

A Man after God's Own Heart

Series on 1 Samuel

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Bible Text: 1 Samuel 16

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Please take your Bibles and turn with me to 1 Samuel 16. While you're looking that up, let me ask you if you have signed up for our vocational conference, our conference on calling that we are having on October 14, all the cool people in church have and you would want to join them. You would want to be one of that cool number, wouldn't you, when the roll is called up yonder, you want to be there. You can sign on online or you can sign on at a table in the reception hall after the service. But I do warmly encourage you to do that and be there or be square, as they used to say.

There is a little incident that we're looking at this morning in 1 Samuel 16. There's a humorous little thing that happens very early on in this story that reminds me of something that used to happen from time to time when I was in high school. His name was Dr. Gilmer. He was the principal of our high school. Most of us lived in absolute fear of him. He was a well-groomed man. He drove a very smart sports car and somehow or other the image of him driving into work in his sports car and the austerity and severity of his gaze stood in stark contrast. He was mysterious to us. Rumor was among us boys that his PhD was in witchcraft. We would have believed that to be true. Most of us at one stage or another had had the application of his thick leather belt to our outstretched hands, a form of torture that we were subjected to usually for having done something, although in my case never for having done something wrong but sometimes having not done something such as homework. Whenever he visited our classroom, even the teacher trembled with fear.

Well, I thought of him when I read about Samuel coming to Bethlehem and the elders of the city came to meet him trembling and saying, "Do you come peaceably? What is on your mind?" I don't know what is on their mind, do you? None of the commentators seem to know. Why are they so scared? I mean, it could be, I suppose at the end of chapter 15:33, they had heard about Samuel hacking Agag to pieces. That's nearly as bad as Dr. Gilmer's belt. Probably even more appropriate would be what we are told in the 34th and 35th verses, that is, that Samuel and Saul had gone their separate ways so who wanted to be on the side of the man who wasn't on the side of the king if the king is the man in power? Maybe that was the reason that they were trembling when Samuel came to visit.

Well, whatever is the case, this chapter marks the beginning of a new epoch in the story of the Bible. From the gates of Eden and the promise of a human champion who would one day crush Satan, to Abraham who is told he will have an offspring who will bring blessing to the world, to Moses who teaches us that sacrifice and offering in the work of a priest is the means by which we can overcome the distance between us and God, to Samuel who stands out as being the classic prophet, the one who comes as a spokesman from God. From there to this man that we're going to read about today, this man who is at the center of the Bible story. There is no other human being in the whole of the Old Testament who has the significance that this man is going to have in the Bible story line or in the overwhelming story of the Bible.

During the Old Testament period we've been learning God is dealing with people as infants. He does what we do in infant school: he shows and tells. He shows and tells. He shows us something happening in history, then he gives us an explanation of what he's doing. So these people in the Old Testament, they had something of the Gospel. They had all these saviors, deliverers in the form of forerunners and types and promises that were looking forward to the coming one, the coming one. All the lesser rescues and lesser salvation's and lesser deliverances were all pointing forward to a bigger rescue, a bigger salvation, a bigger deliverance that was to come and the smaller lights, the smaller rescuers were like shafts of light preparing us for the bursting through of the sun. But of all of those shafts of light in the Old Testament, none shines more brightly than the star of Bethlehem, David, whose life and reign most prefigure the life and reign of his great descendent, King Jesus.

In the Old Testament Isaiah, for example, anticipates the emergence of a new visible eternal kingdom out of the broken down kingdom of David. He says, "There will come forth a shoot from the stump of Jesse and the Spirit of the Lord shall rest upon him." Jeremiah predicts a greater than David, "Behold, the days are coming declares the Lord when I will raise up for David a righteous branch who will be king. He will reign and deal wisely and shall execute justice and righteousness in the land." You get to the New Testament and the New Testament begins, "Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham." It gets to the Gospel, Paul writing in Romans 1 defines the Gospel in these terms, "The Gospel of God which he promised beforehand through the prophets in the holy Scripture concerning his Son who is a descendent of David according to the flesh and demonstrated to be the Son of God with power by his resurrection from the dead." David gets into the Gospel. There is nobody more significant in the Old Testament than David.

