

**Texts: 2 Samuel 7v1-17 and Romans 1v1-6**

**Sunday 15<sup>th</sup> September 2019**

**Brightons Parish Church**

Let us pray. May the words of my mouth, and the meditation of all our hearts, be acceptable in Your sight, O LORD, our strength and our redeemer. Amen.

**I want to show you a few famous lines** from films and I wonder if you can guess where they featured:

- “Here's looking at you, kid.” **Casablanca, 1942**
- “Houston, we have a problem.” **Apollo 13, 1995**
- “Ogres are like onions.” **Shrek, 2001**

To really get these lines, to grasp their meaning and significance, you need to know the back story – whether it be a love story, or a rescue mission, or a simple feel good film with poignant truths – knowing the back story helps.

**And the same is true** of ‘the kingdom of God’ – without knowing the back story it can be quite meaningless.

We are now into week four of our current sermon series on ‘the kingdom of God’ and over the last three weeks we’ve seen that from the beginning of creation ‘the kingdom of God’ has been central to the biblical story. In **Genesis 1 and 2**, we saw the pattern of the kingdom, with God’s people, living in God’s place, under God’s rule and enjoying God’s blessing.

In Genesis 3, we saw how the pattern of the kingdom was lost, for when Adam and Eve ate of the forbidden fruit, they were rejecting God’s rule, and as a result, they were no longer His people, which led to them being expelled...

from God's place, the garden of Eden, and consequently, they also lost the blessing of God.

**But then last week**, with Ian, we read from later in Genesis, where in chapters 12, 15 and 17, God makes a covenant, a promise, with Abraham to once again form a people of God, who will be given a land, who will live under God's rule and once again enjoy God's blessing.

So, we're only up to Genesis 17, and yet we are beginning to get a rich and full back story to 'the kingdom of God'.

**But from Genesis 17** to where we read in 2nd Samuel, it took about 900 years for everything to pass, so there's a lot of history sandwiched between those two moments in the biblical story, which you may be glad to hear, we won't try to cover in depth in this series.

**And yet, to understand ‘the kingdom of God’, and to understand how God seeks to restore the pattern of the kingdom we need to know some of that 900-year history, which I’ll review, very briefly, just now.**

**Broadly speaking, from Genesis chapter 12 to Exodus chapter 18, the focus is primarily on God’s people, on how God would once again form a people who would be His special possession. And so, we find God taking Abraham, and from that old man, forming a nation, through Isaac, Jacob and then Jacob’s 12 sons, including Joseph.**

**Over the summer months, we worked through the story of Joseph, seeing how God’s promise began to be worked out – that this great grandson of Abraham...**

**was used of God to save God's people from starvation by providing a home for them in Egypt.**

**But after Joseph, hundreds of years pass, and the people of God grow to be very numerous in Egypt, numbering in the millions. **Yet they have become slaves to Egypt**, and so they cry out to God, who hears them. He takes Moses and uses him to rescue God's people and bring them out of Egypt, through what we call the Exodus, that act of God by which the people of God are saved.**

**Then, God leads them, by a pillar of cloud and fire, to Mount Sinai, which we read about in Exodus chapter 19. **And from chapter 19 of Exodus** to the end of the book of Leviticus, we now find a focus on God's rule and blessing, for in those chapters, we see how the people of God...**

are to live, and also how a holy God can presence Himself amongst His people so that they have relationship.

**After Leviticus, we have the** books of Numbers, Deuteronomy and Joshua, and whilst some of their content continues to describe the rule of God, these books also begin to move the focus onto God's place, that land which was promised to Abraham many years before.

**Now, the people of God are still,** at the beginning of Numbers, situated at Mount Sinai, but because of grumbling, protest and unbelief the people of God are punished, and instead of a few months' journey to the promised land, they travel for 40 years around the desert, so that all but two of that generation pass away, all who were filled with ingratitude and unbelief.

**Eventually they do reach the promised land**, but under a new leader, under Joshua, and they enter the land of Canaan, taking possession of it, and settling into a place that flowed with milk and honey.

**At the end of the book of Joshua**, Joshua himself gives a warning to the people, to not turn away from the Lord, and the question arises: will they or won't they? What will happen to the people of God now?

