

"God Sees"

May 27, 2018

Scripture: 1st Samuel 15:34 to 16:13

34 Then Samuel went to Ramah; and Saul went up to his house in Gibeah of Saul. 35 Samuel did not see Saul again until the day of his death, but Samuel grieved over Saul. And the LORD was sorry that he had made Saul king over Israel... 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." 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.

Over the last two weeks we have looked at how God calls and at how God responds as part of our "God at Work" series. Today we look at another call story – the call of David as the second king of Israel. As I shared last week, God responded to the Israelites call for a king in spite of the fact that it was a bad idea. It was choosing an earthly king over a heavenly God. The chosen people were choosing to take a step away from God. And out of His great love and unimaginable grace, God responded by giving the people a king. Today we look at how that played out for Israel. Let us pray...

To begin today, I invite you to think back to when your children or when you were little. Two common phrases at my home were, "Watch this" or "Look at me"! Do you remember when your children or you made these requests? Sometimes it was something as simple as what they had dressed themselves in that day. They were so proud of their choices. Other times it was some skill or talent that they had developed. It might have been as simple as making a free

throw or it might have been something complex that they had mastered on their instrument or maybe it was a movement that they had mastered for ballet or dance. However big or small, taking the time to watch, taking the time to appreciate what they had accomplished mattered. It was affirming and made them feel significant. It says to them, "I see you" and it let them know that they mattered to me and that I loved them.

When we consider our larger world, there are many ways that people say, "Look at me". Sometimes it is through the possessions that we surround ourselves with. We live in big homes that people can drive by and 'ooh' and 'aah' at. We own fancy cars that people stare at as we drive by. Sometimes it is through our positions or how we flex our power when in the public eye. Sometimes it is through our achievements and other monumental things we do. We post it on Facebook or we send out a Twitter about our latest award or the big deal that we inked for our company. For the world, looks and brains and strength and titles are important. They are ways to day that we matter, that we are significant, that we are important. It is a strange concept to think that a person, simply for who or what they are at their most basic level, matters.

When God decided to give the people a king, Saul was chosen to be the first king of Israel. In a strange way, God chose as the people would choose. Maybe God was trying to make a point here, which we may see as the story of Saul evolves. But in 1st Samuel 9, verse two, hear the words used to describe Saul: "*Saul, a handsome young man... stood head and shoulders above everyone else*". Both

looks and stature? Boy, Saul will make a great king. And, truth be told, initially Saul was a good king. Samuel anoints Saul as king and soon thereafter Saul defeats the Ammonites. Then the Philistines begin to prepare for war against Saul and Israel. In 1st Samuel 13, Saul expects Samuel to come and offer a sacrifice on their behalf. But Samuel is delayed and Saul takes matters into his own hands. Saul offers an unlawful sacrifice. As soon as Saul is done with the sacrifice, Samuel arrives. In 1st Samuel 13, verses 13 and 14, *"You have done foolishly; you have not kept the commandment of the LORD your God, which he commanded you. The LORD would have established your kingdom over Israel forever, ¹⁴ but now your kingdom will not continue; the LORD has sought out a man after his own heart; and the LORD has appointed him to be ruler over his people, because you have not kept what the LORD commanded you"*. The era of the first king is beginning to draw to an end.

Saul continues to walk without God and Samuel the prophet again reminds Saul at the beginning of 1st Samuel 15 that God has rejected him. And yet Samuel still grieves for Saul. Perhaps it is like the sadness we feel when we see one we love making bad choices and heading down a bad road. But God himself has moved on and basically instructs Samuel to do the same. Samuel is a little unsure about *"filling his horn with oil and setting out"*. This is because over his years as prophet, Samuel has earned a reputation for speaking a hard word and many now fear seeing him coming. We hear this in today's passage when we read, *"The elders of the city came to meet him trembling, and said, "Do you come peaceably"?* God has identified a new king from among Jesse's sons who live in Bethlehem.

Samuel has been instructed to go to Bethlehem to anoint a new king. But Saul is still king. The people wanted a king. The people like Saul. So, Samuel is a bit fearful about his mission. God instructs Samuel to go to Bethlehem under the guise of making a sacrifice to the Lord. Samuel arrives at Jesse's house and the parade of sons begins, starting with the oldest. Eliab passes before Samuel and he thinks, *'Surely the LORD's anointed is now before the LORD'*. The oldest, the tallest, the strongest, yes, just like Saul, this must be the one. But God says, nope. God sort of reprimands Samuel, saying, *"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"*. God is saying that the things of the world - looks and brains and strength and titles – they do not matter. God is inviting Samuel to see as God sees.

Each of the remaining seven sons pass by and over and over God says, *"Neither has the LORD chosen this one"*. By the time the last one passes by, Samuel must have been a bit confused. Doesn't age matter, doesn't strength matter, doesn't intelligence matter? All of these questions must have passed through Samuel's mind. Finally, Samuel must ask, *"Are all your sons here"?* Well, actually, no. The youngest one is out in the fields tending the sheep. Surely God would not choose the youngest, the one with the least standing, the one doing the grunt work out in the fields. What about age and status and titles?

I think at this point, Samuel gets it. He tells Jesse and his other sons that they will not sit down until this youngest one arrives. Yes, David is ruddy and handsome and has beautiful eyes. But the things of this world do not matter to God. God says to Samuel, *"Rise and anoint him; for this is the one"*. Samuel rises and anoints David with the sacred oil. And do you notice what happens? The Spirit of the Lord comes mightily upon David from that day forward.

God blesses David from that day forward. God saw something in David that Samuel nor anyone else saw. He saw David's heart. He saw what would ultimately matter. He saw what would, in the end, make David the greatest king Israel has ever known. God knew that David was a *"man after God's own heart"*. This leads me to the question: do we ever try and see as God sees? Do we ever look beyond what we see on the surface? Do we ever look beyond a person's looks or status or position? Do we ever look past a person's checkered past or their troubled present? Do we ever take enough time to get down to the core of a person, to get down to the heart of the matter? When we do, we are blessed. It is when we are willing to see as God sees that we see the anointed in the most remarkable places and in the most astonishing people. It is then that we come to see the face of Jesus in the "the least of these" – in the children, in the stranger, in the homeless, in the outcast. When we look into their eyes that are asking, "Do I matter?" and we see them as God sees them, then yes, they matter. They matter to us and to God.

As we close today, I want to speak to those who maybe question if you matter, to those who may wonder if you belong to God. Yes, yes, you belong to God. Yes, you matter to God. If you are interested in exploring your place in God's family, I invite you to join us on Monday evenings at the Methodist Church here in Winner. I invite you to come for a one-of-a-kind look at how to live a life of peace, meaning, and hope. Doors open at 6 pm for refreshments and a casual and engaging time of worship will begin at 6:16 pm. After worship, we will offer some Life Groups where you can explore these questions. We invite you to start right where you are and to begin a new journey with God, going from whatever crossroads you find yourselves at now to a life of peace and meaning and hope.

Let us pray....