

“It’s What’s Inside that Matters”

1 Samuel 16: 1, 10-13

Third Sunday After Pentecost

June 10, 2018 (B)

Pikes Peak UMC, Pastor Dea Sharp

1 Samuel 16:1, 10-13 (NRSV)

David Anointed as King

16 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.”

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.

We watched the movie “Wonder” with Julia Roberts the other night. I’ll rate it a 2-tissue movie about Auggie who was born with a genetic defect that deformed his face. He’s been homeschooled but at the start of fifth grade goes to a mainstream school – even though he knows and his family knows, there will be ridicule and bullying about his appearance.

Auggie’d love to be anonymous.

Sometimes being anonymous has its advantages.

This is the second of three messages I’ve prepared about King David.

David begins his story as an obscure nobody.

He’s almost forgotten by his family.

Last Sunday, we talked about how there came **to be a king** in Israel.

The elders gathered and demanded a king.

So, God said, “give ‘em what they’re asking for.”

But, when we get to today's reading, King Saul, the "people's choice," has already been rejected by God. And Samuel's afraid to follow God's orders to choose a new king, 'cause Saul is still on the throne. Having your life in jeopardy could do that!

Even so, **Samuel** can teach a few things.

I'm thinking about three things:

- 1. Action is a good remedy for despair.** As Gretchen read, Samuel is wallowing in his grief over Saul's rejection. He probably blames himself for choosing the wrong king. But God asks, "How long are you going to sit there and pout? Get up. Let's start over."

Now, I'm not saying that grief is bad.

Mourning a loss can be a healthy thing.

But, when grief falls into despair and inaction takes over, that's NOT good.

The prodding of Samuel, to get up and get out **and ALSO** trust God, the one who leads us **is a** difficult act of faith. But, Samuel learns, it's worth the effort.

- 2. The old adage "if at first you don't succeed, try, try again" works.** Saul is a flop. We gotta look for a new king.

And, in the search, if Jesse's eldest son isn't the king we're looking for, try the next son. And the next, and the next, and the next until you run out of sons...keep trying.

- 3. Expect the unexpected.** Israel a patriarchal society where the eldest son received the largest part of the inheritance. So, naturally, Samuel expects Jesse's eldest son, Eliab, to be the king he's looking for. The last thing Samuel expects is for the youngest son, who doesn't look very likely to lead an army into battle, will be God's chosen one.

With God, we are continually called to expect the unexpected.

Which brings me to this question.

What can we **learn about God** from today's reading?

- 1. God chooses unlikely leaders to do His work.** Who of us would have ever thought we'd be church committee leaders or managers in our jobs? Lay leaders or yeah, clergy!?

God seems to use a clear pattern - often!

He chose a childless, old couple, Abraham and Sarah, to be the parents of a great nation.

He chose a stuttering murderer with anger management issues, Moses to lead his people out of the wilderness.

He chose a poor carpenter and an unwed teenage mother to raise his son, and a motley crew of fishermen to spread the gospel throughout the world.

God (still) chooses unlikely leaders to do His work.

2. God uses different criteria than we do. Samuel was pretty surprised when God rejected the eldest son. But God says, “Don’t look on his appearance...I’ve rejected him; I don’t see as mortals see; they look on the outward appearance, but the Lord looks on the heart.”

God’s criteria are different than ours.

3. God’s choices are immediate. The moment David comes, God tells Samuel, “Rise and anoint him; this is the one.”

Scripture DOES NOT say, “and then over the years, David slowly grew into his anointing, gradually, only as much as he could handle...”

No. It says *“and the spirit of the Lord came mightily upon David from that day forward.”*

Now, to be clear, that doesn’t mean we don’t grow, or have setbacks, or days where we don’t feel God’s presence.

Our commitment to God is too often shaky, though it DOES grow in time.

But God’s commitment **to us** is instant, consistent, and always.

Okay.

We’ve had our lessons from Samuel.

And about God.

But, this is supposed to be about David!

His entrance isn't anything spectacular!

There's really only ONE verse that tells us anything about him and it's a short verse.

And kinda confusing, 'cause, just a moment ago, God said not to judge someone based on their outward appearance and then we're told how good looking David is!

Various translations, pretty pointedly, talk about David's appearance!

You heard our translation.

The NIV says: "He was glowing with health and had a fine appearance and handsome features."

One commentator said, staying faithful to Hebrew, "He was earthly-minded, with eyes for the beautiful, and good vision" which really are inward qualities of the heart and mind.

So, what can we learn from David and the qualities **that God sees?**

- 1. David is earthly-minded....**which we could take to mean that he's practical, focuses on the challenges around him and is grounded in the present.

Even Jesus used David as a example to prove to the Pharisees that *sometimes practical trumps matters of the law*. When David went into the temple with his men and ate the bread that was reserved for the priests, Jesus pointed out, that a good leader doesn't become so stuck in matters of law that he or she is no earthly good.

There's that precept that says, "If you have to choose between being right and being kind. Be kind."

- 2. David has an eye for beauty.** There's an artistic side to David, the musician and psalmist. David see's and appreciates the details of God's creation. A good leader must be able to see beauty in the world in order to inspire others.

Now, it's worth noting that this attribute ultimately gets David in trouble, too, because his eye for beauty leads him into his affair with Bathsheba.

Sometimes our greatest strengths also contain the seeds of our greatest failures. There's a lesson there, too.

3. David has good vision. We could take this literally (after all, he's pretty good with a slingshot), but it can also mean foresight, or the ability to see what's coming.

Much of David's military success came from his ability to stay ahead of his enemies. A good leader has to be able to anticipate changes and notice the consequences of actions.

These are the things we can learn from David's character. They are the things that make him a man after God's own heart.

But, there's something more we can learn from David and it's about his (and our) vocational calling, that is, our jobs.

Each of us have some sort of God-given calling.

That makes our occupations a sacred thing.

In other words, if you're a chimney-sweep, you should sweep chimneys to the very best of your ability, in order to glorify God.

And if you do, your chimney-sweeping job is just as holy, just as sacred a calling as that of Mother Theresa, Billy Graham, or St. Francis.

So, there are a few things we can learn about **vocation** from today's passage.

- When David finally arrives, what's he been doing? He was shepherding. Working. Doing.
- After David is anointed, what does he do right after that? He goes back to shepherding.
- And what does David do, in the long run, after he becomes king? Shepherding. People. Not sheep.

Throughout his life, David continued to work diligently at the vocation he'd been given.

“King” is just a title, in Hebrew or English.
His vocation is shepherding. It’s what he does his whole life.
God has called us to a vocation, too.
Maybe, it’s what you’re doing now, maybe not...yet.

Frankly, as I look back on my life, I know (**really** know) that God was preparing me for what he had **really** made me FOR.
I had jobs in grocery stores and 5-star hotels and our tire store and in a bank.
All along the way, I believe I ran from or ignored the something better, the more beautiful (and fulfilling) that God had in mind for me all along – like being here with you.

I gotta tell you, I’m so grateful that I stopped running (and ignoring.)
And I pray that you’ll find yourself running WITH God.
In your job (your vocation.)
In your family.
As you lead some on the journey of faith.
And as you follow others who are ahead of you on that journey.

That’s the greatest lesson from David!
That when God chooses you, no matter how unexpected, or how unlikely you think you are, that when God looks and sees your inward appearance, He will find HIS heart reflected there.

Praise God for lessons! Amen!