“Looking for Donkeys and Finding a King”
1 Samuel 9:1-27

INTRO:

In the nineteenth century, a poet and hymn writer named William Cowper wrote a hymn/poem which put an important phrase in the mind of the church. He wrote:

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\begin{align*}
\text{God moves in a mysterious way} \\
\text{His wonders to perform;} \\
\text{He plants His footsteps in the sea} \\
\text{And rides upon the storm.}
\end{align*}
\]

Deep in unfathomable mines
Of never failing skill
He treasures up His bright designs
And works His sovereign will.

William Cowper could have been writing a commentary on 1 Samuel 9 when he penned these words. We will discover how God indeed worked in mysterious ways His wonders to perform as we learn how someone sought after donkeys and found a king.

I. A Good Heritage (v. 1-2)
II. Taking the scenic Trip to a Sacrifice (v. 3-14)
III. What Really was Happening (v. 15-17)

I. A Good Heritage (v. 1-2)

A. “There was a man of Benjamin whose name was Kish the son of Abiel, the son of Zeror, the son of Bechorath, the son of Aphiah, a Benjamite, a mighty man of power. And he had a choice and handsome son whose name was Saul. There was not a more handsome person than he among the children of Israel. From his shoulders upward he was taller than any of the people.” (1 Samuel 9:1–2)

The chapter opens with a short sketch of Saul’s heritage and physical qualifications. Saul was a man who did not grow up with the career goal of becoming the first human king in Israel. However, when he became king, he started out very well. He had all the qualifications the people wanted in a king.
B. He had a strong heritage. His father was a man of wealth and reputation who could trace his line all the way to Benjamin. Saul also was very tall and handsome. He was by all appearances, the best man in Israel for the job. When he finishes poorly it was not because he did not have the breeding for the job. He did not suffer from a bad environment. He suffered from letting sin rule in his mind and life.

II. Taking the scenic Trip to a Sacrifice (v.3-14)

A. Saul’s Dad’s donkeys have mysteriously wondered off into the wilderness. Saul is given the job to go find them and bring them home. Saul begins a tour of surrounding towns, looking for dad’s donkeys. Saul took one of the servants with him to look.

B. Consider now what happened? Saul and the servant go town to town to try and find the donkeys. They cannot find them. Finally, Saul said they needed to go home or his father would start being worried more about them than the donkeys. His servant “just happened” to know Samuel was in town. He also “just happened” to have a quarter shekel of silver to give to Samuel as a payment for seeing where the donkeys were. He also “just happened” to suggest strongly to Saul to seek Samuel. It looked like Saul “just happened” to pick the right one among the servants to bring with him on this search.

C. When they arrived outside the town, Saul and his servant talk with the ladies out at the well who draw water, and they told him to hurry into town because Samuel was on his way to conduct a sacrifice for the town.

“So they went up to the city. As they came into the city, behold, Samuel was coming out toward them to go up to the high place.” (1 Samuel 9:14)

Samuel “just happened” to be coming down the road to meet them when they come into the city to meet Saul and his servant.

III. What Really was Happening (v.15-17)

A. What an amazing set of coincidences to just fall into place so that Saul is in the right place at the right time. One of my favorite lines from the program NCIS is when Abby tells Gibbs, “The pigmies in Africa know what you think about coincidences.” Was this just an astounding string of happenstances or what something else happing?

B. Verses 15-17 supply the twist in the story as God lifts the veil for us so we can see what He was doing behind the scenes.
“Now the LORD had told Samuel in his ear the day before Saul came, saying, ‘Tomorrow about this time I will send you a man from the land of Benjamin, and you shall anoint him commander over My people Israel, that he may save My people from the hand of the Philistines; for I have looked upon My people, because their cry has come to Me.’ So when Samuel saw Saul, the LORD said to him, ‘There he is, the man of whom I spoke to you. This one shall reign over My people.’” (1 Samuel 9:15-17)

Can you see the picture? The LORD told Samuel the day before, tomorrow at this time, I will send you the man from Benjamin who you will anoint the leader in Israel. Samuel must have run outside to the sundial so he knew the time. Samuel had already set up the feast and the time and had a meal cooked especially for Saul. At the right moment, Samuel headed out to the feast, and low and behold, he met Saul on the road and the LORD said, “This is the guy.”

C. This is providence. Often God makes appointments for us that we never realize He has made. Let’s talk a little bit about what providence is and what it means to us. Providence means literally to see ahead of time. It is God’s goodness providing for us before we are aware that we have a need. We can see God’s providence benefitting Saul in 1 Samuel, but you and I have never been called to be the king of Israel. Does God’s providence apply to us? Does our God alter coincidences for each of us?

1. Proverbs 16:9 tells us, “A man’s heart plans his way, But the LORD directs his steps.” The Lord directs all of our steps. He is not responsible for our sin. Yet, He directs what steps we take for our spiritual and temporal benefit. Do you remember Psalm 37:23-24?

“The steps of a good man are ordered by the LORD, And He delights in his way. Though he fall, he shall not be utterly cast down; For the LORD upholds him with His hand.”

This is a great promise for all those who belong to God through faith in Jesus Christ. He directs even our steps.

2. I think the greatest verse on God’s providence is Romans 8:28.

“And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose.”

We start with the qualifiers which tell us to whom God gives this promise. This promise is for those who love God. We who know the Lord and love Him can claim this promise. Second, it applies to all those who have been called to faith in Christ.
What exactly can we trust the Lord to do? All things that God allows to come into our lives, the good, the bad, and the ugly, He weaves all together for our good. He is using the details of our lives to make us what we must become for Him.

When we are submitting ourselves under the hand of God, as we are exhorted to do in 1 Peter 5:5, and we are waiting for God to exalt us in due time, how can we be assured He will take care of us? Here is how we know. God’s promise to work all things for our Good.

Do you know this God? If you do, are to holding on to this promise and not letting Satan rip it out of your hand?

Cowper finished his hymn with these words:

 Ye fearful saints, fresh courage take;  
The clouds ye so much dread  
Are big with mercy and shall break  
In blessings on your head.

 Judge not the Lord by feeble sense,  
But trust Him for His grace;  
Behind a frowning providence  
He hides a smiling face.

 His purposes will ripen fast,  
Unfolding every hour;  
The bud may have a bitter taste,  
But sweet will be the flower.

 Blind unbelief is sure to err  
And scan His work in vain;  
God is His own interpreter,  
And He will make it plain.

Hymn# 56 - Day by Day