

## *“God’s Anointed”*

(1 Samuel 16:1-13)

“Then Samuel took the horn of oil, and anointed him in the presence of his brothers;  
and the spirit of the Lord came mightily upon David from that day forward.”

(1 Samuel 16:13a)

### **Tricky Treason**

Last week we reflected on the account of God’s people asking for a human king. In such a question, the people were trying to replace God as their King. They wanted a human king to lead them in battle like all the other nations. They were tired of trusting God to protect and provide for them, so they rejected God.

But still, God allowed the people to have a human king and even chose Saul to be king over them. God could have given up on the people just as they had given up on God, but God chose to stick with them even though their request for a king wasn’t the best course of action. But God stuck with them because that’s who God is, God sticks with God’s people through thick and thin. God is always working to set things right again.

But sure enough, the people having a King didn’t work so well. We quickly learn that Saul was not the right man for the job because he was not completely faithful to God’s ways, and thus God regretted that he had made Saul king (1 Sam 15:11, 35) and he in fact rejected Saul as king over the people of Israel (1 Sam. 15:26). After all, the king was to remain completely faithful to God and God’s instructions; that was the stipulation for God’s people having a human king. That king was not supposed to let the power of being king get to their heads.

So Saul, Israel’s first king, didn’t work out so well. But God always has a plan to set things right again, even if God’s plan does involve treason. Yes, you heard me right, treason.

According to Google, Treason is “the crime of betraying one’s country, especially by attempting to kill the sovereign or overthrow the government.” Treason here in America would be trying to assassinate the President or take over the White House.

Now, our text for today is a story of treason, tricky treason at that. God told Samuel to fill his horn with oil and go anoint a new king whom God had already chosen. When Samuel questioned God’s treasonous directions, God had a trick up his sleeve... “tell the people that you are there to sacrifice to the Lord. Invite Jesse and his sons to the sacrifice and I will direct you to the one you are to anoint as king.”

Now, the story is fairly straightforward. Samuel goes to Bethlehem to anoint a new King under cover of offering a sacrifice. Samuel has Jesse, the grandson of Ruth, present his seven sons, but none of them are the appointed person whom God has chosen. So Jesse sends for the youngest of the bunch who was caring for the sheep out at pasture. This youngest son is in fact the one that God has chosen, so Samuel follows God's instructions and anoints David in the presence of his brothers, and God's Spirit rushes into David from that day forward. It is only a matter of time until David is publicly anointed as King over Judah and then over all of Israel.

### **Provocative Parallels:**

But today, instead of focusing only on this treasonous story of David being anointed King, I'd like us to look back on this particular story of David from the perspective of Jesus. After all, today is the third Sunday of Advent, which is a season of waiting expectantly for Jesus to come as King and to set things right in our world.

So as we look back on this account of David being anointed, I'll highlight some provocative parallels between the story of Jesus and the story of David.

- *Bethlehem* (1 Sam. 16:1)

First of all, we can note the common location of Bethlehem. David, who became king over God's people was from Bethlehem. As we mentioned a couple of weeks ago, David's great grandparents were none other than Ruth and Boaz, whose redemptive story gave us a peek into greater redemption still to come through David, and especially David's lineage.

And that greater redemption did come through David's family line in the person of Jesus. Jesus was born into the family of Joseph, whose family also came from Bethlehem. Think about this: Jesus was born very near to the place where David grew up and was anointed King.

This common location of Bethlehem and this common family lineage connect the stories of Jesus and David in a unique way. We can already begin to see at Jesus' birth that Jesus comes as God's anointed King.

- *God looks on the heart* (1 Sam. 16:7)

A second provocative parallel: God is the one who chooses David as King, not because of his physical stature or appearance, but rather because of his heart, who he was on the inside.

People look on external appearances: who is the biggest, the strongest, the fastest, the most attractive, and so on. These are the kinds of people that stand out in our world, at least in the media. People often judge others based on how they look, based on their public appearance. Some of our own lives are even driven by the desire to make sure that people like how we look on the outside.

