



This morning we begin a 12-week journey looking at the life of King David. There is much we can learn from him, both good and bad, that can help shape our own lives as disciples of Jesus Christ, the one who is King of kings and Lord of lords. King David gets a lot of ink in the Old Testament. About 60 chapters are devoted to his life, spanning all or parts of the books of 1 and 2 Samuel, 1 Kings, and 1 Chronicles.

King David is often called "A man after God's own heart" which comes from 1 Samuel 13:14. That verse is God's description of the kind of man who will be the next king of Israel. David becomes that king, and so the title is applied to him. We see it reiterated in the New Testament, about 1100 years later, in Acts 13:22, when Paul recounts Israelite history leading up to Jesus.

To say David was "a man after God's own heart" is not to say David lived a perfect life. In fact, some of his sins are huge, and we might even wonder, "How could this man be considered 'a man after God's own heart'?" I have wrestled with this before. This is why I have given the sermon series the title that I have: "The Life of David: A Complex Man After God's Own Heart." This is not meant to disparage or question Scripture. Rather, it is meant to help us see David as less of a caricature, and more human...more accessible. Sometimes we put our Biblical heroes on tall pedestals and make them larger than life: wiser, stronger, nobler, and holier than they really are. The fact is: **The only one who belongs on any pedestal is God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, who is/are wiser, stronger, nobler, and holier than we could ever imagine.** So, I hope in this series we will see David as someone we can relate to, learn from, be inspired by, so we can *we* be men and women after God's own heart as well, in our discipleship to Jesus.

Now, before we read today's passage, let me give some very brief background about Samuel that will help for anyone who is maybe a little uncertain about him, because he's a central figure who isn't really introduced in this passage. We are in the book of 1 Samuel; there's also a 2 Samuel that

we will be in for the last 2/3 or so of this series. **Samuel is an important leader in Israelite history, serving as a priest (though not officially called one), judge, and prophet – essentially in that order though there was overlap between the roles.**

Regardless of the title he had or the role he played,¹ Samuel was known as a reformer and unifier, helping to usher the Israelites through change and transition, and he brought the Israelites back to right worship and right relationship with God. And significantly, as prophet, Samuel acted on behalf of God in choosing and anointing Israel's first two kings (making Samuel the last of the judges) – first Saul, and then David. In fact, we read about Samuel choosing and anointing David today. With that, let's turn into today's passage: **1 Samuel 16:1-13.**

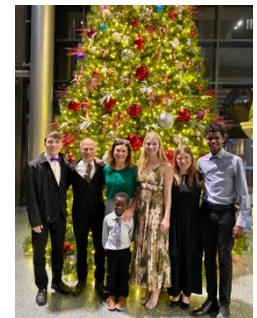
So, let's dive right into David being chosen here. David is an unlikely candidate and had at least two strikes against him. **First, David wasn't from the right family.** This was a strike against all of Jesse's sons. King Saul had several sons, three who are mentioned fairly prominently in Scripture including his oldest, Johnathan, who should have inherited the throne. We'll encounter him later in the series. I mentioned part of 1 Samuel 13:14, already, but here's the full verse, where the prophet Samuel speaks to King Saul, "But now your [Saul's] kingdom will not endure; the Lord has sought out a man after his own heart and appointed him leader of his people, because you have not kept the Lord's command." So, the crown won't be passed on to his own sons as one would normally expect; it will go to a new person, and a new family.

Second, David was the youngest and least likely of the candidates from within his family. We just read about that. When Samuel goes to Jesse and asks him to bring forth his sons, David isn't even initially included. His own dad didn't bring him to the "Let's Pick a King from Your Family" game show. Whether it was just inconvenient because David was out tending sheep, or because Jesse didn't think his youngest son could possibly qualify, we don't know for sure. Probably it was the latter.

My mother-in-law tells the story of how her grandfather, or maybe it's great grandfather, left England with two of his brothers, because their oldest brother was going to inherit the family property and whatever else would get passed on. That's just the way things were in that culture at that time. And there's a similar mindset in Israel 3,000 years ago: how could it possibly be the *youngest* one who's going to be chosen as king? He's not even invited.

