

Introduction

All of us make choices every day. We decide when we are going to eat and what we are going to eat and where we are going to go, what we are going to wear, who we are going to talk to, etc. etc. Some choices we make, however, are more significant than others and we give considerable thought to those decisions. Take the decision to buy a vehicle. It makes such a sizable impact on your budget that you need to weigh a number of matters of consideration. How many people do you need to be able to transport? Do you need power or economy? What kind of look do you want? What is your color preference? How much money can you afford to put into the vehicle? Some of these matters are far more important than others. Most important you want a vehicle that runs. What is a car that looks great but won't take you anywhere? All those factors considered, you make your choice.

Well, what could be more significant for the nation Israel than God's choice for her king? When it came to selecting a king for his people Israel, many factors could be weighed in the balance, but one factor stood out above all the others. We find what that was as we study our text for this morning.

[Read Text and Pray]

In our study of the life of David, we come this morning to his personal arrival on the scene of the scripture. He is the youngest of 8 sons of Jesse the Bethlehemite, descendant of Judah, and a keeper of sheep. The key feature in his introduction is that he is the one whom God himself chose for himself. Subtle evidence in the text communicates to us that Saul though chosen by God was chosen according to the desires and impressions of the people. The people demanded a king, and God gave them Saul according to their demands, the kind of king the people wanted. In 1 Samuel 8:22 the Lord spoke to Samuel and said, "obey the voice of the people and make them a king." In stark contrast the one who comes on the scene in this text is a man after God's own heart. He is better than Saul. Here is the one God has chosen for himself. The main idea in our text this morning is that God reveals the king he has chosen for himself. What unfolds before us are four aspects of this choice.

First, let us notice . . .

I. The Consolation of God's Choice.

God's choice, you see, brings hope against the backdrop of sorrow. Consolation is comfort or solace. From the outset of chapter 16, the intent of the Lord is to bring consolation and hope. The LORD spoke to Samuel asking how long he would grieve over Saul since he had rejected him from being king over Israel. Saul was grieving. Why? Samuel longed for Saul to succeed as king. He had anointed him; he had been the Lord's prophet unto him. Saul's failure brought Samuel deep down into sorrow. The hope he had was extinguished and now he is near the end of his life and the situation in Israel seems to be in shambles again just as it had been in the days of his birth when Hannah had brought him to the tabernacle to serve with Eli.

Samuel must have felt something like Jesus's disciples after the crucifixion. The two on the road to Emmaus said to their mysterious companion, "we had hoped that he was the one to redeem Israel." When you have been around as long as I have and even shorter, and you look around at the culture around us, you are probably growing less and less optimistic about the direction in which it is going.

It is grievous to think how deep into the darkness the world has descended in a short period of time. That's how Samuel appears to have been feeling. He was low on hope.

But look. The Lord rebuked him for his grief. "How long will you grieve over Saul?" He's gone. He had his time. It is passed. Grief is a real experience in life. We buried a dear sister in the Lord from this congregation yesterday. It is sad to say good-bye. And God understands grief. God expressed his own sense of grief for having chosen Saul. There is such a thing as godly grief. But there is also a time for accepting and adjusting to God's disposition of events in our lives and getting on with them. At some point we must refuse to be paralyzed and demoralized by unhappy outcomes in our lives. That is what the Lord seems to be saying to Samuel here. You have grieved enough. It is time to look to the future with hope. Look up. Get up and get moving. The Lord had a task for Samuel. "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."

Friends, this is consolation; this is a balm to a sorrowful soul. God is not done. The first king was a king of the people. It is no surprise that he failed to fear the Lord. But God has chosen for himself a king who fears the Lord and will love his word. Come out of the doldrums, Samuel. Lift up your head because I am not finished working. My king will be a different story.

Brothers and sisters, there a came a time more recent when the days were dark, unbelievably dark. The Jews lived under the oppressive hand of the Romans. The Pharisees and Sadducees were the revered teachers of the day. It was a mess. The temple may have been grander than ever, but the spiritual darkness in Palestine was as thick as ever. Outwardly, there was every reason to be without hope. But God! Into this darkness shone the Light of the World, the Son of David. One man in Jerusalem whose name was Simeon was waiting for the consolation of Israel. And when Mary and Joseph came into the temple with the infant Jesus, Simeon blessed God, for he had been allowed to see the Lord's Christ. This infant he said was the Lord's salvation. A light for revelation to the Gentiles, and for glory to Israel.

Now here we are again in darkness in our present day, but let us not grieve ourselves hopelessly by the times in which we are living. Behold the king of God's own choice, the crucified but risen Lord Jesus Christ is on the ready. There will be a cry of command and the sound of the trumpet, and Christ the King will descend to catch his people up to himself and keep us with him forever. Brothers and sisters, this world is passing away. In the end it will be scorched out of existence. But the people whose hope is King Jesus have reason not to be weighed down by grief. The consolation brought to Samuel by the word of the Lord that he had chosen a king for himself was a dimly lit candle compared to the bright sunshine of hope that shines through Jesus Christ. We need to walk in the light of that sunshine, full of hope no matter how dark the days may become.

