

Text: 1 Samuel 16: 1-13

Theme: David, A Man After God's Own Heart: God chooses the weak things of this world to confound the wise

Sermon delivered by Dele Agbelusi during Service of the Word on 2/07/2017 at 10.30am

Last week, we started a new series of sermons from 1 and 2 Samuel on the general theme, The man after God's own heart. We considered the people's choice of a king, Saul, and how he failed miserably the test of obedience to the God who anointed him and consequently rejected him.

1 Samuel 16 brings us to the point where God finally tells Samuel that enough is enough. Quit weeping over this man, Saul, who is no longer willing to allow me to work with him.

God had a man waiting in the wings and Samuel would have to go and find him. As you read through 1 Samuel 16:10, you realize that Samuel almost made the very same mistake that was made with Saul. He was looking for someone that fits into what he thought a king should look like. But God is so much more concerned with character than He is with looks and pedigree.

Over the next few weeks we will follow the early years of David as he rises from obscurity to become the king of Israel. As he moves from one crisis to another, we will trace the hand of God behind the scenes, preparing a shepherd boy to become a king.

Perhaps no other character in the Bible resonates with most people like that of David. He is a man who demonstrates moments of greatness mixed with moments of the ordinary. He is a man of valour but also of fear. He is a man who fellowshiped with God and entertained the wiles of Satan. He is an extraordinary saint but an ordinary man!

It may interest you to know that David is mentioned in the Bible more than any other person. His resume was very full: Jesse's youngest son. Saul's court musician. The giant-slayer. A fugitive on the run. Jonathan's closest friend. A hero to thousands. A man of blood. Israel's greatest king. A poet of exceptional skill. A gifted architect. Handsome. Powerful. Charismatic. Loved by multitudes. Adulterer. Murderer. Father to a son who turned against him. He rose from obscurity to lead his nation. Through his own foolish choices, he destroyed his family and ended his reign amid trouble and intrigue. Called and gifted, human to the core. A paradox. Strong in battle, weak at home. He danced before the Lord, he had trouble with his kids. He wept, laughed, cried, and poured out his heart in worship before the Lord. He is one of us, entirely human, made of flesh and blood.

The Bible never flatters its heroes. It always tells the truth about men so that, against the backdrop of human frailty and failure, we can magnify the grace of God at work upon the platform of human weakness. **What did God think of this man? God said of him—and of no one else—here is a man after my own heart. Unbelievable, but it is true.**

Our goal in this series is simple. We want to know how an obscure young shepherd became king over Israel. By what path did God lead him from the pasture to the throne? Along the way we are going to survey 4 episodes in his life. Through victories and defeats, good times and bad, sorrow and joy, God was at work building godly principles into David's life.

Let us turn our bibles to 1 Samuel 16. We will divide the passage into 3: 1-God and Samuel; 2-Samuel and Jesse's sons; 3-Samuel and David.

1. God and Samuel

"The Lord said to Samuel, 'How long will you mourn for Saul, since I have rejected him as king over Israel? Fill your horn with oil and be on your way; I am sending you to Jesse of Bethlehem. I have chosen one of his sons to be king'" (1 Samuel 16:1).

To understand these verses, we need a bit of biblical background. Saul had been the people's choice. The Israelites wanted a king so they could be like the other nations. They had pestered

Samuel until he finally said, "Lord, these people really want a king," and the Lord said, "Fine, I'll give them a king." No man ever had a better start than Saul. He was an impressive young man - tall, handsome, a born leader. The day came when after acts of disobedience that God said, "I'm going to tear your kingdom from you and give it to a man after my own heart." No wonder Samuel weeps for Saul. He weeps for himself and for Israel. Who would take his place? There was no one on the horizon that could do the job. And God said, "Fill your horn with oil and be on your way; I am sending you to Jesse of Bethlehem. I have chosen one of his sons to be king."

When you start looking at Saul's forty-year reign in Israel, it is clear that he was the exact opposite of what David would be in his service to God. When he was confronted with his sin, Saul began to rationalize about what he had done and blamed the problem on the people (1 Samuel 15:24-25). You will find out later that when David sinned against God, he was repentant and did not try to give excuses or blame somebody else. (Read Psalm 51).

There is a time to mourn and then there is a time to get up and move forward. Eventually we have to dry our tears because life moves on. Samuel did well to mourn for Saul but the time had come to anoint the next king.

When Samuel goes to Bethlehem, he doesn't know how God's choice will be revealed. "Just go to Bethlehem to the house of Jesse and the rest will be made clear to you." Here is a great key to discovering God's will. **If you want to know God's will for tomorrow, get up, wash your face, brush your teeth, have a good breakfast, and then go out the door and do God's will today. And in the doing of God's will today, you will discover God's will for tomorrow.**

Are you uncertain and worried about the future? In a state of panic? Fearful over what might happen next? Rest in these two words: God knows. And while you worry, he is up ahead of you arranging the details of your future. Let that thought lift your spirits. Wait on the Lord. Listen for his voice. Rest in him. And take the next step in front of you. Be encouraged, child of God. We know not what the future holds but we know who holds the future.

1 Samuel 16:2 and 3. "But Samuel said, "How can I go? If Saul hears about it, he will kill me." The Lord said, "Take a heifer with you and say, 'I have come to sacrifice to the Lord.' Invite Jesse to the sacrifice, and I will show you what to do. You are to anoint for me the one I indicate." God was not telling Samuel to lie? Not at all. "This was strictly *true*; Samuel *did offer a sacrifice*; and it does not appear that he could have done the work which God designed, unless he had offered this sacrifice, and called the elders of the people together, and thus collected Jesse's sons.

2. Samuel and Jesse's Sons

(1 Samuel 16:6-10).

