

“They Have Rejected [the Lord] from Being King”

Scripture Readings: Deuteronomy 17:14-20; 1 Samuel 8:1-22

Rev. Nollie Malabuyo • August 21, 2022

Dear Congregation of Christ: This might come as a big surprise to many of you: Did you know that our nation could have become a constitutional monarchy like Great Britain? That George Washington, against his wishes, could have been proclaimed as His Majesty, George Washington? But what history records is that in 1786, ten years after the Declaration of Independence, the President of the Continental Congress, Nathaniel Gorham wrote on behalf of the Congress to Prince Henry, younger brother of the Prussian king, Frederick the Great. Gorham invited the Prince to become King of the United States of America, converting the new nation into a constitutional monarchy.

But why did the Founding Fathers want a king? A king like King George III, whose rule they did not want? We all know that the colonists resisted the taxes that the Crown imposed on all goods imported from Great Britain. They also fought against the oppressive rule of the British military officials. However, after the War of Independence, the new nation was in shambles politically and economically. There was even a rebellion by the war veterans because the government had no money to pay them. The Continental Congress then decided that a strong leader must head the nation. And who can be a stronger leader other than a king? The idea was to copy the constitutional monarchy of their former ruler, Great Britain. But Prince Henry knew the hatred of the Americans against the British king, so he declined the invitation. So we can only wonder: What if America had a constitutional monarchy today like Great Britain? What if we have Queen Elizabeth II or some other king or queen as our monarch?

What the Founding Fathers resisted when the British king ruled over them was similar in a few ways to what God told the Israelites after they asked Samuel to appoint a king to rule over them. Samuel warned them that their king would eventually oppress them in many ways, similar to how the British monarchy oppressed the colonists (1 Sam 8:1-22). Four centuries before, when the Israelites were still wandering in the wilderness on their way to the Promised Land, God told them the duties and responsibilities of kings who would rule over them (Deut 17:14-20).

And when we look at our own nation today, do you find a situation similar to that of Israel during the time of Samuel’s last days? So, our theme this morning is God’s warning against Israel, **“They Have Rejected [the Lord] from Being King,”** under three headings.

“A King to Judge Us Like All the Nations”

To understand why the Israelites demanded a king to rule over them, we must look at the historical context of that time. When Samuel was old, he appointed his two sons as judges, just as Gideon and Samson were judges. But we are informed in verse 3 that these two sons were disobedient to God’s laws and corrupt. They were focused on shameful gain, so they judged the people with their eyes only on profit.

Therefore, the elders of Israel told Samuel that since his two sons were not fit to be judges, Samuel should appoint a king to rule over them after he dies. And because Samuel actually appointed a king after him, he was the last judge of Israel. Israel then became a monarchy.

When the elders asked Samuel to appoint a king, he was saddened because he considered their demand as a rejection of him and his sons as judges. His leadership was questioned. But it was more than that: Samuel saw their demand as evil. But the Lord said to Samuel, *“they have not rejected you, but they have rejected me from being king over them”* (8:7). And we see this in our nation. Godless pagans want to replace “one nation under God” in the Pledge of Allegiance with an LGBTQ Pledge of Allegiance for children in a youth camp. The “husband” of Pete Buttigieg led them with this pledge: “I pledge my heart to the rainbow of the not-so-typical gay camp. One camp, full of pride, indivisible, with affirmation and equal rights for all.” They want to erase “In God We Trust” from our coins and place a Satanic symbol alongside the Ten Commandments in Oklahoma’s statehouse. A student can be suspended if he says a prayer at school and a college coach can be fired if he led his team in a prayer before a game. These are just a few examples of our culture rejecting God in favor of paganism.

But these things are happening not only outside the church, but also *inside* the church. A few weeks ago, students at a ritzy high school in New York were forced to watch a drag queen show at an Episcopal church. A few pastors in a “conservative” Presbyterian denomination came out in the open having “same-sex attraction,” and they have never been disciplined. Many evangelical churches keep their mouths shut or even implicitly approve LGBTQ movement and *Critical Racist Theory*. A well-known professor—I have a couple of his books—at a Christian university in southern California openly declares that abortion is not murder. He wrote to all Christians who have not bought his “progressive” book *The Bible and the Ballot*, “Love you all including those of you who like a certain politician (though I question your sanity and biblical literacy).” So, if you and I do not agree with our godless culture—and this is half of America—then you are insane and biblically illiterate.

Why have many churches and “Christians” support the “woke” culture? Because they have been co-opted by politicians, celebrities and the fake news media. They do not want to be mocked, harassed, or even raided by the FBI or by armed IRS agents. They cower in fear of the government. In fact, many are like the Israelites who want to be “like all the nations.” They are happier when they worship, believe and practice what the world does. The Apostle Paul warns Christians, *“Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect”* (Rom 12:2). Christians are supposed to be “non-conformists,” distinct, peculiar, a people whom God called out of this wicked world, not a people *like* the world.

The Apostle John also warns us to flee the world’s desires because they are not from God, and they are soon gone. Only God’s people will remain (1 John 2:15-17). We must not be “like all the nations” who rage against God and want to throw off his rule over them (Psa 2:1-3). In fact, a good rule of thumb for us is this: If the world speaks, does and thinks one way, we must speak, do or

think the opposite way. Our Lord himself said that broad way is the way to destruction (Matt 5:13). Israel's sin here is idolatry, not trusting God alone to protect them and provide for all their needs. The psalmist warns both them and us, "*Put not your trust in princes, in a son of man, in whom there is no salvation*" (Psa 146:3; also 118:9). And when we trust in our own wisdom and possessions instead of trusting in God, we also become idolaters.

