

God keeps not doing things the way we expect, the way we think they should be done. and we keep being surprised.

Last week we heard the people of Israel come to Samuel and demand that he name a king for them. Until that point, their only king had been God; they had prophets like Samuel and judges like Deborah and military leaders like Gideon, but no human king; all of these leaders served while constantly seeking the will of God.

But the people wanted to be like everyone else, they wanted to be like their neighbours who were strong, and they thought that having a king would make them strong. And despite Samuel listing all the awful things a king would do, would draft their sons to fight in armies and demand 10% of their harvests in taxes and would give lavish gifts to his friends and ignore the poor, despite all this they wanted a king anyway, and God said yes. God allowed the people of Israel to exercise their free will, to make a choice, and they got their king, and the first king of Israel was Saul.

As I looked at that passage last week, I have to say that in some ways this was a surprise. After all, this is the God who started the ten commandments with the words I the Lord your God am a jealous God. One might think that the people saying no, God, we don't want you to be our king anymore, we want a human king like everyone else, might be a problem. This is the God who called one tiny nation out of all the nations of the earth into a covenant with God precisely so they would not be like everyone else, so that they would live as lights of the world to draw all the other nations of the world to God. One might think that this, too, might cause God to refuse to authorize a form of government just so that Israel could be like everyone else.

But God does keep surprising us, and the people got their king.

Things were OK for a while. In the beginning, Saul tried to follow God's will in the way he ruled. But over time, maybe inevitably, power corrupted, and all the dire warnings from Samuel came to be and God rejected Saul from being king over Israel and sent the prophet to go anoint the new king-in-waiting.

And this is a surprise, too; surely God could have simply said, see! I told you so! You had your little experiment, you had a king and it didn't work, so now that's the end of that whole king thing. Nope. Instead, God decides to find a different and better king.

Samuel goes to the place God leads, finds the youngest instead of the oldest, not the best looking or the physically strongest, and that one will be king.

Again, God surprises.

2nd parable, surprise: mustard not from trees, not even planted: weed, crab grass or dandelions

The kingdom shows up in our lives where we never expect it to.

(Dandelion grows up through the sidewalk)

The kingdom spreads throughout our lives in ways we never expect it to (mustard tree), can't contain it to just one, can't contain it to just Sunday morning.

The kingdom can call us way outside our comfort zone into truly dangerous acts, indeed treasonous acts (Samuel and David)

Woman who starting attending church just to have her baby baptized and found that God was calling her to re-examine all sorts of things about her life.

When we choose to follow Jesus, to have him dwell within us as we pray at communion, we are inviting that growing as fast as a weed kingdom into every corner of our lives: into our work life, into our relationships with our family and friends, into our greatest successes and our most embarrassing and troubling failures. Inviting us to do things and be people we never would have thought or planned.

God shows up and acts in the place we would never expect. But that's how God has always worked. Why are we still surprised.