But David is not perfect. Alec McTeer, an Old Testament theologian says this, "David is one of the most complex characters in all of Scripture and the most colorful, lovable and exasperating of all characters. He excites both devotion and disenchantment. Whatever qualities he has as a person, as a King he proves a failure. He fails to govern his kingdom. He fails to govern his family because he fails to govern himself." And we will end up asking David as we ask all of David's descendents except one, we will end up asking the question: is he the King we're to expect? Is he the King that we really need? And the answer is: well, he's better than Saul. And the answer is: well, he's better than all of his

descendants, bar one. But no, he isn't the King that we need. Only Jesus will do. Only Jesus will do. That's going to be our conclusion so I've told you the conclusion. You're getting a few months off and come back when we're finished Samuel.

Well, we need to bear that in mind as we take our road trip now through the life of King David. This morning we're going to look at what this chapter tells us about the God who grieves, the God who provides and the God who enables. It starts with the grief of God as the last chapter ended. We looked at this last time so I won't elaborate but at the very heart of it, we're told in chapter 15:11, the word of the Lord came to Samuel, "'I regret that I have made Saul king, for he has turned back from following me and has not performed my commandments.' And Samuel was angry, and he cried to the LORD all night." Now, this is not God changing his mind. God established his purpose. You can read about it in the works of Moses in the first of his books, Genesis. God's purpose was fixed from before all eternity and had been fixed in Scripture that he would call someone out of the tribe of Judah to reign and that he would have the throne and to him with the nations, the peoples of the world would be attracted to him. God's purpose stood firm. God doesn't change his mind. But God does regret. God grieves. He grieves over the wicked. He grieves over those who waste the opportunities that he has given them. He grieves over those whom he has raised up and empowered and equipped to serve his church in the world who fail him. He grieves over men and woman who he has made in his own image to enjoy all that he has made in this world. He grieves when those men and women rebel against him and turn their back. Be sure of this: God takes no delight in the death of the wicked. And when you get near to God like Samuel, you will grieve too. You will feel what Samuel felt as he cries out to God and as now we find him grieving at the beginning of chapter 16, grieving over the loss of Saul.

The problem is that as Samuel is connected, able to feel the divine pathos, he is in danger of forgetting the divine purpose. That's why God comes to him and rebukes him. Samuel is in danger of crossing a line. I think we empathize with Samuel who is grieving over this man whom he has lost, grieving alongside God. But now God comes to him and do you notice the second part of what God has to say to him, reminds Samuel that his purpose stands. What is his purpose? Saul has been rejected from being king. This theme of rejection has been going on now for some time in the book. Chapter 8, verse 7, "And the LORD said to Samuel," about Israel, "They have not rejected you, but they have rejected me from being king over them." The first rejection is Israel's rejection of God. Then in chapter 10, Samuel confronts the people at a place called Mizpah and he says to the people straight up, he says, "Today," this day, "you have rejected your God, who saves you. You have rejected the God who saves you from all your calamities and your distresses, and you have said to God, 'Set a king over us.'" You have a king, yet you want another kind of king. Then in chapter 15, verse 26, Samuel now says to Saul, straight up, looking him in the eye, "You have rejected the word of the LORD, and the LORD has rejected you," Samuel, "from being king over Israel." God set him up. God has pulled the plug on the kingship of Samuel.

