

Change is Coming, Get Ready

June 2021 (30 May - 26 June)



Some of us thrive on change, and some of us don't like it yet we know that change is part of the human condition — we deal with it on a daily basis. We can wait until change happens and let it change us out of necessity or we can act in a manner in which we try to shape and control the changes we face in life.

However there are times in our lives when the changes we face go far beyond our individual circumstances. Every so often, perhaps once in a lifetime, people collectively are faced with a seismic event that changes the course of history. We are in the midst of such an event, one that has affected the whole world.

The aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic will be far reaching and will change the way we structure our societies and order our institutions. The scope will be wide and comprehensive ranging from how we govern ourselves and who will govern us, to how and where and when we work. This pandemic has caused us to think about how we view and value the importance of each individual human life.

The early Christians faced times of great disruption, famine, plagues and war. They had at least three key things to say about the way we should look at society and structure it.

Firstly, they believed scripture is clear that God intends that there should be human power structures in our world.

Secondly, they uphold the idea that God is sovereign over all power structures, and he will hold to account all who have exercised power. The book of Revelation confirms this view.

Within Christian teaching the third important thing to note is that God intends to bring justice and wise government to reign in the world. Jesus Christ is the ultimate dispenser of true justice. In Mark 10: 35-45 Jesus explains that true power and equity begins with a servant heart. Jesus is the Messianic figure of which the Old Testament prophets spoke.

One day the Kingdom will be realised. Until that day Christians are called to speak truth to power demonstrating the alternative Kingdom values of service, humility and grace.

Structure

Using a sequence of four stories from the book of 1 Samuel, and highlighting one in particular each week, we have asked our daily scripture writers to help us gain an overall biblical perspective on what it means for Christians today to help shape and challenge the power structures of our modern world in order that all creation might flourish.

These stories ask what kind of leaders do we need to grow and encourage? What changes must we start to champion, and challenge governments and individuals to take on board? Why do we pray 'Thy Kingdom Come' if not to effect change?

These key stories are opened out further by exploring the additional scripture readings listed in the *Revised Common Lectionary* and applying lessons to be learned, for family life, church life, and work life as we face the changes ahead.

Each week of the four week theme runs Sunday-Saturday and has its own subtheme, which contains daily Bible readings and thought triggers. Look up our [Discussion Questions PDF](#) that adapts the material for personal Bible study and [Connect groups](#).



In a changing world we trust in the providence of an omnipotent God (30 May, Trinity Sunday)

Using Hannah's song helps us explore the idea that God engages with the plight of individuals. Hannah is struggling with childlessness. Justice is not simply generic for nations or communities. God listens to the poor and downcast, the disappointed and lonely. Our theme this month invites the writer to share seven prayers and reflections, making use of the biblical vision of a just society that one day will rule on earth — and that starts with individuals.

1. 1 Samuel 2: 1-10

1. **The Change-maker's Mother.** Amidst all the trials and upheavals of life God stands with the oppressed, depressed and disappointed.

Key Story

2. Romans 8: 12-17

2. **Another Kingdom** Living into a new identity.
3. **The Secret Heroine.** It is fascinating to read this psalm alongside our key text for the week 1 Samuel 2: 1-10. The two texts closely echo one another thematically and structurally with praise towards God who is capable of profound reversals in circumstances. In *Psalm 113* we can pray alongside our secret heroine of this week — Hannah.

3. Psalm 113

4. **Overcoming Evil with Good.** When you read today's reading in the context of Hannah's life and actions that we are reflecting on this week, she becomes a true example of selfless love and devotion to God.

4. Romans 12: 9-16

5. **Mary the Revolutionary.** This is another story of how one person's commitment and belief in her knowledge of God allows her to be used by God in a most spectacular way to change the whole outcome of history.

5. Luke 1: 39-57

6. **Mind-altering, Body-altering, Life-altering!** Singing praises to God alters the chemistry and mood in our minds, bodies and lives.

6. Acts 16: 22-34

7. **Rhoda's Story.** Change is coming, get ready...

7. Acts 12: 1-17

In a changing world, you choose: Power, Popularism, or Principle (6 June)

The key passage for this week records a moment of great institutional change in the life of Israel. It marks the end of the rule of the Judges. Power now is being passed to a king. What follows on from this reading is a devastating critic of Kingship. In rejecting the status quo — which was the Kingship of God — Israel to Samuel's mind was making the wrong decision.

This reading may cause us to consider the changes we face in our time. How will we re-structure our relationship with those who hold the levels of power post Covid? What place does God have in the public arena? Why is it important that power is always held to account? What role should the faith community play in this accountability? Who are the kingmakers today? Who do we choose as our kings? What role do tech giants and media influencers play in our world? How are they shaping governments and also our individual freedoms?

1. 1 Samuel 8: 4-20,(11:14-15)

Key Story

2. Psalm 138

3. Genesis 3: 8-15

4. Psalm 130

1. **Samuel agrees to a king reluctantly.** Keep in mind the changes happening worldwide in governments and the rise of new democracies and struggles against dictatorships. Settled government may not always be the norm even in the UK. Fragmentation between the four nations of the UK could bring, unrest and upheaval. In the next 10 years political and religious institutions will come under great strain. Governments find themselves controlled not by the ballot box but by multinationals and big business. Will we choose wisely who governs us? Integrity over popularity is always a challenge. Reflect on the core values of Hannah's song (see 1 Samuel 2: 1-10). In the light of Samuel's intervention what is the church's role as prophet today? Should we be kingmakers?
2. **Choosing well comes through praise and trust in God.** Be careful which power brokers seek to control our lives.
3. **What place does God have in the public area?** This is the story of God in search of Adam who has lost his innocence sold for a piece of fruit. So much of the sadness that is happening in our world is due to lost innocence; promised power and influence bought through control and manipulation. Make sure that we don't fall into the temptation of being bought for a few days or years of fleeting power or influence. God comes calling asking "Where are you?"
4. **Acknowledging the grace and mercy of God.** The story of Israel's search for a king is the story of 'everyman' in every generation, looking for a leader to follow. Trouble is — all political leadership ends in failure. Israel finds a new start with David only to find David's reign would end in tears. The prophets always point to a coming king and kingdom. King Jesus the servant king who will bring peace.

