

The title of this morning's sermon is, *When God Says, "Obey Their Voice."*

Please open your Bibles to **1 Samuel 8** and stand with me for the reading of God's Word.

**1 Samuel 8:4** Then all the elders of Israel gathered together and came to Samuel at Ramah **5** and said to him, "Behold, you are old and your sons do not walk in your ways. Now appoint for us a king to judge us like all the nations." **6** But the thing displeased Samuel when they said, "Give us a king to judge us." And Samuel prayed to the Lord. **7** And the Lord said to Samuel, "Obey the voice of the people in all that they say to you, for they have not rejected you, but they have rejected me from being king over them. **8** According to all the deeds that they have done, from the day I brought them up out of Egypt even to this day, forsaking me and serving other gods, so they are also doing to you. **9** Now then, obey their voice; only you shall solemnly warn them and show them the ways of the king who shall reign over them." **Samuel's Warning Against Kings** **10** So Samuel told all the words of the Lord to the people who were asking for a king from him. **11** He said, "These will be the ways of the king who will reign over you: he will take your sons and appoint them to his chariots and to be his horsemen and to run before his chariots. **12** And he will appoint for himself commanders of thousands and commanders of fifties, and some to plow his ground and to reap his harvest, and to make his implements of war and the equipment of his chariots. **13** He will take your daughters to be perfumers and cooks and bakers. **14** He will take the best of your fields and vineyards and olive orchards and give them to his servants. **15** He will take the tenth of your grain and of your vineyards and give it to his officers and to his servants. **16** He will take your male servants and female servants and the best of your young men and your donkeys, and put them to his work. **17** He will take the tenth of your flocks, and you shall be his slaves. **18** 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." **The Lord Grants Israel's Request** **19** But the people refused to obey the voice of Samuel. And they said, "No! But there shall be a king over us, **20** that we also may be like all the nations, and that our king may judge us and go out before us and fight our battles." **21** And when Samuel had heard all the words of the people, he repeated them in the ears of the Lord. **22** And the Lord said to Samuel, "Obey their voice and make them a king." Samuel then said to the men of Israel, "Go every man to his city."

You may be seated. Let's pray.

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On Sunday mornings we have been looking at a few examples of God giving people what they want...to their own detriment.

I think this is so important, because of a mistaken notion about God...

If God doesn't want us doing something, He will prevent us. There are people who do things and their defense is, "God hasn't stopped me, so He must be okay with it."

But it doesn't work like this.

God hasn't created a bunch of robots. We are free moral agents who can push for things, which God can give us...even when it's not best for us.

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Over the last few weeks we have looked at different examples:

- God let Moses take Aaron with him when he refused to go
- God gave the Israelites meat when they asked for it after complaining about the manna
- God let Balaam go with Balak after telling him no
- God let 2.5 tribes settle outside the Promised Land.

In this sermon we will see our last example and continue Luke 15 next week.<sup>i</sup>

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Look with me at verse four...

**1 Samuel 8:4 Then all the elders of Israel gathered together and came to Samuel at Ramah 5 and said to him, “Behold, you are old and your sons do not walk in your ways. Now appoint for us a king to judge us like all the nations.”**

Notice their motivation: to be **like all the nations**.

Remember the word holy means set apart, or different. In asking to be like the other nations they were asking to be unholy, or common.

Part of their holiness was having God as their king, which meant NOT having an earthly king.

**1 Samuel 8:6 But the thing displeased Samuel when they said, “Give us a king to judge us.” And Samuel prayed to the Lord. 7 And the Lord said to Samuel, “Obey the voice of the people in all that they say to you, for they have not rejected you, but they have rejected me from being king over them.**

I’ve always felt like this is a heartbreaking response from God. It shows a tender side as He discusses being rejected by man. It’s unimaginable to me that sinful, fallen man would reject God...and not the other way around.

