



THE STORY



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Scripture: The Story – Chapter 11

When I grew up in Kitchener –Waterloo, public schools were divided up into three levels. Elementary Schools from Kindergarten to Grade 6 had their own building. High School, Grade 9-13, had their own building and the middle grades 7-8, they had their own building.

There was some wisdom to that as they kind of sequestered all the children ages 12-14, (grade 7&8) with their raging hormones, off on their own for two years. A kind of a holding cell until everything settled down and they are ready to enter high school. Usually 4-5 elementary schools would feed into each of the middle schools so at a time in life when you are most vulnerable you would suddenly be placed in a new environmental with a bunch of new classmates.

I don't remember a lot about my Grade Seven year at Stanley Park Senior Public School. Maybe a few of my classmates, my home room teacher, Mr. Wilson. But most of the other memories have dimmed over the years. Except for one. We had a school soccer team. It was a good team. In fact, every year this team was usually in the running for the middle school city championship. In the fall of 1975, at the age of 12, I tried out for this team. I loved sports and had played on the soccer team at my last school. But this was a little different. I would now be competing against guys who were 1 to 2 years older and in some cases miles ahead of me in physical maturity. I mean, Mike Poschner had a full on beard. Remember my peach fuzz story from last week.

Well, after a week of intense practices, the coach, our Phys. Ed. teacher, posted the list of boys that made the team on the bulletin board outside the gym. I popped my head through the mass of bodies gathered around the board and was pleased to find

out that I had made the team. And I was also pleased, that this list was displayed in such a public manner. For all who walked by it could see my name amongst those who had made the cut. Little did I know that this high point in my young life, would actually lead to a season of angst that would stay with me even now, forty plus years later. You see my soccer coach, the Phys. Ed teacher, was fond of lists. Our routine was that we would practice each day after school in preparation for our games that would be held on Friday afternoon. And every Friday morning, the coach would post a list on this very public bulletin board outside the gym, of the players that would dress for that afternoon's game. You see, we had 25 players on the team but only 18 uniforms. Even though you made the team, not everyone got to dress for the games.

I remember the Friday of the first game, sitting in class, my mind preoccupied with the list. Finally, when classes rotated, I made a beeline to the gym. There was already a swarm of guys huddled around the list, congratulating each other. I pressed forward and scanned the names from top to bottom, bottom to top. Nothing. My name wasn't there. I hadn't made it. I was passed over. That afternoon, I made my way out to the soccer field with the other castoffs. We stood off from the team, they in their majestic green uniforms, us in our street clothes trying to muster up some enthusiasm to cheer them on. But, probably the hardest pill to swallow was from some of our classmates who asked, I thought you made the team? Why are you out there with the team?

They didn't see our sweat and toil in the practices during the week, they only came out to the games and I wasn't dressed for those. This routine went on for 8 Fridays in a row that fall. I would work hard on my soccer skills throughout the week, anticipate

and hope that it was enough to make the list. But inevitably, I would walk up to the bulletin board each Friday morning and nothing. No, Paul McIlwraith. I didn't dress for one single game that entire season and the team went on to win the championship. It was a pretty hollow victory for me, having felt like I played no part in the success. My dad would comfort me, don't worry your time will come. In the grand scheme of things that was not a big deal but for a 12 year-old boy, this was everything.

Maybe you know how that feels. You have had a similar experience. Being passed over, the forgotten one. The one that doesn't make the cut, doesn't measure up. Maybe you didn't make the team. Or, maybe you didn't get into that university or college you applied to or, the program you desperately wanted. Or maybe you were passed over for the job, or the raise or a promotion. Or overlooked for the position on the board or maybe you were dumped by a boyfriend or girlfriend or even a spouse. You know what it feels like to be rejected and it hurts a little or a lot, doesn't it?

We even have expressions for that in our society. He was left standing out in the cold? Or, he was left holding the bag. Or she was left standing at the altar. Oh, that one hurts. Or, he is out in the pasture tending sheep. Well, that is not really a saying in our culture but that is a reality of where we find ourselves in *The Story* today.