Next, I want you to see . . .

II. The Perplexity of God's Choice.

For Samuel and everyone else in this narrative God's choice appeared perplexing. God has selected for himself a king. But the human in everyone was confounded by his choice. There are like seven aspects of God's choice which lead people who think according to the wisdom of man to scratch their heads about the man God had chosen.

A. First, Samuel was told to go to Bethlehem. The one the Lord had chosen was a son of Jesse from the little out of the way village called Bethlehem. Micah the prophet describes the town as "too little to be among the clans of Judah." This is not where one would go to find a king.

B. Second, the one who was chosen of the Lord was not a first-born. When Samuel arrived at Bethlehem, the very first of Jesse's sons to appear before him was the first-born, Eliab. However, the Lord told Samuel, that is not the one.

C. Third, the one chosen was not the one with the look. Here again, it was Eliab who did have the look. When Samuel saw him, he thought to himself, this has got to be the Lord's anointed. "Six foot 2 and 225" writes one commentator, surely a masculine specimen of strength! But no.

D. In fact all but one of Jesse's sons were brought to the sacrifice, but none of them were chosen. In other words, one of the sons was written off from the beginning. He was deemed least likely to succeed. And yet this is the one God chose. No one would have thought it could be him.

E. Fifth, the one chosen was the youngest of the brothers. Wait a minute. He picked the baby to be king? Uh-hmm.

F. Sixth, he was a keeper of sheep. It was an unenviable task reserved in this case for the youngest. Eliab mocked David when he came to visit the battlefield when Goliath was standing before the army of the Lord. He said, "Why have you come down? And with whom have you left those few sheep in the wilderness?" If you hang around with sheep you will start to smell like a sheep. And who would think such a one would be God's choice? Samuel asked, "Are all your sons here?" And Jesse said, "There remains yet the youngest, but behold, he is keeping the sheep." Here is an air of protest from the father himself. He could not be God's choice.

G. Seventh, we do not even hear the name of this last son until he is anointed. This is just that eighth son. He is a nobody. He is forgotten and overlooked.

All in all God's chosen one seems so unlikely, the one no one would expect. Why did God go this route, make the unlikeliest one his choice? It is just the way God works. Human beings, you and I, tend to put our confidence in the flesh, in our own strength and in our ingenuity. And prideful beings that we are, we think highly of our ability to discern problems and how to fix them. But God desires that the creation sees that what matters most in this world is not the display of man's glory but the display of God's glory. So God chooses to demonstrate his might and wisdom and strength by using the weak and the despised. His desire is to humble pompous human pride and exalt his glory. He is going to show that he does not need the things that humans value so much and take so much pride in to accomplish the things that really matter. In fact the absence of what humans value helps demonstrate that the work being accomplished is the work of God. So when it comes to the king of God's choice, he is not looking for someone who impresses the nations by his status and stature or his age and his IQ. When this king rises to success, it will be evident to all that it has happened not because the man is great but because he serves a great and awesome God.

The apostle Paul makes this very point to the Corinthians. He asserts that God has chosen the low and despised things in the world, even the things that are not to bring to nothing the things that are. And the reason? So that no human being might boast in the presence of God. God wants us to make our boast in him. He wants our confidence not to be in the flesh but in him.

And so when God sent forth his own Son into the world, he sent him in the same kind of package that David came in, even born in the same town. As Isaiah says, "He had no form or majesty that we should look at him, and no beauty that we should desire him." Jesus did not come to impress the flesh. He came to do the will of God.

The gospel is the same way. It is not about doing a great work or thinking great things of yourself. It is about a great work that's already been done—the work of Christ on the cross. The gospel is about coming to an end of yourself and ascribing glory to God. Paul writes that the message of the cross in its plain unvarnished facts is the power of God. It is folly to those who are perishing, but to us who believe, this gospel is the power of God. God is pleased through the folly of preaching the gospel to accomplish the most amazing work accomplished in the world. He saves sinners who believe. He rescues them from Satan's clutches. He pulls them from the fire—out of agony and darkness into the joy of forgiveness and the light of life.

There are any number of implications for us here. First, when you look at yourself, do you observe deficiencies and disadvantages and unimpressive characteristics? Are you a nobody from Bethlehem? You think you are unattractive to the world? That is okay. Do not put your hope in the things the world hopes in; they don't matter to God. On the other hand, you might look at yourself and think you have quite a number of characteristics that the world does admire. You think you are smart? Good looking? Do not boast about yourself. Do not put your hope in your attractiveness, intelligence, your status. Those things could not be less important to God.

What matters is placing our faith in an unattractive savior who dies on a cross. We believe an unattractive gospel that focuses on denying ourselves and taking up our own cross. But this is the power of God. And the result of the power of God in us is that we boast not in ourselves but in the power of God. To God be the glory!!!

So we have seen hope in God's choice and humility in God's choice. Next let's observe . . .

