

The Shepherd King, 1 Samuel 16, BCF 2011.01.16

1 Samuel 16:1 *The LORD said to Samuel, "How long will you grieve over Saul, since I have rejected him from being king over Israel? Fill your horn with oil, and go. I will send you to Jesse the Bethlehemite, for I have provided for myself a king among his sons."*

Last week we saw that people tend to want to trust other people rather than the Lord. They don't want to be different and rely upon God as our King. So they asked for a king like all the other nations had, and God gave them one, a man named Saul.

But Saul was a failure, and now Samuel is to go to anoint a new King for the nation. Anointing is the Old Testament ceremony whereby a national leader, specifically a priest or the king, was set apart for service for God and the nation. The first king Saul was not obedient to the Lord and so Samuel had to say to him

"...now your kingdom shall not continue. The LORD has sought out a man after his own heart, and the LORD has commanded him to be prince over his people, because you have not kept what the LORD commanded you." (1 Samuel 13:14)

God desires a "man after his own heart" (Heb. "a man like / according to His heart"), The heart in the Bible is not primarily about emotions but more about what we think deep inside, what motivates us, what we value, what is important to us, and what we truly love. To have a heart "like" God's own heart means to have deep inside the same mindset as God: to consider important what he considers important, to love what he loves and hate what he hates, to share God's mindset about life, to trust his ways and obey his will. People can share like passions with other people, such as rock-climbing, golf, quilting, or social concerns. This goes beyond being like-minded to being like-hearted. That's what David was toward the Lord, having the same passions as God.

And so in this chapter we will be introduced to David, who will become the great king of Israel. He is one of the most important people in the Bible, being mentioned in 66 chapters in the OT, and with 59 references to him in the NT. As we saw from last week, from Genesis onwards God is at work to raise up a faithful leader, a King and Champion and Hero and Leader not only for Israel but who will lead the whole human race out of the curse of the fall. We will see that David is a great leader, but not the final answer, for he too will have failures. He is however the next step in God's drama of redemption. God says these words, *"I have provided for myself a king..."* He himself will raise up that King. We can vote and we can appoint people to positions, but God alone can produce a truly good and righteous leader.

1 Samuel 16:2-5 ² *And Samuel said, "How can I go? If Saul hears 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 *And invite Jesse to the sacrifice, and I will show you what you shall do. And you shall anoint for me him whom I declare to you." 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 *And he said, "Peaceably; I have come to sacrifice to the LORD. Consecrate yourselves, and come with me to the sacrifice." And he consecrated Jesse and his sons and invited them to the sacrifice.*

"I have come to sacrifice." There is no deception here, but rather concealment of Samuel's final purpose. Samuel did come to the community, as he did to many others, for judgment

and sacrifice. But the anointing would not be a public proclamation but a clandestine ceremony. Saul in his state of mind did not deserve full disclosure of all of Samuel's actions.

Samuel was not only a priest and a prophet, but also a Judge of Israel. That is, he was a military and judicial figure, as well. He would come to the various Israelite towns to hold court, make sacrifices, and then have a feast with them. There was no central temple in Jerusalem, so it was allowable for him as priest to receive sacrificial offerings for the sins of the people. His coming to a community might mean there would be an indictment or trial of some sort, and so there naturally was some fear at his surprise appearance. But there would also be occasion for forgiveness, sacrifice, and then feasting to celebrate reconciliation between God and man.

Samuel says that he comes specifically to share that meal with Jesse and his family.

1 Samuel 16:6-10 *When they came, he looked on Eliab and thought, "Surely the LORD's anointed is before him." 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 sees not as man sees: man looks on the outward appearance, but the LORD looks on the heart." ⁸ Then Jesse called Abinadab and made him pass before Samuel. And 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 And Jesse made seven of his sons pass before Samuel. And Samuel said to Jesse, "The LORD has not chosen these."*

Seven of Jesse's sons are now presented to Samuel. He is impressed. They are tall, strong and confident. They present well. You get the feeling this is like the NFL draft. Dad Jesse is standing with the clipboard reading each guy's performance stats, that sort of thing. But... the new king is not among these sons! God says that they are "rejected", that is, passed over and not chosen for this role.

It's interesting that Samuel -- who was a prophet as well as a judge - could not himself guess which one it was, and God says to him this very great principle, *"Do not look on his appearance or on the height of his stature, because I have rejected him. For the LORD sees not as man sees: man looks on the outward appearance, but the LORD looks on the heart."* (v. 7) The condition of the heart before God is infinitely more important than outward appearance.

And Samuel should have known better. Saul had been a miserable failure. He looked good, but had no real heart for God. He was impressive in stature (tall), in battle, in fame. But he was compromising when it came to obeying God. He was not faithful to his call. Saul was more concerned with the approval of men rather than God, with his own name rather than the name of the Lord. Saul's concern never rose above his own public opinion poll.

