

Title: The Coronation and the Courtroom
Text: 1 Samuel 11:12 – 12:25
Theme: The amazing grace of God
Series: 1 Samuel
Prop Stmtnt: God's grace provides the foundation for reconciliation and renewal.

History has been shaped by speeches made famous not simply because their utterance was eloquent, but because their effect changed hearts, beliefs and actions. I can think of several: Martin Luther's "Here I stand" speech at the Diet of Worms and Martin Luther King, Jr. "I have a dream" speech at the Lincoln Memorial in Washington, D.C. have changed and continue to change this world. King's speech was first delivered in Detroit. It was fitting that when he delivered it famously in D.C. that he did it at the Lincoln Memorial since it was Lincoln who famously delivered the Gettysburg Address and it was also tragic that both of them were assassinated. Queen Elizabeth I delivered a moving speech in 1588 that roused her troops in response to the 130 ship Spanish Armada that was sailing toward England and it was Winston Churchill who roused the English people again in 1940 with his "We shall fight on the beaches" speech. Some of the most famous speeches in history are retirement or resignation. George Washington delivered his famous one in 1783 and who can forget Lou Gehrig's "Luckiest man to be alive" speech which was his farewell to baseball delivered in Yankee Stadium on July 4, 1939.

Our text this morning is the context and the text of another famous resignation speech. Moses delivered his in the shadow of Mount Pisgah as the nation he led was poised to conquer the land that he led them to, but would now go in, without him. The nation renewed the covenant (OT law) with God at that time (Deut. 29). His successor, Joshua, did the same when his time had come to relinquish control as the military commander and national leader. And once again, the nation renewed the covenant with God (Joshua 24). 400 years later, Samuel is giving his resignation speech and calling for the people to renew their commitment to the covenant. And not since Moses and Joshua had one man been able to have such a profound influence upon the nation of Israel, like Samuel. His life is not over. Samuel is not dying. But his time has come to step aside and yield to another. This is a major event in the life of the nation. Moses got them out of Egypt and on the threshold of the land. Joshua led them in conquest and now, Samuel has inaugurated a monarchy. The era of the judges was now over, the time for the kings has begun. It feels like a scene from the Lord of the Rings with the song "Into the West" playing. Samuel's resignation speech is the period at the end of the sentence.

Read Text:

The setting is clear (11.12-15). Saul just led the nation in an incredibly decisive victory. His surprising resolve and desperately needed bravery awakened the nation and rallied them to a war that unified them even as it delivered the citizens of Jabesh-Gilead. In so doing, a message had been sent to all other enemies; domestic and foreign. We have a king and we are now a force to be reckoned with. The celebration at Jabesh-Gilead was only the beginning. There is no doubt that the Israelites lined the road and cheered wildly for the 330,000 soldiers returning

from war. It was like watching a page of history turn. These people had never experienced something like this. A people so accustomed to being a doormat for other nations are now large and in charge; at least for a moment. Giddy from victory, there were those who now were demanding the death penalty for those Israelites who did not want Saul as their king and they demanded this of Samuel (11.12) who was there in the aftermath of this incredible victory. That is interesting, isn't it? They asked this of Samuel. But Samuel is not in charge anymore. It's not his decision to make, though it would have spared Saul of being responsible for this act of revenge.

But the sun had not yet set on Saul's finest day. And before Samuel could answer, Saul spoke up and he wisely and humbly acknowledged that it was the Lord who should get credit for the victory. Therefore, no man in Israel will die. Look at this! The king is not only strong and victorious; he is humble and generous. And many of his detractors, likely became fans in this moment. He won them over. At this point, Samuel does answer and he does in a way that resonates with Saul's growing supporters. Let's give Saul a proper coronation. So, they plan this occasion where they are going to renew the kingdom. This involves re-coronating Saul, offering peace offerings and a lot of celebration. This is a big event. This is a big, national event. I think that it is at this event, perhaps toward the end of it, that Samuel delivers this speech. 12.1 says that Samuel spoke this to the nation. He does not have the authority to summon the nation together anymore. This authority is now the king's. Therefore, I think that Samuel delivered this farewell speech at this occasion. Samuel is not caught up completely in the national mood. He is an old man. He is wise, seasoned and steady. He knows that one day is not an entire life. Some believe that he is still bitter over the rejection of the people. I don't think that is the case. I just think he has seen how the hearts of people, leaders too, tend to drift in bad directions. His words are a reality check, a needed reality check.

Do you see what Samuel does? He attempts to give context to this event. Don't misunderstand what is happening here. So, he turns the coronation into a courtroom because he wants them to see that this moment of glory is actually way more serious and therefore, more amazing than they realize.

