

1 Samuel 16 Sermon

Reading v1-13

1 The Lord said to Samuel, 'How long will you grieve over Saul? I have rejected him from being king over Israel. Fill your horn with oil and set out; I will send you to Jesse the Bethlehemite, for I have provided for myself a king among his sons.'

2 Samuel said, 'How can I go? If Saul hears of it, he will kill me.' And the Lord said, 'Take a heifer with you, and say, "I have come to sacrifice to the Lord." 3 Invite Jesse to the sacrifice, and I will show you what you shall do; and you shall anoint for me the one whom I name to you.' 4 Samuel did what the Lord commanded, and came to Bethlehem. The elders of the city came to meet him trembling, and said, 'Do you come peaceably?' 5 He said, 'Peaceably; I have come to sacrifice to the Lord; sanctify yourselves and come with me to the sacrifice.' And he sanctified Jesse and his sons and invited them to the sacrifice.

6 When they came, he looked on Eliab and thought, 'Surely the Lord's anointed is now before the Lord.' [a] 7 But the Lord said to Samuel, 'Do not look on his appearance or on the height of his stature, because I have rejected him; for the Lord does not see as mortals see; they look on the outward appearance, but the Lord looks on the heart.' 8 Then Jesse called Abinadab, and made him pass before Samuel. He said, 'Neither has the Lord chosen this one.' 9 Then Jesse made Shammah pass by. And he said, 'Neither has the Lord chosen this one.' 10 Jesse made seven of his sons pass before Samuel, and Samuel said to Jesse, 'The Lord has not chosen any of these.' 11 Samuel said to Jesse, 'Are all your sons here?' And he said, 'There remains yet the youngest, but he is keeping the sheep.' And Samuel said to Jesse, 'Send and bring him; for we will not sit down until he comes here.' 12 He sent and brought him in. Now he was ruddy, and had beautiful eyes, and was handsome. The Lord said, 'Rise and anoint him; for this is the one.' 13 Then Samuel took the horn of oil, and anointed him in the presence of his brothers; and the spirit of the Lord came mightily upon David from that day forward. Samuel then set out and went to Ramah.

Introduction.

What is the defining characteristic of a good leader?

I love that one of the themes of 1 Samuel is that the antidote to corrupt leadership is wisdom and stature - that is what we should look for in our leaders, and we should pursue ourselves. But there is something more foundational - the starting point.

Here in the aftermath of the failure of Saul God chooses himself a king. Not the one that Israel had set their hearts on. But one who has set their heart on God. v1 *The Lord said to Samuel, 'How long will you grieve over Saul? I have rejected him from being king over Israel. Fill your horn with oil and set out; I will send you to Jesse the Bethlehemite, for I have provided for myself a king among his sons.'*

God has moved on, even if Samuel is still grieving. But we have the problem of an incumbent king who knows power is slipping away from him. And that dangerous for the nation, and for all those who would stand against him.

The prophet himself is afraid v2 *Samuel said, 'How can I go? If Saul hears of it, he will kill me.'* And the Lord said, 'Take a heifer with you, and say, "I have come to sacrifice to the Lord."

The city elders are terrified too v4 *"Samuel did what the Lord commanded, and came to Bethlehem. The elders of the city came to meet him trembling, and said, 'Do you come peaceably?'"* - Samuel represents the political resistance. He is the one who is standing up to Saul, and he is dangerous to know. Speaking Truth to power will always be a costly thing.

But lets just pause and notice where we are: Bethlehem.

This is no coincidence. It is a fairly inconsequential town a few miles from Jerusalem. But This is where true kings are born. his is why Mary and Joseph had to make the journey. And if you remember in that story, the child born to be king was a threat to the corrupt ruling powers.

Jesse and his sons are invited to the sacrifice

And then Jesse tells the eldest Son (Eliab) stands before him.

And Samuel looks at him and says 'v5 *'Surely the Lord's anointed is now before me.'* Why? The eldest son, tall, strong, noble looking?

