

The Search for A King

1 Samuel 16:1-13

By David Felker

Please turn with me in your Bibles to 1 Samuel chapter 16. 1 Samuel chapter 16; it begins on page 238 in your church Bible. And just before we read, something to consider.

Seeking Significance in the External Things of this World

Many of you know this, but I have a three month old son named Marshall and since Marshall's birth we have had some, just big macro-level discussions in the Felker home. And we have talked about in the future whether or not we will be owners of a minivan. It's big stuff here; big things are happening. I come from a long line of minivan owners. My mom has had no children in the house for seven or eight years and yet she can't get rid of the minivan. She still drives the minivan. And I have vivid memories of the family minivan. I still remember as a child my dad having a few moments of glory as a van owner. And this would happen on family outings where all three of the boys would be in the backseat, mom would be in the front seat, and you have to be on a road kind of like County Line Road in Jackson and it has to be kind of a Saturday night. And you stop at a red light and just one of those vehicles pulls up next to you - I mean a Mustang or a motorcycle Rocket and I think you know where this is going - but dad, you know they're paying no attention to my dad with a button-down and khakis driving a van but my dad, he'd be focused on the light and when the light hit green he would stand on the gas pedal. And for about three or four seconds we would be ahead and yet always, always, always this Mustang or whatever kind of car would just come flying by. And the reason that they would always pass us is because you don't hang out on a road like County Line Road, you don't drive a car like a Mustang on a Saturday night to lose to a van. You drive a vehicle like that to be a "Somebody." Nobody wants to be a "Nobody."

And that really comes so natural to us. We want to be important, we want to be valued, we want to be significant and noticed. Here is our problem. The way that typically happens, the way that typically manifests itself is through external things. We are raised in, really raised in the grammar of seeking to find significance based on external things. We drink that water. We believe that life is found in what you can see. We are brought up in that grammar of understanding life and it is so natural to us that we don't understand how destructive it can be and we don't understand the damage that it's doing to our hearts. 1 Samuel 16 is one of the Bible's great heart passages and it really does reveal to us the lie of that outside approach to life and so let me pray for us and

then we'll read it together. Let's pray.

Father, we do thank You for time together. We pray that You would nourish us and feed us from Your good hand. We pray that our hearts would be good soil for the good seed of Your Word. We pray especially if it's the case that we come with cold and jaded hearts towards You we pray that You would be at work and work through even my lisping, stammering tongue to bring You glory. We pray all of this in Jesus' name, amen.

1 Samuel 16 beginning in verse 1:

“The LORD said to Samuel, ‘How long will you grieve over Saul, since I have rejected him from being king over Israel? Fill your horn with oil, and go. I will send you to Jesse the Bethlehemite, for I have provided for myself a king among his sons.’ And Samuel said, ‘How can I go? If Saul hears it, he will kill me.’ And the LORD said, ‘Take a heifer with you and say, ‘I have come to sacrifice to the LORD.’ And invite Jesse to the sacrifice, and I will show you what you shall do. And you shall anoint for me him whom I declare to you.’ Samuel did what the LORD commanded and came to Bethlehem. The elders of the city came to meet him trembling and said, ‘Do you come peaceably?’ And he said, ‘Peaceably; I have come to sacrifice to the LORD. Consecrate yourselves, and come with me to the sacrifice.’ And he consecrated Jesse and his sons and invited them to the sacrifice.

When they came, he looked on Eliab and thought, ‘Surely the LORD’s anointed is before him.’ But the LORD said to Samuel, ‘Do not look on his appearance or on the height of his stature, because I have rejected him. For the LORD sees not as man sees: man looks on the outward appearance, but the LORD looks on the heart.’ Then Jesse called Abinadab and made him pass before Samuel. And he said, ‘Neither has the LORD chosen this one.’ Then Jesse made Shammah pass by. And he said, ‘Neither has the LORD chosen this one.’ And Jesse made seven of his sons pass before Samuel. And Samuel said to Jesse, ‘The LORD has not chosen these.’ Then Samuel said to Jesse, ‘Are all your sons here?’ And he said, ‘There remains yet the youngest, but behold, he is keeping the sheep.’ And Samuel said to Jesse, ‘Send and get him, for we will not sit down till he comes here.’ And he sent and brought him in. Now he was ruddy and had beautiful eyes and was handsome. And the LORD said, ‘Arise, anoint him, for this is he.’ Then Samuel took the horn of oil and anointed him in the midst of his brothers. And the Spirit of the LORD rushed upon David from that day forward. And Samuel rose up and went to Ramah.”