Later on in the Old Testament in Hosea, we read these words, God's warning to Israel, "He destroys you, O Israel, for you are against me, against your helper. Where now is

your king, to save you in all your cities? Where are all your rulers - those of whom you said, 'Give me a king and princes'? I gave you a king in my anger, and I took him away in my wrath," says the Lord. The Lord gives and the Lord takes away. You see, to us as we've been learning, sin is a small thing and these very physical stories are in the Bible to remind us, to drive home to us the desperate, desperate nature of the sin problem in us. We must never mistake God's wrath against sin either as an unfeeling indifference on the one hand or as something that is his simply to extinguish, as it were, at his bidding. It's a real thing, the wrath of God but it's a strange work of God to be angry. He is angry and grieves at the same time. He is full of wrath and full of sorrow for men in their sin at the same time.

He is a God who grieves and he is a God who provides. Listen to God's provision in chapter 13, verse 14. God had promised Samuel this, "The LORD has sought out a man after his own heart." We heard that and then we were faced with this man Jonathan, Jonathan who was the son of Saul. We're not introduced to Jonathan or told that he's the son of Saul, rather we're not told he's the son of Saul until after the kingdom has already been wrested from the hands of Saul. The first time we meet Jonathan he is already a disinherited son so he's not the replacement for Saul. But when you read the story of Jonathan, you cannot help but think this is the kind of man who should be leading Israel. He's a man who believes God. He's a man who will take risks. He is a man who is a leader of men. He's the kind of man whom you really want to be the king of the people. And there are a number of similarities between Jonathan and the one who was to become the king. Both men were sons of Saul. One was a son and one was a son-in-law. Both fought the Philistines single-handedly. Both Jonathan fighting them as an army and the other one fighting Goliath single-handedly, both lead Israel to victory. Both are attacked twice by Saul, their father and father-in-law. Both trust in the Lord. Jonathan trusts in the Lord, not numbers and the other man trusts in the Lord without weapons.

Well, we see 2 things about this provision. We see God's grace. God promises a man after his own heart. It isn't that God has looked at somebody and said, "Well now, there's the kind of person who will make a good king." No, this is the man on whom God has set his heart. A choice, the decision, the selection has all been God's. We know that when we come to find this man he's not perfect, in fact, he's very imperfect but God has set his heart on this man. Here is God, if you like, acting like a true King: in wisdom and power. He chooses Israel to be his people. He chooses David to be his King. He chooses Jerusalem to be his city. And all of his purposes are ultimately fulfilled in Jesus Christ who is the chosen one of God and we Christian believers know that our security lies not in what God saw in us, it lies completely in what God chose to do to us: he chose to set his love upon us. His heart is upon us not because we deserve it but because of his grace. The security of David's throne rests on the foundation of God's choice and God's will and we'll find that because of that, David's throne is occupied to this day and for all eternity will be occupied.

We also see not only the grace of God in the provision but we see the wisdom of God in the provision. You know the story, it's a great story. Samuel comes. He says he's there to sacrifice and he wants to see all of the boys, the sons of Jesse. He wants to see them

because he wants to anoint them. He wants to anoint one particularly. Well, this would not in any way raise questions about the kingship. Anointing is used in various settings and in various ways in the Old Testament. It would not have necessarily aroused suspicion that there was anything royal about this and actually the text doesn't give any indication that there was any anointing as king, at least that is not said when David is eventually anointed.

So all the boys are brought in. Eliab is the first one the comes in and Samuel notices Eliab. He notices his appearance, the height of his stature. He is very impressed with Eliab. In fact, Eliab makes him think about somebody else that he had once met back in chapter 9, verse 2, "A handsome young man. There was not a man among the people of Israel more handsome than he. From his shoulders upward he was taller than any of the people." Samuel looks at Eliab and who does he see? He sees Saul. He thinks, "This is a good replacement for Saul. Saul is handsome. He is strong. He is tall. He looks like a king. Eliab is handsome. He's tall. He looks like a king. This must be God's man for the hour." And it is at that point that God interrupts the proceedings and the Lord said to Samuel, "Do not look at his appearance or at the height of his stature because I have rejected him." Why has God rejected him? Do you notice that it is because the Lord looks on the heart? The Lord looks on the heart. God saw in this man, Eliab, what Samuel could not see. God looks on the heart of Eliab and he sees a man who not only looks like Saul but if he was ever in power would be Saul, mark II. things would not be safe in this man's hands. The Lord sees that. He sees what is in this man and he makes his decision and he says, "This is not the man. I have rejected him."

