

The Making of a King
1 Samuel 16:13-23
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Here is this morning's trivia question:

What was the purpose of the 20th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution?

It was to change the date of the inauguration of the American President from March 4 to January 20. It also moved the convening of a new Congress from March 4 to January 3.

A big part of the reason for the amendment was the belief that the four month period between the election of a new President (which happens the first Tuesday after the first Monday in November) was simply too long. The transition time is often awkward for both the President-elect and the outgoing President.

That certainly was the case following our most recent election. In fact, one of the accusations being investigated is that members of the Trump transition team made inappropriate contact with officials of foreign governments while Obama was still President. Perhaps it would be wise to shorten that 2-1/2 month transition even more!

In the book of 1 Samuel, David is chosen as king and anointed by Samuel about 10-12 years before he actually begins to rule as king. So we have a 10-12 year transition time when David is the king-elect (chosen by God) and Saul is still the reigning king. As we go through the rest of the book of 1 Samuel this summer, we see this is a very, very difficult time for David, Saul and all of Israel. It seems even a four-month transition could have spared the people much agony.

Friends, today our journey through 1 Samuel brings us to chapter 16:13-23 (page 239 in the pew Bible). Let's pause and pray that as the Lord speaks to us, to each of us in this room, we would hear, understand, believe and obey his word.

1 Samuel 16:13 – So Samuel took the horn of oil and anointed him in the presence of his brothers, and the Spirit of the LORD came powerfully on David from that day forward. Then Samuel set out and went to Ramah.

This was the culmination of the sermon last week, as David is anointed the new king. Kings in Israel were not crowned with a crown, but anointed with oil being poured over their heads. The king was "the anointed one," or in Hebrew, "the messiah." The Greek word would be "christos." Saul had been the anointed one. Now it is David. For Israel, he is the messiah or christ (with lower case "c"). This all points us to hundreds of years later when a descendant of David will be the Anointed One, the Messiah, the Christ with a capital "C". More on that in a bit.....

1 Samuel 16:4 – Now the Spirit of the LORD had left Saul, and an evil spirit sent from the LORD began to torment him.

That one little verse raises two important questions:

#1 Does God sometimes take his Spirit away from people?

Can a Christian today lose the Holy Spirit, and, as a result, lose his/her salvation? Let me read what Tim Chester writes in his commentary because I think he hits the nail squarely on the head:

"The departure of God's Spirit does not represent the removal of Saul's salvation. Whether or not Saul was a true, but troubled believer is hard to discern. The removal of God's Spirit is the removal of his anointing to rule, both his authority and his ability to be king over God's people."

Years later, when David sins with Bathsheba, he prays (Psalm 51:12) that the Lord would restore, not his salvation, but "the joy" of his salvation, meaning a tangible experience of a salvation he still had. At that time, David also prayed the Lord would not take the Holy Spirit from him. It is a request that God would not remove his anointing, like he had Saul's, and that David would retain his authority and the ability to rule. To be King of Israel was to be a Holy Spirit-anointed ruler. That is what the Lord took away from Saul, not his salvation.

#2 Did God really send an "evil spirit" to torment Saul?

Yes, I believe he could have done that. Though demonic forces serve Satan, God is still sovereign over every creature, and if he wants to use a demon to torment someone, that is up to him. However, the Hebrew word translated “evil” or “wicked” could also be rendered “misery.” So it is possible the Lord sent a “spirit of misery,” which could be a good angel commissioned to discipline Saul, or it could just mean Saul was given a feeling of depression, with the purpose of drawing him back to the Lord.

God wants Saul to be miserable, not because he is mean, but so Saul will turn away from his pride and self-sufficiency. The bottom line is, at this point, Saul becomes emotionally volatile, and paranoia starts to infect his soul. Yet, there is also another reason why the Lord wants Saul in this condition.

1 Samuel 16:15-16 – So Saul’s servants said to him, “You see that an evil spirit (or spirit of misery) from God is tormenting you. Let our lord command your servants here in your presence to look for someone who knows how to play the lyre. Whenever the evil spirit from God comes on you, that person can play the lyre, and you will feel better.”

A lyre is an ancient musical instrument. It was like a u-shaped, small harp that one could hold on his/her lap. There was a cross piece with probably four or five strings, though later in Greek culture, it was usually a seven-stringed instrument. Anyway, think a small harp.

1 Samuel 16:17-18 – Then Saul commanded his servants, “Find me someone who plays well and bring him to me.” One of the young men answered, “I have seen a son of Jesse of Bethlehem who knows how to play the lyre. He is also a valiant man, a warrior, eloquent, handsome, and the LORD is with him.”

Now, obviously a little time has passed since Samuel had anointed David as the next king, but it is interesting that this young man is much more impressed with David than his own family was. Remember, when Samuel came to Jesse’s home to anoint a new king, David isn’t even there. He had been assigned sheep duty.

It is interesting how people within your family, especially siblings, sometimes fail to see the good qualities with which you have been blessed and often don’t recognize the wonderful ways God is working in your life. I don’t have an answer for that. Our text just reminds us it has been that way for a long time, and it will probably continue to be that way. So, if you feel under-appreciated by your siblings, and maybe even your parents, you probably should just get over it. That is how life is sometimes!

