

1 Samuel 16:1-13

“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? 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.’ 3 Invite Jesse to the sacrifice, and I will show you what to do. You are to anoint for me the one I indicate.”

4 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.

6 When they arrived, Samuel saw Eliab and thought, “Surely the LORD anointed stands here before the LORD.” 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.” 8 Then Jesse called Abinadab and had him pass in front of Samuel. But Samuel said, “The LORD has not chosen this one either.” 9 Jesse then had Shammah pass by, but Samuel said, “Nor has the LORD chosen this one.” 10 Jesse had seven of his sons pass before Samuel, but Samuel said to him, “The LORD has not chosen these.” 11 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 until he arrives.” 12 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.” 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 upon David in power. Samuel then went to Ramah.”

Dear Friends in Christ,

If you mention the name George Washington to most people, you will find that most people give him very high praise. He was the first President. Under his leadership our little nation was able to free itself from the great and mighty tyranny of the British. Most people and history books that write about George Washington keep coming back to the theme that George Washington was the right man at the right time. When our nation was looking for the right leader to keep things together, he stepped into his office with confidence and trustworthiness. He made tough and bold decisions that in the long run helped our nation. He did not necessarily seek to be the first President, but he became the President that was needed that that time. He was the right man at the right time. And looking back at history, I think that most people would say that they are glad he was our first President.

The children of Israel could have expressed similar thoughts about King David, that he was the right man at the right time. David's predecessor, King Saul, was a good king gone bad. He was quickly losing favor with the people and had already lost it with God, because he had rejected God as God. That's why God told Samuel that he had rejected Saul as king. And so in David God chose a new king: not one with great political aspirations that sought glory and power for himself in the throne of Israel, but an unassuming boy who quietly tended to his family's flocks. Like George Washington almost three thousand years later, David did not seek it but was propelled into a position of leadership—the right man at the right time. About him the Israelites would say—and today still do say—We're glad he was our king.

The account of David's anointing would be enough to stir the heart of any patriotic Israelite. When the leadership of Israel was in shambles under King Saul, God sent his prophet Samuel to the speck-on-the-map town of Bethlehem where he was to anoint a no-name guy as the next king of Israel. And the story

reaches its climax as the candidates pass by Samuel, and God chooses the least likely one, the one so unlikely he wasn't even invited. This is a true rags-to-riches, shepherd-of-sheep-to-king-of-kings story. But while I'm sure it would stir up the emotions of any patriotic Israelite, what is this story supposed to mean for us? These first thirteen verses of 1 Samuel 16 are much more than an inspiring account of Israel's political history. So I tell you this now and I pray the Holy Spirit convinces you of it through his Word: Even though you're not an Israelite, even though you live 3000 years later, even if you've never heard of David's anointing before, this story is still for you. It assures you that . . .

Theme: God Anointed The Right King

- 1. He picked him with divine wisdom**
- 2. He equipped him with divine strength**

Did you catch something in the sermon theme that didn't quite seem to fit with what we heard in the reading? This is what we heard from the Bible: **“Samuel took the horn of oil and anointed [David] in the presence of his brothers.”** In other words, Samuel poured oil over David's head, which was the customary way of setting him apart as the next king of Israel. That's what the Bible says. But the sermon theme reads, “God anointed the right king for you.” Who anointed David, God or Samuel?

Samuel poured out the oil, but there is no doubt about it that God anointed David. And that's good, because God picked David with divine wisdom, a wisdom that even wise, old Samuel didn't possess. That was shown when Jesse had his sons pass in front of Samuel. Samuel saw the oldest one, Eliab, and as far as he was concerned he was looking at the next king of Israel. The oldest one of the family, he probably looked the part of a king. So Samuel thought this was Israel's next king, but God said no. Nor was it the second oldest. Nor the third. Not the fourth and not the fifth and not the sixth and not the seventh. In a culture in which the firstborn son was used to getting the royal treatment, God picked the lastborn, David, whom they hadn't even bothered to invite. It's clear that even though Samuel poured the oil, it was God who picked David.

God explained to Samuel why he picked 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.”** God picked David because he can do something no other can do, he can see through good looks and great stature and gracious conduct and everything else external and he can see straight into the heart. Now the Bible doesn't say there was something especially bad about David's older brothers, but it does say that God knew exactly what kind of person each of them was, and he knew in his wisdom that David was the best man for the job. God knew that David was the special man for God's special work. And God was right.

