

Thought for the day 27th July 2020 from Jan Betts (All Hallows)

1 Samuel 10 1-16 Luke 22 24-30

'Give us a king, give us a king' said the Israelites to God. 'All other nations have a king, we want a king!' So God gave them a king and blessed Saul very clearly through Samuel in our reading from 1 Samuel. What God knew, and the Israelites did not want to know or hear, was that human kingship and power will always descend into empire and domination and exploitation. As it did!

Jesus knew this. His whole ministry was about combatting the idea of power as exploitation, be that Roman, Jewish or any other. The power of God is to love and not to exploit, to serve and not to dominate. In the parallel passage to our Luke reading, in Matthew 18, Jesus tells his disciples to become like children, considered no more than slaves in legal terms. Extreme language, but Jesus is always about extreme overturning of human systems of violence.

A servant relationship could be one of exploitation as well. But Jesus turns this upside down. Master/mistress and servant have a relationship of mutuality. We are not slaves! The great servant songs of Isaiah quoted in Matthew show Jesus as a servant. Paul talks of himself as a servant of God, and greets other Christians as servants of God. The servant relationship with God isn't domination, because God is above all love and our servant relationship with her is one of joyful loved and loving service. Servant obedience is about falling in line with someone who above all longs for our good, who knows us better than we know ourselves and who wants to guide us into ways of freedom from the tyranny of buying into human power, into the human desire to be what others are and to have what others have. Servant mind loves as God loves, without any desire to dominate.

What form might your loving servant relationship with God take today? What might we notice about God's loving relationship with us?