“You Will Cry Out Because of Your King”

Did God then oppose Israel's demand for a king? The answer is no, because way back almost 400 years before Samuel, God foretold that he would appoint a king for them. When they were wandering in the wilderness on their way to the Promised Land of Canaan, the Lord told them that he would choose a king from among them. What are the qualifications and duties of this future king? In Deuteronomy 17:14-20, God set forth what a king must be, what he should and should not do.

The king must not be a foreigner. He must not lead the people back to Egypt to acquire many possessions because God already appointed them to conquer Canaan. He must not have many wives because they will turn his heart away from God. He must not be greedy for silver and gold. He must keep a copy of God's law to study it meditate on it, and obey it, because God's law will keep him from being overly proud and from straying from God.

These duties and responsibilities of a king are almost identical to Samuel's warning to the people when they finally demanded to have a king to judge them. The king would take their sons and daughters to work for him. He would draft their sons for military service and even as workers in his field. He would take their daughters and make them perfumers, cooks and bakers. He will overly tax them and give a portion of his money to his servants and soldiers. Lastly, he would take their servants and animals and make them work for him. In short, he would make the people practically slaves with low wages and high taxes! It's true, the only things we can be sure of in this life—from the ancients days till the end of the world—is death and taxes.

Therefore, Samuel warned them, "*And in that day you will cry out because of your king, whom you have chosen for yourselves, but the LORD will not answer you in that day*" (8:18). In other words, after they suffer at the hands of their king, God would tell them, "Be careful what you wish for, because you will reap what you sow." And in all of human history, kings and rulers—almost without exception—are evil. British philosopher Lord Acton saw enough of this in his own nation, so he concluded, "Absolute power corrupts absolutely." What Israel got for a king is the exact opposite of God's appointed king in Deuteronomy 17. This is God's judgment against their idolatry.

Does this remind you of another nation, that is, of our own nation today? Our Founding Fathers installed checks and balances in our Constitution to prevent the President from having absolute power, which would eventually turn into absolute corruption. We have national elections every two years, but there are no term limits, so most Senators and Representatives practically have lifelong terms of office like the Supreme Court justices, and like Israel's kings. And there is almost no exception that our government officials enrich themselves in office because of corruption. And to

serve their greed, they enact all kinds of laws and budgets for personal gain, which they acquire by overtaxing the people. Sound familiar? Go back to the Boston Tea Party. Go back to the medieval kings and queens. Go all the way back to the kings of Israel and all other kings in the ancient world. This is why the American Revolution, the French Revolution, and Russian Revolution happened against their kings. And we see signs that it could happen in our own time.

“Obey Their Voice and Make Them a King”

God describes the Israelites as a “stiff-necked people” (2 Chr 30:8; Acts 7:51). They grumble, complain and accuse at the least inconvenience. When hardship and fear overcame them in the wilderness, they blamed Moses and wanted to turn back to Egypt even if they became slaves again. Knowing how stubborn his people were, God told Moses to fulfill their demand for a king. Notice in verse 20 that a part of the duty of the king of Israel is to “*go out before us and fight our battles.*” After God fought their battles for them in Jericho and against the Philistines, the Israelites have turned away from trusting God so easily. They wanted a mighty king who would lead them in battle. However, as we shall see next Sunday, their first king, Saul, failed in this responsibility. And even King David failed to do this later in his reign, leading to him to commit adultery and murder.

“Obey the voice of the people” sounds identical to a Latin saying, “*vox populi, vox Dei,*” which means, “The voice of the people is the voice of God.” It was first coined during the Roman empire, and in our day, this is exactly what we call “democracy.” We have elections, and afterwards, we conclude, “The people have spoken.” And what has this “voice of the people” accomplished? Think of France, Russia, China, Cuba. That’s what we have after the people have spoken. Pure democracy is more or less mob rule. Israel then had mob rule. The Israelite people have spoken, and God told Samuel, “*Obey their voice and make them a king,*” and we will see what becomes of them. And what they became when evil kings ruled over them is not that pretty.

Dear brothers and sisters: When Jesus entered Jerusalem on the same week that he was crucified, people hailed him, “*Hosanna! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord, even the King of Israel!*” (John 12:13) They clamored for Jesus to rule over them as the King of the Jews. What kind of king did they want Jesus to be? They had seen enough of his divine power in his signs and wonders, so they wanted him to lead them as their king in their war against the oppressive Roman empire. They did not want him to save them from sin, from Satan’s tyranny, from eternal death.

But Jesus, as he answered Pilate, is not an earthly king, saying, “*My kingdom is not of this world.*” He is our spiritual King who will reign over an eternal, heavenly kingdom whose citizens are the citizens of heaven. How did Jesus become King of kings and Lord of lords? Not by leading an earthly army to victory. Not by amassing great riches through taxation and oppression. Not by wielding absolute power. Not by brainwashing people and manipulating politics. He became the King of heaven and earth by willingly offering himself as a sacrifice on the cross for the sins of his people. Therefore, his kingdom is a kingdom of all those who believe in him, who remember his perfect righteousness, his sacrificial death, and his glorious resurrection to save us from the tyranny of sin, Satan and death.