



**WESTLAKE HILLS**  
PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

## "David – Part I"

**Sermon Series: "Witnesses to God's Larger Story"**

1 Samuel 16:1-13

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**1 Samuel 16:1-13**

**Samuel Anoints David**

**(NIV)**

<sup>1</sup> 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."

<sup>2</sup> But Samuel said, "How can I go? Saul will hear about it and kill me."

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

<sup>4</sup> 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?"

<sup>5</sup> 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.

<sup>6</sup> When they arrived, Samuel saw Eliab and thought, "Surely the LORD's anointed stands here before the LORD."

<sup>7</sup> 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."

<sup>8</sup> Then Jesse called Abinadab and had him pass in front of Samuel. But Samuel said, "The LORD has not chosen this one either." <sup>9</sup> Jesse then had Shammah pass by, but Samuel said, "Nor has the LORD chosen this one." <sup>10</sup> Jesse had seven of his sons pass before Samuel, but Samuel said to him, "The LORD has not chosen these." <sup>11</sup> So he asked Jesse, "Are these all the sons you have?"

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

Samuel said, "Send for him; we will not sit down <sup>[a]</sup> until he arrives."

<sup>12</sup> So he sent and had him brought in. He was ruddy, with a fine appearance and handsome features.

Then the LORD said, "Rise and anoint him; he is the one."

<sup>13</sup> 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 upon David in power. Samuel then went to Ramah.

### Footnotes:

- a. [1 Samuel 16:11](#) Some Septuagint manuscripts; Hebrew *not gather around*

### Introduction.

Have you ever felt like a nobody, like you just didn't matter? Have you ever been passed over at work and someone else got the promotion you thought you deserved? Were you ever the kid who was picked last for a team when they were choosing up sides? Did your wife or husband ever come home and say, "I don't love you anymore, and I don't want to be married to you." And they left. If these things ever happened in your life, then this sermon is for you.

I think there is much in this story we can learn about how to deal with rejection and feeling left out, and we would do well to study this passage of Scripture. No one ever imagined that one day this young man who was passed over by his own family would become the king of Israel, but God surprised them all by His unexpected selection of David, a witness to God's larger story.



## I. The Background to David's Call.

To appreciate fully God's unlikely call of David, we need to understand the background to the story that led to this incident. After Israel took possession of the Promised Land, eventually Joshua, who succeeded Moses as the leader of the Hebrews, passed away. Then the nation of Israel was led by a series of people who were called Judges. When we hear the word "judge" we naturally think of legal affairs, but this is somewhat misleading. While these Old Testament Judges did attend to legal matters, they were primarily charismatic military and spiritual leaders who exercised a liberating and even saving role for the people of Israel, and they helped the nation complete the occupation of the Promised Land.

However, this period in Israel's history was also marked by disunity, and at the end of the book of Judges we read, *"In those days Israel had no king, and everyone did right in his own eyes" (Judges 21:25)*. (Sounds like a church staff on occasion!) When the people of Israel began to compare themselves to the nations around them, they felt inferior because they didn't have a king like everyone else. They thought a king would help organize the tribes of Israel into a mightier nation with a greater military presence, and they wanted to be like everybody else.

Isn't that just like you and me? We see someone wearing a new pair of jeans, and we wish we had a pair just like them. We hear about a friend going on some exotic trip, and we wish we could be just like them. The desire to fit in, to be liked by everyone else around us drives us to do things that compromise our values. We buy things we don't need to impress people we don't like with credit cards we can't afford...to be like everybody else!

From the beginning it was God's intention that He be Israel's king. He didn't want them to be like everybody else, like all the other nations. Still, the people persisted, and they said, "We're tired of worshipping an invisible God. Everyone asks, 'Where's your king?' and we have to say, 'Oh, He's in heaven.' We want a leader here on earth. We want to be like everyone else." Eventually, God conceded to the wishes of His people, and Samuel, the last Judge, who was also a priest and a prophet, anointed Saul as their king.