So, at Samuel's request, David is brought in from the fields, and the Lord lets Samuel know that David is the one. Verse 12 tells us that David was "glowing with health, had a fine appearance, and handsome features." This seems to stand in contrast with the directives that Samuel had about what matters: the heart. What's going on?

His appearance is noted, but it's not why he was chosen. If appearance really had been what Samuel was looking at and God wanted, then probably at *least* one of the 7 older brothers would have qualified. I mean, they're all related, and have the same genetics, right? Certainly one or two, at least, would have been handsome, and with good health and fine features, because they're all brothers. That's the way genetics tends to work. Take my family for example: You look at my five kids (**Picture Here**)...and I know you might think that's me with 6 kids, but that's actually my wife in the green shirt...and you can tell my kids got good genes from *her*...but it's not like any of them stand out as being a lot different than the others, right? They all have similar features and all my kids look kind of similar. Oh, wait...maybe two of them don't actually! But that's *because* of genetics, which only proves the point that if *outward appearance* is what Samuel actually was going by, someone else almost certainly would have fit the bill before he got to David. So, David's appearance is *noted*, but he was *chosen* because of his heart for God.



Then, there is a short, private ceremony to anoint him as the king-in-waiting. Saul still rules, and will for some time. But David is the chosen one to succeed Saul. And the end of verse 13 says that, **"The Spirit came upon David in power" (1 Samuel 16:13)**. So often we Christians read Jesus' promise in John that once he leaves them, the Spirit would be with the

disciples (John 14), and we read about the Spirit coming upon the disciples in Acts 2...and we read of the Spirit in a lot of the New Testament...and we Christians tend to think the Spirit's first appearance is in the New Testament. But it's not. Right from the beginning, in Genesis 1:2 we read about the Spirit of God hovering over the waters of Creation. God's Spirit has been around a lot longer, and touched people for a lot longer than just the New Testament. And here, the Spirit comes upon David in power. We aren't told what that looked like at that moment, but it is evident that God's anointing is upon David as the Spirit comes upon him.

So, what do we take away from this? Here's what I think the main thing is that God would say to us today from this passage: **God sees what we overlook, and chooses who we wouldn't expect.**

There are three aspects about this that we would do well to keep in mind and I want to highlight. **First, our human tendency is to look at the surface, but God looks deeper – at the heart.** At first, Samuel fell into this kind of a trap – he was ready to anoint the first son presented to him, Eliab, back in verse 6. We fall in the same kinds of traps. We judge people by the color of their skin or length of their hair or the tattoos on their body...and not the content of their character. We see someone driving a fancy car or living in a big, expensive home and make some judgment or draw some conclusions....but we don't know that they are in debt up to their ears and stressed out about it or are on the verge of bankruptcy and it's put their marriage on the rocks...and everything is not as rosy as it might look from the outside. Or we see someone who's homeless and asking for money on the street corner....and we don't realize the abuse he received as a child, that never was in a safe, loving home, that drugs became his escape and now he can't keep a job because of addiction and poor mental health. We look at the surface just as Samuel did.

We would do well to remember this passage and do the work to get below the surface, to ask questions, to listen to others, to really get to know them and why they think, act, vote, speak, dress...the way they do. It's harder than judging by the surface, but it's the way God works, and invites us to, also.