**We then enter into the book of Judges**, where there is a cycle of sin and grace, for the people of God keep turning away from Him, doing evil in His eyes,... and so, they are punished by God. They then cry out for mercy, so God sends a ruler, a judge, to lead them back



under the rule of God, enabling them to enjoy God's blessing and peace once more. This cycle of sin and grace repeats, again and again and again throughout the book, until we get to the very last line of the book of Judges, **where we read:** 'In those days Israel had no king; everyone did as they saw fit.' (Judges 21:25)

There is here a hint of what the solution might be, that the people need a king. **But this is not a new idea,** for a king and ruler had been mentioned back in Genesis 49, **where the line of Judah** was said to hold a 'sceptre' and the 'ruler's staff', and that 'the obedience of the nations shall be his'. The idea of a king is also mentioned in the book of Deuteronomy, **where the king is commanded:**

**‘..to write for himself on a scroll a copy of this law...It is to be with him, and he is to read it all the days of his life so that he may learn to revere the Lord his God and follow carefully all the words of this law and these decrees and not...turn from the law to the right or to the left.’**

**(Deut. 17:18-20)**

**God’s appointed king was to be the means by which the rule of God came upon and through God’s people so that they could then enjoy God’s blessing. God would rule His kingdom through His king.**

**And so, at the end of Judges, this idea is raised once more, enabling us to enter into the books of Ruth, 1st Samuel, 2nd Samuel and 1<sup>st</sup> Kings, where we see how God raises up for Himself a king to rule over His people...**

Eventually, David, that famous shepherd boy, becomes king. His journey is one of suffering and rejection, he faces many struggles to reach a position of peace, of rest, and that is where we find ourselves as we come into 2nd Samuel chapter 7. **All this is the back story leading** to this very chapter, 900 years of God forming a people, of giving them His Law, His rule, of taking them to the promised land, and then establishing a king, through whom God's rule and blessing could come to God's people within God's place.

**Chapter seven opens with these words:** "After the king was settled in his palace and the Lord had given him rest from all his enemies around him, he said to Nathan the prophet, 'Here I am, living in a house of cedar, while the ark of God remains in a tent.' Nathan replied to the king,

**‘Whatever you have in mind, go ahead and do it, for the Lord is with you.’” (2 Sam. 7:1-3)**

**The king is at rest, at last, but he recognises it has come from God’s hand, and yet the ark of God, the symbol of God’s presence amongst His people, remains in a tent, whilst the king lives in a house of expensive cedar. And so, there is a burden upon David’s heart to do something, which receives the support of the prophet Nathan.**

**But that night the Lord spoke to His prophet, relaying to Nathan, and then on to David, that the Lord was going to turn David’s offer upon its head, for the Lord now promised to build a flesh and blood house, a lineage for David. **We read:****

**“Now then, tell my servant David, “This is what the Lord Almighty says: I took you from the pasture, from tending the flock, and appointed you ruler over my people Israel. I have been with you wherever you have gone, and I have cut off all your enemies from before you. **Now I will make your name great...**The Lord declares to you that the Lord himself will establish a house for you: when your days are over and you rest with your ancestors, I will raise up your offspring to succeed you, your own flesh and blood, and I will establish his kingdom. He is the one who will build a house for my Name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom for ever. I will be his father, and he shall be my son...” (2 Sam. 7:8-9, 11b-14a)**

**In this passage, God refers to the covenant promises made to Abraham: of a people, of a land, of blessing...**

**But these are now tied to the king and so Israel's future is identified with the king's future. Concerning this king, God promises:**

- **That he will be a descendant of David (v12)**
- **That His kingdom will be established by God (v12)**
- **That this future king will build a house for God (v13)**
- **Will reign for ever (v13, 15-16)**
- **And will be a son of God (v14)**

**So, a future king, one greater than David, is to come, and through this king, God's kingdom will be established, His rule over His people, in His place, will become reality, and all will know and live in God's blessing.**

**With the coming of David's son, Solomon, as king, in the book of 1<sup>st</sup> Kings, we see the building up of the kingdom,**

**such that by chapter 10 of 1<sup>st</sup> Kings the nation of Israel experiences a Golden Age, and we're left asking: is Solomon the king who was promised? Is he this son of God?**

**Well, chapter 11 of 1<sup>st</sup> Kings reveals that Solomon is led astray from God, he does evil in the eyes of the Lord, and despite the intervention of the Lord, Solomon does not turn from his ways. As such, it's not long before this partial rebuilding of the kingdom begins to disintegrate.**