Amen. This is God’s Word.

I want to look at three things in this text tonight. First is the priority of a true king. Second, the anointing of a true king. And third, the true King to whom David points.

I. The Priority of a True King

And so first, the priority of a true king. From its outset, the book of Samuel is about the priority of, the search for, a true king. The whole focus of the narrative is on the issue of kingship. At the very beginning we open up 1 Samuel we find a barren woman named Hannah and she gets a vision of a true king, she sings a song of a true king, she prays about a true king. And she describes a king as one who receives strength from the Lord. And Samuel so received this vision from his mother, Hannah, that he anointed Saul as the first king of Israel. And now as you can see, look in your Bibles at verse 1, Samuel is in despair. At the end of chapter 15, we learn that Samuel grieved over Saul. Samuel loved Saul but Saul has turned out to be just like all the other kings. And so 1 Samuel 16 really is both a sad and a celebratory passage in Scripture. I mean it is a sad passage. It's very sad. It's made Samuel grieve that God has come to the point where He had enough of Saul. God rejected Saul because Saul was not a true king. Saul was not a king with heart character. He was not a king like Hannah sang about. And so it's a sad passage. And yet it's also an amazing celebratory passage because God is about to send Samuel to anoint the next king of Israel and this will be a king whose kingdom will live forever, whose house would live forever, whose house would never end.

Man's Assumed Choice vs. The Lord's Sovereign Choice

Now the theme of the passage is the Lord's choice and as we come to verse 1 the Lord says, "I will send you to Jesse, the Bethlehemite, for I have seen for myself, I have provided for myself a king among his sons." And God has provided. God has seen for Himself this king. And Samuel will find him at Jesse's house. And Samuel assumes if God is looking for something special, if there's going to be something really special at the house of Jesse, Samuel assumes that it's going to be something easily seen. It's going to be something easily seen. And so the first person to be paraded out in front of Samuel is the oldest, Eliab, probably a man's man. Samuel is attracted to the stature of Eliab, to his appearance. Perhaps he looks kingly. Perhaps he looks like the description of Saul in chapter 9. Maybe he's strong and a big frame. One commentator has said that if Yahweh had not chosen the king, Israel would have suffered "Saul Act II." If Yahweh had not chosen the king then Israel would have suffered "Saul Act II." And God says, "What I see, what I am paying attention to, what is important to me is the heart."

And we see this in verses 6 and 7. This is really the heart of this passage. Commentator Ralph Davis says verse 7 in our passage is "the key verse in the entire David narrative." And we read, "When they came he looked on Eliab and thought, 'Surely the Lord's anointed is before him.'" Verse 7, "But the Lord said to Samuel, 'Do not look on his appearance or on the height of his stature because I have rejected him. For the Lord sees not as man sees; man looks on the outward appearance, but the Lord looks on the heart.'" Okay, what is this all about?

Some of you know this. I finished high school and I graduated from Fayetteville High School in Fayetteville, Arkansas. And our rival high school was Springdale High School. And back when I was playing which is now almost twelve years ago, thirteen years ago, the head football coach at Springdale High School he was one of the most

brilliant offensive minds, one of the most brilliant high school minds at any level - I mean high school, college, or professional. It was a man by the name of Gus Malzahn. And Gus Malzahn is now the head football coach at Auburn and his offenses coaching at the University of Tulsa, coaching at Arkansas State, coaching now at Auburn, his offenses are always either leading the nation in offensive production or very close to the top. And if you're familiar with Gus Malzahn's offense, it was this way in high school playing against him, it is this way now watching him coach this last year in the National Championship game, what Gus Malzahn gets the defense to do is to focus on minor things. He has always done this. He gets the defense to focus on minor things so they miss the major things that he's trying to do.

