

Rev. Paul A. Hottinger

**Rejection, Then Tyranny**    First Week in Ordinary Time    Friday, January 17, 2014  
8:15 AM    **1 Sm 8:4-7, 10-22;**    Mk 2:1-12    (I've chosen them for a special vocation to lead the world a new way of living and they don't want it; they want to be like the world.)

**“It is not you they reject, they are rejecting me as their king.”**

I mentioned before that Samuel is a prophet during a time of great transition. For around two hundred years Israel existed as **confederation of tribes in the covenant with God**. In this covenant Yahweh is king; that is the watchword, you may say. Yahweh is King; **God is king over the people and warrior and provider and guide and guardian**. What that meant was, practically speaking, when one tribe was in trouble the other tribes had to come help. It was a mutual kind of reliance upon one another, interdependence. After while it seems that **that sort of interdependence broke apart**. Tribes, especially the north and to the extremities, were unwilling to respond to the call of the tribes in, you might say, hotspots.

So here we see that the **elders come to Samuel** and say, well, Samuel, you are dying; your sons are not following in your ways, in other words, they have lost the faith, so we want you to **anoint for us a king like all the other nations**, who will then be able to fight our battles for us. And Samuel, of course, is against this because it's not the covenant; that's not the arrangement; that's not the deal. So he goes of the Lord in prayer and **the Lord says**, don't worry: **“Grant the people's every request. It is not you they reject; they are rejecting me as their king.”** And he doesn't say in so many words, but he means: **and they will be sorry**.

**This is a phenomena that repeats itself many times in history**. Indeed, history has very few unique events. This is a story about how people do not want to take responsibility for themselves. This is about a society, a covenanted society, where one group doesn't want to help the other group anymore. People start thinking about themselves, or tribes think about themselves and try to prosper without being willing to help others, which then in turn means that they are on their

own and no one is going to help them. **This is the breakdown of society.** Having a king is no solution as you can read in this. There is no solution except to become responsible for oneself and one another. **There is no solution except mutual help and shared responsibility.**

So they said, no, we want a king. Everyone else has one—following the crowd. Israel was supposed to be different. They weren't supposed to be like every other nation. That's why: "It is not you they reject; they are rejecting me," God is speaking. **I've chosen them for a special vocation to lead the world a new way of living and they don't want it; they want to be like the world.** This takes place prior to one thousand years before Christ: 1050 BC, something like that.

So then Samuel delivers this message from the Lord. He talks about what the king is going to do, and he is talking about **tyranny**. Yeah, the king will fight your wars all right, only who is he going to use to fight your wars? He is going to use you. Your property and your children are going to become his property and his children. The upshot of all this is going to be **you are going to end up as slaves**, you yourselves! Not only will he take everything from you, but then you yourselves will become his subjects. **This is what happens when people rely on some great savior in flesh and blood, some king, some politician, some military leader. It repeats itself over and over again in history.** God already offered a solution, and the people are saying we don't want that. So we will see as we read the Books of Samuel and Kings exactly how this all turns out.