**This is Israel's highpoint as a kingdom under a human king, and so the promise and the hope of 2nd Samuel 7 still awaits fulfilment, we still await to see how God will restore His kingdom, through a human king, who will also be a son of God, such that the people of God live under the rule of God, in God's place, and enjoying God's blessing.**

**It's been a long story**, and there's still more to come, but what might we glean from Genesis 12 to 1st Kings 11?

One of the most striking things about this period of the biblical story is how so many parts of it leave us hanging, leave us wanting more, and leave the people of God wanting more. **In the book of Leviticus**, God lay down the means by which He, as a holy God, could continue to presence Himself amongst His imperfect people. They are given instructions on how to construct the tabernacle, the tent where the ark of God would dwell, which was a symbol of God's holy presence. They were also given the sacrificial system. But there are limitations – only one person, once a year, could come into most holy place within the tabernacle. There is then a limitation of relationship, it's only a partial restoration of what was in the garden of Eden,...



and so a greater peace between God and humanity must come, and so the people of God are left wanting.

**In the books of Numbers** to Judges, we see a limitation of obedience by God's people, we see God's people displaying unbelief and wilful disobedience, again and again. They so often have a hard heart towards God and His ways and so there is only a partial restoration of God's people: they are numerically there, but their hearts are still so often wayward. The people of God are left wanting.

**And then in 1 Samuel to 1<sup>st</sup> Kings 11**, we see a series of imperfect human kings, through whom only a partial restoration of God's rule and blessing comes about, and then only for a short time in the reign of Solomon,...

before quickly crumbling away. Once more, the people of God are left wanting and hopes are dashed.

**And I wonder if you resonate with that lack**, with that hunger for something greater: of greater intimacy with God, or of greater obedience to God's ways, or for a greater king who offers true hope?

Now these may not have been the first things to jump to mind when you thought about what you lack, **but if we're honest**, all of us have some degree of discontentment, some degree of awareness that something is lacking in our lives.

It may be that you lack peace in your soul. It may be that you have discontentment with your life,...

**maybe especially in the relationships you have with others, or with infirmity. It may be that you lack hope and encouragement amidst the greatest challenges of life.**

**Friends, the discontentment, the hunger in our lives, is a sign of the brokenness of our world, and of our God-given sense that there is meant to be something more, something better, of a kingdom that has been lost.**

**That lack we feel also highlights that our man-made solutions are insufficient, they don't truly meet our need. We try to anaesthetise our lack of peace and contentment with stuff, with pleasure, with popularity. Similarly, we try to fix our broken relationships through guilt, through nagging, through manipulation and trying to get our own way.**

**But the discontentment of our souls has at its root a deep spiritual need and problem, and no man-made solution can address that, just as no mere human king could be the solution to restoring God's kingdom, nor could an external Law change the heart of broken humanity, just as no animal sacrifice could cleanse the human conscience and restore full intimacy with God.**

**The discontentment we feel, as the discontentment the people of old felt, is a pointer beyond ourselves and our solutions, to something else, indeed to someone else.**

**And that someone else, as we'll see in future weeks, is Jesus – for in Him, as we read in Romans, we find a descendant of David, but also the Son of God. In Jesus, as the apostle Paul outlines, we find someone who:**

- **Is the Christ, the promised King (v1)**
- **He has conquered death (v4)**
- **He rules in power as Lord (v4)**
- **This Jesus calls us and equips us by His ‘grace’ to ‘obedience’ – to live under God’s rule (v5)**
- **And He calls us into relationship with Himself – that we might be a people who ‘belong to Jesus Christ’ (v6)**

**Friends, in the midst of our discontentment, God is calling, calling us into deeper relationship with Himself through faith in His Son, Jesus Christ.**

**Just as there was more for the people of God long ago, there is also more for us as well – there can be greater peace, greater contentment, greater depth of intimacy with God and greater hope for tomorrow.**

**Friends, where do you lack that discontentment? Where is the lack in your life? Too often I have allowed my discontentment to lead me into unhealthy choices and actions, and I encourage you not to do that, but to seek Jesus in the midst of your discontentment.**

**Yesterday, I heard a song that sums this idea up well. As we listen to it, bring the deep ache of your soul to Jesus.**

**PLAY: “*Falling Into You*” – Sam Hibbard**

**Friends, may today be more than a history lesson, may we hear the call of God to turn our eyes to our heavenly King so that in Jesus we see the One who can meet the deep ache of our souls, for He is the One through whom the kingdom of God will come. To Him, be all glory, now and forever. Amen.**