sky, shines to the other part of the sky, so will the Son of Man be in His day. But first He must suffer many things and be rejected by this generation.'"

We have just experienced an inauguration. The inauguration is an event designed to mark the ascent of ruling authority. It is, by design, to be as public as possible, to demonstrate to as many as possible the significance and power of the ruling authority. An inauguration is kind of a stepchild of a coronation, which is the declaration before all of the power and authority of a monarch, a king.

Now we've never had a king in America. We, in fact, pride ourselves on the American Revolution, in which we threw off the rule of a king, a British king by the name of George III. We celebrate the fact that we have freed ourselves from kings. That has become much the way of the world. There are few monarchies who have actual kings. There are some symbolic kings, powerless, symbolic kings and queens. There are some autocratic, military, monarchical dictators where one man rules with power even over life and death.

But an absolute monarchy is very rare; there are only a few. That is a place where one man rules with sovereign, supreme power over everyone else, unrestricted by any law, any legislature, any tradition, or any custom. Today there is Brunei in Asia. There is Eswatini, also known as Swaziland in Africa. There is Oman in the Middle East. There is Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates, which is a coalition of small monarchies.

Oh, there's one more. There actually is one true monarchy, one absolute monarchy; it is the smallest nation in the world, 121 acres, 825 people. It is Vatican City. Vatican City is called an ecclesiastical theocracy, a kingdom with an absolute sovereign. That absolute sovereign is the pope. There have been 266 of them through the history of that theocratic, ecclesiastical kingdom. He rules not only over that kingdom, but over all who by extension belong to that kingdom because they're part of the Roman Catholic Church. Currently the throne is occupied by a former bar bouncer and janitor who likes the tango by the name of Jorge Mario Bergoglio, who took the name Francis.

The world has no other monarchies really. There are some tribes here and there that have one man rule. But we basically in our time resent monarchies. We celebrate the end of monarchies, the end of dictatorships, the end of kings. We hail democracy. In our country we have spent countless dollars, countless lives, countless years trying to turn other countries into democracies like us.

Now it may shock you. The Bible doesn't advocate democracy. The Bible doesn't mention democracy. The Bible doesn't comment on democracy. The Bible doesn't define democracy. There is no place in all of the Bible where you even find democracy. There is no country revealed in Scripture where it existed; it is never affirmed by God.

Now I told you last week that I do not believe as a Christian that I can support strongly freedom of religion, because that would be to violate the first commandment, right? "Have no other gods." You say, "Well, doesn't the church need freedom of religion to move forward?" No. In no way does any political law aid or hinder the church of Jesus Christ. We are a separate kingdom. Jesus said, "My kingdom is not of this world. If My kingdom were of this world My servants would fight."

We would fight if the kingdom were of the world to make sure we got our space in the world. But this is not a kingdom that is part of this world, this is a kingdom of another world. The church does not need help from Washington or any other government. When Jesus said, "I will build My church, and the gates of hades, the gates of hell will not prevail against it," He assured all the forces of evil that would be relentlessly against the church the gates of hell would never be able to thwart His purpose.

I think we need to be reminded that the world, not just in its social perspectives, but even in its political perspectives, is never intended to be a friend of the church or an ally in any way. Listen to the words of our Lord in John 15:18, "If the world hates you, you know that it has hated Me before it hated you. If you were of the world, the world would love its own." There's the issue. If you decide that you love the world, you can wiggle your way into it and draw out some level of affection.

"But because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, because of this the world hates you. If you are who I chose you to be, you will be hated by the world." That does not thwart the purpose of God for His church in the world. We don't need laws, we don't need politicians for Christ to build His church."

"And remember the word that I said to you," Jesus said, "'A slave is not greater than his master.' If they persecuted Me, they will also persecute you; if they kept My word, they will keep yours also. You're tied to Me." By the way, "He who hates Me," He said, "hates My Father."

In John 16:33 in the next chapter, He said, "In this world you will have tribulation." Told you last week we lose, right? Now, for now, "In this world you will have *thlipsis*, pressure, tribulation; but," He said, "I have overcome the world." The end of the story: Christ wins, and we win in Christ. But losing now and winning then has nothing to do with any political help.

