

God's Anointed King
1 Samuel 16:1-13
Week 4

Opening

Ask if anyone would like to open in prayer. They can pray on their own or use the prayer printed below. It also might be a good idea to reach out to a group member prior to your meeting and ask them ahead of time if they'd be willing to open in prayer. That's a great way to encourage participation without putting anyone on the spot.

Gracious God, as we come together to place our lives in front of your Holy Word, we pray that you would give us wisdom and understanding. May we approach this sacred text with humility, curiosity, expectancy and love. Be among us and in our conversation through the power of your Holy Spirit. We pray in the name of the one to whom this whole story points, Jesus the Christ, amen.

Depending on time constraints you may want to take a bit of extra time to check in with folks and see how they're doing. You could also wait and do this at the end of the session before closing in prayer.

Check-in question

Each week, give an opportunity for folks to either respond to the check-in question below or, if they'd rather, share something that came up for them as they were reading the other texts assigned for the Big Read this week.

David was not who anyone was expecting to be anointed King of Israel.

What are some indicators the world looks for in a leader? What do you value as evidence of a Godly leader, whether in the church or the world?

Background

King David is one of the more well-known figures in the Bible, and for good reason. He's actually the most developed and complex character in the entire Old Testament. The amount of pages dedicated to telling his story (1 Samuel 16 through 1 Kings 2) outnumber any other single person in the Bible except for Jesus (who has four entire books in the New Testament!). This begs the question: Why does David get so much attention? Sure, he was an important king, but in terms of the overall storyline of the Bible, why is David such a big deal? Something about David captured the imagination of the biblical prophets and poets. The biblical author designed these stories to say something about God's value system that is so different from our own, in order to generate hope for the future.

Unlike Saul, Israel's first king, David didn't have height or muscle going for him (remember how Saul's intimidating stature made him attractive as a royal candidate, 1 Samuel 9:2). God revealed to Samuel that Israel's true king and Saul's replacement would come from the tribe of Judah and the family line of Jesse of Bethlehem. When Samuel showed up, he looked at seven of Jesse's sons, many of whom were also tall and handsome. But God was clear, outward appearance is never a reliable indicator of inward character. ("Humans see what is outwardly visible, but God sees the heart."). So Jesse fetches the forgotten son of the bunch, who has been out watching the sheep: young David. This, we discover, is Israel's true king.

Samuel performs the ancient anointing ceremony that had been performed on Israel's priests, pouring oil over David's head. Here in the family room of his house, David is appointed as the real king of Israel, with no fanfare and no crowds. He's the true king of Israel, but--and this is the catch--no one else knows it yet.

The biblical author saw the God of Israel at work in David's story in unique and important ways that made him stand out from among all of Israel's kings. The stories of David weren't preserved and crafted merely out of historical interest. This story of David's humble origins came to epitomize the ideal king. A ruler who wasn't exalted over Israel by human expectations or standards. Rather, he was elevated by God's own grace and surprising creativity. It all happened right under Saul's nose, which didn't make him happy.¹

1 Sam. 16:1-3. Samuel had anointed Saul as king. Saul's failure hurt the prophet deeply, but he was not alone. The Lord also had grieved over Saul's conduct. The Lord confronted Samuel about his continuing distress over Saul and instructed Samuel to go to Bethlehem to the home of Jesse. Samuel's assignment was simple. He was to anoint a new king. He already had announced God's rejection of Saul. However, the prophet's inquiry reflected the inherent danger of the task. Samuel had legitimate concerns about how Saul would interpret his anointing one of Jesse's sons as king. While the prophet might have divine authority, the king had the political will and the armed power to act if he knew about Samuel's taking action to replace him. So the Lord gave Samuel a second task that would mask the primary purpose of his visit to Bethlehem.

1 Sam. 16:4-7. Perhaps the elders trembled because they interpreted Samuel's appearance as an indication a murder had occurred in the area. "Consecrate" refers to becoming ritually clean. The specific guidelines are uncertain, but they presumably involved bathing, putting on clean garments, abstaining from sexual activity, and avoiding contact with unclean objects (such as a corpse). The consecration of Jesse and his sons demonstrated Samuel's complete obedience. Samuel did not know whom the Lord had selected. Therefore the prophet began to guess at who might be chosen. However, his faulty insight led him to the wrong conclusion. As Samuel sized up Jesse's oldest son, he felt confident this was the Lord's choice for king. Before Samuel could pour oil on Eliab's head, however, the Lord ended his silence. The Lord then explained He looks at people's hearts and not just their physical features. God's words were not what Samuel expected. Having been disappointed over Saul and having been corrected concerning Eliab, Samuel then showed where his priority was. He would listen to God's voice, look for God's choice, and advance God's purposes. External appearance does not qualify an individual to