If you are just joining us, you are catching us in an exciting time. We, as an entire church are going through the bible. The whole bible, from the first book in the Old Testament, Genesis right through to the last book in the New Testament, Revelation and we are using as our guide, a resource called *The Story*. It is a version of the bible that follows a chronological timeline of when things occur. Today, we find ourselves in Chapter 11 of *The Story*, or 1 Samuel 16 in the Old Testament of the Bible. We are about to be introduced to one of the most significant character in all of scripture. It's David.

Let me just give you a bit of background as we jump into the text today. The time period is around 1000 BC. The Israelites, God's chosen people are in disarray. They faced increasing external threats from hostile neighbouring nations like the

Philistines but there was also a lot internal discord. Up until this time, Israel was ruled by Judges but many were corrupt and they didn't satisfy the people's desire for true leadership and security. The Israelites wanted a king to rule over them and to solidify their army. Just like all the other nations around them. God used Samuel, a priest, a prophet and the last in the line of Israel's Judges to anoint the very first King of Israel.

It was Saul. Tall and handsome Saul. And as you may remember from last week, all started well enough. Saul had some early victories, won the approval of his people. He worshipped and obeyed God. Everything was good. But then pride started to surface in his life. He began to depend more and more on his own resources rather than God's provision and he ended up failing miserably. God removed his presence from him and now has Samuel on the look-out for the next King to replace Saul. And as you can imagine, God has the exact person in mind for the role, but it was not the person that would have appeared most obvious on the surface. And that shouldn't be a surprise given all that we have learned to this point in *The Story*. God chooses unlikely people, the ones that we probably wouldn't. But with hearts set on him, God uses them to do some pretty amazing things. That is where we pick up in 1 Samuel 16.

1 Samuel 16:1-2, page 145

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." 2 But Samuel said, "How can I go? If Saul hears about it, he will kill me."

Understandably, Samuel is a little distraught. As the spiritual leader over ancient Israel, he has the weight of the people on his shoulders. He knows they have a dud on the throne in Saul. Chaos is erupting all around. Instead of being unified, the people of Israel are more fractured under Saul's leadership then they were before they had a King.

Did you see that the African Nation of Zimbabwe was in the news this week? Once known as the bread basket of Africa because of its' rich soil and

farming potential. It has Victoria Falls which is one of the seven natural wonders of the world and a major tourist attraction. It has the Zambezi River running through it which provides a consistent irrigation source that allows wildlife and vegetation to thrive. And, though landlocked, the country had modernized well in the early years of President Robert Mugabe leadership. There was a well laid out network of paved roads, four airports, and a rigorous and inclusive education system. Things were good, just like the early days of King Saul.

But, power (pride) and corruption came to define the last 25 years of Mugabe's presidency. In 1997, Zimbabwe had the fastest growing economy of any African nation and only a few short years later, it was marred in unprecedented hyper-inflation. A onetime exporter of cotton, beef, tobacco and sugarcane, Zimbabwe now exports only its people who are fleeing the country by the tens of thousands. Although Zimbabwe has some of the richest farmland in Africa, people, children are starving. HIV/AIDS has devastated a generation of Zimbabweans.

As I have shared before, my wife, Carolyn established a mission organization in Zimbabwe in 2004 to help feed widows and orphans affected by the AIDS epidemic. We have a heart for Zimbabwe, but things were dire under Mugabe's leadership. One journalist wrote that through his actions, Mugabe has basically written a manual for how to destroy a nation. Finally, this week, military forces have taken over Zimbabwe, placing now 94 year-old Mugabe under house arrest in what many are expecting to be the beginning of a transition of power away from Mugabe and hopefully, a new day for Zimbabwe.