So here's another surprise to add to that one. The Bible doesn't recommend, prefer, or even discuss democracy. The ancient world had kings. No other form of government appears either in the Old Testament or the New Testament. Kings were a common grace. We talk about God giving common grace; and government is common grace to bring order to society, we understand that. But do you also understand that the most common common grace of governmental character is a monarchy; in

fact, so common were kings that we find in the Old Testament no nation under any other kind of government. So normal was it to have a king that the epic tragedy of Israel in the Old Testament was that they wanted a king like all other pagan nations.

Was Israel a democracy? Never. What was it? It was a theocratic monarchy and God was King. Yahweh was their King. The covenant God was their King. The Lord Yahweh was Israel's King forever.

You would think that would be enough, right? Isaiah 44:6. And Isaiah has a lot to say about this. Isaiah 44:6, "Thus says the Lord, the King of Israel." Did you hear that? "Thus says the Lord, the King of Israel and His Redeemer, the Lord of hosts: 'I am first and I am the last, and besides Me there is no God.'" Verse 8 of that same chapter He says, "Is there any God besides Me? I know of none." So the King of Israel is the one God. In Isaiah 33:22 we read, "For the Lord is our judge, the Lord is our lawgiver, the Lord is our king; He will save us."

That was the confession of the people. Listen to the response from heaven. Isaiah 43:15, "I am the Lord, your Holy One, the Creator of Israel, your King." And in Malachi 1:14 God says, "I am a great King." So great a king was He that He was feared among the nations.

There's only one God in the universe, and He in His mercy and grace gave Himself to a people, the Jews, to be their King. What an astonishing privilege, right? And everyone in the ancient world knew God was Israel's King. They knew about this God who had delivered them from Egypt. They knew about this God whose power had drowned the Egyptian army. They knew about this God who had sustained them for forty years in the wilderness. They knew about this God who had brought them into the land and allowed them to conquer powerful resident enemies. And they knew that the people worshiped this God, because when they came into the land they came in with the tabernacle, right, a tent?

Everywhere they went with a tent. They set up camp. All the tribes were around a little box called the ark of the covenant. And the ark of the covenant had cherubim. Because God dwells in the presence of the cherubim, that was the symbol of His throne. God is invisible, but God demonstrated His presence in a symbolic way in the ark. And they carried the ark everywhere they went, put it in the middle, and all the tribes focused in on the ark.

If you don't think sin makes you stupid, get ready for this story. Under attack from some Midianites, Israel decided they wanted a king. They wanted a king? You mean they wanted another king other than God, Yahweh, the God of the universe, the true King, Judge, Redeemer? Yes, they wanted a king. Well, who was overseeing life in Israel before they had a king? God. It was a theocratic kingdom, and God had agents; those agents were judges and prophets. One of those judges—turn in your Bible to Judges chapter 8—was a very familiar man by the name of Gideon. We don't have time for the entire story, but it's an incredible story of how God used Gideon, and it leads us into chapter 8, verse 22.

Gideon had just had a great victory. The men of Israel said to Gideon, "Rule over us, both you and your son, also your son's son, for you have delivered us from the hand of Midian"—Let's start a family monarchy. You be our king. "Gideon said to them, 'I will not rule over you, nor shall my son rule over you'"—Why? What's the next line?—"The Lord shall rule over you." You don't trade Him in

for me; that's insane.

The last of the judges was a man named Samuel. Turn to 1 Samuel chapter 3, and we're going to go through this story. This is an astonishing story. In a sense, it's the end of the reign of God over Israel. Chapter 3, verse 19, it says that, "Samuel grew and the Lord was with him and let none of his words fail. All Israel from Dan even to Beersheba knew that Samuel was confirmed as a prophet of the Lord." So he was a judge and a prophet. "And the Lord appeared again at Shiloh, because the Lord revealed Himself to Samuel at Shiloh by the word of the Lord." So this is exactly the way the kingdom should operate, right? God is the King and He mediates His kingdom through the words that He gives to His prophets. The Lord had His way, the Lord had His way with Samuel.

Then we come to chapter 4—monumental: "The word of Samuel came to all Israel. Now Israel went out to meet the Philistines in battle and camped beside Ebenezer while the Philistines camped in Aphek. The Philistines drew up in battle array to meet Israel. When the battle spread, Israel was defeated before the Philistines who killed about four thousand men on the battlefield. When the people came into the camp, the elders of Israel said, 'Why has the Lord defeated us today before the Philistines? Let us take to ourselves from Shiloh the ark of the covenant of the Lord'"—that is the symbol of God's presence, that's His throne—"let's take that, that it may come among us and deliver us from the power of our enemies." So now what you know has happened is that the ark, which was the symbol of the actual presence of God in the midst of His covenant people, has become a good luck charm.

