

David Anointed as King

Fall Quarter: God's Exceptional Choice

Unit 2: Out of slavery to nationhood

Lesson 9

Sunday School Lesson for the week of October 30, 2022

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Lesson Scripture: 1 Samuel 16:1-13

Key Text: *The Lord does not look at the things people look at. People look at the outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart. 1 Sam. 16:7b*

Lesson Aims

1. To understand the consequences of rash, impulsive judgements and decisions.
2. To understand the humanity of our leaders.
3. To recognize the presence of God's Kingdom at work in history, the present, and the future.
4. To embrace the importance of not judging only by what we see.
5. To embrace the reality that a new day always comes through Christ.

Author's note: In this particular lesson I found the best way to glean the lessons from the narrative is to allow the narrative itself to speak. It is rich in truth and possesses many precious observations. Thus, we will read the text and allow it to speak. Again, the lesson is a supplement to the lesson book, which is well done. All pronouns are traditional. However, God transcends all pronouns and language.

Introduction

Israel's request for a king resulted in pain and chaos. God warned Israel, through Samuel, their desire for a king was in essence a lack of trust in God. The Lord reminded them His call to trust Him was not without a foundation. Their trust should be freely given based on the many acts of God's grace at work in their past. However, the Lord, in the mystery of His will, allowed Israel to have their king. Notice God steered them toward a king fitting the near-eastern world's expectation for kings. Saul was handsome and stood head and shoulders over the other Israelites. He "appeared" to be everything Israel desired in a king.

Saul suffered from progressive emotional instability during his reign. Many modern professional psychologists acquainted with the biblical text believe he suffered from bi-polar illness. His behavior certainly would fit today's diagnostic criteria. Saul's moods would swing drastically from a kind soul to a violent, aggressive personality. He most likely was often depressed. Still, he reigned for 42 years. His long reign reveals that much of the time he was a functional king. His illness seems to have had no effect upon his ability to know right from wrong. In the Bible people are almost always responsible for their actions.

One of the many reasons we are not to judge another is related to our lack of knowledge. We do not know if the person struggles with an emotional disorder or unresolved grief. We don't know at what point God holds that person accountable for their actions. Only God knows what truly occurs in the heart of another. Still, we must remember that emotional distress does not always mean a person is not responsible for their actions. The judicial system in the U.S. struggles with this issue constantly. In our text, it is obvious that Saul was well aware of his decisions and possible consequences.

Jonathan, Saul's son, befriended David after David slayed Goliath in chapter 17. They entered into a binding covenant of friendship and never violated that covenant.

The remedy that seemed to soothe Saul's troubled soul was music. I had the privilege of touring hospitals especially created for mental illness and addiction. Most of them had a "music therapy" room. It is quite amazing that today we still employ the methods used by Saul's court.

As an aside, Saul did not enjoy the plush court as other kings. He dwelled within a fort-like structure and did not have a court hierarchy. However, there were those who served closely with him. Thus, I simply refer to them as his court, though it was a very loosely constructed court.

Members of Saul's inner circle recommended warrior/poet/musician David as an instrument to soothe Saul's torment. Only Samuel and the house of Jesse knew of the anointing of David as king. However, over time David never knew "which Saul" would greet him. Later, after David's slaying of Goliath, David became a courageous, heroic figure in Israel. He grew in popularity since defeating Goliath, and this roused Saul's jealousy and created paranoia in the mind of the king. Saul, on occasion, attempted to kill David in a fit of anger and jealousy. Jonathan, on many of those occasions, helped David escape harm. Eventually Saul chased David throughout Canaan. David and the 600 men loyal to him avoided Saul and refused to bring harm to Saul. Saul was "God's anointed," and David dared not harm him. David was a young man of faith, and to harm Saul would prove a great sin against God. Harming those whom God has chosen was an affront against the Lord in the eyes of David. There was no circumstance where David would hurt Saul's son and dear friend Jonathan.