If the Lord sees characteristics in your life which are pleasing to him, that is what is important.

Anyway, the important part of the story is that Saul is looking for a lyre player, and that “just happens” (wink, wink) to be something David does very well.

1 Samuel 16:19-20 – Then Saul dispatched messengers to Jesse and said, “Send me your son David, who is with the sheep.” So Jesse took a donkey loaded with bread, a wineskin, and one young goat and sent them by his Son David to Saul.

This apparently is not a tribute or tax, but a gift for the king showing Jesse’s loyalty to Saul, which becomes somewhat ironic as the story continues.

1 Samuel 16:21 – When David came to Saul and entered his service, Saul loved him very much, and David became his armor-bearer.

In our twisted age, some see a sexual connotation here, but in Hebrew it is clear that none is intended. Saul simply likes David.

1 Samuel 16:22 – Then Saul sent word to Jesse: “Let David remain in my service, for he has found favor with me.”

David has quickly gone from being a shepherd boy to serving in the royal court. That is, of course, appropriate training for the role God has for him as the next king. Eventually, David will marry one of Saul’s daughters and become his son-in-law, but already David is becoming like a son to Saul. That is a great irony, because even though Saul does not know it, David is the one who will eventually replace him on the throne.

In summary...

1 Samuel 16:23 – Whenever the spirit from God came on Saul, David would pick up his lyre and play, and Saul would then be relieved, feel better, and the evil spirit would leave him.

A couple of my friends in college earned degrees in “Music Therapy.” I was initially skeptical that “Music Therapist” was a real job. Yet, over the years, I have realized more and more what a powerful impact music has on the human psyche. It is the language of the heart which can soothe anxiety, calm a troubled soul, and indeed, relieve misery.

Of course, music can also have a negative impact on our emotions as well. Some modern music focuses on expressions of anger and ends up leaving listeners feeling more troubled and angry.

Yet, it is hard to overstate the positive impact the right type of music can have on us. I believe, best of all, are many of the songs we sing here on Sunday mornings. They can have a very positive impact on our souls. The music is often very uplifting, and the lyrics almost always point us to powerful truth, which enlightens our minds and strengthens our hearts.

For those in this room struggling emotionally and/or spiritually, I recommend a steady diet of good music. No, it won't solve everything, but it can surely help, just like it did for Saul.

OK, please be aware that, as we go through the book of 1st Samuel, we are looking at an historical narrative, in other words, a true story. In this type of literature, seldom does the author explicitly say, “This is what you should do” or “This is what you should not do.” However, the author, in this case both a human historian and God Himself, is continually using the story to implicitly communicate truth, inspire and warn.

1 Samuel contains God's words, written to the people of ancient Israel and written for God's people at all times and in all places, including northern Minnesota, including in the year of our Lord 2018.

Yes, it is a little easier to realize what the Lord is saying to us when we go through Luke 6 and Jesus

says, “Love your enemies.” That is often not easy to do, but it is pretty clear what the Lord is saying to us through that text. We need to love our enemies.

Identifying what the Lord is saying to us, how he wants us to respond to his words, is a little more difficult when we read a text like 1 Samuel 16. On the surface, the passage may seem to merely inform us about what happened 3,000 years ago.

Yet, the Bible itself (2 Timothy 3:16-17) assures us that God always has something practical to say to us whenever we open this book.

2 Timothy 3:16-17 – All Scripture (the Old Testament, including 1 Samuel 16) is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work.

So how does the Lord want to use this passage to enable and encourage us to do his will?

#1 God encourages us by reminding us it is a special honor to be a believer and follower of Jesus Christ.

The main point of 1 Samuel 16 is that Saul has lost his anointing, and David has become God's anointed one. He is messiah (with a small case “m”) or in the Greek, the christos (the christ with small case “c”)

1 John 2:18 – The Antichrist is coming, and already many such antichrists have appeared.

The Bible teaches that the capital “A” Anti-Christ will come at the end of the age, during the time of the Great Tribulation, before Jesus returns to rule. Yet, even in the first century, there were lower case “a” anti-Christ, all opposing the Lord Jesus and pointing to that capital “A” Anti-Christ who is sure to come.

David is just one of the anointed ones, small “c” christ, who will serve the Lord and who point to the capital “C” Christ who is sure to come, the Lord Jesus.

All the kings of Israel who were descendants of David were anointed ones for that reason. Many of them did a very poor job of serving the Lord; yet, they still pointed to Jesus as the Anointed

One who would not fail in being a faithful servant of God the Father.

First, the Apostle John also says that we as Christians are anointed.

1 John 2:20 – But you have an anointing from the Holy One, and all of you know the truth.

The anointing is the Holy Spirit; and indeed, one of his primary roles is to guide us into truth. So, like David and other kings in his line, we are anointed ones, or lower case “c” christ.

