

1 Samuel 16:1-13

God Looks to the Heart

Introduction

People of God, Throughout history, great leaders were often remembered by some defining physical trait—and more often than not, it was their height. George Washington stood at 6'2"; Abraham Lincoln at 6'4", but he was also remembered for his chinstrap beard. Theodore Roosevelt was not a tall man, only 5'10", but he was all teeth and spectacles. Adolf Hitler, his mustache. Donald Trump his hair. Many on the internet declare that Trump's son Barron is destined to be a great leader in America, and his 6'9" frame certainly helps him fit the part.

This connection between a person's stature and their destiny to rule was even stronger in the ancient world. Israel's first king, Saul was chosen in part because he was head and shoulders above the rest. For a people surrounded by nations ruled by the towering descendants of the Nephilim, Saul looked the part.

But when Samuel anointed David to be Israel's new king, he was chosen not because of his height. He in fact was the smallest of Jesse's sons. In choosing a small shepherd boy to be Israel's next king, God overturned the assumptions of the ancient world about power. True kingship is not measured in the inches of a man's stature, but in faithfulness of one's heart toward God. For it is the heart

that God looks upon, and it is the heart that determine ones' destiny to rule and attain glory.

16 Now the Lord said to Samuel, “How long will you mourn for Saul, seeing I have rejected him from reigning over Israel? Fill your horn with oil, and go; I am sending you to Jesse the Bethlehemite. For I have provided Myself a king among his sons.”

The chapter opens with Samuel grieving Saul's fall. At first, we had such high hopes for Saul, but the glory of kingship quickly went to his heart. Pride took root, self-importance grew, and he acted for his own honor and glory rather than the Lord's. And following the pattern of Adam, the world's first king, Saul was impatient, seized at that which was not his, he blame shifted, and never truly confessed his sin. Samuel put it bluntly: Saul had rejected the word of the Lord, and so the Lord rejected him. And Samuel wept.

But then the Lord told Samuel that his time of mourning was over. It is now time for him to take up his horn of oil, for God had already chosen a king for Himself from among the sons of Jesse in Bethlehem.

It is so important for us to realize people of God, that Saul's sin and failure did not derail God's plan or interrupt the advancement of His kingdom. Actually God uses sin

and suffering and sorrow to help further accomplish His good purposes in the world. Yes, Saul's rebellion disqualified him from being king in Israel, but it opened the way for David, the man after God's own heart, to be king.

In other words, God strikes straight blows with crooked sticks. For those who love God, all things worked together for their good. And now matter what evil has befallen you, no matter what sorrow has plagued you and your family, you can confidently know that the Lord is the giver of all good gifts, and that this dark providence in your life is designed by Your Heavenly Father to be for your good and glory, so long as you keep your heart fixed on Him.

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

Samuel knows that Saul sees him as a threat to his kingdom and his dynasty. If Saul catches wind that Samuel is walking around Bethlehem with a horn of oil slung around his shoulder, Samuel will soon be put to death for treason and against Saul's kingdom.

So the Lord provides a cover story for Samuel.

But the Lord said, “Take a heifer with you, and say, ‘I have come to sacrifice to the Lord.’ ³ Then invite Jesse to the sacrifice, and I will show you what you shall do; you shall anoint for Me the one I name to you.”

God allows for the use of deception to keep his messengers and servants safe from harm, so they can continue to fulfill their calling. Like when missionaries go to foreign countries that are hostile to Christianity, they go under the cover of teaching English, or as a business consultant, or something else, in order to conceal their evangelistic mission.

So Samuel brought a heifer for a peace offering. But it conceals his real intentions.

⁴ So Samuel did what the Lord said, and went to Bethlehem. And the elders of the town trembled at his coming, and said, “Do you come peaceably?” ⁵ And he said, “Peaceably; I have come to sacrifice to the Lord. Sanctify yourselves, and come with me to the sacrifice.” Then he consecrated Jesse and his sons, and invited them to the sacrifice.

The elders of Bethlehem were uneasy when Samuel arrived. After all, this was the prophet who had just hacked King Agag to pieces. Perhaps they feared he had come to

bring judgment upon them as well for their own compromises with the spoils of the Amalekites.

But Samuel reassures them that he comes in peace. So they consecrate themselves for the feast, which signifies that they cleansed themselves with water before partaking of the meal. This is a type of Christian baptism. In order to eat the Peace offering of the Lord's Supper a person must have been consecrated with water in baptism.