Even Samuel, this great man of God falls for the myth of and outward stature, of character seen in appearance. That ancient of human heresy that the blessing of God can be seen. It is a toxic idea. For anyone who doesn't not fit the cultural ideal. Who skin is the wrong colour, who's body is the wrong shape, who disability is visible. That those who are beautiful or strong are blessed by God, and those who aren't are less important, less valuable, less blessed.

And to Samuel God says one of the most profoundly important things in this whole book, one that has been hinted at already, and one which will be played out through the rest of scripture

v7 *"Do not look on his appearance or on the height of his stature, for the Lord does not see as mortals see; they look on the outward appearance, but the Lord looks on the heart."*

Remember this was even true of Jesus. Your grandmas picture of Jesus... Isaiah 53 *He grew up before him like a tender shoot, and like a root out of dry ground. He had no beauty or majesty to attract us to him, nothing in his appearance that we should desire him.*

"It is not this one" says the Lord. Jesse would have been confused - why is to not the firstborn son?

Seven sons pass in front of Samuel.

Samuel is now confused - surely some mistake? v11 *'Are all your sons here?'* And Jesse said, *'There remains yet the youngest, but he is keeping the sheep.'*

Why is David left out? Is so inconsequential? Remember that keeping sheep is a lowly and dangerous job. You would usually hire someone to do this.

Why is David doing it? He isn't interested in politics or self promotion. He is willing to work hard at an ordinary job. There is a genuine Humility about him. *Not thinking less of yourself, but thinking of yourself less.*

So they call for him - and all have to remain standing until he arrives. This description of him is interesting. *v12 Now he was ruddy, and had beautiful eyes, and was handsome*

Ruddy is not a compliment. Ancient world valued pale skin, He is a shepherd boy - he has a weathered complexion, and you have to look closely to see his attractiveness - he has beautiful eyes. Look closely and you will see the beauty, but most people wouldn't see it. And that is actually true of all of us. For you bear the image of God.

But his outward appearance is not impressive. So when God looks on the heart - what does he look for?

So David is chosen, but not because of what he has done - he has basically done nothing to this point. Just like Jesus at his baptism - achieved nothing. Loved simply for who he is, loved out of the grace of God. True of you too.

What can we say about David? He is humble. He isn't self promoting or self aggrandising. He is willing to do lowly tasks. And he has a heart after god's heart. He wants what God wants... Not out for what he can get. If Jesus had to work 30 years as a carpenter...

And God so often chooses the one who is insignificant.

1 Corinthians 1 26 Brothers and sister, consider the time of your calling: Not many of you were wise by human standards; not many were powerful; not many were of noble birth.

Why? So that it will be God's glory not human glory. God's glory sets people free. Human glory enslaves us.

28 God chose the lowly and despised things of the world, and the things that are not, to nullify the things that are.

Do you remember we talked about Samuel waiting his whole life for the moment he is born for. This is it. *v13 Then Samuel took the horn of oil, and anointed him in the presence of his brothers; and the spirit of the Lord came mightily upon David from that day forward.*

And it has ramifications that the could not have foreseen.
Anointed = 'messiah' in Hebrew and 'Christos' in Greek.

Conclusion

What is it that makes David great? It is his humility, and his hunger for God. And these things open the door for God to work in him.

And this is all our journeys. If you are in a season where you are metaphorically tending sheep, don't despair.

God is working in this world through the lowly and ordinary things. His kingdom is a grassroots kingdom, it has dirty feet. It is made up of ordinary people like you and me.

And when you look at the church and are tempted to despise it, remember this. And when you have days when you, when you doubt yourself, when you wish you were more. Remember that is not how God works.

St Augustine said

"Humility is the foundation of all the other virtues"

And if you are going to build high, you need to start by building low.

So may the God of grace who loved you before you were anything, give you humble hearts into which he can pour his spirit and lay deep foundations of wisdom and character.

Amen