

God and His Chosen Shepherd

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[0 : 00] For now, let's prepare our hearts to receive God's word. What makes a good leader?

What makes us say that the person who is in charge is respectable and honorable? Now, as many of you know, we at KAC are currently in the season of electing our leaders.

By the Lord's grace, we have chosen our elders and we will be selecting our deacons next. And we trust that the individuals that the Lord has chosen are the right ones to govern our church over the next three years.

That said, when it comes to defining what good leadership is, you'll receive answers that vary across a wide spectrum, depending on who you ask.

Some say the person must have good income and good reputation at his line of work. While others say financial standing is not as important as a willing heart.

[1 : 24] Perhaps a good starting point is to acknowledge that the lenses in which you and I tend to view leadership are often culturally based. Each of us tend to favor a certain kind of leader based on our experiences with them.

See, if you had a hard time working with someone who calls all the shots, you might prefer a person who rallies everybody and gets people's opinion. But the same is true the other way around.

Because a people's person might take a long time to get things done. So what then does the Bible say about leadership?

That's the topic that this week and next Sunday sermon will attempt to address. Our focus this morning is on leadership in the Old Testament. And perhaps there is no better book than to compare what a God-honoring ruler versus what a God-defying ruler looks like than the book of 1 Samuel.

If you haven't already, please turn to 1 Samuel chapter 16. 1 Samuel chapter 16. So let's give some context to our passage.

[2 : 52] See, as Samuel the prophet grew older, the Israelites demanded for, quote, a king like other nations to lead them into war and fight their battles.

So soon enough, a handsome and tall man from a tribe of Benjamin named Saul was anointed as Israel's first king. But despite Saul's numerous victories over the Philistines, we quickly realize that Saul really is like a king like the other nations.

He prioritizes his own interests before the word of God. In chapter 13, we see just as the Philistines threatened to overcome Saul and his army, Saul did not wait for Samuel to arrive.

Instead, this king of God goes up and makes a sacrifice himself, hoping to somehow gain the Lord's favor through a burnt offering. Then in chapter 14, when Saul finds out that God helped his son rout the Philistines, he almost killed Jonathan, his own flesh, solely out of jealousy.

Then in chapter 15, Saul was given the mission, the one chance to fulfill God's prophecy, to revenge the Israelites against the Amalekites.

[4 : 20] And God told him to destroy everything that belonged to the Amalekites. But out of his greed, Saul preserved the life of the Amalekite king, thinking that perhaps he could negotiate some kind of trade deal.

And he also kept all the good and fat cattle and sheep for himself. God told him to destroy everything that was the last one. And he said, God will reject the house of Saul forever.

Thus, we come to the events of today's passage with a heavy heart. Who will lead Israel next?

What's the man that God will rise up to govern his own people?

Part 1. The Lord sends Samuel to anoint David. So some time passed since the events of chapter 15, and we again find Samuel in his house.

Now, in the midst of his depression as he mourns for Saul, God's chosen prophet likely wondered if the words he said to Saul back then in chapter 15, verse 26, still rings true.

[5 : 41] See, these words ring and echo in Samuel's mind.

Has the Lord truly rejected the house of Saul forever? Is there no more room for mercy and forgiveness?

Well, worry not. For in verse 1, the word of the Lord comes to Samuel and uses the same words to confirm that God's will is done.

How long will you mourn for Samuel, since I have rejected him as king over Israel? And to dispel any doubts that Samuel might have, the Lord ushers a command for him to fill an animal horn flask with oil, an instrument that's used for the anointing of a king, and commissions him to travel all the way to Bethlehem and anoint a son of Jesse as the next king.

Yahweh assures Samuel that he will be with him, and he will tell him what to do and who to anoint. See, but Samuel's task is not that straightforward, because as the most esteemed servant of the Lord, and consequently, someone who holds high authority among the Israelites, it's likely that Saul pays close attention to Samuel's whereabouts.

[7 : 33] Of course, it doesn't help that Bethlehem is located way out of the prophet's normal duties. So for Samuel to pack his bags and go all the way to Bethlehem would only alert Saul that there in Bethlehem lies a threat to his throne.

So aware that Saul is on high alert, Yahweh tells Samuel to bring a hifer with him. Now a hifer is a young cow.

A young cow that is used in rituals where there is an unresolved murder in a rural town or in a small region.

This way, in Saul's eyes, Samuel would only be going to Bethlehem to perform his duties as God's chosen judge over Israel. But things, of course, are not that simple.

For Yahweh specifically tells Samuel to invite Jesse to the sacrifice. And I will show you what to do.

[8 : 44] Well, over there in Bethlehem, the people are going about their businesses as usual.