And so for example, this may not work, this may be absolute gibberish to some of you, but he will get a receiver to go in motion and the quarterback will fake a handoff to the receiver making the defense focus on the outside, all the while he will hand the ball to the running back right up the middle. Is everybody still with me? We're okay? There are a million examples of that in his offense. My point is, he gets you to focus on minor things; he gets you to focus on inconsequential things.

The Sinful Heart: Majoring on the Minors and Minor on the Majors

Here's the point - our hearts are so focused on the minor, our hearts are so focused on the inconsequential, our hearts are so focused on the meaningless details our hearts miss the major things. Our hearts get misdirected and we are actually fooled and blind to what is true, what is real, and what is beautiful. And God is saying to Samuel, "Man looks on the outward appearance. Man is obsessed with things that are not real. They're not spiritual reality." What is it that really matters? Think about this stunning statistic from the American Association of Plastic Surgeons. They reported that there were 14.6 million cosmetic surgeries performed in America in the year 2013 and this is because every moment of every day we have been taught that life is found in what you can see, that this world is the whole story. We have been taught to be obsessed with the external, that appearance is what matters. "Get down to this dress size, network with this kind of person, look this way." We've been taught to get approval by being polished enough or pretty enough or athletic enough, successful enough, connected enough. And a lot of life is spent frantically trying to earn approval based on things that are inconsequential. What the Lord is saying is that these things are not who you really are. They are inconsequential to who you really are.

I do want to qualify this and say that the Lord is the one who gives good gifts - the money, the outward appearance, the stuff, the material world. The things are not the problem. The problem is to give your heart to them. The problem is to fall in love with them. The problem is to be driven by them, for them to define who you are and to be your identity. One of the signs of an idol is not just that you love it, not just that you trust it to fulfill you, it's not just that it's kind of the go-to thing to validate you when you bump into stress and fear, but one of the signs of an idol is that you listen to it, that it operates like a power in that way. You listen to it and you believe what it says. And we can so easily start to listen to the voice that says your meaning and your value and your importance is based on what others can see, that your importance is determined by

your beauty, your outward beauty, your resume, your looks, your clothes, your connections, so much so that we really can, we feel more important than people who have less, we feel less important than people who have more. And if you look at outward appearance, if that is the thing that really starts to scratch the itch in the core of your being, if it becomes the deepest most desperate desire of your heart, if it is something that is deep in your heart that you love it, that it's something that you listen to, and even if it's just more important than character, more important than heart character, you are focusing on minor things, you are focusing on inconsequential things and peripheral things.

Godliness: The Heart of a True King

What is it that really matters? What constitutes beauty and what constitutes value and character? According to the Lord, life is a matter of the heart and the deepest joys that could ever be found, the most significant things in this life are unseen. God is not fooled. God sees the heart, He sees every desire and thought and motivation of the heart. And so in application, do you see the way in which your heart can major on the minors and minor on the majors? And consider asking yourself, consider asking your spouse, consider asking a close friend these questions - How do I view other people? Am I fascinated with appearance or does a person's character fascinate me? Do I have more joy today than I did a year ago? Do I handle my suffering with more gentleness and peace than I did a year ago? Am I more able today to weep with those who weep than I was a year ago? Do I enjoy being with my family? Do I have more joy? Am I becoming more holy? Those are things that indicate a heart that's becoming godly because that is character; that is what matters. And that's the king that we need - a king with heart character. And so the first thing that we see is the priority of a true king.