Why has the Lord rejected him? Listen to what the Lord says, "The Lord sees not as man sees. Man looks on the outward appearance but the Lord looks on the heart." Literally God says, "I am not as man sees. My way of seeing is not like man's way of seeing." He sees to the heart of things and so what Samuel has to do is Samuel has to believe God and not judge by human sight. That is what God is teaching him over and over again as one after another of these sons comes and is rejected. Comes and is rejected. One after the other comes and is rejected. God is saying to Samuel and to us, "God does not look at the outward appearance." He sees better than we do. His perception is more trustworthy than ours is. This takes us to one of the cardinal elements of the biblical religion. You see, what is God teaching Samuel? God is teaching Samuel here what Samuel has already known but which he needs to learn in this particular context in his life. God is teaching Samuel here that the believer acts not by sight but by the word of God. What God is saying to Samuel is, "Samuel, when you look at this man, I don't want you to ask yourself, 'What do I see?' I want you to ask yourself, 'What am I hearing from God?'" Martin Luther put it like this, "God gives only one set of organs to the Christian man or woman. Not your mouth or your nose or your eyes, just ears." Those are the only organs that God gives to the Christian person. We are to walk not by sight but by faith in the word of God like Abraham did. Abraham doesn't see the truth that he's promised. He doesn't see the offspring that he's promised nor the blessing for the world that is promised. What does he do? He believes the promise and he's justified by faith alone.

Now, what Samuel is being taught here is that the wisdom we have in life is to walk and to trust in the God who sees. That's one of the themes of this little section. He's the God who sees. Samuel did not see Saul again, verse 35, chapter 15. The Lord had seen a king for himself, chapter 16, verse 1. Samuel saw Eliab and thought him worthy but the Lord says he does not see the eyes but the heart. Now, this is a great insight into the world today and how we relate in the postmodern world where everybody sees things differently, don't they? They say about you when you say you're a Christian, "Well, that's the way you see it but I see it another way." Everybody thinks the way they see it is the right way. The warning of this text is we human beings cannot trust in anything we see. We will get it wrong. It is not a worthy or a reliable indicator of who someone is or what the meaning behind the situation or circumstance in our lives may be. We cannot look at what's going on in our lives and necessarily draw the right conclusion from it. You may be going through a rough time. Maybe you've been tempted to draw a conclusion from that rough time you're going through but beware of doing that because you will almost invariably get it wrong.

So what are you to do? Well, you're to trust. The whole of biblical religion is about trusting. Trusting and obeying. Trusting and obeying. There's no other way to be happy in Jesus but to trust and obey. It doesn't change. Old Testament, New Testament, today it doesn't change. We don't walk by sight but we live by the word of God.

Now, was God's word true? Of course it was true. It works out in history. You can see this in the responses of Jonathan that I just mentioned and the brothers of David. I mean, Jonathan was the son of the king, the previous king Saul. If anybody had a bone to pick with David when David was eventually seen to be God's nominee for the office, it was Jonathan who had reason to be really angry at the idea. After all, this was supplanting him. It was pushing him aside. Instead, Jonathan who is old enough to be David's father, embraces him like a son, like a brother almost and supports his claim to the throne. He becomes his number 1 fan, his best friend. Jonathan takes that role while his own blood brothers are full of envy and jealousy against David. Was God right? Of course God was right. We have to trust God. He sees not as we see because he knows the heart. He knows the heart.