They're farming, they're trading, they're hunting, when all of a sudden they see a man approaching their town entrance.

Hey, hey, hey, who's that? Yo, isn't that Samuel? The guy who literally cut Agag into pieces not too long ago?

What happened? Did something go wrong? Why is he here? Immediately, the villagers alerted the elders, who too trembled when they saw the young cow next to Samuel.

You could almost hear whispers among themselves on whether an unknown murder has occurred in their village. Confused, the elders asked Samuel, Samuel, do you come in peace?

Now, assuring that he had only come to sacrifice, he orders the elders to consecrate themselves. And that means to bath, to put on clean clothes, to avoid sexual, any sexual activity, and to refrain from any contact with a dead body.

[10 : 08] Samuel then goes to Jesse's place, tells them also to clean themselves, oversees their consecration, and invites them to come to the sacrifice.

A few days later, Samuel begins the official ceremony. To his shock, however, this prophet of God was unable to discern God's will.

This is the only time in the Bible where Samuel is shown to be in such an uncomfortable position, where he has to rely on his own insight to choose Israel's next king.

So when Samuel sees Eliab, and his appearance and his height, he thinks to himself, well, here's a strong man who can surely lead and govern a nation like Israel.

See, the thing is, as far as precedent goes, when it comes to anointing a king, the only one that Samuel has is Saul, who stood a head taller above everyone else.

[11 : 20] So it makes sense that Samuel would think Eliab is the perfect candidate. Just as he was about to take out his horn, the Lord finally breaks his silence.

Do not consider his appearance or his height, for I have rejected him. The Lord does not look at the things people look at. People look at the outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart.

In a remarkable statement, Yahweh declares that he is fundamentally different from any human being. While humans look at what can be seen from the outside, Yahweh treasures what cannot be seen on the inside.

Men emphasize strength and gifting. God values the heart. God values the heart. So Samuel turns to Jesse and says, the Lord has not chosen this one.

Next, Abinadab walks up. Nope, the Lord has not chosen this one either. Well, how about Shema? [12:41] No, sir, nor has the Lord chosen this one. Well, things sure are awkward now, aren't they? On one hand, the Lord insists that the next king must be a son of Jesse.

But on the other, four more sons passed before Samuel, and the Lord rejected all seven of them.

Confused, Samuel asks, with a last resort, are all these, are these all the sons you have?

Well, it turns out, there was, there is actually a younger son who's out there tending the sheep. The beautiful thing is that the word for young can also mean small, which fits Yahweh's guideline to not just consider the physical appearance.

sensing that this last child might be the one. Samuel urges Jesse to quickly bring David in.

And a few moments later, David comes in. And even though he is small, he is a fine-looking man.

He has red-tinted hair and beautiful eyes.

[14:04] Now granted, what matters most is his heart. And the Lord affirms David's heart by telling Samuel, rise and anoint him. This is the one.

So Samuel takes out his horn and pours the oil over David's head before the elders of Bethlehem and in front of David's brothers. Just as the seamless, invasive fluid works its way into the hair of God's anointed.

So does the Spirit of the Lord enter God's newly chosen servant. Part two.

David receives the Spirit of the Lord. See, this pouring of the oil over David's head is not just mere symbolism. Because verse 13 tells us, from that day on, the Spirit of the Lord came powerfully upon David.

And in contrast, the next verse writes, now the Spirit of the Lord had departed from Saul. Careful readers of the Old Testament would know that the duty of Israel's king is not just to guide them into battles, but also lead the nation of Israel spiritually.

[15:26] So this transfer of God's Spirit from Saul to David is not just a spiritual phenomenon, but also a political one.

From that day on, God would govern his people no longer through Saul, but through David. But Saul's condition is sadly worse than just not having the Spirit.

What it says here, an evil spirit from God came and tormented him. Now one possible meaning of evil, and the one that you and I are most accustomed to, is moral perversiveness.

Which means God sent a morally corrupt demon to torture his servant, suggesting that there is some kind of alliance between God and the legion of demons.

Well, that can be right. Thankfully, evil can also mean misery. And misery is a state of great distress or discomfort, both in the mind and on the body.

[16:45] Taken this way, the Lord likely sent an angel of judgment to torment Saul's spirit so that he was in constant pain. But regardless of what kind of being that was sent, it's clear that Saul's condition is not just a medical issue, but a supernatural assault by a being sent by God's command.

By repeatedly disobeying the Torah and by repeatedly going against the word of the Lord, Saul entered into a personal living judgment done by the Lord.

And his condition was so unique that Saul himself didn't know what to do. Ultimately, it was his servants who told him that it was this tormenting spirit is from the Lord.

