

**The Rock: 12-19-2021****Advent: The Road to Bethlehem**

**First reading:** Ruth 4: 18-21, Luke 2:8-12

**INTRODUCE THE VIDEO:** This week we are looking at King David, lets listen to his response to a question that was asked to him.

**Title:** The promise in an unexpected package

**Scripture:** 1 Samuel 16:1-13 (black bible Pg. 223-224)

**Theme:**

Human beings have the ability to look, see and judge with their eyes, doing so, often. God, however looks, sees and judges the heart -for only he has the ability to see that deep into a human soul

**Introduction:**

Matthew Henry, in his very helpful commentary says this about people:

"We can tell how men look, but He (God) can tell what they are...Let us reckon that to be true beauty which is within, and judge of men, as far as we are capable, by their minds, not their mien."

**-Commentary on 1 Samuel: Pg. 286**

An obscure shepherd boy from Bethlehem, not even found to be worthy to be invited to the party, is all of a sudden thrust into the king's service and the limelight of history.

This week, we discover, in the course of history and God's plan, He chooses whom He will, and David was His man. With all of his short-comings, his heart was seen by God and judged to be right.

This is such an upside-down story as we look at this text. Although by now, we ought to be used to such upside down stories on the time line of God's plan, that it is expected.

He seems to always pick who we wouldn't, choose the end of the line instead of the beginning, and those who seem to have little to nothing by way of worldly perspective to offer, and turns the tables on this world.

Brennan Manning from the Ragamuffin Gospel says:

"The Kingdom belongs to people who aren't trying to look good or impress anybody, even themselves. They are not plotting how they can call attention to themselves, worrying about how their actions will be interpreted or wondering

if they will get gold stars for their behavior..."

As we begin this story, we discover that the prophet Samuel is making a mistake that so many of us make. Looking at the outward appearance.

### **The Story:**

He has been commissioned by God to go to Bethlehem and anoint a new King. Having gone home to Ramah in despair and grief over the abject failure of Saul, God tells him to get it together, for he has work to do:

#### **-1 Samuel 16:1 (ESV)**

"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."

Samuel does what he is told, after a little complaining about the possible threats to his life by the current king. After all, most would call what he is about to do treason and that never ends well.

But off he goes and he comes to the house of Jesse, the grandson of Ruth, remember? It is from his sons that God has called His king.

So he begins in the normal way, oldest first:

**-1 Samuel 16:6-7 (ESV)**

"When they came, he looked on Eliab and thought, "Surely the Lord's anointed is before him." 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."

Many a man may look the part, and perhaps even for a time plays it well. However, it is the heart, and what is happening there that matters to God.

In that statement, we find hope for us all. Because we see that Samuel runs the gambit with the boys until there is no one left, or so he thinks:

**-1 Samuel 16:8-10 (ESV)**

"Neither has the Lord chosen this one." Then Jesse made Shammah pass by. And he said, "Neither has the Lord chosen this one." And Jesse made seven of his sons

pass before Samuel. And Samuel said to Jesse, "The Lord has not chosen these."

What is amazing here is what we find in verse 11:

**-1 Samuel 16:11 (ESV)**

"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."

David was not even seen worthy enough to come, or to be invited to the party. His chores are more important for what / whom is the youngest -the runt of the litter.

How upside down is God's kingdom? The first shall be last. In weakness there is strength, and in our strength, we find weakness.

The best leader among us is the one who is the first and best servant. Not sitting on a throne with a gold crown, but rather in your undergarment washing the feet of everyone in the room.

Or, as in David's case, running the hills of Bethlehem, watching over and protecting his father's sheep.

From every perspective, our relationship to God, in Christ, is a heart matter first. How we look, what our education is, our birth order, social status, family background and position, or even, what we've done right or wrong in life is all secondary to the call of God in and on our lives.

Far too often we approach things from a "King Saul" perspective- looks, performance-based acceptance by those around us -preening our pin-feathers as it were, trying to impress.