6-7 “So it was, when they came, that he looked at Eliab and said, ‘Surely the Lord’s anointed is before Him!’ But the Lord said to Samuel, ‘Do not look at his appearance or at his physical stature, because I have refused him. For the Lord does not see as man sees; for man looks at the outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart.’”

It is deeply human to judge a book by its cover. But do you hear what God is saying? Your worth is not determined by those things the world thinks are important. Your appearance, your achievements, who you are or are not friends with, or who you are related to. God is not impressed by how much money you make, what socio-economic class you are in, or how much theology you know. God is not looking for those who present a polished appearance to the world to show His favor to—He's looking for the pure in heart. He's not seeking the those who are

physically strong and tall—He's seeking the one who is totally surrendered to God's will and word.

And here is where you need to stop and ask yourself: what is the most important thing about you? Is it any of those things I mentioned? Or is it something else. God is only concerned with one thing about you – Your heart.

For the eyes of the LORD roam to and fro over all the earth, to show Himself strong on behalf of those whose hearts are fully devoted to Him. – 2 Chron. 16:9

Saul looked the part of a king, but his heart was all wrong. He was consumed with himself, obsessed with his image, hungry for his own glory. He never owned his sins, always blamed others, and cared more about man's opinion than God's word. And God rejected him for it.

And when Samuel looks on Jesse's first born Eliab, God also says "I have rejected him." Maybe God knows something we don't about Eliab. He might have been All Tribe Quarterback for Bethlehem High, he might have been big and tall and strong. But the Lord is not looking to have a Saul 2.0 reign for him and his kingdom.

If you live like Saul—if your choices you make in life are fueled by what is going to make me look the best before other people, what is going to get me the most amount of

honor and glory and praise from men – then you are filled with the pride of life—and you are setting your heart against the Lord. And the Lord will set his heart against you if you do not repent of this.

Maybe you do this when you are among your friends. You are a person who is inclined to do foolish things, or say foolish things just to impress others. Maybe when you look in the mirror you have that other girl in mind, and think to yourself, I am going to look better than her today. Not remembering that “your adornment should not be *merely* outward—arranging the hair, wearing gold, or putting on *fine* apparel— but rather it should be the hidden person of the heart, with the incorruptible beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is very precious in the sight of God.

Maybe you hold yourself so high in your own eyes that you have developed a habit, or the character, where you constantly excuse your sin and shortcomings by pointing fingers at others instead of confessing it and owning it. Maybe, when you do confess your sins, you do it only so you can be seen as doing what is right, but really your heart is far from God.

That is the kind of person that God rejects.

But David was different. To be a man after God's heart is to confess your sins honestly, to take responsibility for your actions, to stop making excuses, and to tremble at God's word rather than man's. It is to be concerned with the Lord's glory and to live for His praise, and not your own. It is to not be fearful or overly concerned with what other people think about you, but only to live your life in the sight of God.

That's what God delights in. That's the kind of heart He seeks out. And that's the kind of heart He can give you in Christ—if you will humble yourself before Him.

Jesse made seven of his sons pass before Samuel. And Samuel said to Jesse, “The Lord has not chosen these.” ¹¹ And Samuel said to Jesse, “Are all the young men here?” Then he said, “There remains yet the youngest/smallest, and there he is, keeping the sheep.”

And Samuel said to Jesse, “Send and bring him. For we will not sit down till he comes here.” ¹² So he sent and brought him in. Now he *was* ruddy, with bright eyes, and good-looking. And the Lord said, “Arise, anoint him; for this *is* the one!” ¹³ Then Samuel took the horn of oil and anointed him in the midst of his brothers; and the Spirit of the Lord came upon David from that day forward. So Samuel arose and went to Ramah.

Despised and Rejected

It says that David was handsome, but he was handsome in the way that if you told him he was handsome, he wouldn't know what to do with that information, and he wouldn't give it any thought again. He was not like I was when I was younger, my head was so big Ivette was afraid I wouldn't be able to fit on the airplane to come home from the Navy.

It says David was ruddy, which means his face was flushed red from hard work. He was faithful in his labor and was concerned only to do a good job for the pleasure of God. And if you find a man who is concerned to work hard and do a good job, and labor heartily as unto the Lord, you should hire that guy for your company. And if you are not that guy, if you are lazy, and you look to do the bare minimum, and take extended bathroom breaks every hour in order to get out of doing work – no one should hire you, and you will get a bad reputation. Let the one who labor do so with all his might as unto the Lord.

Though David was humbly handsome and hardworking, Jesse only saw his son's height. He was the smallest. And that was all Jesse needed to know. Leave him with the sheep, he has no great destiny. The prophet couldn't possibly want him for anything.