Saul was tall and handsome. He stood a full head taller than anyone else, and he came onto the scene and swept the nation by storm. At first, he had a measure of humility, and he seemed to be able to rally the people around a cause. But it wasn't long before he became thin-skinned, hot-tempered, and given to depression. Eventually, Saul was too full of himself, and when he disobeyed God in the worst kind of way the Lord rejected him as king. He told Samuel to go to the home of Jesse, a man who lived in Bethlehem, and to take with him preparations for anointing a new king, for God had selected that new king for Himself from among Jesse's sons.

My friends, God scans the earth for people who will lead for Him. He is looking for men and women who will follow Him and be His leaders. He isn't looking for perfect people. He's not looking for angels in human form. Rather, He is looking for men and women, boys and girls who have spiritual and character qualities, which set them apart.

Last Thursday and Friday our church hosted the Leadership Summit simulcast conference for the city of Austin. It was a tremendous event, and every year I attend I come away with new insights and more inspiration to be the best leader I can be. If you didn't go this year, you missed a great opportunity to learn and grow, and I encourage you to commit to attending next year when it comes around.

One of the things that struck me most about this year's Summit was the realization that leaders come in all shapes and sizes and personalities. Sometimes leaders don't fit the mold of what you imagine. Tony Dungy talked about mentoring leadership. He was soft-spoken and mild-mannered. Not the typical image of the command-and-control NFL coach who wins a Super Bowl. And yet he did. He talked about the power of influence and how when you touch a person's life it ripples out to impacts hundreds of others.

They also had an interview with Jack Welch, the former CEO of General Electric. For 20 years he ran the \$157-billion-a-year company that has more than 300,000 employees. Forbes magazine ranks GE as the second largest company in the world. But Jack wasn't the titan of Wall Street I imagined. He was this small, bald-headed man with a high squeaky voice and a thick northern accent. I was struck by his passion, his energy and his humor, despite now being in his middle 70s. He was a colorful leader!



And there was Blake Mycoskie, the 33-year-old entrepreneurial founder of Tom's Shoes which as a for-profit business has given away over 680,000 shoes to poor people around the world. Keith was this curly-haired young man with a bright smile who looked a little ADD. He had a free spirit and a winning personality. But he also had an amazing idea which has captured the hearts and minds (and the pocketbooks) of people all across this country. His idea – for every shoe he sells, he gives one away to a poor person in another part of the world.

These people couldn't have been more different from one another. They were as different as the colors of the rainbow. It reminded me there isn't a one-size-fits-all when it comes to leadership. Leaders are as different as they can be. But there is one thing these people all had in common; they all possessed a burning passion to make a difference in the world. They are like the prophet Isaiah who lived 300 years after David. When God asked, "Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?" he replied, "Here am I; send me!"

God is not looking for perfect people to be His leaders. Rather, He is looking for individuals who have spiritual and character qualities which set them apart. In this particular case the Lord sought out a man after God's own heart (1 Sam. 13:14), and He found that person in David the son of Jesse. David was a human being just like you and me, mere flesh and blood. He wasn't larger than life figure like Michelangelo depicted him in his great statue. In fact, by almost any measure there wasn't much to the naked eye that indicated David was leadership material at all. Just ask His family.

## **II. The Surprise of David's Call.**

The story of Samuel inspecting the sons of Jesse to discern who was to be the next king of Israel is one of the funniest scenes in the Bible. First, he saw Eliab who was the oldest, and Samuel thought to himself, "This must be the one!" Eliab looked like the type you'd choose for a king. No doubt he was tall and impressive, certainly a man of battle, because in just the next chapter he's fighting with Saul and the troops against Goliath and the Philistines. But Samuel was focused only on the externals, and God said Eliab wasn't the one.