That is a similar scenario facing Samuel in this passage. God is orchestrating a bit of a coup d'état and is leading Samuel to Saul's successor as King of Israel. And where he is taking him is a little surprising. It's to Bethlehem. Oh, we know it well today as the birthplace of Jesus. But in this day, 1000 years before Jesus, it was nothing more than a sleepy little hamlet located about 15 kilometers down the road from Jerusalem. It was a hick town. Nothing ever happened in Bethlehem. Maybe a little like Ilderton or Birr or Thorndale. Just sleepy little

towns. Nothing ever happens there. That is Bethlehem in this day.

That is why Samuel is a little concerned about Saul finding out. Remember he was still King. Why would someone of Samuel's stature and importance be headed towards Bethlehem? He was afraid his presence would raise a little suspicion. That is why God says to him in,

1 Samuel 16:2-3

The LORD said, "Take a heifer with you and say, 'I have come to sacrifice to the LORD.' 3 Invite Jesse to the sacrifice, and I will show you what to do. You are to anoint for me the one I indicate."

The heifer gives Samuel the reason for his presence. The priest has come to offer a sacrifice to the Lord among his people. They would buy that. But, God wants Jesse in attendance. Jesse was a local farmer and sheep breeder but he was also the grandson of Ruth that we talked about a few weeks ago. It is one of Jesse's sons that God has already ordained to be the next King. The text continues,

1 Samuel 16:4-5, page 145

Samuel did what the LORD said. When he arrived at Bethlehem, the elders of the town trembled when they met him. They asked, "Do you come in peace?" 5 Samuel replied, "Yes, in peace; I have come to sacrifice to the LORD. Consecrate yourselves and come to the sacrifice with me." Then he consecrated Jesse and his sons and invited them to the sacrifice.

Jesse had eight sons. And we get a sense that there is going to be a bit of a Project Runway like atmosphere about to take place with Jesse parading each of his sons down the red carpet. Strutting their stuff under the watchful gaze of Samuel to determine, who is God's chosen man. Who will be the next King? The first to arrive in the spotlight is the eldest son, Eliab and we kind of expect from Samuel's reaction that this might be the one.

1 Samuel 16:6, page 145

When they arrived, Samuel saw Eliab and thought, "Surely the LORD's anointed stands here before the LORD."

Eliab would be the most logical choice at this time. He was the eldest son, and we are also given hints that Eliab's appearance resembled that of Saul. Kingly. Tall and handsome. We envision him with a thick flow of hair, a couple of days stubble on his chin, steely blue eyes, straight legged denim jeans rolled up at the ankle of course, a plaid shirt and sparkling white teeth. This has to be the one. But then the Lord reminds Samuel of something very important. Look at the next verse.

1 Samuel 16:7.

But the LORD said to Samuel, "Do not consider his appearance or his height, for I have rejected him. The LORD does not look at the things people look at. People look at the outward appearance, but the LORD looks at the heart."

Have you ever done that? Made a quick judgement based on someone or something's outer appearance and ended up being wrong? What is that expression? Don't judge a book by its cover. But have you ever judged a book by its "cover" and ended up disappointed because the cover, the outward appearance seemed so promising. But when you opened it up, got to the inside, to the heart of the matter, it is such a letdown.

I get that feeling every time I go for one of those health food nutrition bars. Oh they look good on the outside. Their colourful packaging with the fancy labelling splashed across the front. 5 Grams of sugar per 40 G bar, Gluten free, very high source of fibre, No genetically engineered ingredients. But no matter how healthy it is, how great it looks on the outside. When you get to the heart of the matter, it still doesn't taste as good as a Snickers bar. Does it?

People look at the outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart. What do you see when you look at people? And how does that inform your perception of them? This is an important lesson God has been teaching us all throughout *The Story*, isn't it? And it is a point that he is particularly driving home to Samuel when it comes to choosing the next king of Israel. Don't get fixated on the external.

Look as the text continues, Jesse continues the cattle call with his second son,

1 Samuel 16:8

Then Jesse called Abinadab and had him pass in front of Samuel. Perhaps, Abinadab is the athletic one with his muscular physique, form fitted Under Armour T and biker shirts. His latest victory medal hanging from his neck.

But Samuel is catching on. We are on page 146 now.

