

An Unlikely Choice
1 Samuel 16:1-23

1 Samuel 16:1-13 [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.”* [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.”* [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] *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.*

[6] *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.”* [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.”* [12] *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.*

We won't read this text:

[14] *Now the Spirit of the LORD departed from Saul, and a harmful spirit from the LORD tormented him.* [15] *And Saul's servants said to him, “Behold now, a harmful spirit from God is tormenting you. [16] Let our lord now command your servants who are before you to seek out a man who is skillful in playing the lyre, and when the harmful spirit from God is upon you, he will play it, and you will be well.”* [17] *So Saul said to his servants, “Provide for me a man who can play well and bring him to me.”* [18] *One of the young men answered, “Behold, I have seen a son of Jesse the Bethlehemite, who is skillful in playing, a man of valor, a man of war, prudent in speech, and a man of good presence, and the LORD is with him.”* [19] *Therefore Saul sent messengers to Jesse and said, “Send me David your son, who is with the sheep.”* [20] *And Jesse took a donkey laden with bread and a skin of wine and a young goat and sent them by David his son to Saul. [21] And David came to Saul and entered his service. And Saul loved him greatly, and he became his armor-bearer. [22] And Saul sent to Jesse, saying, “Let David remain in my service, for he has found favor in my sight.”* [23] *And whenever the harmful spirit from God was upon Saul, David took the lyre and played it with his hand. So Saul was refreshed and was well, and the harmful spirit departed from him.*

1. Grieving is part of the Christian life:

If you've been a follower of Jesus for even just a little bit, you know that grief and pain are not absent from following Jesus.

Samuel was a servant of God. A Prophet, a Priest. Since his childhood he had faithfully served God. Shouldn't everything be cool by now? Shouldn't all his problems of life be done with? He's faithful, he's obedient, he's done all God has asked and now he sees his biggest failure... Saul.

Samuel was afraid for Israel. He was afraid Israel would fall into ruin without godly leadership. He was lamenting his own role in the demise of Saul. He had a relationship with Saul. Samuel loved Saul and wanted it all to work out.

But I think Samuel was also discouraged in his “role” in all of this. When you do what God says, shouldn't everything work out alright? Shouldn't there always be great success?

Samuel did what God asked and things still went to failure. When serving God it's easy to feel this way. Samuel couldn't view Saul's failure with professional detachment.

Do you ever mourn over such things? The sin of friends, family, leaders? Do you take offense to the things that offend God? Do you hurt for the things that hurt God?

Has this happened to you? You spend time loving a person, sharing your life, hoping they can see Jesus. Hoping they can start to make some decisions that will make changes for the better. Hoping and praying that God would do a work in them. And then.... It goes South. They fall back into old sinful behaviors, seem to reject your help and counsel. They struggle to see Jesus and struggle to see how God has used you in their life.

Well... welcome to following Jesus. This is what Jesus is calling us to. We're to love, just like Jesus loves us. Samuel loved Saul. Saul was Samuel's student. Samuel was Saul's teacher, pastor and friend. Yet Saul failed God and failed Samuel.

We don't stop loving when it all goes South. Sometimes we have to remove ourselves from bad situations, but we don't stop loving. We don't stop forgiving and we don't stop hoping and praying for God's will to be done in our life and the lives of others.

Samuel's grief and fear are answered with orders from God. Fill your horn and go... God has provided a king. He has not let go of His people.

Samuel's mourning was not wrong. He was mourning the loss of a king that began with such promise. He was mourning his role in it all. But God is god and we are not. He is still in control.

2. The true King never loses control of His kingdom. He is always present, always aware and always working.

Joshua 1:9 *[9] Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous. Do not be frightened, and do not be dismayed, for the LORD your God is with you wherever you go."*

Isaiah 45:6-7 *[6] that people may know, from the rising of the sun and from the west, that there is none besides me; I am the LORD, and there is no other.*

*[7] I form light and create darkness,
I make well-being and create calamity,
I am the LORD, who does all these things.*

Matthew 19:26 *[26] But Jesus looked at them and said, "With man this is impossible, but with God all things are possible."*

He is even in control of evil. This is a very unpopular thought isn't it. It's troubling to think that God ordains evil, calamity, pain and suffering. But this is where our faith is tested. This is where our trust is challenged. Do we really believe that God is god and we are not? Do we really believe that He is God.

I admit that I struggle with this. With my finite mind I think... How can this be? But I also admit that I don't understand this either. I am not able to reconcile the fact that **if** God loves us, why would he allow, even cause pain and suffering in this world. **There are many views on this subject** but in my mind, none seem to be able to completely satisfy our human reasoning with a plausible answer. **Because of this, I see it as a mystery of who God is.** One that I will not know in this life on earth. Yet I will trust Him. Because of who He is and what He has done.

3. God's chooses whom He will choose for the work that He is to accomplish: It is not what we see, but what God sees. In choosing David, He doesn't look on the outward appearance, He looks on the heart. His ways are not our ways.

Proverbs 19:21 [21] *Many are the plans in the mind of a man,
but it is the purpose of the LORD that will stand.*

Isaiah 55:8-11 [8] *For my thoughts are not your thoughts,
neither are your ways my ways, declares the LORD.*

[9] *For as the heavens are higher than the earth,
so are my ways higher than your ways
and my thoughts than your thoughts.*

[10] *“For as the rain and the snow come down from heaven
and do not return there but water the earth,
making it bring forth and sprout,
giving seed to the sower and bread to the eater,*

[11] *so shall my word be that goes out from my mouth;
it shall not return to me empty,
but it shall accomplish that which I purpose,
and shall succeed in the thing for which I sent it.*

The kingdom is only safe in God’s hands. Not in Kings or Presidents, or Chancellors or Prime Ministers. We look at the outward appearances and make judgments accordingly.