But God looks deeper than our clothes, our muscles, our skin. God looks into our hearts.

God chose David not for his external appearance, but rather for who he was on the inside. David was in fact known as a man after God's own heart. That's the kind of person that might be able to handle being King over Israel. That's the kind of person that might not let the power of being King go to his head.

This inner courage of relying on God is something that David modeled throughout his life, and it is something that we can see especially in many of the Psalms attributed to David. For example in Psalm 16, David says,

**1**Keep me safe, my God,  
for in you I take refuge.

**2**I say to the Lord, "You are my Lord;  
apart from you I have no good thing."

**7**I will praise the Lord, who counsels me;  
even at night my heart instructs me.

**8**I keep my eyes always on the Lord.  
With him at my right hand, I will not be shaken.

**9**Therefore my heart is glad and my tongue rejoices;  
my body also will rest secure,

**10**because you will not abandon me to the realm of the dead,  
nor will you let your faithful one see decay.

**11**You make known to me the path of life;  
you will fill me with joy in your presence,  
with eternal pleasures at your right hand.

In these and other Psalms, David modeled what it meant to be a person after God's own heart, a person who turned to God at all times.

And where we see this modeled in the life of David, we see an even clearer picture through the life of Jesus. Jesus is the perfect example of this kind of inner strength. In key moments in Jesus' life and ministry we find him getting away from everything and turning completely to God. Jesus did this throughout his ministry and most importantly in the Garden of Gethsemane. Jesus trusted God so completely that he was willing to give his very life. That's the kind of heart that God looks for. That's the kind of heart that God invites us to have as well. God looks into our hearts.

- *God chooses the youngest* (1 Sam. 16:12)

Another parallel between David and Jesus is that God chooses the youngest of Jesse's sons, David, to be anointed as King. Samuel was impressed by the oldest son Eliab, likely because of their physique and stature. Eliab was someone Samuel could picture as a King, as mighty or mightier looking than the kings of the other nations. God, however, looked within and chose the one least likely to be chosen. The oldest son was the one who received the greatest blessing and inheritance. The oldest sons were the ones who expected honor and glory.

David, as the youngest son, did not have high expectations. When his brothers went to fight in Saul's army, David stayed back to watch the flocks and occasionally to transport food and messages back and forth. So God chose the youngest, the one people would have been least likely to expect, the one who was least likely to expect it.

God choosing the unexpected people has been a consistent theme throughout Scripture. God chose Jacob over Esau, the younger of the two sons, God chose Joseph, one of the youngest of Jacob's sons to be the one who rescued the whole family, God chose Moses to lead the people out of Egypt, and God chose David to be King over Israel.

In the story of Jesus, God also used the element of surprise, choosing a virgin teenage girl to bear God's own son. Mary the mother of Jesus was one of the last people others would have expected to give birth to God's anointed. Mary would not have expected it herself. Yet God chose Mary because she was open to God working through her to bring redemption to the whole world. Instead of running from God's calling, Mary responded to the angel Gabriel, "Here am I, the servant of the Lord; let it be with me according to your word." When God surprises us, may we also respond with openness to God's calling: like David, like Mary the mother of Jesus.

- *Anointing a new King* (1 Sam. 16:13)

A fourth interesting parallel is that both David and Jesus were anointed ones. In our text for today, Samuel anointed David as King in the presence of his brothers even though Saul was technically still the King of Israel.

Now, in the Old Testament, people were anointed to signify God's blessing and calling on their lives. Thus, Israel's Kings were anointed with oil to set them apart as ones who would rule the people with God's justice and equity. Furthermore, they were empowered by God to carry out God's work in the world.

Jesus was known as the Christ, which is not his last name, but rather is a Greek word meaning "anointed one." And Jesus was anointed at least two significant times during his life. First, he was symbolically anointed with water when he was baptized by John in the Jordan River. Secondly, before Jesus was handed over to be killed, a woman came with an expensive jar of perfume to anoint Jesus. In both of these instances, we catch a significant piece of what it meant for Jesus to be God's anointed one.