Sin has made these people stupid. And even with as noble a prophet judge as Samuel, their stupidity could not be avoided. So they lost the battle and lost lives, and they said, "We need to get God down there; get the box."

"So the people sent to Shiloh, and from there they carried the ark of the covenant of the Lord who sits above the cherubim"—reminding them that this is the throne of God. "And the two sons of Eli, Hophni and Phinehas, were there with the ark of the covenant of God. As the ark of the covenant of the Lord came into the camp, all Israel shouted with a great shout, so that the earth resounded." Why? Because, hey, God showed up, the good luck charm. "When the Philistines heard the noise of the shout, they said, 'What does the noise of this great shout in the camp of the Hebrews mean?' Then they understood that the ark of the Lord had come into the camp. The Philistines were afraid, for they said, 'God has come into the camp.' And they said, 'Woe to us! For nothing like this has happened before.'" They feared the God of Israel because they knew the history of His power. They feared Him more than Israel love Him.

"Woe to us," they said. "Who will deliver us from the hand of these mighty gods? These are the gods who smote the Egyptians with all kinds of plagues in the wilderness. Take courage and be men, O Philistines, or you will become slaves to the Hebrews, as they have been slaves to you; therefore, be men and fight." So, pep talk: "You can't be intimidated by this God, you've got to go to war."

"So the Philistines fought, Israel was defeated, every man fled to his tent; and the slaughter was very great, and there fell of Israel thirty thousand foot soldiers." God is saying, "You're not using Me as a magic charm." "The ark of God"—verse 11—"was taken"—the Philistines took God—"and the two sons of Eli, Hophni and Phinehas, died."

Didn't turn out so well, did it? Somebody said, "Get God and we'll win. They got God and they were massacred. What happened? What happened? Go to verse 19—well, verse 18. First, "Eli fell over backward, broke his neck and died because he was old and heavy. His daughter-in-law, Phinehas' wife, was pregnant about to give birth; and when she heard the news that the ark of God was taken, that her father-in-law and her husband had died, she kneeled down and gave birth, for her pains came upon her. And about the time of her death the women who stood by her said to her, 'Do not be afraid, for you have given birth to a son.'"

So she dies in childbirth. Hophni and Phinehas are dead, Eli is dead, thirty thousand soldiers are dead. The wife of Phinehas is giving birth; she's dead, the child lives. "And about the time of her death they said, 'Don't be afraid, you've given birth to a son.' She didn't answer or pay attention." Listen to this: "She called the Ichabod, which means, 'The glory has departed from Israel,' because the ark of God was taken and because of her father-in-law and her husband. She said, 'The glory has departed from Israel, for the ark of God was taken.'" Do you know what she means? "God's gone. We may have a box, but we don't have God."

Chapter 5. If you think that's a problem for Israel, imagine what a problem it is for the Philistines; now they have God. "The Philistines took the ark of God, brought it from Ebenezer and to Ashdod. Philistines took the ark of God and brought it to the house of Dagon and set it by Dagon." Dagon was kind of a reverse mermaid: male, fish head, human legs, bizarre idol.

So "when the Ashdodites arose in the next morning"—after setting God—imagine the ark of the covenant next to Dagon. "They came early in the morning and Dagon had fallen on [its] face to the ground before the ark of the Lord." And they said, "Oh, somebody knocked him over." "So they took Dagon and set him in his place. But when they arose the next morning, behold, Dagon had fallen on his face to the ground before the ark of the Lord. And [only this time] the head of Dagon and both the palms of his hands were cut off on the threshold; and the trunk of Dagon was left to him." Somebody decapitated that idol. You're not putting him in the same place with the true and living God.

Well, that was the end of the religion of Dagon obviously. So verse 5 says, "Neither the priests of Dagon nor all who enter Dagon's house tread on the threshold of Dagon in Ashdod to this day." That religion went out of existence immediately. I mean, if the God of Israel can whack off your head and your hands, we don't need you.

