



## MORRISON ZION EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH

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January 1, 2013  
New Year's Day Worship  
Sermon Text: [1 Samuel 28:3-25](#)  
Mr. Timothy Pingel

First Lesson: [Numbers 6:22-27](#)  
Psalm of the Day: [Psalm 8](#)  
Second Lesson: [Philippians 2:9-13](#)  
Gospel Lesson: [Luke 2:21](#)

### Face The Future With God

During the first few days of the new year, we often read in newspapers, or maybe we watch on TV, a great many predictions about the coming year. Some of these predictions are made by experts, experts in business, experts in politics. Some are made by people who claim to have supernatural powers to foresee the future. The very fact that these predictions are made and that they receive so much publicity shows us that we would like to know what the future will bring. I'm sure that all of us at sometime wonder whether or not this really will be a happy new year for us and for those whom we love.

In our text this morning, we have a picture of a man who is deeply concerned about the future, a man who is afraid beyond measure of what the next day would bring. In his fear, he went to what we would call today a spiritualist medium, a woman who claimed to have the power to contact the souls of the dead and speak with them. In this connection, the question is often asked, who was it that spoke to Saul that night? Some say that the Witch of Endor was a ventriloquist who pretended that Samuel was speaking to Saul. Others hold that it was really the spirit of Samuel. Still others are of the opinion that it was an evil spirit pretending to be Samuel. The Bible does not give us a direct answer to this question and we can't be sure just exactly what did happen that night. However, the Bible does make it clear that such things as this should not be done. This text can teach us a great deal about how we look at the uncertainty of the upcoming year. May the Holy Spirit help us all develop a proper attitude for the future as we, under his gracious guidance, study the picture of King Saul as a man facing the future without God.

A man who faces the future without God may for a long time seem to get along pretty well. Saul had been living without God for a long time. He pretty well controlled what happened in the kingdom of Israel. For a long time, Saul thought that he could do just about what he wanted to do and that he could make the future be just what he wanted it to be. Early in his reign, he had been a humble man and a fine king. But then he began to do things the way he thought they should be done. He began to ignore God's commands. As a result, God told him through Samuel that he would take the kingdom away from him and give it to David. Saul then tried to ensure that this would not happen by trying to kill David. When the priests of Nob helped David escape, he tried, by ordering the whole city to be destroyed and all the inhabitants killed, to make sure that nobody would ever help David again.

We see then in Saul a man who was trying to make sure that the future would be what he wanted it to be. He exemplified the spirit the poet expressed when he said, "I'm the master of my faith. I am the captain of my soul."

In the whole land of Israel, there was no man with greater power. He was king. He never had to worry about his daily bread. If he wanted food, he could order a servant to bring him food. If he wanted someone to play music in the palace, he could summon someone into his presence. If men did what he didn't want them to do, he could order them killed, as he did with the priests of Nob, or he could send out an army to punish them, as he did with David. On his orders, Saul's army drove David and his men out of the land of Israel and into the country of the Philistines. A man like that would seem to have the situation well in hand. He acted as though he did not need God.

But when a man faces the uncertain future without God, sooner or later he must always learn what Saul learned at the time of our text. He came face to face with a situation that was beyond his control. The Philistines had invaded the country and Saul marched out against them. But when he came to Mount Gilboa and saw how large the army of the Philistines was, he was afraid. Our text said, "He was afraid. Terror filled his heart." There on Mount Gilboa, Saul learned that there are some things that even kings with absolute earthly power cannot do. Just as men today must sometimes learn the hard way there are some things that cannot be bought for money. There are some situations that cannot be fixed, even if you know the Mayor or the Chief of Police.

So Saul, as our text tells us, inquired of the Lord, but the Lord did not answer him, neither by dreams nor by Urim, nor by prophets. Many times in the past, the Lord had spoken to Saul and told him what to do. Saul, however, chose not to listen to the Lord or his messengers because he thought that he knew better. Unfortunately, people have not learned much since the days of Saul.