"For the LORD sees not as man sees: man looks on the outward appearance, but the LORD looks on the heart." We would all agree with this principle, but how often do we judge others by their outward appearance? Because a person speaks well, or presents well, or has poise and self-confidence, or great talent, we will choose him as a leader. Skills are good, and confidence may be valid, but there is far more to a person. We are too easily impressed by superficial things. People are like icebergs, having the great bulk of who and what they are hidden out of sight. Their motives, their loves, their thoughts, their gods, their values, their real beliefs often hidden far from public sight.

This highlights the importance of the heart. We have called this series, “Shaping a Heart for God” because life is lived from the heart. What we think about, value, love and cherish deep within, these become our motives and basis for how we live life. So, what’s in our heart, and the condition of our heart is far more important than our appearance.

As a teen working on our farm I learned about heartwood. My step-dad showed me how it was good that the cedar posts we used for building fences had a strong, red, aromatic center. It was good and meant the post would last a long time. Some years after that when we lived in a different home I was driving through the neighborhood after a storm. There was a beautiful old home nearby with stately trees around it, but I noticed one of the large trees had toppled in the wind. As I drove by I could see that the tree though beautiful and stately on the outside had somehow rotted out in its heartwood. The interior had decomposed. So when the wind came the beautiful tree came down and then became firewood. This can happen to people.

My son, be attentive to my words; incline your ear to my sayings. Let them not escape from your sight; keep them within your heart. For they are life to those who find them, and healing to all their flesh. Keep your heart with all vigilance, for from it flow the springs of life. (Proverbs 4:20-23 ESV)

We need to remember that God’s choosing here is specifically related to his choice for king, not salvation. David appears to be a believer in God from an early age.

But David is not there in the room...

1 Samuel 16:11 *Then Samuel said to Jesse, "Are all your sons here?" And he said, "There remains yet the youngest, but behold, he is keeping the sheep." And Samuel said to Jesse, "Send and get him, for we will not sit down till he comes here."*

When we first introduced to David, he’s not there! He’s not there because he is the youngest son, probably about 12 years old, and he’s got farm chores to do. Herding sheep (and usually goats, too) was not considered a glamorous job. He got this job because he was at the bottom of the family hierarchy, the low man on the totem pole, the bottom of the pecking order. (We catch a bit of his brothers’ attitude toward him in 17:28.) It’s interesting that where God sees a king, his father and brothers only see a sheep tender. This sounds like...

But God chose what is foolish in the world to shame the wise; God chose what is weak in the world to shame the strong; God chose what is low and despised in the world, even things that are not, to bring to nothing things that are, so that no human being might boast in the presence of God. (1 Cor 1:27-29)

Being a shepherd was long hours, usually miles of travel to find pasture, sometime nights alone under the stars. It was not a clean job. Not a nine to five job. A person needed vigilance, stamina, and courage to chase away predators. He would do this job through his youth and teen years.

What did David learn outside? What did he learn as a sheep-herder? He learned humility and faithful service. He learned to care for the lives committed to his charge. He learned courage by facing predators that attacked the flock. He learned how to spend long hours

alone in the presence of God and how to sing and play music for God's glory. Perhaps it's during those sheep herding years he sang these words...

*When I look at your heavens, the work of your fingers,
the moon and the stars, which you have set in place,
what is man that you are mindful of him,
and the son of man that you care for him? (Psalm 8:3-4)*

*The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want.
He makes me lie down in green pastures.
He leads me beside still waters. (Psalm 23:1-2)*

David will be outside, physically and socially and politically, for a large portion of his life. He will continue sheep-tending for a few more years, then work for Saul, then be on the run from Saul for nearly a decade, and then another 7 years after Saul's death would pass before David would be King of the entire nation. In all about 25 years would pass from this night before he would actually BE king over all of Israel. We see similar things in Abraham's life as he wanders and lives in tents in the promised land for many years, Joseph must endure slavery and prison before his exaltation to power, Moses must herd sheep for 40 years before called to deliver Israel.

A lesson here: God uses humble circumstances as he shapes a heart after his own heart. Do not despise it when God hides you away, even for a long season. There will be times when others do not notice you, or they will pass over you. Times when your praise does not come from man, and you are shut up to God alone. You may be sidelined with an illness, a job demotion or loss. Or you must learn menial duties and faithfulness and humility. Useful service involves humility and dying to self. Great men and women of God all through history have experienced this, even our Lord Jesus.

Further, remember that following Christ will also mean sharing his reproach, and that as many people reject Christ they will rejecting you. We must accept that.

And now David arrives...