Next there was Abinadab, the second oldest son. He looked as impressive as his older brother. But God told Samuel, "That's not the man either." We're not told why; we're just told he wasn't the one. Samuel went on down the line of Jesse's seven sons, and God made it clear to the prophet that none of them was the Lord's anointed. Finally, Samuel asked, "Are these all the sons you have?" to which Jesse replied, "Well, there is one more, the youngest, but we left him out tending the sheep." Jesse thought so little of his youngest son he didn't even have David in the lineup! How overlooked David must have felt. Even his own father didn't see potential in him.

We have all been rejected or overlooked by someone in the past, and it leaves a lasting mark, doesn't it? When I was in the seventh grade there was a particular girl I liked. Back in the day, in my school if you liked a girl and wanted to go steady with her, you gave her a silver ID bracelet with your name engraved on it which would proclaim to all the world you were a couple. So, I scraped together all the money I had, and I bought an ID bracelet and made my plan to ask this young woman to be my girlfriend. However, I was too much of a coward to ask her myself, so I had a friend do it for me. I'll never forget my buddy walking back toward me, the ID bracelet in his hand, and a look of disappointment on his face. "Sorry, Pete. She said, 'No.'" My 12-year-old heart was crushed.

Early in our marriage, Lorie and I lived in Washington, DC where I served a church in Alexandria, VA. One day she was riding the Metro to her work at the George Mason School of Law in Arlington, and next to her sat a man in a 3-piece suit reading *The Wall Street Journal*. They struck up a conversation and began to talk about things. He asked her, "Where do you work?"

She said, "I work at the George Mason School of Law."

He replied, "Oh. Are you a professor there?"

Lorie answered, "No, I work in the Admissions office."

"Are you the director?"

"No, I'm just a clerk."



At this, the man said “oh”, and he turned back to reading his paper. He no longer wanted to have any more conversation. He wrote Lorie off. He passed over her and decided she wasn’t worth talking to. Lorie felt like saying to him, “But I have a Masters degree, and I’m a writer, and this is just a temporary job until I can get something in my field!”

Several years ago, I sent a proposal for a book I wrote to a number of publishers. I’ll never forget the rejection letter I received from one of them. Not only did it say they didn’t want to publish my book, but the editor went on to tell me all the ways my writing was bad, and he pointed out what he perceived were the shortcomings of what I submitted to him.

All of us have been rejected or passed over, and it’s encouraging to know that David, the greatest of Israel’s kings, must have experienced the same feelings in life as you and I. He knew what it was like to be overlooked. He knew what it was like to be left out. But God took this nobody and made him into somebody special. The Lord delights in surprising the world with His unlikely choices.

### **III. The Reason for David’s Call.**

On the surface, there was nothing about David that would have impressed us, nothing to cause us to say, “Wow! This guy would make a great king!” If we had been living next door to the family, we might not have even known the name of Jesse’s youngest son. After all, even his own father didn’t include David in the lineup until Samuel asked, “Are these all your sons?”

But God said to Samuel, *“Do not look at the appearance or at the height of his stature...for God sees not as a man sees, for man looks at the outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart” (16:7).* In a day when image is everything, this is a word of correction you and I need to hear. All too often we focus on the external. We judge ourselves and the people around us by the clothes they wear, the car they drive, and the house they live in. We evaluate their physical beauty, how attractive they are, and how fit their bodies look. Or we measure them by their intelligence, the schools they attended, the degrees they earned, the cleverness of their speech. We even assess them by how spiritual they appear, how eloquent their prayers are, how well they preach!

Lorie and I used to live in Boulder before we moved to Austin. There is a large running community in Boulder, and Lorie and I joined the scene when we moved to there. Occasionally people in running circles try to one-up each other talking about how many races they’ve done or how fast they are. I wanted to fit in, so I did the same thing. I remember talking to our neighbor Woody one day before the Boulder Boulder, a big 10K race, and I asked him what time he was shooting for to complete the race. He said, “You don’t understand. When I run, I only have two goals – 1) to finish the race, and 2) not poop in my pants!” That’s a healthy corrective to our over-emphasis on the externals!