Second, we tend to overlook the least likely, while God honors the forgotten. David wasn't even brought to the party at first. He's the least likely candidate, all but forgotten. And yet, he was the one God wanted. About 1,000 years later, Jesus teaches, "Whatever you've done for the least of these, you've done for me." The "least of these" is a phrase he defines a moment before: It is those who are hungry, thirsty, strangers, in need of clothes, sick, and in prison (Matthew 25:31-46). Elsewhere he says to love our neighbors as ourselves, and "neighbor" is defined in the parable he then tells. It's about a man who is beaten up and robbed, and left for dead...and after two of his own people ("neighbors") pass by but don't help, it is a stranger from enemy territory who helps him out. He's the true neighbor. That's the parable of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10:25-37), and Jesus closes it by saying, "Go and do likewise." That parable correlates to Jesus' teaching in the Sermon on the Mount about loving your enemies and praying for those who persecute you. So, we tend to overlook the least and the forgotten, but God honors them. And if we say we're on Jesus' team, we need to do the same. Jesus tells us to do that.

Third, we tend to wait for the right fit, but God anoints and prepares us in his time. David wasn't ready to be king yet, and King Saul was still on the throne. There was no immediate need for a new king. But that didn't stop God from anointing David and declaring that David is in the on-deck circle. He's next, and his time will come, and his preparation for that calling begins at this point – actually, it already began. He already had a heart for God. So often, we wait and wait and wait for everything to be "just right" before we move forward on things...we wait for God to make it clear that he's calling us to do something for him, and for us to be ready. But we see here that God lays the groundwork with David, makes the plans for David, gets David lined up and ready to go so that when God opens the door and says, "Go" he's ready. So: **How is God anointing and preparing you for what he's going to call you into?**

This is partly what spiritual disciplines, such as we looked at this last January and February, are all about – like prayer, and Bible study, solitude, tithing, Sabbath, and so forth. They are a way that God anoints us – sets us apart – and makes us ready for when He says, "OK, you're up...I'm gonna work

through you now.” It might be talking about your faith with your neighbor and leading them to Jesus; it might be going on a mission trip; it might be teaching a Sunday school class to 8-year-old kids; it might be leading a small group in your retirement home; it might be standing up for Biblical recording of history in a public schools history class. Too often, those things come our way and we’re not ready. But God anoints you and prepares you for what he’s going to call you to. Our part is to come before him, open to his Spirit and say, “Here I am Lord” and be open to his anointing, his leading, his calling, and to his preparing us for when the opportunities do come.

So, these are three components of God seeing what we overlook, and him choosing who or what we wouldn’t expect. Sometimes that’s other people that he sees and chooses. But it’s also you and me. **God sees you, chooses you, anoints you, and prepares you for his calling upon your life.** You don’t have to be perfect to have a heart for God and be used by him. David was morally reprehensible at times, but he confessed that and desired to follow God’s ways and be God’s hands and feet in the world. His heart’s desire was for God and his will. He loved God and he wanted to live for him.

Similarly, you don’t have to be perfect. You never will be. The only one whoever was, was Jesus. He left heaven to come to earth, fully human and fully God, lived the sinless life to become the perfect sacrifice for sins, on the cross. The penalty for our sin has been paid, and that payment counts for you when you confess and repent of your sin and live to glorify Jesus. But all of that doesn’t make us actually perfect in this life. And yet God still chooses to work through you, just as he did David.

You may not be chosen to be a king. In fact, I know you’re not, because the only king we have is King Jesus. And we are his subjects, anointed by the Spirit to carry out the will of God the father. Together, we are all his sons and daughters through faith in Jesus. And he chooses people like you and me to humbly carry out and proclaim the good news of Jesus. It’s what he does: seeing what we tend to overlook, and choosing what we wouldn’t expect. And he chooses you, so that the will of God would be lived on earth as it is in heaven, bringing light into darkness and hope to the lost, to the glory of God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Let’s pray...Amen.

¹ A few interesting things about him in each of these roles:

- 1 Chronicles 6 traces his lineage to the Levites, though he wasn't in the priestly lineage of that tribe. Aaron's descendants were the priests, but Samuel's lineage goes back to Aarons' brother, Kohath. But Samuel carried out some of the things that the priests in Aaron's lineage were only supposed to do. This makes him a fairly unique character in Scripture, functioning as a priest without technically being one.
- He was the last judge to rule Israel before Saul became their first king.
- And in the New Testament, in Acts 3:24, he is called the first prophet.