1 Samuel 16:12-13 *And he sent and brought him in. Now he was ruddy and had beautiful eyes and was handsome. And the LORD said, "Arise, anoint him, for this is he." ¹³ Then Samuel took the horn of oil and anointed him in the midst of his brothers. And the Spirit of the LORD rushed upon David from that day forward. And Samuel rose up and went to Ramah.*

Young David is described as ruddy, which means reddish. In Hebrew this term may refer to the color of his hair. (I used to have red hair!) More likely, it refers to having lighter skin (lighter relative in mid-eastern standards) and was reddish for having spent much time outside. Again like me... so when you think of David, think me. His eyes were attractive and he was good-looking. (Well, there you go!) Probably not in the Abercrombie sense, but in a healthy, rugged way. Outward appearance is not unimportant, it's just that the condition of the heart is far more important. David is a good-looking young guy, but his heart for God is what is really impressive.

He is anointed King. Anointing is that ceremony whereby a leader, specifically a priest or a king, was set apart for service for God and the nation. Pure olive oil was poured upon the

head. And the Holy Spirit comes upon David to empower him to be a holy representative before God and man, to rule his people in righteousness, to protect them, and to enforce justice.

But we begin to see that David is not the ultimate King that God has in mind. The story line of the history of redemption is that God is raising up a King, a perfect mediator for this creation to remove the curse of sin and death and to restore the blessing of righteousness and life.

As we study the life of David we want to look not just at his example that we might follow, or his errors to avoid. The story of David is more than moral and spiritual lessons. There's more. King David speaks of his descendent, a king greater than himself: Psalm 110:1-2 "*The LORD says to my Lord: "Sit at my right hand, until I make your enemies your footstool." The LORD sends forth from Zion your mighty scepter. Rule in the midst of your enemies!"*" David is pointing ahead to a greater king, the Son of David. David is an imperfect shadow of the perfect Coming King.

The Hebrew word "to anoint" is מָשַׁח *mašah* "The anointed" מְשִׁיחַ is *meshîah*, which we transliterate into "messiah". The Greek word (NT) is *chrīō*, "anoint", an anointed one or the anointed is *Christos*, from which we transliterate the Christ. So Messiah and Christ are identical terms and there not properly a name but an office. So David, an anointed king is pointing ahead to the Anointed One, the Messiah, the Christ.

David in his life is a "type." This means that in himself and in his life is a prophetic foreshadowing of the coming Son of God. So as David was humbly serving his family, so too the Lord would empty himself of the glory of heaven and take on the form of a bondservant (Philippians 2). He like David would be born in Bethlehem (Micah 5:2). As God's servant, the Son of David too would be overlooked and passed over. He would be *The stone that the builders rejected has become the cornerstone.* (Psalm 118:22) Isaiah would say, *...he had no form or majesty that we should look at him, and no beauty that we should desire him.* (Isaiah 53:2b) He would come into *"the world, and the world was made through him, yet the world did not know him. He came to his own, and his own people did not receive him.* (John 1:10-11)

He too would be a shepherd, the only Good Shepherd who is truly concerned for the life and welfare of his flock, who would lay down his life for the sheep. Jesus himself at birth would be laid in a feed trough surrounded by livestock, and shepherds would be his first visitors. He alone of all the rulers and leaders of this world is truly concerned for our welfare and can protect us to eternal life. Jesus' greatness would not be in his appearance, but in his heart. Overlooked by man, but approved by God. And as David was given the Spirit, so his greater Son would not only have the Spirit but give the Spirit to all his people. (John 3:34)

Now, finally, how do we come to have a heart after God's own heart? How do we begin to see our hearts shaped in likeness with God's heart?

The Bible says that from our birth into this world our hearts are in darkness. It is blind and bent in its loves and desires and motives, so that we cannot trust it: *The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately sick; who can understand it?* (Jeremiah 17:9)

The good news is that God can remake a heart, and reshape it to new loves and affections and values and motives: *And I will give you a new heart, and a new spirit I will put within you. And I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh.* (Ezekiel 36:26) . God does not save us *because* we have a heart like his, he saves us *by giving* us a heart like his. This is the new birth. And Jesus purchased that heart for us by his own death on the cross. It's a fantastic thing if someone offers to give you a new car, or build you a new home. Jesus offers us a new heart!

And this new heart is to be kept with diligence, maintained in fellowship with God, to be nurtured and fed with truth, and strengthened by the Holy Spirit. This heart will continue in this life to be shaped into likeness with God's heart.

All of this comes about by God's grace, received by faith.

Let's finish by reflecting on David's confession of faith in Psalm 23:1-4. Many think of the 23^d Psalm as a psalm for the dying. But it's really about living and about David's trust in the Lord. The first step to having a heart shaped after the Lord's is to, like David, make sure the Lord is YOUR Shepherd. Can you say this is true of you?

The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want. He makes me lie down in green pastures. He leads me beside still waters. He restores my soul. He leads me in paths of righteousness for his name's sake. Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for you are with me; your rod and your staff, they comfort me.