This was the problem with Israel's first king, Saul. Frightening as this may seem, God will give us what we demand - Speaking to the aged Samuel, the elders say:

**-1 Samuel 8:5-7 (ESV)**

"Behold, you are old and your sons do not walk in your ways. Now appoint for us a king to judge us like all the nations." But the thing displeased Samuel when they said, "Give us a king to judge us." And Samuel prayed to the Lord. And the Lord said to Samuel, "Obey the voice of the people in all that they say to you, for they have not rejected you, but they have rejected me from being king over them."

I was reminded a couple weeks ago that words matter, and this text is proof of that. Bill Arnold's commentary on this passage contrasts this with God's heart, from verse 1 in our text this morning, when he quotes the LORD to Samuel:

"'I have provided for myself a king from among his sons.' [This] stresses that David is Yahweh's own choice...This suggests a contrast with the circumstances surrounding Saul's selection when God made a concession for the sake of the people: 'listen to them and give them a king.'"

**-NIV Commentary OT: Pg. 230**

Words matter: "Give us a king like the other countries.: OK. The problem with that request is that God's people are not supposed to be like the other nations, running their country through man-made systems.

Not that these are bad, but they are destined to fail every time, because they are man-made. A cursory study of history will show this to be true every time.

These are man's system's and attempts to rule and bring order (not a bad thing). Yet we are trying to fix the chaos we have and continue to create.

God has His way of doing things, and it is never how we expect it. We should be careful to remember this, and ask ourselves, in the words of Alistair Begg -Do we believe this book and what God tells us?

For is we do, we will remember that the best of men, are men at best, and are destined to fail. Even this David later in life will come up short.

We have to remember that God's politics are perfect, and our hope in this world which has lost its way, un-grounded in any type of moral reasoning, can only be fixed when we realize that it is from within -starting with our hearts -that the divine repair work begins.

We need help from the outside, and God has given it, or given Him to us in Jesus Christ of Nazareth. We have got to do something with this king in a manger. For if He is who He says He is, we have to confront ourselves this Christmas season.

The weariness of a world gone sideways, creates and breeds fear and insecurity. Hwoever, that great Christmas Hymn written in 1847 keeps reminding me:

**Adolphe Adam: Oh Holy night**

"Oh, holy night, the stars are brightly shining,

It is the night of our dear savior's  
birth;

Long lay the world in sin and error  
pining,

'Till He appears and the soul felt its  
worth.

A thrill of hope, the weary world  
rejoices,

For yonder breaks a new and glorious  
morn.

Fall on your knees..."

Can we imagine, a young shepherd boy, a  
thousand years before, on those same tiny  
hills in the little town of Bethlehem,  
dotted on that cool evening with fires  
and other shepherds tending their sheep?

Looking perhaps, at the same stars that  
can be seen even today, perhaps David was  
staring up at them as he heard his name  
called.

"'Hey, David! Samuel is in the house with  
your father and brothers looking to  
anoint a new king. He wants to see you!'  
'Me, really?' 'Yeah -you. Get moving.'"

"That's strange, I'm the youngest and  
first they don't even want me around, and  
now they want me right away. Ok -  
whatever" In the house he goes, and it's

then that it happens. He walks in, and Samuel sees:

**-1 Samuel 16:12-13 (ESV)**

"Now he was ruddy and had beautiful eyes and was handsome. And the Lord said, "Arise, anoint him, for this is he." 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."

Funny, the narrator here takes care to tell us that David looked the part. But I thought God doesn't care about those things, after all verse 7 is pretty clear.

Yes, you are right, but that doesn't mean in order to be Godly one needs to walk around looking sullen, dower and cranky, and dressed as though we went to John the Baptist's school of fashion and design.

Let's not be so quick and simple in our reading of the Bible.

David was strong, handsome, and had eyes that would catch your attention - "beautiful eyes" -the window to one's soul, to one's heart.

Let's remember that we are limited in our perspectives. We can only see what we can

see. It's one of the reasons Paul tells us to look at people with the eyes of Jesus. "No longer look at people from a worldly perspective, but rather see people as Jesus does. 2 Corinthians.