But Samuel said, "The LORD has not chosen this one either."

Undeterred, Jesse moves on. I mean, he has eight sons, he could do this all day. Next up for inspection is son number 3, Shammah.

Shammah maybe the musical one. He comes in carrying a guitar and strumming a tune. White T-Shirt and his wrangler jeans pulled over his scuffed up leather boots. Chiseled jaw line. Keith Urban cowboy good looks. This has to be the one. The next King.

1 Samuel 16:9

but Samuel said, "Nor has the LORD chosen this one." The LORD does not look at the things people look at. People look at the outward appearance, but the LORD looks at the heart."

The text says that Jesse had seven of his sons parade down the red carpet in front of Samuel on that day. Strutting their stuff. Posing and posturing.

1 Samuel 16:10

...but Samuel said to him, "The LORD has not chosen these."

Maybe it's just me but, this story reminds me a lot of Cinderella. Do you remember Cinderella? The Prince sends his Aid to find the young woman who lost her shoe at the Royal ball the night before. The Aid goes from home to home, trying to find the woman whose foot fits the shoe. When he arrives at the home of Cinderella, her step mother has her locked away but the two step sisters positioned themselves to the front of the line and try to contort their foot in every possible position to fit into the shoe but to no avail. Is this all the young women in

the house ma'am? Is there no one else who might fit the shoe? There is still Cinderella. But she has been hidden away. Locked away out of sight.

In the same way, Samuel turns to Jesse and says in,

1 Samuel 16:11

"Are these all the sons you have?"

I thought I was told you had eight sons? I have only seen seven. Are you sure you are not hiding one off somewhere? And you wondered if Jesse squirmed a little bit. He pauses for a minute and then responds.

1 Samuel 16:11 Well,

"There is still the youngest," Jesse answered. "He is tending the sheep."

The word youngest in this verse is an interesting word. In the Hebrew language of the original text, the word would be haq-qa-tan. Haq-qa-tan. And this words' literal translation in English would not only convey the idea of being young but it would also relate well to another English word we use, runt. Runt. The haq-qa-tan is the runt.

Jesse says, to Samuel. Yes, I still have one more son, but he is the runt. He is out in the pasture, tending the sheep as runts tend to do. He is not on the roster of Jesse's sons vying for the crown. His name is not on the list. He is not quite ready for prime time yet. This eighth son would have been passed over and forgotten if God had not prompted Samuel to ask, are there any more!?

Can I ask you a question, do we have any runts in here? Sorry, anyone the youngest in their family. Put your hands up. I was a middle child, I have a younger sister who is 52 and I still refer to her as my "baby" sister. After this week, I have a new name for her, she is the haq-qa-tan! The runt. As the haq-qa-tan of your family, maybe there have been times in your life, when you too have felt passed over, forgotten.

How would you feel if you had a family meeting and you were not invited? That is what is happening in the text. Jesse and seven of his sons have gathered for an important occasion and the runt is left standing in a field.

His name, is David. Do you know that there are 66 chapters of the bible devoted to the life of David? There is only one other biblical character that gets more space. Any one care to guess who that is? Jesus. The ancient city of Jerusalem, God's holy city was also known as, the City of David. The New Testament of the bible begins in the Gospel of Matthew by referring to Jesus, the savior of the world as the "son of David".

Matthew 1:1

This is the genealogy of Jesus the Messiah the son of David.

The Star of David is the globally recognized symbol of the Jewish people. David. The man after God's own heart. He was the Giant slayer, when he took out Goliath. He was the warrior. The musician. The poet. David wrote some of the most recognized and beloved words in the bible.

Psalms 23

The LORD is my shepherd, I lack nothing. 2 He makes me lie down in green pastures, he leads me beside quiet waters, 3 he refreshes my soul. He guides me along the right paths for his name's sake. 4 Even though I walk through the darkest valley, I will fear no evil for you are with me; your rod and your staff, they comfort me.