"So the men of Ashdod saw that it was so and they said, 'The ark of the God of Israel must not remain with us, for His hand is severe on us and on Dagon our god.' So they sent and gathered all the lords of the Philistines to them and said, 'What shall we do with the ark of the God of Israel?' And they said, 'Let the ark of God be brought around to Gath. Send it out of here, send it to another town.'" Gath, that's where Goliath was from.

"So they took the ark to Gath, and they brought it around, and the hand of the Lord was against that city with very great confusion. He smote the men of the city, young and old, so that tumors broke out on them. So they said, 'Get that thing out of town.' They sent it to Ekron. The ark came to Ekron, and the Ekronites cried out, 'Yikes, they brought the ark of the God of Israel around to us to kill us and our people.'" This is a problem to have God on your hands, and to be mocking God and dishonoring God in all these ways is a very deadly kind of activity.

So they had a meeting in verse 11: “They gathered all the lords of the Philistines and said, ‘Send away the ark of the God of Israel, and let it return to its own place, so that it will not kill us and our people.’ For there was a deadly confusion throughout the city; the hand of God was very heavy there. And the men who didn’t die were smitten with tumors and the cry of the city went up to heaven.” God is just leaving a slaughter everywhere the ark goes.

Chapter 6 says, “The ark of the Lord was in the country of the Philistines for seven months. And the Philistines called for the priests and the diviners, saying, ‘What shall we do with the ark of the Lord? Tell us how we shall send it to its place.’” This is most interesting. “They said, ‘If you send away the ark of the God of Israel, do not send it empty; but you shall surely return to Him a guilt offering.’”

These are pagans saying this: “Don’t just send that back, send that back with a guilt offering.” “What do you mean?” “Send it back with something that indicates you know you violated that God. Admit that what happened to you is what you deserved because you violated that God.” “What would we send?” Fascinating.

“They said, ‘Well, what shall be the guilt offering which we return to Him?’ And they said, ‘five golden tumors and five golden mice.’” Why? That’s called a votive offering. You create something that resembles the punishment: the mice because of the plague; the tumor because of the tumors. So they were making mice and tumors to send back as a way to say to the offended God, “Please, we recognize that we have offended You.” Verse 5 sort of sums it up: “If we give glory to the God of Israel, perhaps He will ease His hand from you, your gods, and your land. Get God out of here and don’t send Him back empty, send Him back with recognition that you have sinned against Him.”

Go over to chapter 6, verse 17. These are the golden tumors. This is getting more serious. They are so afraid of this deity that they start making these votive representations of His judgment in gold, golden tumors and golden mice, and they set it on the ark, verse 18, to send it back.

Came to Beth-shemesh. “He struck down some of the men of Beth-shemesh because they had looked into the ark of the Lord.” What? Yes. There were things in the ark, right? They looked. “Fifty thousand plus God killed, and the people mourned because the Lord had struck the people with a great slaughter.” Verse 20, “The men of Beth-shemesh said, ‘Who is able to stand before the Lord, this holy God?’” You can’t survive an encounter with Him that is sinful. The ark then was taken to Kiriath-jearim. It stayed there for twenty years, and all the house of Israel lamented.

Chapter 7, “Samuel spoke to all the house of Israel, saying, ‘If you return to the Lord with all your heart, remove the foreign gods and the Ashteroth from among you’—oh, here’s the problem; God didn’t defend them because they had turned to idols—‘and direct your hearts to the Lord and serve Him alone; He will deliver you from the hand of the Philistines.’ So the sons of Israel removed the Baals and the Ashteroth and served the Lord alone. And Samuel said, ‘Gather all Israel to Mizpah and I will pray to the Lord for you.’” That was kind of a revival maybe?

Verse 6 says, “They gathered to Mizpah, drew water, poured it out before the Lord, fasted, said, ‘We’ve sinned against the Lord.’” Confession. Verse 8, “Samuel says, ‘You’d better keep it up. Do not cease to cry to the Lord our God.’”

Just for the sake of time, down to verse 15. God gave them peace with their enemies. “Samuel

judged Israel all the days of his life. He used to go annually on a circuit to Bethel and Gilgal and Mizpah, and he judged Israel in all these places.” Remember now, when it says he judged Israel he was passing on to them the word of the Lord. “Then his return was to Ramah, for his house was there. There he judged Israel; built there an altar.”