Prior to Saul's death, the crown was taken from him. Saul engaged in sins against God and ignored the godly wisdom of Samuel. Samuel delivered the news that, in the eyes of God, Saul was no longer king. Prophets possessed tremendous power in the early years of the Old Testament. Even kings listened intently to their words and took them seriously. Saul must have been devastated to hear the news of his dethroning. However, Saul continued to serve as king in spite of Samuel's message. What else could Saul do? There was not yet another king to replace him. Later, young David would be anointed king in Bethlehem, yet David did not press to take the office of king. He waited. Though anointed, David still respected and honored king Saul. It is possible that Saul believed he might win back the Lord's favor. There seems to be some indication that Samuel greatly desired a change in Saul's heart. However, the change did not occur.

Saul led Israel in a vicious battle against the Philistines. The Philistines were one tribe Israel never drove from the promised land. The Philistines were a thorn in Israel's flesh for years.

During the battle, three of Saul's sons were killed, including Jonathan. Saul was severely wounded and asked his armor bearer to end his life. It would have proved a great humiliation for the king of Israel to be taken prisoner. The armor bearer was too afraid to take the life of the king. Thus, Saul fell on his own sword. In fear and anguish, the armor bearer also took his own life.

The growing awareness of Saul's instability, and eventually his death, must have led some in Israel to recognize that in their desire for a king they had actually exchanged the reign of God for a man with feet of clay (like all of us).

The Text

When Samuel informed Saul that God removed from Saul the spiritual mantle of kingship, Samuel entered a period of mourning. His mourning represents his great love for Israel. After all, now that Saul was not blessed as king, what would happen to the people of Israel? Samuel was now in old age. He had to wonder, "Who will guide and direct Israel?" "Would God continue to bless His people, or remove the divine hand from upon them?" His grief also reveals a fondness for Saul and a great desire that the king prosper. Though Samuel knew that selecting a king had not been the ultimate will of God, he still wanted Israel's king to do well. Samuel greatly desired that Saul be a godly, righteous king who could rule the people with justice and protect them from neighboring enemies, especially the Philistines.

Has life ever become so difficult you wondered, "Who is in control?" "What do I do next?" "Where is God?"

Samuel is left to ask, "What now?" In the eyes of God, Saul is no longer king, yet the people recognize him as such. Approximately ten years passed between the removal of the kingdom from Saul and the official anointing of David. During that time Samuel most certainly prayed and interceded for Saul. Eventually his intercession became mourning. Our narrative finds Samuel in a despondent state. What is a prophet/judge/advisor to the king to do when the king has failed? What is next?

Can you relate to Samuel's mourning? His possible confusion? Have you ever found yourself in grief, wondering "What do I do now?" How does our faith bring us comfort when facing uncertain times? What gives us hope for the future?

It is during this period of sadness and mourning that God speaks to Samuel, telling him to "Go." Sadness and mourning the loss of someone, or a way of life, is understandable. It is part of the human condition. Mourning allows us to release the stress and pain from the emotions and body. However, prolonged mourning is destructive. Prolonged mourning easily leads to depression. Depression saps us of energy, both physical and emotional. We suffer spiritual fatigue when we suffer depression and often isolate ourselves. Samuel had experienced a most painful event. He had to inform Saul of his failure. Sharing this news seems to have hurt Samuel as much or more than Saul. This most likely was the last time Samuel and Saul met face to face. A second episode of sadness most likely occurred when Samuel realized that Saul was not changing, nor was his

loss of the kingdom going to be reversed. Samuel has mourned, but now it is time to move onward.

After a period of mourning, there comes a time to move onward. Of course, the season of mourning is different for individuals, yet still one cannot holistically live in a constant state of grief. It is for Samuel's good that he needs to move forward.