1. **Do you have a clue on where you actually stand before God?** (12.1-15)

Samuel assumes the role now of a prosecuting attorney and he presents piles of evidence to support his point. Here is his point: In spite of the amazing grace and faithfulness of God in your life, you have consistently rebelled against him. You do not believe him. You now think that your problems are all solved because you have a king, but in reality, you are in an even more precarious situation. Here is how he builds his case.

A. **How have I failed you?** (1-5)

Samuel has served for perhaps 50 years as Israel's judge. He was literally called by God to do this. Even as a child he delivered the Word of the Lord to the high priest, Eli. As a child, Samuel was consistently faithful to do what God called him to do. It is very rare for someone to be in a

position of power like this for so long without something coming out that reveals a weakness. Samuel asks them if there was ever any occasion when he used his position of authority to serve himself, enrich himself, play favorites or be unfair. Whose ox or donkey have I taken? Have I defrauded, oppressed or accepted a bribe from anyone? Testify against me. Samuel was so confident that there were no skeletons in his closet that he was willing to be publicly confronted by anyone. The Detroit News said this week that in the last 12 years more than 110 labor leaders, politicians, police officers and bureaucrats have been charged with federal corruption-related crimes. It is really difficult for us to imagine 1 guy being able to stand in front of the same group of people and ask them to call out anything. Even if you went back to all of his Tweets and Facebook posts, there's nothing! The point is pretty clear. I have been your leader this entire time. I have not taken anything from you. Now you have a king. The king is going to take things from you. He is going to take your oxen, donkeys, crops, daughters for his servants and sons for his army. He is going to take your money to support his administration. You chose this and you chose this, in spite of the fact that you didn't have it too bad. You demanded this, even though no one can point to anything in my life that failed you.

4x in verses 5 and 6, Samuel uses the word "witness." The LORD is a witness. Saul is a witness. There is no charge that can be leveled against Samuel. The point is very clear. I have not failed you. I have done what the Lord wanted me to do and now, I have done what you wanted me to do. But what you have demanded of me by demanding a king, is an affront to God. You demanded a king you can depend on so that you would not have to depend on God. But, has God ever failed you? Beginning in v.6, Samuel gives a brief history of God's relationship with Israel.

B. Has God failed you? (6-11)

The theme of verses 6-11 is this: The LORD has not failed you, but you have repeatedly failed the Lord and yet, in spite of your repeated failure, the Lord as repeatedly rescued you. Look at v.7. I think verse 7 really gives us the proper tone of this speech. Samuel is not an old and bitter man who is feeling unappreciated and rejected and is lashing out in frustration over how he is being kicked to the curb. Look at v.7. *"Now therefore stand still that I may **plead with you** before the LORD concerning all the righteous deeds of the LORD that he performed for you and for your fathers."* Then Samuel reminds them of these major events in their history.

- The Lord rescued you from Egypt
- The Lord rescued you from Sisera
- The Lord rescued you from the Philistines
- The Lord rescued you from Moab
- The Lord sent Jerubbaal (Gideon), Barak, Jephthah and now me.
- You lived in safety.

C. In spite of that, you rebelled again and this one was really bad. (12)

When Nahash attacked, instead of calling upon God to rescue you, you demanded a king to rescue you, when the LORD was your king. Rejecting your rightful king and replacing him with another king is called treason. But you didn't care. *"No, but a king shall reign over us."* Do you realize what you have done?

2. **Your rescue is not because of you; but is in spite of you.** (12.13-15)

Here is your king! (v.13). You got what you wanted and you think that everything is going to be fine. So, here they are celebrating this victory and it would be very easy to conclude that our plan worked out after all – right? See Samuel? We wanted a king because we wanted someone to defend us and this is exactly what happened. We got a king. We got a victory. But, if we go back one chapter, we all realize that the only reason why Saul was so decisive and effective was because the Spirit of the Lord came on him. And the only reason the nation rallied to follow him and was so overwhelmingly victorious was because the Lord moved on them too. So, let's understand what really happened and even Saul knows this. Do you remember what he said? *"The LORD has worked salvation in Israel today."* (11.13) Again, what is Samuel doing? He is pleading with the people (v.7). Do not misunderstand what has happened to you. You deserved the justice of God and here you are alive and victorious but only because of the grace of God!

Do not misinterpret your blessings and think that you earned them. And do not presume upon the patience and mercy of God (12.14-15). Instead of treating you like the traitors you are, he treated you like his children. This is how amazing God is. This is how gracious God is. This is how loving and longsuffering God is. God puts his mercy on display in order to motivate you to trust him. If you, however, keep rejecting him, then you will not experience his mercy, but will instead experience his justice. And do not forget that...