From Jesse's human point of view, David was insignificant—despised and overlooked.

David knew what rejection felt like. And so does your Lord Jesus. He knew how people only looked on the external, and judged him as a result of how he looked.

Isaiah says of Him: *"He had no form or majesty that we should look at him, and no beauty that we should desire him. He was despised and rejected by men, a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief; and as one from whom men hide their faces he was despised, and we esteemed him not."* (Isaiah 53:2–3)

And some of you know exactly what that feels like. Maybe that was your childhood—never valued, always mocked, told you were worthless. Maybe you are not tall enough, smart enough, strong enough, put together enough.

People are really good at projecting their own expectations of you back on to you, and when you fall short of what they think you are supposed to be, they feel justified in their rejection of you.

Maybe you experienced it with your parents, your siblings, or those you thought were your friends. Maybe it is what you are walking through even now.

But hear this! Jesus knows what that is like. David knows what that is like. You are not alone. And you are not despised. For God looks on your heart.

David himself prayed in Psalm 27: *"For my father and my mother have forsaken me, but the Lord will take me in."*

And the Lord will take you in! Even if father or mother forsake you, even if others despise you, the Lord receives you in Christ.

At Jesus' baptism the Father declared, "This is my Beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." And when you were baptized into Christ, the Father spoke the same word over you: You are My beloved son in whom I am well pleased. You are not despised. You are accepted in the Beloved, and not rejected!

So do not let the opinions of others define you! Do not let their rejection write your story. Listen instead to what your God says of you in Jesus Christ. Man looks at the outward appearance, and often with suspicion or scorn. But the Lord looks on the heart. So cultivate a heart of love for God and virtue toward Him, and do not let the opinions of others dictate who you are and what your destiny is. For God is with you, what can man do to you?

Now historically, this has been the experience of the Church. Christians have constantly been associated with those who are low and despised in the world.

1 Cor. 1 says:

"God chose what is foolish in the world to shame the wise; God chose what is weak in the world to shame the strong; God chose what is low and despised in the world—even things that are not—to bring to nothing things that are, so that no human being might boast in His presence. And because of Him you are in Christ Jesus, who became for us wisdom from God, righteousness and sanctification and redemption. Therefore, let the one who boasts, boast in the Lord."

Anointed

Why then should we boast in the Lord? Because the destiny of the despised is to reign in glory. That is the meaning of our anointing in baptism.

When Samuel poured oil on David's head, the Spirit of the Lord rushed upon him. From that day forward, David was marked as the Lord's anointed—destined for the throne. And that word "anointed" is the word *Christ*.

David's life became a living shadow of the true Anointed One, Jesus Christ. Like David, Jesus was chosen by God,

not by men. Like David, He was despised and rejected. Like David, He suffered before He reigned. Though David felt that he came close to death many times, Jesus did die. Where David sat on Israel's throne, Jesus was raised to reign forever at the right hand of God in Heaven, which is the True throne of David.

And here is the astonishing thing: when you were baptized, you too were anointed into Christ. That is what it means to be called a *Christian*—an anointed one. The Heidelberg Catechism asks, “Why are you called a Christian?” The answer:

Because by faith I am a member of Christ, and share in His anointing: so that as prophet I confess His Name, as priest I present myself a living sacrifice of thankfulness, and as king I fight with a good conscience against sin and the devil in this life, and afterward reign with Him eternally over all creatures.

That means that this pattern of suffering and glory of David and of Christ, is now the pattern of your life also. His pattern is now your pattern. As David suffered before entering the glory of his reign, so Christ suffered before being exalted to the glory of His reign. The path is always the same: the cross before the crown.

Hebrews 2 tells us it was fitting for God, in bringing many sons to glory, to make the founder of our salvation perfect

through suffering—and that He is not ashamed to call us His brothers.

We are Christians and that means that we have been anointed in our baptism to be Christ's brother's - to suffer with Him, and then to reign with Him in glory forever.

So don't be surprised when your life feels like exile. Don't be shaken when obedience brings scorn, or when following Christ costs you dearly. That is not a sign of God's rejection—it is the path he lays down for His most beloved sons. David walked it. Christ walked it. And now you walk it too.

But take courage, people of God: just as surely as the oil ran down David's head, anointing him to be king; and just as surely as the Spirit descended upon Jesus at his baptism, empowering him to rule as king, so surely your baptism is God's pledge that the rejection and suffering you experience will give way to your glory. The cross will yield to the crown—so long as you seek after God's own heart as David did. For that is the kind of heart that God looks upon with acceptance. Amen.