



**January 12, 2014**

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**A Series on David II: Selection – 1 Samuel 16:1-13**

Last week, we looked at how David's desire to do something *for* God ran afoul of God's own plans to do something for all humanity in Jesus – and why, even when you're Nathan, one of the great prophets of all time, you can still get it wrong. But Nathan heard God's word, and wasn't afraid to let David know that both of them were on the wrong track: and David was wise enough to listen to God speaking through Nathan.

Which is a long way to say that we must be careful that our own desires don't deafen us to God's true leadings, and that we should listen with care to those who just may know more than we do.

Today, our theme remains scenes from David's life as Scripture records it, and, for that matter, how different our human view is from God's – but we go back to before David became king, to David's entry into the narrative of God's people.

Here's the setting: God's people wanted a king, a human leader, boots-on-the-ground instead of, or maybe in addition to, the Kingship of

God. Samuel, the greatest prophet of this time, was led by God first to make a man named Saul king. He's a fine specimen: tall, handsome, strong, and courageous, with a desire to do the right thing. But though King Saul is all those things, the responsibility of kingship drives him mad, and he makes some very bad choices. So, God removes his spirit from him, and sends Samuel off to anoint – christen, set apart by the act of blessing and placing oil on him – a new king.

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Now, the story line is very simple: all of Jesse's sons look like good kingly material, starting with Eliab and going right on down. But it's David – the youngest son (odd, for a society that valued the eldest, but it shouldn't be surprising to us: after all, Joseph was the youngest of Jacob's sons, yet saved the whole of his people in the end) – David, whom God has already chosen. “Have no regard for his appearance or stature, because I haven't selected him. God doesn't look at things like humans do. Humans see only what is visible to the eyes, but the Lord sees into the heart.” (v 7)

Humans do have a problem with picking, don't they? The human selection process is often a mess. Any of you ever end up being chosen last for a team in gym class? Lots of people who are now professional athletes were. And being the last one picked on Sue's team for dodge ball doesn't say much at all about what kind of neurosurgeon you'll make.

It simply isn't easy learning to see what God sees without God's help: few of us can even begin to glimpse into another's heart. It's far too easy to miss the beauty of each tree for the grandeur of the forest, miss what's right in front of us.

(Joel plays embellished piece.) Anyone recognize what Joel just played? Listen again: (Joel plays again). It's hard to pick out what you're looking for without knowing *what* you're looking for; hard to pick it out from the mass of notes around it. God had to make Samuel keep on looking, since all of the obvious choices were wrong!

This is one place where experience and age work against us: we make snap judgments – prejudices – based on what we have already experienced, before giving what's in front of us a chance to show what it (or he or she) really *is*. It's very human indeed to see what we want to see in something or someone – rather than what is really there.

Friday, we celebrated the life of our church family member Rev. Ralph Hawthorne – quite an experience, and for me, a great privilege to bear witness to the resurrection for a gentleman who just a few months ago marked his seventieth anniversary of ordination to pastoral ministry. But there was something, a mistake, that none of us caught – none of the half-dozen or more of us who had looked carefully at every word of the program for that service. Where the years of his life were listed, right on the front, here, it should have said 1917 – 2014.

What it said was, “2017-2014.” It took an eight-year-old family member to notice it! That’s an obvious mistake, you say? Well, tell me something. Most of the dates that we look at on a daily basis, do they start with “19” or “20”? Our so-called trained eyes skipped right over the mistake, because it looked normal *on the surface* – but it was wrong. And, by the way, there’s couple of issues with your bulletin today, but Diane will fill you in on that...

The women and men we will ordain or install today to positions of leadership and responsibility in our church were chosen by you, actually, the full members of our congregation, and we believe as Reformed Christians, Presbyterians, that God spoke through you like God spoke through Samuel, and they were chosen by God through your voice to the special service God intends for them. So, let them lead, let them set examples for all of us in what it means to follow God. Sometimes, the choices may seem odd to us (though, of course, not in the case of any of them); but remember what God said to Samuel: God doesn’t see as we see: God sees the heart.

And that is a lesson for us, not just for Samuel. It comes up over and over in Scripture: the one you wouldn’t expect is the one God has chosen, from the very beginning through Moses (who said he wasn’t much of a speaker) to Jeremiah (who said much the same thing) to Amos, a plain farmer, Joseph the carpenter, Mary the peasant girl, Peter the fisherman, Paul the hater of all things to do with Jesus – and Jesus

Christ himself, whom even his forerunner, John the Baptist, wondered about. How could this ordinary teacher be God's anointed king, the Messiah? He wasn't a warrior, he didn't raise armies to slay the enemy: he saw into human hearts, and still sees into human hearts, still selects us to follow him – and expects us to do our best to emulate him, looking into the heart, treating each person and situation as God has given it to us, not skipping over them because of what we think we know, but looking for what God sees in every person, every moment.

Approach each person with care! God may well have put that person there just for *you!*