And one of these servants suggested to try musical treatment, the playing of a liar, which is a popular remedy among the Israelites against spiritual torment.

Well, liking the idea, Saul immediately tells them to search for someone who can play. Before a search party could even be organized, one unnamed servant says, I have seen a son of Jesse of Bethlehem who knows how to play the liar.

[18:18] But David's musical abilities were not the only impressive thing about him. See, militarily, he is a brave man and a warrior.

Socially, he speaks well. And physically, he is a fine-looking man. And all of these are traits of someone who is fitting to be summoned before the king's court.

But of course, the last trait is the most important. And the Lord is with him. And the Lord is with him.

A description that's only been used in the Old Testament up to this point for four individuals.

Isaac, Jacob, Joshua, and Samuel. Talk about good company. So liking the candidate, Saul sends word to Jesse and tells him to immediately bring his son over.

Jesse obeys and he loads a donkey with bread, skin of wine, and a young goat to supply David with food as his son remained in Israel's political and military establishment.

[19 : 39] A few days later, David meets Saul for the first time at Gebeah. And he immediately enters his service and plays the lyre for the king.

And from that day on, any time Saul faces an attack from the tormenting spirit, David will come before him, play a tune, and Saul's spirit will be relieved from the pain and misery.

Sometimes Saul would even summon David even though he felt fine, just to have the comfort of his presence around him. Saul liked David so much that it didn't take long for him to give him a permanent position, an armor-bearer.

In such a position, David was kept close to the king such that whenever something happens, he could appear immediately and help the issue.

Saul liked David so much that he sent a word to Jesse, allow David to remain in my service for I am pleased with him. And thus, David's soothing remedy through his musical playing and his accompanying presence pleased Saul.

[21 : 04] And there, he stayed in the palace. Now what happens after this is perhaps the most famous event in all of 1 Samuel.

A story of triumph that even hardcore atheists are familiar with. And that is none other than the victory of David over Goliath.

but I want to draw our attention to how the Bible outlines David's rise as a king. We start with chapter 15.

Saul's downfall sets up David's rise. And in chapter 16, despite all the strong candidates among Jesse's sons, God chose the youngest son to be king.

And this follows a pattern of God using the least likely candidate to accomplish his purpose. And this is of course made evident in Genesis where the firstborn is often displaced by the laterborn.

[22 : 14] See Cain and Abel, Ishmael and Isaac, Esau and Jacob, and now fast forward, we have Eliab and David.

But the Lord not only chooses the youngest but also the weakest. Notice how God's anointing of David came before he played for Saul and before he struck down Goliath.

It wasn't as if God needed to see if David and his musical abilities were good before he decides to send his spirit to David. It wasn't as if God needed for David to prove himself against the Philistine giant before he chooses him as king.

It's the opposite. The spirit of the Lord came and anointed David before he did anything. But the Lord said to Samuel, Do not consider Eliab's appearance or his height, for I have rejected him.

The Lord does not look at the things people look at. People look at the outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart. The heart is mentioned close to a thousand times in the Bible.

[23 : 43] heart. In Mark chapter 7 verse 21, Jesus identifies the heart as the seed of our emotions and the factory that pumps out sin, including evil thoughts, sexual immorality, theft, murder, adultery, etc.

Elsewhere in Jeremiah chapter 17 verse 9, it says, the heart is wicked and deceitful above all things. Who can fathom it? See, as much as you and I try to put up a nice facade before others, as much as all family arguments are magically resolved in the church parking garage, we know within the darkest corridors of our hearts how destructive sin can be.

You and I know that if we let our hearts run free, unguarded, how much pain it could bring to our lives. So what then is the message of 1 Samuel 16?

For all of us here at BM Cooching Evangelical Church, especially in this election season, I speak first to the ones being led.

In some sense, that's all of us, whether you are a churchgoer, an usher, a worship leader, a deacon, an elder, or for that matter, a pastor.

[25 : 24] For all of us come here as sheep to be fed. So let me ask you this, do you choose your leaders solely based on qualifications?

The person who works a white-collar job surely is more qualified to lead the church than the one who works at a skilled trade. Do you pick your leaders based on their personality, the charismatic one who goes around rallying people and gets people to buy in on his ideas, is the one who will lead our church to revival.

outward appearance.

But Lord, you remind us what matters most is our heart. I pray for all who are either in leadership or are serving, or are served, that the gospel of Christ, the sacrifice of your son on the cross will become the foundation of everything we do here at KEC.

That first and foremost, we are children of yours, redeemed, treasured, valued, bought with by the heavy price paid on the cross, and from that empower us to serve you and your kingdom.

In Jesus' name, amen. Amen.