Notice, God always enters our sorrow. We never suffer alone. The text doesn't say Samuel actively sought God; God comes to Samuel. There will come many "nudges" of God in the midst of our pain. As our grief begins to take an emotional toll, God, in a myriad of ways, will prompt us to move onward in life. When my sister took her life, I was overwhelmed by grief and suffered depression. One day, out of the blue, the thought came to me to write a book about our childhood and the pain that led to her death. I was to find a ray of hope and not allow death to win the day. The thought did not come out of the blue. It came from God; of that, I have no doubt. These taps on the shoulder from the Lord come to us all. They ask us to enter life again and to allow faith to triumph over pain and hurt.

Have you experienced, during a time of grief, a "Go" moment? If so, how do you believe God nudged you out of your grief? Notice, God has told Samuel to "get back into life," for there was much yet to be done and experienced. Why do you think it is important, after a period of mourning, to get back into life? If you have experienced such a moment, what has God taught you from that moment? How has the Lord used you? How has God used your past pain to deepen your faith and compassion for others?

Notice the words "fill your horn with oil and go." God is reminding Samuel that the Lord doesn't abandon his people, and the divine will is always moving onward. There is another kingdom moving in the world. It will later be embodied in Jesus. The Kingdom of God is still moving in human history toward God's redemptive end. The horn of oil refers to the anointing oil used for the consecration of a king. Saul's failure doesn't mean the end of kings for Israel. God has another king, already chosen by the Lord. A new day is coming. In our walk of faith, no matter how rough the adversity, a new day always comes.

How does the promise of a new day give you strength to face adversity? How do you think the resurrection of Jesus is related to the certain coming of a new day? Can you share a time when, after a struggle, "all things became new?" If you have had such an experience, how is your perspective of the world and God different than before the adversity and sorrow? How are you different?

Samuel was a well-respected prophet/judge. However, in his initial reaction to the call of God to confront Saul, we are allowed to see that he too has feet of clay. He feels fear. The Lord has commanded Samuel to take a heifer with him to the house of Jesse. A heifer was often used for sacrifice, and Samuel feared Saul would hear of his actions. He was afraid Saul would attempt to take his life. After all, the last message Samuel gave Saul was humiliating for Saul.

As stated above, we see Samuel's feet of clay in his reaction of fear. His fear also reveals his knowledge of Saul's instability. It was difficult to predict the reactions of Saul. Samuel's fear

was not a sin. It was a natural human response in light of the circumstances. Yet, Samuel could not allow the fear to deter him from answering God's call. His initial reaction might have been one of fear, but his response to God's call reveals his faith. The text reads, he did "as the Lord said." Our natural human responses are not always sinful. They are responses, not choices. It is what we do with that fear that matters most. When we allow fear to keep us from obedience to God, then it becomes a lack of trust.

Are we often guilty of perceiving our leaders in the faith as void of humanity? In your journey of faith, can you affirm that there were moments when you acted impulsively? Do you believe Samuel's reaction was a sin? If not, why not? How do you understand "response versus sin" in this text? Can a response be void of sin and yet later become a sin? How? Can you give an example?

The house of Jesse dwelled in the small village of Bethlehem, a short distance from Jerusalem. Jerusalem was not the capital of Israel at this time. David would later capture Jerusalem from the Jebusites and declare it to be the capital of Israel. Saul's capital was at Gibeah during this time. Still, it is important to remember that the future Messiah would come from Bethlehem, Jesus' birth place. Thus, the New Testament reminds us that Jesus was from the "house of David," the younger son of Jesse. In this narrative, we are witnessing the beginning of "the David line."

The reaction of the people who met Samuel as he approached the village is noteworthy. They trembled! Why? Under Saul's reign life often became chaotic. When the house of Jesse saw Samuel, the prophet of God, they were terrified he had come to pronounce judgement upon them, or had come to warn them of approaching calamity. Again, this reaction reveals the instability of the times under Saul's reign. It also reveals the power and respect wielded by a prophet. The power of the prophet revealed that there were "two branches" of authority in Israel. There was the king, and there was the prophet. Samuel told them he came in peace.