3. **God is perfectly just and free to let us experience his justice.** (12.16-18)

At this point, Samuel, the prosecuting attorney rests his case and asks the Judge for the verdict. The LORD who is witness (v.6) now responds in a way that affirms in a deafening and overwhelming manner all that Samuel has just stated. The Judge renders his judgment and it is terrifying. This is May-June, a particular dry season in Israel. It is not impossible for it to torrential rain and thunder but it is highly unusual. This out of the blue weather event makes a very bold statement, particularly since it was on cue from Samuel. It is the time just before harvest and a heavy rain like this could actually destroy the crop and their economy.

This is what God can do. This is what God has the right, the freedom and the power to do. The obvious point is that God could do this to you. God could have unleashed his power upon you, but he didn't. It is not his inclination to do that. His posture is one of mercy, not judgment. Now, he is capable of doing it and will do it if he has to. He can bring a flood, plagues, open the earth, and send earthquakes and fire. But you need to know this about God. He loves to use his infinite power to rescue, redeem, restore, protect and keep his own. He loves to use his power for you, not against you. You gave him a reason to do so, and he didn't.

But that will not always be the case with a king. You rejected God so that you can have a king. But if your king is going to be strong enough to defend you against your enemies, he is going to be strong enough to attack you if he decides he doesn't like you, or if he is threatened by you or if he decides to punish you because you don't agree with him. So, you turned your back on the ultimate king who would never betray you for one who could.

4. **Without excuse or defense, we need to be saved.** (12.19-25)

Look at verse 19. Look at it carefully. What do you see? 1) You see these people pleading with Samuel to be their advocate and to stand in between them and God. Pray for your servants, they cry! They realize that they have sinned. They acknowledge it, confess and clearly have an attitude of repentance. But they are at a loss of what to do. They cannot fix the mess that they have made and they realize that because of their sin they have no right to go before God. So, what do they do? 2) They appeal to the most innocent person in their midst and that is Samuel. Now, Samuel is not sinless, but he is (in a sense) blameless. So, they ask him to pray for them.

Here it is again. This is a preview of what the Bible calls the gospel. We are just like the children of Israel. We deserve the justice of God. We deserve his righteous judgment for our rebellion and arrogance. We deserve his wrath, which may not seem like a big deal until you actually see how powerful God is and how holy his wrath against sin is and how serious your sin is. When you see that, all hope is drained out of you. And you realize that the only way for you to be rescued from God's judgment is if you have an advocate. You need someone who is not sinful to somehow come between you and God and defend you or protect you. But, who can do that?

Religions tell you to try to make up for your failures by saying hail Mary's, light candles, give up chocolate for lent, go to church more, give more money, etc., but do these religions have any idea of the weight of our sin before a holy God? How can anything that we do, even begin to budge the scale? After all, I am a sinner. Everything that I do is tainted by my sin. I cannot even repent right without adding to my sin. I need a Savior. I need a sinless Savior. God gives us 4,000 years of history in the OT in which he tells the same thing over and over and over, because we are so slow to learn it. I am a sinner who has rebelled against God and I cannot save myself. I have to be rescued by someone else. I have to be forgiven by a perfect sacrifice. All of this sets the stage for Jesus. Jesus died in your place. He died in order to pay in full for the sins of every single person who admits their sin and turns in faith to Christ, alone. Have you ever done that? Have you ever admitted to God that you are a sinner who deserves his justice and told him that you confess that Jesus is your Savior and you trust him and yield your entire life to his control? His death was sufficient to pay in full for your sins, so that when you trust in him, your sin account is wiped clean. There is nothing left for you to pay. This is what the OT previewed. This is what this text previewed.

The people repented and Samuel told them the good news. Yes, you have sinned, but you are owning it and turning to God. Don't turn to anything else (empty things – v.21 refers to idols and other gods). Trust this: The Lord will not forsake his people.

Samuel, is a Christ-figure in this text. He is not Christ, but he helps us see a part of what Christ will be and do. Samuel is their advocate. Samuel prays for them and he keeps praying for them. That is what Jesus is doing for us right now. Samuel is going to keep on instructing them and that is what Jesus does by sending the Spirit who directed his Word to be written and he helps us understand it and believe it. Verse 24 is so good. Consider what great things he has done for you. That is why you serve him.

There are about 125x the OT uses the phrase or a variation of it that says, "I am the LORD who brought you up out the land of Egypt (or out of slavery)." The Lord doesn't say that in order to hold it over their head. He says it to remind them of how merciful and powerful he is. God exercises his power to save. Why would you follow any other? The text ends with a warning for the people and the king. All alike are under the authority of God.