III. The Ground of God's Choice.

It comes out when Samuel sees Eliab, the oldest of Jesse's sons. He sees the perfect specimen of what a king should look like. And he thinks, "Surely this is the Lord's anointed." The Lord rebuked Samuel, however. "Do not look on his appearance or on the height of his stature . . . For the Lord sees not as man sees: man looks on the outward appearance, but the Lord looks on the heart."

The most important factor in God's choice of a king is not what he looks like. Far from it as we have seen. Appearance is inconsequential. Turns out David was not all that bad looking himself. It is just that this is not what God was looking for. The Lord chose a man whose heart would belong to him. It is all about the heart—that unseen but all-important aspect of who a man is.

People put all kinds of money and effort into their outward looks. Our society focuses on physical beauty and attractiveness. Hair styles, makeup, plastic surgery, clothing, jewelry, gym memberships, personal trainers . . . can you imagine the funds that are expended in these areas? Truth be told, we can do a little to improve our external appearance, but we can only do so much. And we spend so much time and money on it!

But what matters to God is our heart! And that is where he looks. The most important part of a man or woman is their heart—not the cardiac muscle in the center of our chest but the immaterial center of a person's soul where abide the mind, will, emotions, and affections. What does God see when he looks there in you? Here is where motives and plans and priorities are established. Here is where it becomes apparent who or what a person worships. Where a person's treasure is, that is where their heart is as well. And that is where God looks. What matters to God is what he sees when he looks at your heart. People may see your smile and may hear a pleasant tone of voice. But God knows the truth. David says in Psalm 51 that the Lord delights in truth in the inward being. God sees past the facade to the truth of who you are.

What is in the heart is what matters to God. For this reason Peter instructs wives as follows: "Do not let your adorning be external—the braiding of your hair and the putting on of gold jewelry, or the clothing you wear—but let your adorning be the hidden person of the heart with the imperishable beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit, which in God's sight is very precious." (1 Peter 3:3-5). Likewise, husbands, says Peter. Do you want to be truly beautiful? Put your energy, time, and money in your heart.

So what does the Lord see in your heart today? And when you look at others, what do you see? Do you focus on the exterior—something which matters very little? Or do you consider a person's heart?

That brings us to a fourth aspect of God's choice . . .

IV. The Indication of God's Choice.

When the shepherd boy came in from the field, the Lord spoke to Samuel. "Arise, anoint him, for this is he." Then Samuel took the flask of oil and anointed him in the midst of his brothers." The visual indication of God's choice was the anointing. This is a private anointing. Looking forward, David will be anointed publicly after the death of Saul. At that time the people will anoint him as though to commit themselves to him as their king. This anointing here however is private. It is the anointing from God's prophet. The anointing indicates God's choice of David and his designation as God's representative king. This act sets David apart from the rest and calls for those around him to give heed to him. It is also a sign of God's obligating himself to David to equip him for the office of king.

The supply of God's power for fulfilling the role of king came in the person of the Holy Spirit. When Samuel anointed David with the oil, the Spirit of the Lord rushed on David from that day forward. David was conscious of the Lord's empowerment. You may recall in Psalm 51, the great psalm of David's repentance, that in the midst of his cry, he pleaded with the Lord, "Do not take your Holy Spirit from me."

The anointing of David points ahead to a significant day in the life of Jesus. Before his ministry went public, he arrived in the wilderness at the place where John was baptizing. And he persuaded John to baptize him. Rising up out of the water, the heavens were opened and the Spirit of God descended upon him and a voice from heaven said, "This is my beloved Son with whom I am well-pleased." Jesus is the Son of God, yet he lived his life and ministry out of the power supplied to him by the Holy Spirit. It was in the power of the Spirit that he obeyed the will of God all the way to the cross where he died for sinners and rose up from the dead victorious.

This anointing of David also gives us an illustrated glimpse into the gift of God when a person is converted. By the Spirit of God, they are marked out as belonging to God and the Spirit of God supplies the needed strength for the believer to live for Christ. Just think how the Spirit was poured out on the day of Pentecost. And then at every important juncture as the gospel was crossing boundaries from Jerusalem to Judea to Samaria and to the uttermost parts of the world, the Spirit of God was given in visible power to verify that these too were people whom God accepted. So now the Spirit does not come with the same visible outer effects, but he comes indeed upon those who come to Christ. And so it is by the gift of the Spirit that we are able to live in obedience to the call of God. That is what Paul teaches the Galatians. He says, "Walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh." He says, "If we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit."

Brothers and sisters, we should treasure the gift and provision of the Holy Spirit. We must understand that we who have taken up our crosses to follow Christ are not left to ourselves to follow

him. Like David, when we come to Christ, God gives us his Spirit. That Spirit testifies to us that we are children of God. He also supplies everything we need to serve the Lord and grow in holiness.

Conclusion

So as we are introduced to the king of Israel which God chose for himself, we learn as much about God as we do David. God is the one whose ultimate plan is for the best. God's choices are the basis of our hope and comfort. God's choices though sometimes surprising and perplexing always work to bring the glory back where it belongs. God's choices involve a look at what matters the most about us—our heart. And God's choice of his people involves the choice to enable us to fulfill what he calls us to.