¹ Mackie, Tim. *David: What's the Big Deal?* <https://bibleproject.com/blog/david-whats-big-deal/>

govern. The language of the Lord's rebuff linked Eliab to Saul—I have rejected him. Here, God's decision was not based on Eliab's previous behavior. Instead, it reinforced the weakness of human methodology and reminded Samuel of the vast difference between our methods and God's. God's statement that "the LORD sees the heart" is the crux of this passage. The "heart" refers to human volition. God is much, much different from humans (see Isa. 55:8-9). His thinking and His ways are unlike those of people. His methods cannot be understood by mortal minds and are vastly superior to those of the human race.

-In Hebrew, the "heart" is the seat of human will and decision making, not a fountain of emotions such as we take it to represent. Feelings, of course, are never far from will; obedience requires resolve. It is this wholeness of human intention, energy, action, and emotion that "heart" represents to the Deuteronomic writer.²

1 Sam. 16:8-13. A second son was brought before Samuel. This time Jesse presented Abinadab, but God also rejected him. A third son, Shammah, was brought before Samuel. Once more, God did not select him. God rejected seven consecutive sons of Jesse. Rather than give up in frustration, Samuel sought additional information. He asked Jesse if he had any other male children. Jesse's response suggests he did not think his other son would be selected. The Hebrew word for "youngest" literally is "small, or insignificant one." The description of David as healthy is literally "reddish." It means David either had hair with a red tint or a bronze complexion. His qualification was in his "heart," and only God could evaluate that. The Lord identified Jesse's youngest son David as the new king, and Samuel obeyed God. Samuel anointed David and witnessed the Holy Spirit take control of him. The anointing took place within the family circle. To what extent was this ceremony kept secret? We do not know, but in time everyone would become aware of this new reality, even Saul. At that time the privacy of the event and the inconspicuous nature of the son being anointed combined to create little understanding of its true importance. The reference to the Spirit of the LORD taking control of David indicates that unlike Saul's, David's disposition was one of obedience. God was his primary guide in life. The Holy Spirit's control of David confirmed that Samuel had completed his God-given task. Samuel had moved on from a grievously disappointing situation. He witnessed encouraging spiritual evidence that God had used him in advancing His purpose. Having completed the assignment, Samuel returned to his home in Ramah.³

King David and Jesus

Belief in a future, unique king lies at the heart of the Old Testament story. There is an expectation that a future Davidic king will play an important role in the fulfillment of God's redemptive plans for the earth. These expectations form the basis of the claims made by New Testament writers that the messianic hope finds its fulfillment in Jesus Christ. Messianic expectations linked to the Davidic dynasty do not exhaust what the Old Testament has to say about Jesus Christ. They are only one strand of a cord of connections between the Old Testament and Jesus, but a very significant core strand.⁴

² Hester, David C. *Interpretation Bible Studies: First and Second Samuel*. Geneva Press, 2000.

³ Coffeehouse Five. *David – the Man after God's Own Heart*.

https://www.coffeehousefive.com/uploads/9/0/1/6/9016048/definedbygod2017-09-03_1.pdf. 3 September 2017.

⁴ Alexander, T.D. *The Messianic Hope*. <https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/essay/the-messianic-hope/>.

Read 1 Samuel 16:1-13

*Make it a point over the course of this series to read from a few different translations. Encourage those who may be reading from a different translation to share any differences they see.

Initial Reactions

1. What from this story confuses, inspires, or resonates with you? What questions or curiosities do you have about this passage?
2. What does this story tell us about God? What does this story tell us about humanity?
3. Were there any images, stories or insights that stuck out to you from Sunday's sermon?

Going Deeper

4. Why and when did God reject Saul? Read 1 Samuel 13:8-14 and 15:10-11 to aid in your discussion.
5. What does it mean that God "looks at the heart" of the individual? How does the fact that God looks at the heart counter the lie that "I am what I do"?
6. As one of David's brothers, how would you have felt as you watched your younger brother get chosen? What must Jesse, their father, been thinking?
7. Why do you think God had Samuel and the nation of Israel go through the experience of anointing Saul and not just choose David in the first place?

So What Questions

8. People often base decisions on what they can see. God's actions are based on information inaccessible to a human being. The message of the cross of Jesus is an example of God's methodology. Take a few moments to read 1 Corinthians 1:26-31.
 - a. How do these verses apply to David? How might these verses apply to you and what God has called you to do?

Closing

Check in if you haven't already done so and ask for any prayer requests. Encourage group members to write down these requests and follow up as necessary. Close with prayer.