Psalms 139

O Lord, you have searched me and you know me. You know when I sit and when I rise; you perceive my thoughts from afar. For you created my inmost being; you knit me together in my mother's womb. I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made.

These are David's words to God. David, the Giant slayer, warrior, musician, poet and the man who would be King. But, David was also the liar, deceiver, adulterer, the murderer. He had his highs and he had his lows in life. Perhaps that is why he is so relatable to us. But it was his faith, his incredible faith in these high and low moments that truly defined the life of David. And where did it all start? Right here in 1 Samuel 16. In the lonely fields and pastures of the Hicksville hamlet of Bethlehem, tending sheep. His is the forgotten one. The

overlooked. The haq-qa-tan, the runt of the litter. Even his own father didn't think he was ready. It took the God ordained prompting of Samuel for him to say, Oh yeah. There is one more son.

Have you ever found yourself in the pasture? Your name didn't make the list? Passed over. Forgotten. Marginalized. The misfit. Too young. Too old. Too weak. The wrong gender. The wrong colour. This is where we find David. But David's story is exciting and hopeful for all of us all because we get a glimpse into the kind of people that God chooses to do his work. Oh, we know the kind of people that our culture picks don't we? The tall, handsome, beautiful and athletic. Those with the right colour of hair, eyes or skin. The ones of the right gender. These things give you privilege in our society. The size of your waistline and your wallet. The square footage of your house. The make of your car. The school you attended. The neighbourhood you live in. The brand labels you wear. The size of your office. The number of degrees and awards that fill your walls. Those seem to be the standards for worth and value in our society today and it wasn't a lot different in David's day. But God has a different measuring stick.

The LORD does not look at the things people look at. People look at the outward appearance, but the LORD looks at the heart." These are words of hope for all of those who have ever felt like a misfit. Like you are not good enough. In the Kingdom of God, there is a place and a purpose for all of us. We have seen that already in *The Story*, haven't we?

God took Abraham who had a tendency to fold under pressure and lie, and used him to build a great nation. He took Joseph's brash, pride filled youth and used him to save his people from a famine. He took Moses a murderer and estranged from his family and used him to lead his people out of Egypt. He took a pagan prostitute, Rahab and used her to help lead his people to conquer the Promised Land. He took a frightened and insecure Gideon and used him to lead an under staffed and under equipped army on to victory over a much superior enemy. He took a foreign widow named Ruth and gave her the privilege of being in the very lineage of the Saviour of the world, Jesus. He took a failure of a father, Samuel to be the Greatest Judge over Israel and the one who anointed David as King. And he

took a young, shepherd boy, the runt of his family to be the second King of Israel and one of the greatest man of faith in the entire bible.

What were the qualities that God discovered in each of these individuals? They all had their flaws. It was Faith. And obedience. In short, God looked beyond the exterior and saw their heart. Listen to how God called David. Look back at the text,.

1 Samuel 16: 11-12 or page 146

"There is still the youngest," Jesse answered. "He is tending the sheep." Samuel said, "Send for him; we will not sit down until he arrives." 12 So he sent for him and had him brought in. He was glowing with health and had a fine appearance and handsome features. Then the LORD said, "Rise and anoint him; this is the one."

This is the one. Can you imagine the surprise on Jesse's face? On Eliab's face? On Abinadab's face? On the face of Shammah? On all of the brothers faces? The surprise it must have been to everyone in attendance on that day. Everyone saw the youthful, inexperienced, shepherd boy. But God saw something different. His heart. And the runt, the forgotten one is anointed King.

1 Samuel 16:13

So Samuel took the horn of oil and anointed him in the presence of his brothers, and from that day on the Spirit of the LORD came powerfully upon David.

Isn't that an amazing, hope filled story? This weekend, is child dedication at North Park. This is a holy time for us as a church. We are standing with the parents of these children and we are standing together as a church community and declaring that these little ones are set apart for God. Although the world around us can be harsh sometimes, in the Kingdom of God, everyone has a place. These children really matter to us because they matter to God. We believe with hearts set on him, God is going to use these little ones to impact the world for him.