**1 Samuel 8:8 According to all the deeds that they have done, from the day I brought them up out of Egypt even to this day, forsaking me and serving other gods, so they are also doing to you. 9 Now then, obey their voice; only you shall solemnly warn them and show them the ways of the king who shall reign over them.” 10 So Samuel told all the words of the Lord to the people who were asking for a king from him.**

Despite the way the nation was treating the Lord, He still graciously wanted them to know how bad it would be to have an earthly king. In verse 11 through 17 he warns them what it will be like. Skip to **verse 18**...

**1 Samuel 8:18 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.” 19 But the people refused to obey the voice of Samuel. And they said, “No! But there shall be a king over us, 20 that we also may be LIKE ALL THE NATIONS, and that our king may judge us and go out before us and fight our battles.”**

For the second time they asked to be like the other nations.

They also said they wanted a king that would lead them into battle and fight for them. The reason this request is so sad is this is exactly what God had been doing for them!

Briefly look one chapter to the left at **1 Samuel 7:10**... God had just won a spectacular battle for them...

**1 Samuel 7:10 As Samuel was offering up the burnt offering, the Philistines drew near to attack Israel. But the Lord thundered with a mighty sound that day against the Philistines and threw them into confusion, and they were defeated before Israel.**

Does this sound like the kind of King you’d want to go out before you? Can you imagine a king doing a better job fighting your battles than what we read here? But it wasn’t good enough for Israel.

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The truth is Israel didn’t lack a King to go out before them and fight their battles. They had that King in the Lord Himself.

What they really wanted was the image of a king. They didn’t want to walk by faith, they wanted to walk by sight. They wanted a king they could see...and if you want a king you can see, he better be physically impressive.

Notice in their request there's no mention of him being a spiritual man.

And why is that?

Because they didn't care about him spiritually. They only cared about him physically, and physically he was great:

- **1 Samuel 9:2** Saul [was] a handsome young man. There was not a man among the people of Israel more handsome than he. From his shoulders upward he was taller than any of the people.
- **1 Samuel 10:23** When [Saul] stood among the people, he was taller than any of the people from his shoulders upward. **24** Samuel said to the people, "Do you see him whom the Lord has chosen? There is none like him among all the people." And all the people shouted, "Long live the king!"

The people were happy because he was everything they wanted.

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Because Saul was such a failure, sometimes people wonder why God chose him as king. He wasn't chosen because he was what God wanted. He was chosen because he was what the people wanted.

God didn't just give them a king. He gave them the king they wanted.

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Look at **verse 21**...

**1 Samuel 8:21** And when Samuel had heard all the words of the people, he repeated them in the ears of the Lord.

Samuel tells God everything the people said.

Briefly look back at **verse 19**...

**1 Samuel 8:19** But the people **REFUSED TO OBEY THE VOICE OF SAMUEL**. And they said, "No! But there shall be a king over us,

Talk about rebellious!

They rebelled against God's messenger, which was the same as rebelling against God.

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Now because of their rebelliousness, and because of how bad it was going to be for them to have a king, if you weren't already familiar with the account, what would you expect God to do and not do?

- I would expect him to discipline them.
- I would not expect him to give them what they want.

But look at **verse 22**...

**1 Samuel 8:22** And the Lord said to Samuel, "**OBEY THEIR VOICE AND MAKE THEM A KING.**" Samuel then said to the men of Israel, "Go every man to his city."

God told Samuel to give them a king...after letting them know how bad it would be for them and after making it obvious He didn't want them to have a king. But they kept pushing so He obeyed their voice...and this brings us to lesson one...

**Lesson One: When God says, "Obey their voice," it doesn't always go like we expect.**

Let me ask you: how well did it go for the people having a king?

We have been talking about God giving us what we want to our detriment and this must be one of the best examples in Scripture.

They got exactly what they wanted: a strong, tall, physically impressive king to go before them and lead them in battle:

- Now they're going to be able to fearlessly fight their battles.
- They will never be afraid of an enemy again.

Right?

Wrong!

Look at **1 Samuel 13:5**...