Notice, in troubled times, God still speaks and calls his people. The entire Bible is the testimony of God breaking into human history in our most dire moments. The Kingdom of God is here and always will be. As the people of God, we must always prayerfully seek the call of God to use us, especially in adversity. We are to be the voice, face, hands, and feet of Christ at all times but especially in times of instability.

Samuel informed them he had brought a sacrifice and invited the house of Jesse to join him. This would have been a "fellowship sacrifice." In response, the house of Jesse joined Samuel, except for young David who was tending sheep. As the house of Jesse gathered, Samuel begins to eye the sons of Jesse, for among them would stand the next king of Israel. Jesse's oldest son, Eliab, appeared to be the perfect candidate. He was the first born and, like Saul, was tall and handsome. However, the Lord told Samuel that Eliab was not the one chosen. In 16:7 we read the important verse that reminds us the Lord does not look on outward appearance as we often do; God looks "on the heart."

Again, we see Samuel's feet of clay. He reacted to Eliab as the people initially reacted to Saul. In the choosing of the first king, Israel was looking for one who possessed the looks of a king. Now, Samuel was doing the same thing. One would think he would have learned from his

experience with Saul. Though Samuel was a godly man with a godly heart, it didn't mean he was void of his humanity. This again wasn't an act of sin; it was an act of impulse. It was an "assumption," and assumptions can lead us to conclusions that are destructive.

John Wesley identified sin in 3 ways. First, there were the sins of ignorance. We can engage in a harmful act without realizing it. One important facet of our Christian walk is that we learn what is sin and what is not. There were behaviors and thoughts I once believed sinful, yet today I do not perceive them as sin at all. Then there were things I easily accepted that today I would judge as sinful. Secondly, Wesley spoke of the sins of mistake. The sins of mistake are usually related to a reaction or impulse. Either we do not possess the wisdom to recognize the harm in our actions, or we are caught in a moment when there is little or no time to think our actions through. Though all sins are harmful and destructive, these sins usually reflect the human condition. We are frail, impulsive, and at times lack wisdom. However, the third understanding of sin is by far the most serious. These are the willful sins. We know they are wrong. Our faith has blessed us with the wisdom to know they are wrong. Yet, we choose to engage in the destructive action anyway. Though the first two categories are understandable, they are still sin. There is always a need for confession and forgiveness. Samuel's assumption was impulsive, yet his intent was good. Again, we still must be careful not to "rank sins." Sins are sins and are harmful. For purity of heart, we should always confess all manner of sin, for God is more than eager to forgive.

Does Wesley's three understandings of sin help you in your own faith? Do they help you to avoid judging another? How? What do you believe Wesley was saying about the relationship between our human nature, intent, and motivation as they relate to sin? Do you believe an unintentional mistake is a severe sin? If not, why? Do you think we are still in need of confession and forgiveness?

If we examine Simon Peter's walk with Jesus, we recognize all three. Initially, he was impulsive, making promises he could not keep. It was evident he was ignorant of God's Kingdom. Each time Jesus mentioned dying on a cross Peter recoiled in disbelief. Even after Pentecost his frail humanity and the remnant of the Jewish culture's belief still resided within him. His cultural upbringing and frail humanity made Peter's acceptance of Gentiles very difficult. It took the vision on the roof at Joppa to move Peter into the maturity that "what God has declared clean is clean." At the end of his life, we discover a serene acceptance in his life. Tradition claims he was crucified. He asked to be crucified upside down for he believed himself unworthy to be crucified as Jesus.

Samuel, though a prophet, could still react impulsively. He, too, could jump ahead of God and assume God's will. He knew the next king would emerge from the house of Jesse; thus, he assumed it was Eliab. He was wrong. Samuel's actions were not premeditated, they were impulsive and arose from a good motive.

Why do you think Samuel immediately assumed Eliab was certainly God's choice? What does Samuel's assumption teach us about human nature and the frailty of all people? Have you ever acted impulsively though your heart was pure?