You may have noticed also this weekend, that our worship team is made up of some of our youth. In

fact, our youthful, hip worship director, Jordan; he's the oldest one in the band today, by almost ten years! Most of this band comprise the worship team that leads the youth in worship each week back in the theatre. Back in the back. But we just felt a nudge this weekend, to call them from the back forty, the back end of the building and invite them to lead us in worship to our King, Jesus. The King that, does not look at the things people look at. People look at the outward appearance, but the LORD looks at the heart." And each of these young people have wonderful hearts centered on Jesus. Haven't they done a great job leading us today?

God does not look at the outward appearance. He looks at the heart. So let me ask you a question as we close today? How is your heart these days?

Do you know a little later in his life, David hit one of those rocky patches? He had sinned against God. In his despair, he wrote these familiar words.

Psalm 51:10

*Create in me a pure heart, O God, and
renew a steadfast spirit within me.*

These are words of repentance and faith. Faith in the one, God who restores and redeems. Faith in the one, God, who had picked him. Faith in the one, God, who plucked him out of the field.

God has picked each of us as well. He saved us through his son, Jesus, washed us clean and then called us into his kingdom. God is for us. God is for you. He is in your corner. Do you believe that?

The Apostle Paul summed this up nicely in,

Romans 8:31

If God is for us, who can be against us?

Who can be against us? Do you want to know who can be against us? We can! We let the evil one, the deceiver get into our head and fill it with thoughts of; I am not good enough or I am not talented enough or I am not smart enough or I am not holy enough or I am just not worthy of God's love and attention. We can be our own worst critic and it messes with our heart and we lack the faith to believe that God is for us.

David could have resisted God's call but he didn't, he received it. He could have had a thousand different excuses but he stepped out in faith and believed that God chose him. And if God chose him, he would also provide all that he needs.

What about you. Maybe you know what it is like to be the runt, to be the passed over one, the misfit. God is for you and he has chosen you and he will place you where he wants you and give you what you need. Give your life meaning and purpose. Isn't that what we all want? To have a life of purpose? Do you have the faith, the heart to believe in Him and receive his purpose for your life?

Step away from what the world is telling you, cast those voices aside and turn into Jesus. The story of David is not just in the bible for our entertainment. It is there for inspiration.

We have all been in the pasture. We all know what that feels like. But God has chosen us. Will you surrender everything that is holding you back and come to him? The one, who is for us. The one, who looks past the exterior and sees our hearts. The one, who gives us a purpose to live for and knows what is best for our lives.

Amen? Amen.

Points to Ponder

THE STORY

From Shepherd to King

Chapter 11

With a friend, your family or in your small group, discuss the following questions.

1. Can you think of a time in your life when you were “passed over” or rejected? Share the situation with your group and some of the feelings associated with it. Did this experience prompt a response from you, positive or negative?
2. Read this passage out loud.

1 Samuel 16:7, But the Lord said to Samuel, “Do not consider his appearance or his height, for I have rejected him. The Lord does not look at the things man looks at. Man looks at the outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart”.

Describe some situations in your life where you have “judged a book by its cover” and have been wrong. Where and how does our world ascribe worth and value to someone based on outward appearances? Why does God reject this kind of evaluation?

3. David went from a lowly shepherd tending sheep alone in the fields of Bethlehem to the King of Israel and one of the most significant characters in the bible. In fact, he is listed in the book of Matthew as being in the very lineage of Christ. Are there people around you that may seem insignificant in the world’s eyes but God is calling you to encourage and support to be all that they can be in God’s determination of value?

4. David had a passionate love for God and a singular focus to see him glorified. What are ways we can cultivate a heart like David?

Prayer and Action Item

Pray for one another out of the key points that were discussed. Pray and repent for those times that you have been quick to judge others by worldly standards. Invite God to give you eyes to see those around you the way that he does. Pray for specific people in your life that God may be calling you to encourage and support. Pray for areas in your own life when you have been consumed with trying to live up to the world’s standard of value and surrender it to God.