The Lord still speaks to us today in his Holy Word and tells us what we are to do. He tells us what we need to know for our salvation. Yet even though God's directions and plan are clear, people, and often people in the church who ought to know better, do what they want to do and pay little attention to the Word of the Lord. Saul had lived that way for many years. Now that he was in trouble, he wanted the Lord's advice. But the Lord would not speak to him in any way. When Saul saw that the Lord was angry with him, he should have confessed his sin, repented of his past wickedness, and asked the Lord to forgive him. But he turned to the woman of Endor who was a servant of the devil, hoping that he might find there the help that he was looking for.

So he heaped one sin upon the other. The Lord had clearly forbidden the sort of thing that was done by the woman of Endor. Moses had told his people, "Let no one be found among you who sacrifices his son or daughter in the fire, who practices divination or sorcery, interprets omens, engages in witchcraft or casts spells, or who is a medium or a spiritist, or who consults the dead. Anyone who does these things is detestable to the Lord." ([Deuteronomy 18:10-12](#).) Saul knew very well that this was a sin. In fact, in the early years of his reign, while he was still a believer in the true God, he had ordered

such people to be put out of the land. In doing so, he was simply following the command of the Lord which is found in Exodus that said, "Do not allow a sorceress to live." ([Exodus 22:18](#).) But now he turned to those practices himself. They left him without comfort.

He went to the witch and she brought him up Samuel, or something that looked and talked like Samuel. While Samuel was alive, he was Saul's pastor, but Saul would not listen to him, just as people today often do not listen to the man whom God has given them as their pastor. But when the going gets rough, when they become seriously ill, they do not call on their drunken cronies or their partners in sin to come comfort them. No, then they want to talk to their minister. If only they would listen to him a little bit more in the good days, for the Bible says in [Hebrews 13](#), "Obey your leaders and submit to their authority. They keep watch over you as men who must give an account. Obey them so that their work will be a joy, not a burden, for that would be of no advantage to you."

It was certainly unprofitable for Saul. He learned that the man who faces the future without God can only end in despair. When he called for Samuel, these were the words that he heard, "Wherefore then dost thou ask of me, seeing the Lord is departed from you, and is become thine enemy? And the Lord hath done to him, as he spoke to me: for the Lord hath rent the kingdom out of thine hand, and given it to thy neighbor, even to David: Because he obeys the voice of the Lord. Moreover the Lord will also deliver Israel from thee into the hand of the Philistines; and tomorrow shalt thou and thy sons be with me: the Lord shall deliver the host of Israel into the hand of the Philistines." When Saul heard this, he fainted and fell to the ground. Any hope that he might have had now turned into utter despair. The witch then prepared a meal for him and so he was strengthened in body. This is all that she could do for him, but for his soul and his heart, she had nothing to offer.

So it will always be with those who do not listen to the Word of the Lord and seek their certainty elsewhere. They may find what they think is comfort, but in the end, it will turn out to be utter despair.

Many years ago in St. Paul, Minnesota, there lived a woman who went to a spiritualist medium every week to speak with her son. When her son was alive, she did not send him to Sunday School because he did not want to go. She did not take him with her to church because he did not want to go. When he wanted anything, she gave it to him because she could afford it. When he was killed in a drunken car accident, she was upset. But after while, she went to the medium, and every week she would ask, "Son, are you happy where you are?" The woman would say, supposedly from her son, "Yes mother, I'm happy." She had not brought up her son in the nurture and admonition of the Lord, and we know what comfort this will turn out to be.

As we study this picture of Saul, a man who faced the future without God, we often make the firm resolution that by the grace of the Holy Spirit we shall, during this new year, seek our hope and our help and our comfort in the words and promises of the

Lord, who assures us that he will help all those who come to him for the forgiveness that he offers to all believers in Christ. Amen.