Now just rehearse that history, okay. They have God as their king: the God who led them through the plagues in Egypt, drowned the entire Egyptian army, brought them through years in the wilderness, brought them into the Promised Land, gave them victory over their enemies. God who has just put on His power display, slaughtering all kinds of alien Pagans. They now have God back, they have a faithful judge. Maybe this is permanent, right?

Chapter 8: “Came about when Samuel was old that he appointed his sons judges over Israel. Now the name of his firstborn was Joel, and the name of his second was Abijah; they were judging in Beersheba. His sons, however, didn’t walk in his ways, but turned aside after dishonest gain, took bribes and perverted justice.” Okay, here we have crooked politicians.

So listen to this: “Then all the elders of Israel gathered together, all of the elders of Israel gathered together, came to Samuel at Ramah, and said to him, ‘Now you’ve grown old, and your sons do not walk in your ways. Now appoint a king for us to judge us like all the nations.’” This is clear and complete apostasy. “We don’t want God as our king.”

“Thing was displeasing in the sight of Samuel when they said, ‘Give us a king to judge us.’ And Samuel prayed to the Lord.” Every nation had a king. These two sons of Samuel aren’t working out so well. “Give us a king. We want a king like everybody else has a king.”

In chapter 8, verse 7, “The Lord said to Samuel, ‘Listen to the voice of the people in regard to all that they say to you, for they have not rejected you, but they have’—what?—‘rejected Me from being king over them.’—I mean, does sin make you stupid or what?—‘But listen to their voice. Solemnly warn them; tell them of the procedure of the king who will reign over them.’

“So Samuel spoke all the words of the Lord to the people who asked of him a king. He said, ‘Do you know what this is going to mean? There will be the procedure of the king who will reign over you: he will take your sons and place them for himself in his chariots and among his horsemen and they will run before his chariots. He will appoint for himself commanders of thousands and of fifties, and some to do his plowing and reap his harvest and to make his weapons of war and equipment for his chariots. He will also take your daughters for perfumers and cooks and bakers. He will take the best of your fields and your vineyards and your olive groves and give them to his servants. He will take a tenth of your seed, he’ll raise your taxes, and of your vineyards and give to his officers and to his servants. He’ll also take your male servants and your female servants and your best young men and your donkeys and use them for his work. He’ll take a tenth of your flocks, and you yourselves will become his servants. Then you will cry out in that day because of your king whom you have chosen for yourselves, but the Lord will not answer you in that day.’” “You know what you’re doing? You’re trading in the Redeemer King for an evil anti-God, narcissistic, autocratic dictator.”

Verse 21: “After Samuel had heard all the words of the people, he repeated them in the Lord’s hearing.” He said, “Lord, I can’t believe this, but I’m going to tell you what they said,” as if the Lord didn’t hear. “The Lord said to Samuel, ‘Listen to their voice, give them a king. Give them a king.’”

Chapter 12, verse 12 says, “A king shall reign over you, although the Lord your God was your king.” This is the epic apostasy of Israel. Enter—you know who—Saul. Saul is going to be their king. Go over to chapter 10.

They’ve selected Saul—won’t go through all that story. “But Samuel”—verse 17 of chapter 10—“calls the people together at Mizpah; and he said to the sons of Israel, ‘Thus says the Lord, the God of Israel, “I brought Israel up from Egypt, I delivered you from the hand of the Egyptians, from the power of all the kingdoms that were oppressing you.’ But you have today rejected your God, who delivers you from all your calamities and your distresses; yet you have said, “No, but set a king over us!” Now therefore, present yourselves before the Lord by your tribes and by your clans.’”

“Thus Samuel brought all the tribes of Israel near, and the tribe of Benjamin was taken by lot.” By they way, any king in Israel was supposed to be from the tribe of Judah. “Then he brought the tribe of Benjamin near by its families, and the Matrite family was taken. And Saul the son of Kish was found.” Saul? Why him? Well, we already know, because verse 23 says, “He was taller than anybody else, and more tall, dark, handsome, and cowardly.” Verse 22 says, “Where’s Saul? He’s hiding in the baggage.” “Oh, great. We’ve got a tall, dark, handsome guy in the baggage hiding.”