Now, why is Eliab rejected? Well, we see some of those reasons in the jealousy that develops but why is he rejected here? Do you notice what it says? Because the Lord does not look on the outward appearance. That's where Samuel was looking. He was looking at the outward appearance. But does this mean that if you're really strong and handsome and good-looking, it doesn't apply to any of you but if you were, that God couldn't use you? Is that what it means? God only used ugly people? Well, you do wonder sometimes. No, what this is teaching us is that it really doesn't matter whether you're handsome or ugly. It doesn't really matter whether you're tall or short or fat or thin or whatever the appearance is. It doesn't really matter. None of this matters. External stuff doesn't either qualify or disqualify you from God's service. Looks, talents, education, age, wealth simply don't matter. Period. Full stop. End of sentence.

That's what God teaches Samuel as one after another of these sons comes and goes and none of them is chosen. Another thing that strikes me is that at the end of it all Samuel is left wondering, "Was it Jesse God said? Or maybe it was Jessica's house? Maybe I've come to the wrong address. Maybe I got it wrong." Anyway, he confronts Jesse and he says, "You don't have another son? You must have another son? I mean, God did say it was one of Jesse's sons. You're the only Jesse in Bethlehem therefore it must be you and you must have another son," and what does Jesse say? Well, he says, "Yeah, there remains yet the youngest but behold he is keeping the sheep," and you wonder what was Jesse thinking here? Was he thinking David would be smelly? Or that you really couldn't leave the sheep alone for a while while he brought him to the prophet of God? Or he's too young for anybody to take any notice of? What was the problem with David that Jesse didn't even bother to include him in the number of his own sons? Was it his age? We don't know. The only thing we can say is this: David was not considered important at that point. We're not even told his name, by the way. Did you notice? In the narrative we're not told his name right to the very end, until verse 13. He's kind of the unknown figure. He reminds us of another great descendent of this young man's. Isaiah says of him, "He grew up before him, the Lord, as a young plant like a root from dry ground. He had no form or majesty that we should look at him. No beauty that we should desire him. Despised and rejected by men. A man of sorrows acquainted with grief. Despised and we esteemed him not." David, the great forerunner of that figure, is despised.

Well, God is a God who provides. He provides a man and this is a young man, the youngest of them all who was brought before Samuel. So we come thirdly to the God who empowers. The Lord said, "Arise, anoint him. This is he." In other words, the Lord chooses and the Lord equips and so Samuel anoints David. Now, get that word "anointed" into your head. It's the word in Greek, "Christ." He Christed him. It's the word in Hebrew for Messiah. He Messiahed him. He anointed him. Now, there's a buzzword that comes up again and again in the Old Testament. Whenever you hear it you need to think about the coming one who is going to be the Christed one, the Messiah, the Anointed One. So what's happening there in that little town of Bethlehem, there in the obscure past, is going to change the course of world history staggeringly.

Not only is he anointed but do you notice what happens next? "The Spirit of the LORD rushed upon David," there is the first mention of his name, "from that day forward." How are we to understand the rushing of the Spirit? Well, I don't think this is the internal heart new birth regeneration to use the New Testament language. In the Old Testament, the Holy Spirit has a much broader skill set than just converting a man's soul. He does that, of course, but he does other things. He equips people like Bezalel. Bless him, his mother was having a tough time when she chose that name for him. Bezalel was the guy who was equipped by the Holy Spirit to do beautiful craftsmanship in building the tabernacle. Sampson, the first superhero in history with powerful feats of strength; able to leap high buildings; tear apart lions with his hands; attack whole towns and destroy whole armies; and bring the house down in the end in a grand finale. Then there was Saul, equipped to be the king. In other words, this equipping of the Spirit is like the king's mojo, the thing that makes him the king, that gives him the interior courage, the moral backbone to do the job of being the king of Israel. That's what David received. Later on in his life, David is

afraid that that might be taken away from him and that he will be left without a dynasty and left without the ability to reign when he sins against God and he cries out to God, "Don't take your Holy Spirit from me." He's not talking in salvation terms there but in terms of the role to which God has appointed him.