**1 Samuel 13:5 And the Philistines mustered to fight with Israel, thirty thousand chariots and six thousand horsemen and troops like the sand on the seashore in multitude. They came up and encamped in Michmash, to the east of Beth-aven. 6 When the men of Israel saw...their king go before them they were filled with courage and confidence.**

Nope...

**1 Samuel 13:6 When the men of Israel saw that they were in trouble (for the people were hard pressed), the people hid themselves in caves and in holes and in rocks and in tombs and in cisterns, 7 and some Hebrews crossed the fords of the Jordan to the land of Gad and Gilead. Saul was still at Gilgal, and all the people followed him trembling.**

They're hiding in caves, holes, behind rocks, in tombs and in wells. They're swimming across the river in fear. Even the men who remained WITH SAUL were terrified.

They thought it would be great having a king. They thought it would solve all their problems and make their lives so much better.

But that's not at all what happened.

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Contrast the two battles:

- Their battle against the Philistines in 1 Samuel 7 when God was their king
- Their battle against the Philistines in 1 Samuel 13 when Saul was their king.

It's sad what they gave up.

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Getting what we want – when it isn't God's will for us – doesn't always go like we'd expect.

- Like when Moses go to take Aaron with him
- Like when the Israelites got meat
- Like when Balaam got to go with Balak
- Like when the 2.5 tribes got to settle outside the Promised Land.

None of these accounts went the way the people expected.

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Let me show you something incredible. Turn to the right to **Ecclesiastes 6**. We won't turn back to **1 Samuel**. After Psalms is Proverbs and then Ecclesiastes.

**Ecclesiastes 6:1 There is an evil that I have seen under the sun, and it lies heavy on mankind:**

God said there is an evil. What might you expect the **evil** to be? What's evil to you? Murder, lying, adultery, homosexuality?

These are all **evil**, but look at **verse 2**...

**Ecclesiastes 6:2 a man to whom God gives wealth, possessions, and honor, so that he lacks nothing of all that he desires,**

He **lacks nothing**. He has received everything he wants, but look at this...

**Ecclesiastes 6:2b YET GOD DOES NOT GIVE HIM POWER TO ENJOY THEM, but a stranger enjoys them. This is vanity; it is a grievous evil.**

God could give a man everything...but not give him the power to enjoy it.

This brings us to lesson two...

**Lesson Two: God can give us what we want (Part One) but remove the power to enjoy it.**

When Dad was receiving radiation on his throat, they gave him a feeding tube because he couldn't swallow.

From a taste standpoint, it didn't matter what food went in the tube. It could've been the fanciest, most expensive, delicious food, but it wasn't any better than the cheapest, blandest, most boring food, because Dad didn't have the power to enjoy it.

This is what I think of when I read these verses: sometimes God prevents us from enjoying what He's given us.

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Could you imagine anything worse? God gives you what you want but takes away the ability to enjoy it.

This reminds me of the Israelites eating the meat in the wilderness. We read the account in Numbers, but then the commentary in Psalms says this is what happened...

**Psalm 78:27 he rained meat on them like dust, winged birds like the sand of the seas; 28 he let them fall in the midst of their camp, all around their dwellings. 29 And they ate and were well filled, for he gave them WHAT THEY CRAVED.**

Notice the way this is worded: God **gave them what THEY CRAVED**. Not what God craved for them.

**Psalm 78:30 But before they had satisfied their craving, while the food was still in their mouths, 31 the anger of God rose against them, and he killed the strongest of them and laid low the young men of Israel.**

There is an interesting irony when contrasting two phrases:

- **Verse 29 says they ate and were filled**
- **Verse 30 says before they satisfied their craving**

They ate enough to be full...but it never satisfied them!

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This describes so well what happens when we get what we want, but it's not what God wants for us...

He gives it to us but removes any satisfaction we receive from it.

**Psalm 106:14 They had a wanton craving in the wilderness, and put God to the test in the desert;**

This is referring to Israel wanting meat, and notice this...