By the way, what did he do? He looked for lost donkeys, that was his job. Unfortunately, didn’t do it very well, couldn’t find them. He went from one end of the land to the other end of the land and he couldn’t find them. And somebody said, “Oh, they’re already back home.” Tall, dark, handsome, cowardly, donkey finder. Sin makes you stupid and it makes you make stupid choices about leadership. Who trades in the eternal God for a tall, dark, handsome, stupid donkey finder, who wants to hide in the baggage?

So why did God allow this? As a judgment. You understand that? As a judgment. “You want a king? I’ll give you a king. I’ll give you a king that will show you how foolish you are to turn from God.” Saul is the anti-king. He’s the illustration of the worst kind of ruler. That’s God’s whole point. Saul was a complete disaster, and we know the sad story of it.

A postmortem on Saul, just a few verses, chapter 15, verse 23: “Rebellion is as the sin of divination, insubordination is as iniquity and idolatry. Because you have rejected the word of the Lord, He has also rejected you from being king.” Saul was such a disaster, the people rejected the Lord to get Saul, and then the Lord rejected Saul because Saul rejected Him. “Saul said to Samuel, ‘I’ve sinned. I’ve indeed transgressed the command of the Lord and your words, because I feared the people and listed to their voice.’” There’s the coward hiding in the baggage. He fears the people. Tall, dark, handsome, empty-headed, donkey finder. And he was a total disaster.

You don’t hear this very often in the Bible, verse 35 of chapter 15: “The Lord regretted He had made Saul king over Israel.” Oh, by the way, Samuel said, “There’s not going to be any future for you, you’re done. The next king won’t come from your family.” Again, the wisdom from below is demonic, isn’t it? Sin makes you stupid.

The Lord was kind to them. The next king was who? David. And David was like Samuel. Twice it says, “The Lord was with him.” He was a man with a heart for God. But God reminded them with Saul that when you trade Him in for anyone else, that wicked insanity is devastating, beyond

shocking to me.

There's a passage in Hosea, chapter 13, that is insightful. As Hosea the prophet pronounces judgment on Israel, or Ephraim, listen to this, thirteenth chapter of Hosea: "When Ephraim spoke, there was trembling. He exalted himself in Israel, but through Baal he did wrong and died. And now they sin more and more, and make for themselves molten images, idols skillfully made from their silver, all of them the work of craftsmen. They say of them, 'Let the men who sacrifice kiss the calves!' Therefore they will be like the morning cloud, like dew which soon disappears, like chaff which is blown away from the threshing floor and like smoke from a chimney." They're going to disappear, they're going to vaporize God says.

"Since I have been the Lord your God since the land of Egypt; and you were not to know any god except Me, for there is no savior besides Me. I cared for you in the wilderness, in the land of drought. As they had their pasture, they became satisfied, and being satisfied, their heart became proud; therefore they forgot Me." As He lets them in the land of milk and honey, they forgot Him.

"So I will be like a lion to them; like a leopard I will lie in wait by the wayside. I will encounter them like a bear robbed of her cubs, and I will tear open their chests; there I will also devour them like a lioness, as a wild beast would tear them." He's promising them divine judgment, and it came at the hands of the Assyrians who came in about 732 and took them all away, and they never returned.

"It is your destruction, O Israel, that you are against Me, against your help." How does that happen? "Where now is your king that he may save you in all your cities, and your judges of whom you requested, 'Give me a king and princes'? I gave you a king in My anger and took him away in My wrath."

There's some interesting realities in that eleventh verse. Those are imperfect verbs which means they're continuous action. Literally, "I kept giving you kings in My anger and kept taking away in My wrath," and what it's referring to is in the northern kingdom God gave them ten kings—all of them evil, wicked kings. He gave it as a judgment, He took them away as a judgment. Gave them a worse one as a judgment, took them away. Action repeated again and again and again. The Lord said, "You wanted a king, I gave you kings. I put them there in My anger, I removed them in My wrath. I put another one in My anger, removed him in My wrath. Your idolatry continued and it all ended after those ten kings and you going into captivity." So when you trade the true King for any other king, you have mocked God.

Is there hope? Look at chapter 14 of Hosea. This is the heart of God through the prophet's crying, "Return, O Israel, to the Lord your God, for you've stumbled because of your iniquity. Take words with you and return to the Lord. Say to Him, 'Take away all iniquity and receive us graciously, that we may present the fruit of our lips.' Assyria will not save us, we will not ride on horses; nor will we say again, 'Our god,' to the work of our hands. We won't worship idols we make. For in You the orphan finds mercy.'