Well, on this day, David receives the down payment of his kingship. He receives the Spirit. It's equipping him for everything that's going to happen from this point on. What's going to happen from this point on? There's going to be conflict. The Spirit equipping him for conflict. He's going to be in conflict with lions and bears. He'd find himself betrayed and hunted. He'd have to endure plots and traps. He'd have to live in exile, hide in caves. He'd have to go to the very edge of sanity itself. He needed the equipment of the Holy Spirit for all of that. If ever a man needed that anointing, he needed that anointing and no sooner does the Spirit come upon him than the quiet life of a shepherd is going to come to an end. He is catapulted into the limelight. Trouble soon begins. Does it sound familiar to you? The Lord Jesus in the obscurity of Bethlehem. And then Nazareth. Anointed with the Holy Spirit. Then driven by the Spirit into the desert to be tempted by the evil one and all hell breaks loose on the soul of Jesus.

Well, something else is happening here, there is a contrast being drawn. The anointing and empowering of this young man is in stark contrast to the experience of Saul. Notice 2 verses, 13 and 14, "The Spirit of the LORD rushed upon David, the Spirit of the LORD departed from Saul," and instead of another kind of spirit, a spirit of evilness would be one way of translating it, a spirit of disaster might be another way of translating it, a spirit which brings disaster from the Lord comes upon him. These psychological symptoms that he experiences of being terrified, terrorized, anxious, paranoid, are the direct result of the spirit of kingship being removed from him. He now finds himself without the equipment to do the job but he has the responsibility. He's terrified, distracted, driven to the edge of insanity this man by what happens. And it's the Lord, of course. It was the Lord who withdrew the Spirit. It's the Lord who allows the disaster. Indeed, it's the Lord who intends a disaster. This is part of the judgment of God. Everything comes from him. He ordains whatsoever comes to pass. We can't hide behind human responsibility and avoid what the Bible insists on repeating to us over and over again that everything ultimately comes from the Lord's hands.

But again, the evil is not so much moral evil here as the disaster that followed, the withdrawal of the Spirit. Here is a little interesting thing: in verse 1, David is the one the Lord provided for himself. In verse 17, David is the one that Saul provided for himself as an expert on the lyre. So actually in this chapter you have David being both the Lord's choice and the king's choice and, in fact, not only what Saul actually says is "provide for me a man," we discover that the Lord's provision that he's talked about back in verse 1 for Israel is also the Lord's provision for this man whose life is coming apart and that God uses his anointed servant, David, to restrain the terrors of the night in Saul. To exorcise the demons metaphorically, if you will. To exorcise the demons of his heart. And if Saul represents the world and if David represents great David's greater son, King Jesus, we have an insight into this that our Lord Jesus is both hated by the world and at the same time he is the one who does the world most good even though the world as Saul at this

point, doesn't recognize his kingship and will not acknowledge him to be King. The world does not recognize the kingship of King Jesus or acknowledge him to be King but King Jesus restrains evil in the world. He puts his people in his kingdom in the world as salt and light to restrain evil and to shine in the darkness so that though the world is a dark place it isn't completely dark because of the presence of our David and his subjects.

In a moment or 2 after we've eaten and drunk at the King's table, I'm going to dismiss you into the world in which we live but I'm going to dismiss you as Jesus' people, empowered by Jesus because you too have an anointing from the holy one. You too are empowered by the Spirit to live for him in the world and I'm going to dismiss you into this world to be what God has made you wherever you are, a little bit of Christ, a little bit of the Lord Jesus with an anointing that Christ has, so that you may do for your colleagues, family and friends what David does here. Though they may reject you, nonetheless you will do them good. You will do them good.

Let's pray.

Father, I pray that you would empower us afresh by your grace to be your people in the world, to the praise of your glory. Amen.