

The Real You...

- Have you had one of those moments when you've let your guard down and rather embarrassingly **someone has seen you as you really are?**
 - you're busy in the garden
 - someone has called out to you...
 - "What now?" **you have grumbled**, thinking it was your spouse, but it was the nice neighbour from across the road who's just started coming to church!
 - **you've been exposed** - there is no where to hide!
- **The Bible does that:**
 - **it exposes people and reveals them to be what they really are**
 - 1 Samuel 8 is such a passage
 - God's people are exposed
 - opened to what they really are - and **we're** exposed by it, too

The King Thing

- **"Appoint us a king, like the other nations."**
 - there was plausibility about it....
 - **Samuel was old** (whole succession thing, like the whole Blair/Brown thing!)
 - **his sons were unworthy** - in fact they were scoundrels and no-one wanted to be stuck with them as judges
 - a **monarchy that seemed to work so well** for the other nations appeared as the solution
- Samuel is hurt: **"They have rejected me."**
 - "No," the Lord said, "It is not you they have rejected, it is me. They no longer want me to be their king over them."
- Not that it was anything new:
 - Israel had been doing this since Egypt
 - the same old idolatry - with a new twist (a king) - someone else in charge, but not God!
- **The idea of having a king was not in itself wrong:**
 - there had been mention of it in Deuteronomy (17:14-20), where Moses indicated that the time would come for a king
 - in Deuteronomy mention is also made of a king like the other nations have, but there was to be one vital difference to the kings of the other nations
 - Israel's king was to be a king of **the Lord's choosing**, a brother Israelite, without the customary royal perks (**a harem, massive wealth, a military machine**) but one who was a servant of the Lord and his law
 - so it wasn't the request itself that was wrong, it was what lay behind it that polluted it
- If you look ahead to 1 Samuel 12 you will see that Israel was rejecting the Lord:
 - in that chapter Samuel reminds Israel of their history - **one of deliverance when they cried to the Lord, but then a swing away from him so that he afflicts them**
 - they cry again to him and he delivers them again
 - they are threatened by Nahash the Ammorite and they want a king
- Their help then was not in the strong arm of the Lord, **but in a new governmental structure:**
 - in chapter 7 we saw how when Israel in helplessness (and kingless) repented and turned to the Lord he delivered them and they raised their Ebenezer
 - they had tried manipulating God ("bring the ark to us," they had demanded on the battlefield) - but that failed
 - **now they want to substitute a king for God**
- **It is pure idolatry**

Exposed

- Israel's exposure as to what they were really like under the outward show should make us stop and think about **ourselves**:
 - do we not first assume that when things go wrong then it is our technique that is wrong?
 - the system needs changing, we assume, not that repentance is needed
 - how often that's how our own denomination reacts - witness the reorganisation of central committees, from Boards to Councils last year!
- *"Moving the deck-chairs on the Titanic"...*
- Instead of **looking to God for help** we would rather **tell God what form his help must take**:
 - we don't look to God but trust to a **method**
 - Alpha, Start!, Christianity Explored - **methods** (witness the adverts for some of these things in the Christian press!)
 - better publicity - **method**
 - no-one comes to housegroups, so we need another **method**, different material...
 - particularly where we are involved in leadership - Kirk Session, Presbytery, church committees, SU committees - we need to beware of this subtle temptation!
- What's more, we must be very careful about what we ask from God, **because sometimes he gives us what we ask for!**
 - too often we do not seek his will but are obstinate about what we want
 - some of our proposals and solutions can be very reasonable - **but entirely without God**
 - the Lord knows what is in our hearts
 - we can't put on a front that fools him from what is our real self
 - he can see through our unbelief even when we can't
- Israel wanted a king **'like the other nations'**:
 - **we don't like to be different to others, do we** - even when it is for God's sake?
 - we don't like being distinct
 - **sadly, we would far rather mix our Christianity so that it blends with everyone else in the world**
 - Samuel warned Israel about what a king like the other nations was like - a king greatly different to the kind God would choose and whose standing was greatly different
 - but their "king like the other nations" had become a passion with them
 - **'No,'** they said after Samuel's job-description, **'this is the kind of king we want.'**
- Why would anyone want that kind of king?
 - it's a peculiar fact, but people prefer tyranny to anarchy - whether left or right
 - the mass of humanity has a sense of insecurity and yearns for strong leadership that will say 'Do this!' and 'Do that!'
 - many people want to be told how to live welcoming Hitlers and Stalins even with their high price
 - and being responsible for our own actions - rather than devolving that responsibility to the person in charge - is hard work!

Distinct

- God had made Israel a **distinct** nation, but they didn't want to be **different**:
 - **is this true of us?**
 - **would we prefer to keep in step with our crooked and perverse generation than be the distinct people God has called us to be in Jesus Christ?**
 - **re-iterate the challenge of this morning to be holy - even when it makes us distinct!**