"Do that and I will heal their apostacy, I'll love them freely, for My anger has turned away from them. I'll be like the dew to Israel; like the blossom on a lily, and he'll take root like the cedars of Lebanon. His shoots will sprout, and his beauty will be like the olive tree and his fragrance like the cedars of Lebanon. And those who live in his shadow will again raise grain, and they will blossom like the vine.

His renown will be like the wine of Lebanon.

“O Ephraim,”—or Israel—“what more have I to do with idols? It is I who answer and look after you. I am like a luxuriant cypress; from Me comes your fruit. Whoever is wise, let him understand these things; whoever is discerning, let him know them. The ways of the Lord are right, and the righteous will walk in them, but transgressors will stumble in them. Who is your god? Who is your king?” Two hundred years of warning before the captivity came.

Israel turned in their king, the true and living God for a sequence of wicked rulers. They chose a fake, a fraud. They chose an anti-king, a kind of antichrist, over the eternal King of the universe. Oh, by the way, God promised to send a king, and He did, a true king. He told David in 2 Samuel 7, “I’m going to send someone out of your loins who will have an everlasting kingdom.”

In the gospel of Luke, of course, begins when word comes down from heaven to Mary from an angel, “You’ll conceive in your womb and bear a son and you will name Him Jesus. He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High; and the Lord God will give Him the throne of His father David, and He’ll reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of His kingdom there will be no end.” And Isaiah said, “That Child born to us will be Wonderful Counselor, the Mighty God, the Father of Eternity.” And He came, the true King again, and it all culminated when they had to make a choice. Did they want the true King? Did they want a thief and a robber named Barabbas?

The same kind of horrendous, sinful stupidity rises in the eighteenth chapter of John, verse 33: “Pilate enters the Praetorium, says to Jesus, ‘Are You the King of the Jews?’ Jesus answered, ‘Are you saying this on your own initiative, or did others tell you about Me?’ Pilate said, ‘I’m not a Jew, am I? Your own nation and chief priests delivered You to me; what have You done?’ Jesus answered, ‘My kingdom is not of this world. If My kingdom were of this world, then My servants would be fighting so that I would not be handed over to the Jews; but as it is, My kingdom is not of this realm.’ Pilate said to Him, ‘So You are a king?’ Jesus answered, ‘You say correctly that I am a king. For this I have been born, for this I have come into the world, to testify to the truth.’—and here’s the key—‘Everyone who is of the truth hears My voice.’ Pilate said to Him,”—cynically—‘What is truth?’

“When he said this, he went out again to the Jews and said to them, ‘I find no guilt in Him. But you have a custom that I release someone for you at the Passover; do you wish then that I release for you the King of the Jews?’ So they cried out again, saying, ‘Not this Man, but’—who?—‘Barabbas,’” over Jesus. That’s the folly. Over to verse 15 of chapter 19: “Away with Him, away with Him, crucify Him!” Pilate said to them, “Shall I crucify your King?” Chief priests answered, “We have no king but Caesar.”

There’s only one true king, right? The tragedy of Israel’s history, the tragedy of human history is that the world doesn’t want to recognize the true King, the true and living God and His Son. But God has already determined His Son will be King.

“Why are the nations in an uproar and the people devising a vain thing? The kings of the earth take their stand and the rulers take counsel together against the Lord and against His Anointed, saying, ‘Let us tear their fetters apart and cast away their cords from us!’ He who sits in the heavens laughs, the Lord scoffs at them. Then He will speak to them in His anger and terrify them in His fury, saying, ‘But as for Me, I have installed My King upon Zion, My holy mountain.’ I will surely give Him the

nations as His inheritance, and the very ends of the earth as His possession. He will break them with a rod of iron, shatter them like earthenware.

“Show discernment, O kings; take warning, O judges. Worship the Lord with reverence, rejoice with trembling.”—listen to this—“Kiss the Son, that He be not angry, and you perish in the way, for His wrath may soon be kindled. How blessed are those that take refuge in Him!” You’d better take your refuge in the true King, right?

So, the story of Israel is a story of blasphemy, a story of abomination, a story of apostasy, a story of defection. Inconceivably a story of trading in the one true God for the anti-king, the wicked king, the foolish king: Saul. Trading in the Lord Jesus Christ ultimately for the antichrist fool named Caesar.