II. The Anointing of a True King

The second thing that we see is the anointing of a true king. The story marches on. You see Samuel course through these seven sons that are before him. He gets to the end of the lineup; God has not chosen any of them. It's a bit of a confusing moment. It's probably an embarrassing moment for Jesse because Samuel turns to Jesse, verse 10, and says, "The Lord has not chosen these. Are all your sons here?" And Jesse says, verse 11, "There remains yet the youngest, but behold, he is keeping the sheep." And so what an amazing family scene. In the most important gathering that this family would ever know, the most significant event in this family's life, and David is not even given an invitation. "Samuel said to Jesse, 'Send and get for him for we will not sit down until he comes.'" When David comes, you see in verse 12, that the Lord did what He said He would do in verse 3. He says, "Arise, anoint him for this is he." The Spirit of anointing given to David was to equip him, was to empower him to do what God was calling him to do. And this is an amazing passage; this is a significant moment in the Old Testament. Samuel took the horn of oil, anointed David in the midst of his brothers, and the Spirit of the Lord rushed upon David from that day forward.

Now what do we learn here? For David to be a true king he must have the Spirit of the Lord. For David to be the kind of king that Hannah sang about, for David to be a king

with heart character, he must have the Spirit of the Lord. The Spirit of the Lord must rush upon him; it must flood his life. And listen to this. This is significant. Notice as Ralph Davis says, "No sooner does the Spirit touch David that he is catapulted into endless trouble. The Spirit comes; the trouble begins." And so the Spirit comes in chapter 16. What happens in chapter 17? It's Goliath. So the Spirit comes in chapter 16; chapter 17 is a trial. The Spirit comes in chapter 16; what happens in chapters 18 to 20? That's probably the darkest moment in David's life. He's living in Saul's house, Saul becomes murderously envious of David and tries to kill him six different times. And so the Spirit comes in chapter 16 and in chapters 17 to 20 David is in the wilderness.

The Spirit of the Lord: Bringing True Kingship and True Godliness

And this is the pattern that we see in Scripture. Look at the Scriptures - basically every time the Spirit of God comes upon His people there is jail, there is imprisonment, there's trial, there's temptation, there's wilderness. Even thinking about Jesus Himself, Matthew chapter 3 at Jesus' baptism - what an encouraging time. The Spirit came down as a dove to Him, anointed Him at His baptism, the Father said, "You are My child in whom I am well pleased." What happens in Matthew chapter 4? It's the temptation of Jesus; it's the wilderness. The Spirit comes; the trouble begins.

And why would that be? Let's think about this. The Spirit is not after gifts and power and outward appearance. The Spirit wants your heart. The Spirit is after your heart and a godly heart, heart character, almost always grows in the wilderness, in the trial, with the Spirit's help. I mean let's put this in the context of David's life. David here is told that he is going to be king and yet for the next fifteen years David thinks that he has determined what his life will look like and for the next fifteen years he's a fugitive and a mess. I mean I think it's fair to assume that David's life never looked like he thought that it would. And we think maybe getting an education, maybe getting that job or getting that promotion, or getting that spouse, or getting that dream is going to determine the next decade or two of my life and if we make any mistakes we've ruined it. And what we see as fumbles God is really redeeming us, and it's through the fumbles that He's replacing our idols. What is going to happen as God's Spirit is at work in your life as He is building in you, developing in you heart character is you are going to come up against the reality that your plans and God's plans are going to conflict. And the life that we want, the life that we've come up with in our head is not going to be the life that we're waking up to every day. We are in the wilderness. Again and again and again, God is not going to give us the things that we think are the most important. He's not giving us those dreams because He has better dreams and life plans for us. And it's actually in the wilderness that the Spirit will cause joy to invade your life because your roots will go down deeper than they ever have before and your being stripped of the idols that are killing you and rotting your soul and character is being cultivated in your heart. The Spirit comes; the trouble begins. The Spirit wants your heart, and heart character almost always grows in the wilderness.

But it is important to note that trouble doesn't necessarily build in you character. Think about Saul. Saul's troubles, Saul's wilderness made him harder. They didn't make him

softer, they didn't make him more humble like David, they made him more cold. And so the question is - how do you get heart character?