God is more concerned with what is on the inside of a person than what’s on the outside. He examines the heart, and He measures the character. He evaluates the depth of a person’s spirit and the quality of their commitment. And He studies their values, priorities and ethics. Who are you when no one else is watching? These are the things that mean more to God than all the externals added up together.

What is your focus on? The externals of life which people see or the interior matters of the soul? The Bible says that David was a man after God’s own heart, and that is what made this unlikely candidate God’s choice to be the next king of Israel.

Are you trying to be like everybody else? Are you busy just keeping up with the Joneses? Are you focused on the externals of life, or are you cultivating the interior matters of your soul? Be a person like David – a man after God’s own heart. If you do, He will use you in ways you cannot even imagine. I promise you that.

### **Conclusion.**

Many years ago, my friend Vic Pentz, who is the senior pastor at Peachtree Presbyterian Church in Atlanta, spent a night in a homeless shelter in Houston when he served First Pres there. It wasn’t because he and his wife Becky had a falling out but because he received a phone call from the chairman of the board of a large homeless



shelter. The man asked Vic if he would be willing to go underground with him, so to speak, and spend the night among the homeless on the streets of downtown Houston. Vic agreed, and he put on an old pair of jeans and a grubby t-shirt. He also wore a McDonald's cap with a coffee stain on it. A few hours later, the man's wife dropped the two of them off seven blocks from the Star of Hope Men's Shelter in downtown Houston.

When they arrived, their story was that they had been referred by the Red Cross. They were interviewed as they checked in. "Are you on drugs?" No. "Had any mental problems?" No. "Do you have a job?" Vic didn't want to lie, so he said he worked one day a week! They wrote down "unemployed"! They lined up and took showers. All around Vic were men whose bodies showed the ravages of life on the edge. He was surrounded by a bunch of nobodies – disposable people in our society.

Before dinner a rhythm and blues gospel band conducted a worship service. Vic said he will never forget the singer of the band who walked out with a big smile on his face, looked at all the men, and said, "You are royalty!"

Vic was feeling as unroyal as he had ever felt in his whole life, and yet the singer walked up to one of the men, and he bowed low to the ground and said, "Your highness!" He sang a song about how even though David was a shepherd boy, God saw him as a king. The singer closed by walking through the audience putting his hand over every man's head saying, "King!" "King!" "King!" "King!" "King!" The guys all cheered.<sup>i</sup>

The men in that shelter had one advantage over you and me. Their needs were obvious on the outside. In a homeless shelter, sleeping on a borrowed bed and bathing in a community shower, you have no place to hide. You can't fool anybody. But for us here, we can hide behind our affluence and our polite smiles and our nice clothes. As much as we try to hide it, though, to one extent or another we are all nobodies – wounded, hurting, crippled, afraid, fearful of the future, uncertain of where we stand, feeling rejected by someone. But today, God leaps from His throne and shouts your name! "Weldon! Nancy! Paul! Doug! Emily!"

He waits for you to come to Him so that, in the words of David written in Psalm 8, God might crown you with glory and honor and give you the dignity to live as His heir for all eternity. God holds a crown just for you. There is nothing in this awful world that can remove that crown from your head or tarnish your royal pedigree. God looks out over this congregation, and He says with great joy and confidence, "King!" "Queen!" "Queen!" "King!" "King!" "Queen!"

As sons and daughters of God Almighty, may we go forth as ambassadors of His loving kindness and grace and acceptance and affirmation in a lost and broken world. Everybody is somebody in Christ's body! Amen.

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<sup>i</sup> Vic Pentz, "The True Measure of Greatness," p. 4. A sermon preached at Peachtree Presbyterian Church in Atlanta, GA, on October 24, 2004.