It was during David’s time, 2 Samuel chapter 6; I want to show you something. Let’s close there, 2 Samuel chapter 6. So they finally want to bring the ark back. There was a prescription for how the ark was to be moved. It had rings, and you put up a long pole so that no one ever touched the ark. No one touched the ark. Took long poles, put them through the rings, carried it that way.

They didn’t do that. It says they wanted to move the ark, and verse 3, “They placed the ark of God on a new cart”—What is that? That’s a clear violation of God’s order—“so they could bring it from the house of Abinadab which is on the hill. A couple of guys named Uzzah and Ahio were leading the new cart. So they brought it with the ark of God from the house of Abinadab, which was on the hill; and Ahio was walking ahead of the ark. Meanwhile, David and all his house of Israel were celebrating before the Lord with all kinds of instruments made of fir wood, and with harps, lyres, tambourines, castanets, cymbals.” This is like a coronation now. God’s coming back, they’re going to reenthroned God in the place where He belongs.

Verse 6, “When they came to the threshing floor of Nacon, Uzzah reached out toward the ark of God, took hold of it, for the oxen nearly upset it.” Started to topple off, the ark, so Uzzah reached out to steady it. Look at verse 7: “The anger of the Lord burned against Uzzah, and God struck him down there for his irreverence; and he died by the ark of God.”

Let me say something: you’d better be careful when you put your hand on God. I thought of that in that inauguration. You can say whatever you want to say, but when you touch the ark, when you place your hand on the throne of God because God is enthroned in His word, and you place your hand on the Word of God and pledge to do the very things that blaspheme His name, you talk about a high risk action. All Uzzah did was what he thought was showing some respect. God doesn’t want your respect, He wants your obedience.

Don’t tell me that you advocate the slaughter of babies in the womb. Don’t tell me you want to destroy masculinity, femininity, marriage. Don’t tell me you want to fill the world with LGBTQ people in leadership; you want to justify transgender activity. Don’t tell me you want to invite more Muslims in who represent a religion from hell and then put your hand on the throne of God. You can make any pledge you want; don’t mock God.

A final word, just a reminder. “The deeds of the flesh are evident: immorality, impurity, sensuality, idolatry, sorcery, enmities, strife, jealousy, outbursts of anger, disputes, dissensions, factions, envy, drunkenness, carousing and things like these, which I forewarn you, just as I have forewarned you,

that those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God.”

The message has to end here. Seek the kingdom, right? Seek the kingdom by seeking the King. Repent, the King is here. Repent and receive the gospel. Let's bow in prayer.

Our Father, we certainly are reminded of an Old Testament king by the name of Nebuchadnezzar, who ended up mocking You, and was driven away from humanity for seven years. Lived in a field; his body was drenched with the dew of heaven, his hair grew like eagles' feathers, and his nails like birds' claws; and he was there until he learned that You rule over the realm of mankind. At the end of that period he said, "I bless the Most High and praised and honored Him who lives forever; for His dominion is an everlasting dominion, and His kingdom endures from generation to generation. All the inhabitants of the earth are accounted as nothing, but He does according to His will in the host of heaven and among the inhabitants of earth; and no one can ward off His hand or say to Him, 'What have You done?' At that time my reason returned to me. And my majesty and splendor were restored to me for the glory of my kingdom. Now I, Nebuchadnezzar, praise, exalt and honor the King of heaven, for all His works are true and His ways just, and He's able to humble those who walk in pride.”

Lord, we're going to see Nebuchadnezzar in heaven. How wonderful is that; as wicked as he was, there was grace where there was repentance. Our desire, of course, is not judgment; that's why we live in this world shining as lights in this perverse generation, so that people can see the light and turn from the darkness.

There's another king that Daniel wrote about; this is our King. He says, "I kept looking in the night visions, and behold, with the clouds of heaven one like a Son of Man was coming, and He came up to the Ancient of Days and was presented before Him. To Him was given dominion, glory and a kingdom, that all the peoples, nations and men of every language might serve Him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion which will not pass away; and His kingdom is one which will not be destroyed." A Son of Man is our King, none other than the Lord Jesus Christ. All other kings will be crushed by Him. All those who worship any other god face only eternal judgment.

May the light of the church shine brightly. May the gospel be clear. May we proclaim it with urgency and love, for Your glory we pray. Amen.

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