It is ironic that those who believe in and follow Jesus are called Christians because that term means “little christ.” It was intended to be a derogatory term, coined by those opposed to Christianity. Yet, it is a very good word, at least in its root, because it is a reminder that we, too, are anointed ones, having received God’s magnificent gift of his Spirit, with a responsibility of always serving and pointing to the capital “C” Christ, the Lord Jesus.

We are to always represent him, but never replace him. He, not us, should always be the focus of what we do as a church and what we do in our individual lives. It is never about us, but always about Jesus the Christ, Jesus the Anointed One.

Now, friend, I don’t think it would be very good to go to work tomorrow and declare to everyone around you, “I am an anointed one!” They would not understand what you were talking about. And they would likely think you were more than a little crazy.

However, there is nothing wrong with standing in front of a mirror, with no one else in the room, and reminding yourself, “I am an anointed one. I have been chosen by God to serve the Lord Jesus and point others to him. The Holy Spirit inside me gives me the desire and the ability to do that. It is an honor, an amazing privilege given to me not because I deserve it, but because God has shown incredible mercy and grace to me, a sinner.”

David was an anointed one, you and I as believers in Jesus are anointed ones. May we always remember that it is not about us, but about the Lord Jesus!

At this point, I want to just pause and make sure no one misunderstands. This privilege belongs to every Christian. All of us believers in Jesus have received the anointing, received the Holy Spirit the moment when, by God’s grace, we turned to the Lord Jesus and trusted in him.

Now, you can be a good person, a very special person, a church person, but unless you are trusting in Jesus Christ as your Savior and Lord, you have not received an anointing by God. And believe me, friend, that is not a good thing.

Yet, it is not too late. As God enables, you can put your faith and trust in the Lord Jesus even this morning. If you are not sure what that means or not sure you are doing that, please talk to Pastor Mark or myself. If you choose to place your faith in Jesus Christ today, please make sure you tell us that so we can encourage you as a fellow believer in and follower of Jesus.

#2 God encourages us, by reminding us that he always has a purpose and plan.

That plan always comes together. Things don’t just happen. Our lives are not just a series of coincidences and accidents. Ultimately, the Lord always accomplishes that purpose and plan.

Three thousand years ago, God chose a boy named David to be the next king of Israel. It was no accident that Saul, the current king, asks for David to come serve in his court as an armor bearer. It is no accident that Saul is a tormented man and that he finds relief by listening to music. It is no coincidence that David is a skilled musician who is able to play the lyre in a way that encourages Saul and strengthens that personal bond. In 1 Samuel 16, things that happen, don’t just happen.

At our Adult Retreat in April, Pastor Brent Nelson reminded us of the same truth from the book of Ruth.

Ruth 2:3 – So Ruth went out to gather grain behind the harvesters. And as it happened, she found herself working in a field that belonged to Boaz.

Was that a mere coincidence? No! In the book of Ruth, the things that happen, don’t just happen.

They don't occur by accident. They are *all threads that God is weaving into that beautiful, true story.*

And the same thing is true in 1 Samuel 16, in the rest of the Bible, and in our lives today. The things that happen, don't just happen.

Even the 10-12 years of transition, the time it took for David to actually become king after being anointed by Samuel, even that was part of God's plan. It was a time of great frustration for David and a difficult time for Israel. Yet, God used that time to shape David and the nation, and that would strengthen both.

Friends, that leads us to one of the most important and most comforting truths in the whole Bible. It is spelled out for us very concisely:

Romans 8:28 – And we know that God causes all things to work together for the good of those who love God and are called according to his purpose for them.

The last part simply means "those who are genuine believers in Jesus. The first part means "all things" – every situation and circumstance in life. And right in the middle means our "ultimate good."

In the end, we will see how the Lord has taken every thread in our lives, even the darkest and dirtiest ones and has woven them into a beautiful tapestry. That includes the very bad choices we make and horrible sins we commit.

This is not permission to make very bad choices and commit horrible sins; but it is encouragement that even when that happens, God is not surprised, and he is not going to let it wreck his plan. This also includes very bad situations and circumstances in which we find ourselves, whether those are a result of poor choices on our part or not.

The promise that God causes all things to work together for our ultimate good includes: a diagnosis of cancer, being unfairly fired from a job, a spouse having an affair, a child being addicted to drugs, a parent being killed in a car accident, or losing a ton of money in what you thought was a safe investment.

It also includes irritations, like heavy rain on the day of your son's graduation party, studying for the wrong chapter on an important test, having your favorite football team lose another game, or having someone else sit in your seat at church. God will use all those things for your ultimate good.

Now, I am not saying God necessarily causes *any* of these things, but he does allow them to occur. I believe the Bible is clear that he could have prevented any of them from happening. But he will weave all those things into his plan.

Friend, if the Lord intended all the days of your life to be easy, they would be. He has a different plan. He intends to use the troubles of life, irritants, tragedies and everything in between to help us become the people he wants us to be. We should find comfort in that.

As Paul David Tripp says:

"Since God writes your story, he knows what you are facing and exactly what grace you will need for each day. You will encounter things that will confuse you, but rest assured the One who rules all those things is not confused."

May the Lord use that truth to encourage you and equip you to faithfully follow the Lord Jesus today and in all the days ahead.