**Psalm 106:15 he GAVE THEM WHAT THEY ASKED, but sent a wasting disease among them.**

They got what they wanted, but God didn't let them enjoy it.

This probably isn't speaking physically, but spiritually. Other translations say...

**God sent leanness into their soul.**

What does this mean?

- They were growing physically while they ate, but their soul was wasting away.
- They were satisfied physically but starving spiritually.

The point is...

God can give us what we want, but if it's not what He wants us to have He can remove the power to enjoy it.

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Look at **verse 3...**

**Ecclesiastes 6:3a If a man fathers a hundred children and lives many years, so that the days of his years are many,**

He has 100 children – an unimaginable sign of blessing and prosperity – and he **[lived] many years** – has a long life too...

**Ecclesiastes 6:3b but HIS SOUL IS NOT SATISFIED WITH LIFE'S GOOD THINGS (he still doesn't enjoy what he has), and he also has no burial, I say that A STILLBORN CHILD IS BETTER OFF THAN HE.**

How terrible is it to have all that you want, but not be **satisfied**?

It would be better not to be born at all, because you live a miserable life.

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Skip to **verse 6...**

**Ecclesiastes 6:6a Even though he should live a thousand years twice over,**

He gets to live 2,000 years!

But look at this...

**Ecclesiastes 6:6b YET ENJOY NO GOOD**

Or not enjoy his blessings...

**Ecclesiastes 6:6c—do not all go to the one place?**

In other words, we all die, or we all go to the grave.

**Ecclesiastes 6:7 All the toil of man is for his mouth, yet HIS APPETITE IS NOT SATISFIED.**

He works hard, but despite all his **toil** – or labor – he’s not satisfied.

How terrible is it to have everything you want...but be unable to enjoy it?

Pretty terrible, but that’s what God can cause.

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The question is...

How can we enjoy the blessings we have?

The answer is in **chapter 5**. Look one chapter to the left.

Before Solomon talks about the misery of people being unable to enjoy what they have in **Ecclesiastes 6**, he provides three verses at the end of **chapter 5** that teach that people in God’s will, can enjoy the gifts He gives.

Look at **Ecclesiastes 5:18**...

**Ecclesiastes 5:18 Behold, what I have seen to be good and fitting is to eat and drink and find enjoyment in all the toil with which one toils under the sun the few days of his life that God has given him, for this is his lot.**

God says three things are **good and fitting**:

1. First, laboring faithfully or working hard
2. Second, enjoying simple blessings, such as **[eating] and [drinking]**
3. Third, viewing these blessings as gifts **God has given [us]**

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Keep this in mind and look at **verse 19**...

**Ecclesiastes 5:19 Everyone also to whom God has given wealth and possessions and POWER TO ENJOY THEM, and to accept his lot and rejoice in his toil—this is the gift of God.**

This is the opposite of what we’ve been reading. Now God gives, but with the power TO ENJOY.

And this brings us to the next part of Lesson Two...

**Lesson Two: God can give us what we want (Part One) with the power to enjoy it.**

Sometimes money can sound so bad in Scripture you could almost wonder: “Are we talking about money or leprosy?” You might want to go home and get rid of all your **wealth and possessions**.

But the verse says **God has given wealth and possessions**. They’re gifts from Him. That’s not the issue.

The issue is...

We’re not meant to enjoy the gifts apart from the Giver:

- God prevents us from enjoying gifts He’s given us, if we attempt to enjoy them apart from Him:
- He does this to drive us to Him.

It’s one of God’s graces that we can’t enjoy His gifts apart from Him, because that would allow us to be content without Him.

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At the end of the verse, look at the words **this is the gift of God**. It’s important to understand this correctly.

**Wealth and possessions** are gifts, but that's not the gift he's referring to.

The **gift** is being able to enjoy the gifts God's given us.

Read **verse 19** one more noticing **the gift of God** is being able to enjoy the gifts He's given us...