In due course Samuel makes his way to the house of Jesse and asks to see his sons. The Bible doesn't say if he told Jesse what was on his mind but it doesn't matter because Samuel was well-known throughout Israel. It would be a great honour to have the prophet visit in your home. So Jesse gladly calls his sons.

They line up and the first one is introduced. His name is Eliab. Evidently, he is a bit like Saul - tall and handsome. He must have impressed Samuel because when he sees him, he thinks, "All right, Lord, good choice. He even looks like a king." And the Lord says to Samuel, "What are you talking about? That's not the one." So in comes the next son. His name is Abinadab. This time Samuel doesn't do anything. And God says, "Nope." Go to the next one. "Nope." Pretty soon Samuel is 0 for 7 in picking the next king of Israel. He is utterly bewildered. He has come to anoint the new king but the new king is nowhere to be found.

By the way, we should ask what was wrong with the seven brothers? Nothing, really. The text doesn't say anything negative about them. Eliab and the others were no doubt fine fellows who could qualify for any job in the world except one: King of Israel. Why, because God had already filled that position.

3. Samuel and David

Samuel was a prophet, and knew how to trust the word of the LORD given to him. He had confidence in the word of the LORD when it came to the prophecy regarding Jesse's sons, and he had confidence in the word of the LORD when it came to God's rejection of each of the seven sons. We should trust God's Word as much as Samuel trusted the word of the LORD! When God commands you to march on and you reach a wall or a sea, continue marching, He is capable of making a way through the sea.

(16:11-13) Finally Samuel says, "By the way, you don't happen to have any other sons, do you?" Just an afterthought, really. Jesse says a strange thing. "Yes I do, but he's the youngest and he's out tending the sheep." Meaning, he's just a kid and he really doesn't count for much. You wouldn't want him anyway. It was Jesse's way of saying, "He doesn't have the gravitas to be king."

While all his brothers are with Samuel, David is out with the sheep. He doesn't know anything is even going on. His father didn't even think enough of him to call him in from the field. But Samuel said, "Go get him." No doubt Jesse shrugged his shoulders and said, "Whatever you say but he's just a kid and I don't think he's what you're looking for." In comes David straight from the pasture. He hasn't had time to wash up or change clothes. Do you know what you smell like after working with sheep all day? It's like organic fertilizer.

Keeping the sheep was a servant's job. The fact that David was out keeping the sheep showed that the family of Jesse was not especially wealthy, because if they were, a servant would have been keeping the sheep. But they were not affluent enough to have servants. David was the servant, and keeping the sheep was a servant's job.

Keeping the sheep meant you had time to think. Keeping the sheep took a special heart, a special care. It meant you knew how sheep needed the care and help of a good shepherd. It meant that you knew you were a sheep and God was your shepherd. During these years, God built in David the heart that would sing, The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want. David had lions and bears and wolves to contend with, and the sheep had to be protected. Does God have you keeping the sheep right now? Are you in a humble, lowly, servant's place, but feel that God has called you to greater things? If He has, it will only be fulfilled as you are faithful in keeping the sheep right where you are at. This isn't waiting time; this is training time.

It's not clear that Samuel even told Jesse what it was all about. No matter. The anointing was God's way of saying, "This is my man. When the time comes, he will be king."

Only one detail is left. The Bible tells us that at that moment the Spirit of God came on David with power. Again, we don't know all that it means but we do know this much. The anointing was God's way of saying, "You now have my power."

There is much to instruct us and much to encourage us in this story.

1) There is a message for those who feel confined, passed over, and trapped in a menial place. Be encouraged by David's example. When God wants to prepare us for bigger things, he first teaches us to be faithful in small things. Those who are called to be kings will not stay with the sheep forever. Be faithful. Do what God has given you to do. Keep your eyes facing forward. Who knows what tomorrow may bring?

2) There is hope for those who are confused about the future. Samuel had no idea which son would be king. But he got up and journeyed to Bethlehem anyway. And David certainly didn't have a clue about what life would hold for him. He simply came to the house when instructed and stood silent while Samuel anointed him.

Conclusion

When we study David's life in its total perspective, considering the bad with the good, we may fairly ask, "But didn't God know the trouble David was going to get into? How could God call a man like that to be king and his friend?"

Didn't God know about all the political manoeuvring? Yes. Didn't God know about the affair with Bathsheba? Yes. Didn't God know about the murder of Uriah? Yes. Didn't God know how Absalom would turn out? Yes. Didn't God know David was prone to depression and discouragement? Yes. Didn't God know how David's own family would disintegrate? Yes. God knew all those things and a lot more besides. That is what grace is all about. He knew what David would do. And he called him anyway. All those things are trumped by one prior fact: God chose David to be king and he was going to stand by his man!

We study David's life so that couples whose children rebel, and believers who have squandered one opportunity after another, and Christians who make the same stupid mistakes over and over again, and teenagers who feel forgotten and lonely, and everyone whose life has been less than perfect will know that God can be their shepherd, too. Remember, Jesus is the great Shepherd who gave his life for the sheep.

In the beginning of his story, no one believes in David but God. Not Jesse, not Samuel. Only God. In the end, his family broken, his nation troubled, his closest friends mostly gone, he discovers that God is still there. (1 Samuel 30: 3-6) "Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil." God never gave up on David. That is grace. David never gave up on God. That is what it means to be a man after God's heart.

Samuel was now refusing to see Saul. So Saul was pleased to discover a young musician, David, who was described as having the Spirit of God in him. As David played his music, Saul felt a sense of comfort and relief. After a time, Saul gave greater responsibilities to David. This is clearly God's providence, or the hands of an unseen God, preparing David for greater responsibilities as a King. What a fitting place to receive all the training and insights that you need.