God ALWAYS looks to the heart. Only **God’s wisdom** is acceptable and adequate for directing His kingdom.

Are you OK with who God chooses? Are you OK with what God chooses for you?

See this is problem for me. Because I’m critical. I like to think that I’m pretty sharp and clever. I like to think that I know best. It’s my nature, to exalt myself above not just everyone else, but God himself. I like to judge.

It’s easy for us to see that Saul did not fulfill God’s call on him. But we know how the story ends.

We all like our “candidates” for an election. We have a certainty of hope. We believe in them... but it is so very rare to have a candidate leave elected office with the same support and faith of the people with which they entered that office.

The people of Israel loved Saul... in the beginning. They trusted Samuel and they trusted Saul. God even chose Saul. Look at where it ended up. (But didn’t God predict this?)

One thing we can do. Beware of external appearances. It’s easy to stumble here.

You can visit a church and see lots of external success and niceties. Beautiful buildings and furniture, high tech media and slammin’ music. A good message and great coffee and doughnuts. A bunch of inflatables in the kids church and a dynamic youth program. Everything scripted like a TV show or a Broadway production.

Some of us like the movers and the shakers, the aggressive extroverts. We like salespeople that seek to fill our needs with satisfaction. But some questions we should ask are, How do they pray? Do they enjoy being with their spouse and family? Are they humble? Do they bear one another’s burdens? Do they weep?

We can also be swayed in a different way. We can look at a small unassuming church. We can think that because it is small it is a group of people who are really sold out to Jesus. Small but devoted. We don’t go in for all this big flashy stuff. Big buildings and programs. Lots of people, bumper stickers, huge Christmas and Easter programs... small is real, big is fake.

Both views are flawed. There are wonderful churches that are both small, large and everywhere in between. We need to look for the heart of God. Just because we don't attend a particular church does not make them bad or wrong. It just means that God has called us to "this" church. It's not a popularity contest, it's a matter of the heart.

God gives us hope. God will save us from our **perceived saviors**. Our self chosen saviors. He always exposes the false messiah. And here is a little caveat. Most of the time, we the people are the ones that create the false savior. We are the ones that exalt a leader to savior status. We can be just as responsible as the false savior is. Pause.

Who would have thought that it would be the youngest of Jesse's children? Who would have thought it would be the shepherd, David? Jesse felt no need to invite his youngest son, David to this event. Surely it wasn't the young little guy.

God chooses the unlikely. How many times have you thought "there is no way that guy or gal is ever going to serve Jesus"...? And then you hear or see the miracle that God has done. You see folks that were in sin and disobedience, and now they have exploded for Jesus.

A lot of us folks in our later years, we've been through the ups and downs. We've been on fire for Jesus and we've been down in the lowlands where the water is deep and dry land seems so far away.

The thing for all of us to remember is that God is a God of redemption. And there can be no redemption without sin and disobedience. There are people in this room that have been greatly used by God, and yet we've gone through dark times of heartache and pain.

Sometimes it's because of our own sin. But sometimes it just seems to happen and we don't know why. Many of us run into these dark times and say, "well, I guess I can't be used by God". I guess it was just a fluke or dumb luck that I ever thought God would do great things in me.

But this is where we miss it. See... it's not a sprint. It's a marathon. We get saved, get excited and jump out of the shute and we are cookin' and rockin' and jammin' for Jesus. And then... it all blows up. We sin, we make mistakes, we get mad, get fired, our family suffers, we discover that with serving God comes suffering. That with serving God comes hardship and problems.

We've got problems. I've got problems. You've got problems. It's all going to show it's ugly head. We can only keep the charade going for so long. We can only fake it in front of others for so long and then... we get squeezed and like a tube of toothpaste... what ever is really in us comes out. And it is always ugly.

But don't be discouraged. Don't be dismayed. God is with you. He doesn't expose your sin and ugliness to condemn you or even hurt you. He does it so He can forgive you and restore you to who you are meant to be. A child of the king. Pause.

4. God equips David. God's spirit rushes into him. David has his problems and he's going to have so many more. But the difference between Saul and David is that when David sins, he's going to throw himself into the arms of God. Saul tries to justify his sin and disobedience.

As adversarial as God and Saul's relationship can be, David's will be the exact opposite. Both will have sinned terribly against God, but the difference is repentance.

It's going to be decades before David takes the throne. What God ordains will come to pass. David will remain faithful to this calling.

Has God called you? Maybe it was 10 or 20 or 30 years ago. When I was 11 years old I sensed God calling me to be a pastor. Look at how long it took. I wasn't like David. I wasn't that faithful, but God's purpose has stood the test of time. What has God called you to? Do you even know? Do you remember? It may have been decades, but His call is still true.

Many are the plans in the mind of a man, but it is the purpose of the Lord that will stand.

God calls David and His spirit rushes into him. God's spirit is still with you. Let's pray for us to once again be sensitive to His calling, His will and His spirit that equips. It's not about you... It never has been. It's will always be all about Jesus.