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“We Three Kings of Israel Are: King Saul”  
Text: 1 Samuel 8:4-22a; 9:1-2; Matthew 21:1-9

Israel had a king. A good king. This king performed signs and wonders in Egypt to gain their release from slavery in Egypt. This king led them out of Egypt, through the Red Sea, and for forty years in the wilderness. This king brought them into a good land and gave it to them, fighting for his people and defeating their enemies. He settled them and gave them peace. And if this all weren't enough, he would have done even more, this good king of Israel.

But all that was not enough for Israel. They weren't satisfied with being this king's special people - they wanted to be like all the other nations around them. They wanted a king like all the other nations had. *The grass is always greener*, I guess.

Did they know what they were doing? What they were asking for? Samuel told them; warned them, as we heard. Their new king would do what their old king, their good king, *never* would. He would take their sons and daughters away from them and use them in his service. He would take of their flocks and herds to support himself and his administration. And he wouldn't serve them and care for them as their old, good king did - he would make them serve him and care for him. So really, do you want a new king?

But the people had their eyes and hearts fixed on this. Their good king had called them a stubborn, stiff-necked people and he was right, and they were proving it once again. They were sticking to their guns. They wanted a new king. They wanted to be like all the other nations.

So the good king gave Samuel the go ahead; give them what they want, Yahweh, the Lord, said. It will be a day they regret for a very long time. The sad day when they rejected their king, their good and gracious God, and traded Him for a man named Saul.

Saul looked the part. As we heard, ***there was not a man among the people of Israel more handsome than he***, and ***he was taller than any of the people***. And while Saul started well, he quickly became the kind of king God said he would be. Because Saul was a man, not a god; he was not good and gracious, but a sinner. And he acted the part. He fell into sin, led the people into sin, and finally died a shameful death at his own hand. The Philistines then came and cut off his head and hung up his body on the wall of the city.

There is a warning for us here. We too have a good and gracious king who has provided us with life and everything we need, but are we unsatisfied? Do we want more? Do we want to be not His special people, but like everyone else? Thinking like them and acting like them and imitating them instead of living according to the Word of our God and

King? Are we too rejecting the good and choosing what is not good? We do, don't we? Our King knows it, but sometimes he lets us have what we want, even though He knows it is not good. To teach us, though sometimes it's a pretty hard lesson, as Israel could tell you.

But there's good news for us here, too. **For though Israel rejected her King, her King did not reject her.** There was tough discipline and tough times, but always her King was there for her in the end, not letting her be destroyed; not allowing her enemies to triumph over her. Because one day He was going to come back to her. One day He was going to establish His throne again. One day He would save her.

And that day came when Jesus sat on that donkey and rode into Jerusalem, the anti-Saul. For while Saul was most handsome and tall and stood out as kingly material, Jesus on the other hand, Isaiah tells us *had no form or majesty that we should look at him, and no beauty that we should desire him* (Isaiah 53:2b). Jesus led His people not into sin but into repentance and faith. And in the end, Jesus didn't take His own life in defeat, but laid it down for His people to win the victory. The victory over sin, death, and devil that we could not win. That He - once again - deliver and save us, care for us and provide for us what we need the most. To be that good King, that gracious King, our everlasting King.

***“Say to the daughter of Zion, ‘Behold, your king is coming to you!’ ”***

Indeed He is! That is the good news of Advent. That though we are the stubborn and stiff-necked people, our King has not rejected us. He came and was laid on the throne of the manger, sat on the throne of a donkey, and hung on the throne of the cross, to be your good and gracious King. And just as He came and did that for you, so He is coming again on the throne of the clouds to finally take you to His kingdom, where He wants you forever.

Do you want a better King than that? Do you want to be like all other people, chasing after false gods and rejecting the good your King has for you? He'll let you. But that's not what He wants. He wants you. So repent, return, and rejoice in His love and forgiveness. For He does not reject you, and He never will.

In the Name of the Father, and of the (+) Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.