This is an important principle of the Scriptures, and one that we all struggle with. What really counts in a person, as Arnold says:

"...has more to do with the heart than with the eyes. Despite the benefits of God-given favors, such as natural good looks, there is no substitute for a God-pleasing heart."

**-NIV Commentary OT: Pg. 230**

David may not be the best or even most qualified for the task, but he was God's man for it. Why? His heart, that's why.

The LORD can do more with one obedient heart than any of us could with any army of skilled men full of charisma, training and armor.

You don't think so? Just read ahead into chapter 17. We see David, that young shepherd boy taking on Goliath. The Philistine goon who has frozen the entire Israelite army in its tracks.

David doesn't see the problem in front of him, rather he knows and has confidence in the God with him:

**-1 Samuel 17:26b (ESV)**

"For who is this uncircumcised Philistine, that he should defy the armies of the living God?"

David recognized the ways of the kingdom of God, and they are not the ways of the kingdoms of this world.

Goliath is nothing in the scheme of things when God decides the matter. It is the faithfully obedient people, doing what God calls them to do in the middle of every situation, who will make the difference in this world.

God does not call us to a life of safe faith. David understood this on that night when he was anointed King. He doesn't call us to a life of ease and comfort when it comes to our journey in being conformed to His son.

We often times miss this truth in life, and much of that comes from our failure to see these people in the Bible and their stories and journeys of faith.

Abram and Sarai were not looking for their best lives now. Ruth and Naomi struggled every day as the losses piled

up. Hannah, unheard but not unloved, struggled and pleaded for a son. She would then turn and give him right back to the LORD.

How painful and unsettling all of these things were. Every one of these people were just doing life, not knowing their end from their beginning, but they trusted God in His calling. They believed, by faith, that He would fulfill His promises to them.

One thing that I never see them pray - they never pray for ease or comfort. They pray God's promises to them -no matter the risk or the course they must take to get to the other side.

Let's not miss that. Because in our culture of comfort and ease, where we somehow think (believe) that we have it worse than ever in all of history, we miss the faith journey, and end up being afraid of even leaving our house.

David, in his life, did as many things wrong as he did right. Yet, he was God's man, who had God's heart in the middle of a bunch of unknowns. It would be decades, not a couple weeks, but decades before he would ever become king.

How familiar is that to us though? "Give us a king! Give us a governor, or a

President who will fix all this mess. Well, He has, if we look in the right place. The answer to our dilemma is the King in the manger.

We discover that David's son, This King Jesus, all those generations later arrives on the scene to fulfill all the promises of God.

Luke records for us that eventful night. In the city of David, not Jerusalem, but Bethlehem. The same small rolling hills where David was called to go into the house some thousand or so years before.

There they were, shepherds again, another group of people who we wouldn't expect. Outcast, smelly and not dressed exactly in their Sunday best, hear the voice of one calling, come and see:

**-Luke 2:8-14 (ESV)**

"And in the same region there were shepherds out in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night. And an angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were filled with great fear. And the angel said to them, "Fear not, for behold, I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord.

And this will be a sign for you: you will find a baby wrapped in swaddling cloths and lying in a manger." And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God and saying,

"Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace among those with whom he is pleased!"

God has given this world the King it needs, not the king it wants. From the house and line of David, comes the one who is God -not just a man after God's heart, but God himself.

Just like David, he is an unassuming figure, born in a stable, laid in straw - not very fitting for a king.

David, a precursor and example of Jesus, sets the stage and tone which Isaiah that great prophet captures in his writings:

**-Isaiah 53:2-3 (ESV)**

"For he grew up before him like a young plant, and like a root out of dry ground; he had no form or majesty that we should look at him, and no beauty that we should desire him. He was despised and rejected by men, a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief; and as one from whom men hide their faces he was despised, and we esteemed him not."

Amazing, isn't it. The road to Bethlehem and the promises of God fulfilled in the most backwards and upside-down way. Each one of these people journeying by faith.

Something that Dr. Luke discovered in his research for his writing. But that we will leave for Christmas eve.