III. The True King to Whom David Points

And you have to look to the King to whom David points. And we'll be brief here. The third thing - the true King to whom David points. You cannot study this passage without sensing that you are in the presence of someone familiar. Does this story sound familiar? There was another who wasn't just forgotten by His dad, He was forsaken by His Father on the cross. Does this story sound familiar? Isaiah the prophet described Jesus as having "no form or majesty that we should look at him, no beauty that we should desire him." David was great but not nearly as much as David's greater Son. Samuel says in verse 6, "Surely this is the Lord's anointed. Surely this is the Christ." And Wiley touched on this last week, but Christ was not Jesus' last name. He was Jesus of Nazareth. He was the son of Joseph. But Christ is a title and Christ comes from a Greek word, "Christos." Christos is the Greek translation of the Hebrew word that we translate "Messiah" and they both mean "anointed one." And so in other words, Samuel knows everything hinges on - Is this the Christ?

Our Great Need: Prophet, Priest, and King

And the amazing thing is that in the Old Testament there were three offices that were anointed where a man was set apart in a special way to do something on the Lord's behalf. There was a prophet, a priest, and a king. And the promise was that one of these days there was going to be someone who was going to be all three in one man - prophet and priest and king. And the good news of the Gospel is that there is another. Jesus Christ, the forgotten child of Bethlehem, is the anointed one - Prophet, Priest, and King. And those are the deepest longings and the deepest needs of our hearts. I mean if you think about your own heart you long for a Prophet. You long for someone to reveal truth to you, to tell you the truth, someone who really knows you to look at you and tell you the truth. And we long for a Priest. We want someone to deal with what's wrong with us, to cleanse us. We're broken; we need fixing. We need someone to make continual intercession for us, someone to give us a clean heart. We need a Priest. But there's a deep longing, a deep felt sense, and it's this - I need a King. I need a King.

This past Monday night, I along with most of the Belhaven neighborhood, we went out for hours looking for a missing eight year old boy. And he was found, but throughout that time it was a reminder to my heart, "We need a King." Tuesday morning I went to the funeral of a friend whose dad committed suicide. We need a King. Children get leukemia. We need a King. There's addictions and broken families and divorce and cancer. We need a King. There is a deep longing, a deep felt sense, and I need someone to make things right, to rule and defend me, to conquer all of His and my enemies. We need a King.

And what we're saying with all of this is, "I need a Prophet, I need a Priest, I need a King and God sent Him." Jesus Christ simultaneously is Prophet, Priest, and King. And

I'll end by saying this. Revelation chapter 7 we see this great multitude that no man can number. There are people from every tribe and tongue and people and nation that are standing before the throne and before the Lamb. And the Lamb is Jesus. He sits on the throne; He is our King. And you think about what a true King would do for His people. And the passage says that He will shelter them with His presence, they shall hunger no more, thirst no more, for the Lamb will be their Shepherd, that He will wipe every tear from their eyes. And I think it's worth pausing and thinking about that for a second. Do I think that my money can do that for me? Do I think that my outward appearance can earn that? Do I think that my idol can do that for me? The true King will do that for His people. He will make all the sad things come untrue. He will right all the wrongs. Amen. Let me pray for us.

Heavenly Father, You are a great God. You are the great King above all gods. Would You cleanse us and create in us clean hearts? Would You bless us and be near to us as we go through trials? And would You make Jesus beautiful to our hearts? We pray this in His name, amen.

©2013 First Presbyterian Church.

This transcribed message has been lightly edited and formatted for the Web site. No attempt has been made, however, to alter the basic extemporaneous delivery style, or to produce a grammatically accurate, publication-ready manuscript conforming to an established style template.

Should there be questions regarding grammar or theological content, the reader should presume any website error to be with the webmaster/transcriber/editor rather than with the original speaker. For full copyright, reproduction and permission information, please visit the First Presbyterian Church [Copyright, Reproduction & Permission statement](#).

This article is provided as a ministry of [Third Millennium Ministries](#) (Thirdmill). If you have a question about this article, please [email](#) our *Theological Editor*.

Subscribe to RPM

RPM subscribers receive an email notification each time a new issue is published. Notifications include the title, author, and description of each article in the issue, as well as links directly to

the articles. Like RPM itself, *subscriptions are free*. To subscribe to [RPM](#), please select this [link](#).