

PREPARING AT HOME

June 4-10, 2018

Focus reading: 1 Samuel 8:4–20, (11:14–15) (<http://bible.oremus.org/?ql=388726228>)

Other lectionary readings: Psalm 138, 2 Corinthians 4:13—5:1, Mark 3:20–35

Theme: Choices and Consequences

Last week we learned of Samuel's call and his new role as leader of Israel. At the time of this week's reading, Samuel is old. It is time for a new leader. In another case of history repeating itself, Samuel's sons prove to be corrupt, just as Eli's sons had been. Samuel's sons cannot be counted upon to provide the kind of leadership that Samuel had. Israel must look elsewhere. Since the surrounding countries were led by kings, Israel asked Samuel to appoint a king. As God's messenger, Samuel warns the people of the consequences of having a king. Under a king, the people would lose many of the freedoms that they had gained after leaving Egypt. Kingship would be bad for them. They had not only God's wisdom but the lessons of history to tell them just how bad kingship would be. Still, the people persisted. Their neighbors had kings; Israel wanted a king. While we are probably not surprised by human nature as described in this story, we may be surprised and even a bit disturbed by God's nature as revealed here. Although God knows that a king will be bad news for the people, God gives them what they want. Samuel anoints Saul as the first king of Israel, despite God's warnings that a monarchy is not in the people's best interest. Despite the lessons of the past, despite God's firm and dire warnings, the people choose to trust a king they can see, the cultural norm of their neighbors, rather than the God who they cannot see and yet who loves them despite their lack of faith.

BE CAREFUL WHAT YOU ASK FOR

Discuss the following questions with your child: Have you ever wanted something that you knew wasn't good for you? Why did you want it anyway? Do you sometimes want what other people have? Share some examples. Advertisers are good at making us think we want a lot of things! Is there a difference between what we want and what we need? Is there a difference between what sounds and looks good to us and what is good for us? How do we know the difference? Give your child a sheet of paper that is divided in half. Invite your child to draw "wants" on one half and "needs" on the other. How do we know the difference?

WHO DO WE LISTEN TO?

The people of Israel did not listen to God, although Samuel did. When we have important decisions to make, who might we listen to? How can we listen for God?

PRAYER

Wise and loving God,
We thank you that you give us what we need
and want what is best for us.
Forgive us when we don't listen to you.
Help us to be strong and to listen to your truth,
that we might do what pleases you and what is best for us.
Amen.

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