**Ecclesiastes 5:19 Everyone also to whom God has given wealth and possessions and power to enjoy them, and to accept his lot and rejoice in his toil—this is the gift of God.**

The gift of God is the power – or ability – for three important things in life:

1. First, **enjoying** the **wealth and possessions** He's given us.
2. Second, **accepting [our] lot** in life, which means being content with what we have.
3. Third, **rejoicing in [our] toil**, which means enjoying our work. It's wonderful to enjoy your work

To have these three things is to be very blessed...and God is the only One who can give it to us.

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Look at our last verse...

**Ecclesiastes 5:20 For he will not much remember the days of his life because God keeps him occupied with joy in his heart.**

When it says **he will not much remember the days of his life**, this must be interpreted in light of the book of Ecclesiastes, which basically teaches that our lives are miserable and we don't want to remember them:

- **Ecclesiastes 6:12b While he lives the few days of HIS VAIN LIFE...**
- **Ecclesiastes 7:15 In MY VAIN LIFE I have seen everything...**
- **Ecclesiastes 9:9b All the days of YOUR VAIN LIFE that he has given you...**

Solomon is saying God will keep us **occupied with joy** – or gladness – **in [our hearts]** so we don't remember how miserable our lives are. Listen to the way the Amplified words it...

**For he will not often consider the [troubled] days of his life...**

When we have a relationship with the Lord, we're able to enjoy the gifts He's given us to offset the trials and suffering of this life.

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Let me show you a powerful contrast. Briefly look at **verse 17**...

**Ecclesiastes 5:17 Moreover, all his days he eats in darkness in much vexation and sickness and anger.**

There couldn't be a more depressing description of someone's life...and this is the unbeliever.

We know it's an unbeliever, because of the words **he eats in darkness**. This isn't physical darkness. It doesn't mean he likes to eat his food in the dark.

This is spiritual darkness. The light of the Gospel hasn't shined on him.:

- He experiences much **vexation** or frustration
- He's **[sick] and [angry]**
- He's miserable!

The darkness is a metaphor for the gloom in his life because He doesn't know the Lord.



Let me show you something that makes it more interesting...

Do your Bibles have headings around verses 8 or 10?

- **Riches Are Meaningless**
- **The Foolishness of Riches**
- **The Vanity of Wealth and Honor**

This is actually the description of a rich man's terrible existence, because he's unable to enjoy his wealth and possessions without God.

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Now:

- Contrast the unbeliever in **Ecclesiastes 5:17 Moreover, all his days he eats in darkness in much vexation and sickness and anger.**
- With the believer in **Ecclesiastes 5:20 For he will not much remember the days of his life because God keeps him occupied with joy in his heart.**

Quite a difference huh?

My hope and prayer is that you can enjoy the gifts the Lord has given you, because you know the Giver Himself. You've been reconciled to Him through His Son, Jesus Christ.

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Let me conclude with this...

We should love the Lord, accept God's will for our lives, and enjoy the gifts He gives us:

- If we focus on the gifts more than the giver, we're guilty of idolatry, and we won't be able to enjoy the gifts.
- If we accept the gifts, but covet more, we're guilty of covetousness discontentment, and we won't be able to enjoy the gifts.

But if we submit to God and use what He gives us for His glory, we can enjoy life and experience contentment.

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I will be up front after service, and if you have any questions about anything I've shared, or I can pray for you in any way I would consider it a privilege to speak with you.

Let's pray.

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<sup>i</sup> I don't know if Rhea will remember this. So far she is my only child who's asked this. When she was younger when I would leave for the office in the morning she would try to get me to take her with me.

I told her she would be bored, but she still insisted on going. One day I decided to take her with me and she was bored within a few minutes.

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There was another time she really wanted to play with a puzzle that had 500 pieces. Most of her puzzles at the time had about 10 to 20 pieces. I told her that she wasn't going to like playing with this larger puzzle, but she insisted on it.

I let her dump out all the pieces. I don't think she put any of the pieces together.

I let her go to the office with me and play with the puzzle to teach her a lesson, and I believe God does the same with us sometimes.