After Eliab, Jesse's sons were paraded before Samuel one at a time. We can only imagine Samuel's uneasiness as each one was rejected. He might have thought, "Did I not hear God correctly?" "Has the Lord changed his mind?" The tension must have reached a climax after all of Jesse's sons were rejected. It was then that Jesse informs Samuel he has one more son, the youngest. Jesse, and the others of his house, would never consider David as the one Samuel sought. After all, he was young, and his trade was tending the sheep in the fields. It is beautiful to think the Messiah arose from the lineage of a shepherd.

Are we often guilty of "judging by appearance?" Can you share an experience when a most unlikely person became an answer to your prayers? Since we cannot see the human heart, how does prayer and fellowship help us in discerning our leadership?

It is at this point that the faith and determination of Samuel are again revealed. Samuel informs Jesse to send for David, for "we will not sit down until he arrives." God sent Samuel on a mission. He was to anoint the next king of Israel. Samuel was not leaving - nor leave the place they stood - until the last son arrived.

In our culture of immediate answers and gratification how patient are we in waiting upon the Lord? Can you share a moment when you jumped ahead of God? What was the consequence? Can you share an experience in which you waited? What was the consequence of such patience? Have you ever felt a call from God so strongly you were undeterred? How did the call come to you? Can you share that experience?

As David approaches, we once again read of his "physical attributes." David is handsome and vibrant. Still, the appearance has nothing to do with God's choice. The Lord knew David's heart. The young man most would disqualify based on age and station in life would become the king "after God's own heart." Throughout Scripture, God often chooses those who are overlooked. Israel was a weak nation leaving Egypt. Judges like Gideon claimed they were the weakest choice. Mary and Joseph were far from the ideal couple to bear the Messiah. They came from a working-class background and tiny village. Jesus was reared in a town far from the intellectual and spiritual center of Jerusalem. He was a carpenter.

Two important and powerful acts of anointing occurred during David's consecration. First, he was anointed with oil upon his head. The anointing with oil was an action the people could see, and David could feel. The people believed Samuel had great power as God's prophet, and, thus, had the authority to anoint a king. Still, there was another anointing that was unseen to the human eye but equally as real. The Spirit of the Lord came upon him powerfully. The reality of the trinity was unknown to the Old Testament people. "The Spirit of the Lord" meant the Lord's power and blessing.

It is helpful to visit Jesus' baptism. Jesus' baptism was actually his coronation as the King of Kings. Jesus participated in John's baptism, which the people could see and understand. It was a tangible act. His baptism wasn't for repentance, for Jesus was without sin. When Jesus allowed John to baptize him, he was accepting his ministry of life, death, and resurrection.

After his baptism, the Holy Spirit descended upon him. The gift of the Spirit was the powerful anointing of God Himself. Thus, God says, "This is my son, in whom I am well pleased." Jesus had accepted his ministry as Messiah.

As a baptized and confirmed member of the Church, we are also the called. Not every call is the same. In 1 Corinthians 12-14 we learn that the Holy Spirit has endowed all of us with certain gifts and graces. Together, we form the Body of Christ and become the living presence of Jesus in the world. David had been anointed as the king of Israel. However, he was also anointed and set apart for God's special purposes in the world.

Do you believe you understand the relationship between your baptism, confirmation, and God's call upon your life? Do you think the Body of Christ adequately expresses the presence of the Holy Spirit in baptisms and confirmations? If we fall short what can we do to help each other understand that baptism and confirmation are related to the Lord's call upon our life? Do you believe the Lord has said of you, "I am well pleased"? If not, why not? How can we affirm God's pleasure in us and others?

The Prayer

Almighty God, we confess our frailty and sin. Forgive us for the rash assumptions and judgements that have caused harm. Teach us the dignity of every person. Make us slow to judge and quick to pray. Grant us the gift of patience in seeking your Kingdom at work in our life. Thank you for forgiving our sins, for seeing our hearts, and calling us to serve. In Jesus name, Amen.

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