After his baptism, Jesus spent forty days in the wilderness before publicly traveling around Galilee proclaiming and embodying the kingdom of God (Mark 1:15). Jesus is God's anointed who truly shows us what God's kingdom looks like. Jesus redefined God's king as one who fought with compassion, faithfulness, and service.

After the woman anointed Jesus with perfume, Jesus said that she did a beautiful thing, anointing his body before burial. You see Jesus wasn't the kind of King who would use swords and might to defend his life. Rather, Jesus as God's true anointed one submitted his life completely into God's care. This again is redefined picture of God's king.

And when we take Jesus' anointings seriously, we also learn what it means to live into God's kingdom today, not grasping for power, but serving others with love and compassion.

- *The rush of God's Spirit* (1 Sam. 16:13)

A fifth provocative parallel is the rush of God's Spirit. After Samuel anoints David, "the spirit of the Lord came mightily upon David from that day forward." God's Spirit that empowered Moses, Joshua, the Judges, and even King Saul is now powerfully present in David's life. And throughout David's life, he relied on the power of God's Spirit to pull him through trying times and to win many battles, whether they were physical, emotional, mental, or spiritual battles. God's Spirit is God's active, empowering presence in the world.

When Jesus was baptized by John in the Jordan we read that God's Spirit descended into him like a dove and God spoke these words: "You are my Son, the Beloved; with you I am well pleased." Now God's words to Jesus are actually a quotation from three different scripture passages, one of them being Psalm 2, which was a Psalm used in coronation ceremonies for new kings. Thus in God's own words, we hear God proclaiming that Jesus is God's true king who will show the world God's kingdom through the work of God's Spirit.

Through the rest of Jesus' life, we can see the active work of God's Spirit in Jesus' work of healing the sick, driving out demons, and proclaiming and embodying God's kingdom.

Now, in the Old Testament, God's Spirit was only present with one person at a time. So when God's Spirit came upon David, it left King Saul. But in the New Testament, God's Spirit was not meant for only one person. For that reason, after Jesus' resurrection, God sent the Spirit upon all of Jesus' disciples to continue God's kingdom work in the world. And we can still be empowered by God's active Spirit today to spread God's kingdom of hope, peace, joy, and love.

- *Ensuing Conflict* (1 Sam. 16:14 ff)

Finally, we might also note the parallel of conflict present in both David and Jesus' life. From this point on in David's life until the day that Saul died in battle, David was constantly in conflict with Saul, constantly on the run. Saul tried to kill David with a spear, he tried hunting him down in the wilderness, both to no avail because God's Spirit was with David.

Jesus' life was also marked with conflict with those in authority. Things grew so heated that the Jewish religious leaders joined forces with the Roman political leaders to have Jesus put to death for treason against Rome. Part of the reason I highlight the conflict is because being God's anointed didn't mean living a safe and secure life. Rather it meant trusting fully in God throughout all of life. Furthermore, following God's anointed also doesn't mean living a safe, secure life. It means putting our complete trust in a trustworthy God.

## **Provocative Parallels**

So there you have it...some provocative parallels between the stories of Jesus and David. When we look back from the New Testament onto this one text in First Samuel, we can see how Jesus fulfilled David's calling to be God's true anointed king. Jesus showed us what it truly meant to have a pure heart and to be empowered by God's Spirit.

## **Joyful Jubilee**

So as we celebrate this third Sunday of Advent, we look with joy not to David, but beyond David to Jesus. And when we look to Jesus, we can renew our faith in a God who is always working to set things right in our world, even through the most surprising ways. Jesus came to joyfully proclaim God's year of Jubilee, where the chains of sin are broken and sin's captives are set free.

Therefore, may we celebrate with Joy this Christmas season that God has not forgotten about us; rather, God sent Jesus to redeem us, God sends the Spirit to empower us, and God will come again to make all things new. Amen! Let all God's people say together, Amen!

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Let's continue worshipping God by singing together "Hail to the Lord's anointed," number 185 in your blue hymnal.