In a changing world, you choose: Power, Popularism, or Principle (6 June)

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5. 2 Corinthians
4: 13-5:1

6. Mark 3: 20-35

7. Your choice...

5. **Hearts and minds are transformed through the darkest moments.**
We can be renewed daily by the power of the Holy Spirit. Let us not lose heart but be aware of the coming citizenship in another kingdom.
6. **Called to be the influencers in our world.** Live out the coming kingdom in the present. Change is coming — get ready. Israel emerged as a nation under the love and compassion of God but became influenced by the power struggles of the nations around them. Israel embraced models of kingship that put humanity first rather than God. We are called to share our power model of humility and service in the world, following King Jesus.
7. **Our Daily Worship writer is invited to choose their own reading to conclude the week.** If you are using this material for personal reflection we invite you to likewise choose your own passage to conclude the week. You could return to one of the previous passages or look up another one that on reflection links in to your thoughts this week.



In a changing world... What kind of leader? (13 June)

In our key story this week we are introduced to the idea that it is dangerous to judge someone by their looks. Saul, the first king of Israel, had outward dignity but lacked integrity. This raises the biblical teaching regarding humility and empathy as key ingredients for a leader.

1. 1 Samuel

15:34 -16:13

Key Story

2. Psalm 20

3. Ezekiel 17:

22-24

4. Psalm 92: 1-4,

12-15

5. 2 Corinthians

5: 6-17

1. **In search of a replacement leader.** The story opens up for us what is a central issue in the history of the people of Israel: the conflict between kingship, human rights, and the prophet who speaks God's word — truth to power — and becomes the disrupter. Much of this story reflects the truth that egotistical power never lasts. God will always speak a word of correction through his prophets. This leads us to consider the importance of speaking out and asking what are the issues of today that demand us to listen for the voice of God. Does this passage give us a blueprint for leadership in the work place and also perhaps in our churches? Particularly verse 7.
2. **This psalm might well contrast the difference between David and Saul.** One trusts in horses and chariots the other in the compassion and grace of God. (See Samuel's critique of kingship in 1 Samuel 8: 10-20.)
3. **Ezekiel the prophet is only repeating in a poetic form the promise of the coming age spoken of by Hannah...** The age of prosperity and peace, a time when all things will be well, this is the eternal promise given to Abraham, and reflected in Hannah and Mary's songs as we saw last week.
4. **Here is a psalm full of encouragement and hope.** It highlights the impact that music and praise can have on our disposition. God is in the business of long term commitment. Those who stay true will find even in old age they will be fruitful. What an encouragement to never give up in the service of God. Reflect on David's musical influence on King Saul.
5. **Going home.** The story of the film 'ET', of a small boy's encounter with a stranded alien longing to go home, reflects something of the mood of this passage. Paul invites us to understand that the resurrection of Jesus gives the Christian new vision, because we are born of the Spirit. We recognise the Kingdom that has still to come. This belief and faith evokes longings within us to go home and be with the Lord. Though our outward looking body may be failing, our inward hope assures us we have a future. Linking back to our key reading, looking at the character of David perhaps recall how he longs to regain his innocence and his relationship with God (see Psalm 51).

In a changing world... What kind of leader? (13 June)

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6. Mark 4: 26-34

7. Your choice...

6. **Here again the Kingdom of God is explained in terms of the small becoming great.** The story of David's life follows something of this pattern. God favours the humble and brings to nothing the actions of the proud. Christians are being inspired to believe in the small things that we do, that might look insignificant, but will eventually grow into significant trees of oak to shelter the needy.
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In a changing world, are we ready? (20 June)

Our key reading this week invites us to consider and contrast the power angles in this story. Goliath stands for might and strength towering over Saul who fails to respond. His leadership style is 'wait' and see what happens. David takes up the challenge. He believes he is the Lord's anointed and he goes to face the towering giant with what he knows best: his sling, five stones and his trust in God.

1. 1 Samuel 17: 4-50

Key Story

(Writer should choose a portion of the passage to focus on)

2. Psalm 9: 9-20

3. 1 Samuel 17:57- 18:5

4. Psalm 133

5. Job 38: 1-11

6. Psalm 107: 1-3, 23-32

7. 2 Corinthians 6: 1-13

1. **Leadership that inspires.** When facing change what model of leadership bests suits?
2. **Thankful.** This psalm expresses David's confidence in the Lord's protection and the importance of keeping a thankful disposition.
3. **Sustaining.** God raises up Jonathan in the house of Saul as David's protector. God gives us people in our lives to sustain us and support us in our life's work.
4. **This describes the joy felt in unity and harmony.** Jesus calls his followers to seek unity in John 17, great leaders always seek and acknowledge unity as a power stronger than weapons.
5. **Immeasurable.** The story of Job reminds us that despite all the knowledge of humanity it is God who is in control of the world. We find ourselves back with the insights of Hannah from 1 Samuel 2: 3 "For God knows what's going on. He takes the measure of everything that happens." (from *The Message*).
6. **Nothing lasts for ever except the grace of God.**
7. **Open wide your hearts.** We finish this month off with a note of warning and rebuke. We need to respond to the generosity of God. Change is coming — get ready!