David was for the most part a great king. Arguably the best political leader Israel ever had. God made it clear that he picked David with divine wisdom. But if we were to stop there, we would be saying too much about David and not enough about God. David wasn't Israel's best king because God was just really good at picking the good ones. David was the best because God made him the best. God not only picked David with divine wisdom, but he also equipped him with divine strength at his anointing.

These are the words we read: **“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. The Spirit of the Lord came upon David in power.”** God gave him special strength to carry out special work. He equipped him with divine strength. Doesn't it seem a little abnormal to you that a shepherd boy could kill a nine-foot tall Philistine giant named Goliath with a slingshot? Or that someone trained in guiding sheep to pasture would be so good at leading thousands of soldiers to war? David wasn't lucky. David was extraordinarily successful because God gave him extraordinary success. God makes it clear that he equipped David with divine strength.

I told you at the beginning of the sermon that this account of Israelite history would give comfort and strength to you. Not just to the people of Israel, but to you. God anointed the right king for you. In the time we have allotted to us today we can't examine every comfort we can draw from this story, but I would like to emphasize two things this story says to you. First of all, learn from this that God always picks the right

people for his work. David is just one example of that. We heard about another one in the Gospel. When Jesus was baptized, God made a public pronouncement that he had picked Jesus for a job. God said, **“You are my Son, whom I love; with you I am well pleased.”** Just like David was the right man to serve Israel, Jesus was the right man to save us.

He’s the right man first of all because he knows why we need to be saved. Remember the passage? **“The LORD does not look at the things man looks at. Man looks at the outward appearance, but the LORD looks at the heart.”** Your Lord Jesus sees all of you. He sees the sides nobody else does. From your public sins to the ones you commit only with certain friends to the ones only you know about in your heart of hearts. Jesus is the right man to save you because he sees your sin that is your ruin and destruction. You think you know yourself? Jesus knows you better.

But Jesus isn’t the right man just because he knows you, but he’s also the right man because he loves you. God picked Jesus to save you because Jesus loves you. In spite of his knowledge of and his anger over your sin he loved you enough to take your sin and call it his own. That means your public sins, your pet sins, your hidden sins, your unknown sins, every last one of your sins all went on Jesus. And as the ruin and destruction that sin brings went on Jesus, Jesus’ perfection went on you. So do you know what God sees when he looks into your Christian heart? He sees exactly that — Christ. He sees Jesus.

So that God can say to you what he said to Jesus: **“You are my son, whom I love; with you I am well pleased.”** Just like the Israelites must have been glad that God picked David to be their king, you can be glad that God picked Jesus to be your Savior-King. The one who sees you completely is the one who suffered for you willingly so that you would be saved eternally. That means your Lord Jesus must love you a lot.

There’s one more thing I want you to take with you from the account of David’s anointing. God not only picks, but he also equips his servants. We saw that with David when the Spirit of the Lord came on him in power so that he could slay giants with strength that came from God and rule Israel with wisdom that came from God. We also see that with Jesus. The Bible says that **“God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and power, and...he went around doing good and healing all who were under the power of the devil, because God was with him.”** God equipped Jesus with the strength he needed to save us, and he demonstrated that to us at his baptism, when the Spirit of the Lord, the Holy Spirit, literally descended on him in the form of a dove.

Jesus’ baptism, God’s anointing of Jesus, gives you all the assurance in the world that Jesus, true God and true man, has all the power of God. That means you can depend on the miracles Jesus did. They were God’s power put into effect to testify about Jesus. That means you can depend on the words Jesus preached. They were God’s truth put into our language to bring you to Jesus. And that means you can depend on the death Jesus died — the death of him who looked like nothing more than a man was a death that paid for the sins of the world. And if Jesus died for the sins of the whole world, that means he died for your sins too.

We’ve talked both about David and Jesus on this Baptism of our Lord Sunday. I hope that you can see the connection between God’s anointing of the two. God didn’t record this history about David just so that we’d know about David. God gave us this story, and all the OT, first and foremost to point us to Jesus. He’s the one God picked and equipped to be your Savior. On this Baptism of our Lord Sunday remember that God anointed the right king for you. That powerful, anointed king is your Savior and king. He is your comfort and your strength. Amen.