

Read Andrew Deliyannides’ monologue, “David.”

As Andrew suggests, the story of 1 Samuel 16 is a story of two strange visitations at Bethlehem – the first being the coming of the Prophet Samuel to anoint David; the second being the messengers of King Saul to take David to the king.

And at the heart of the chapter – at the heart of the two visits – is the movement of the Holy Spirit – rushing upon David, even as he departs from Saul.

We saw last time that the LORD rejected Saul as king because Saul does not fear God.

Saul fears the people.

A king who fears the people will not – in the end – lead them to do what is right in God’s eyes.

Oh, he may do a few things right!

And our author is a faithful author who points out many things that Saul does right.

But if your central failing is that you fear the people rather than God – then you will not lead well.

The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom.

1. The Anointing of David (v1-13)

a. “I Will Show You What You Shall Do” – Samuel Fears the LORD (v1-5)

The LORD said to Samuel, “How long will you grieve over Saul, since I have rejected him from being king over Israel?”

Okay, Samuel, it’s time to move on.

It’s time to anoint a new king!

*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.”*² *And Samuel said, “How can I go? If Saul hears it, he will kill me.”*

Naturally, Samuel is concerned about what Saul will do—“if Saul hears it, he will kill me.”

For Samuel to go somewhere and offer sacrifices is a rather public thing.

And what is he doing offering sacrifices in Bethlehem?!

That is not on his regular route—and besides, he’s retired now!

If Saul hears it, he will kill me.

Notice that the LORD does not answer this.

The LORD does not promise, “Don’t worry, that won’t happen!”

Samuel has no such promise.

Do you fear me, Samuel?

Or do you fear Saul?

Think about what happened to the last guy who feared man rather than God?!

And the LORD said, "Take a heifer with you and say, 'I have come to sacrifice to the LORD.'"³ 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."

The LORD has utter confidence in Samuel –

because, as Psalm 99 puts it, "Samuel also was among those who called upon God's name."

That is why the elders of Bethlehem come to him trembling,

⁴ *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?"*

Do you come in peace?

What is the purpose of your visit?

We thought you had retired?

(Prophets do not always receive the warmest of welcomes!)

⁵ *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.*

He said to them, *Shalom*.

Samuel has come to bring *shalom* to Bethlehem and to all Israel and to the ends of the earth!

The *shalom* that Samuel brings is a peace that passes all understanding!

And he calls the elders of Bethlehem to come to the sacrifice,
together with Jesse and his sons.

So it is important to note that David is anointed before the elders of Bethlehem.

But news of this anointing does not seem to travel very far.

The elders of Bethlehem appear to be discreet and wise men,

and it is some time before anyone learns that Samuel has anointed David.

It appears that they heard Samuel's *shalom* – and took it to heart.

This is the path by which the Prince of Peace must come.

b. "Man Looks on the Outward Appearance, but the LORD Looks on the Heart" (v6-13)

⁶ *When they came, he looked on Eliab and thought, "Surely the LORD's anointed is before him."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."⁸ Then Jesse called Abinadab and made him pass before Samuel. And he said, "Neither has the LORD chosen this one."⁹ Then Jesse made Shammah pass by. And he said, "Neither has the LORD chosen this one."¹⁰ And Jesse made seven of his sons pass before Samuel. And Samuel said to Jesse, "The LORD has not chosen these."¹¹ 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."¹² 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."¹³ 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.

But at first David is not there.

Samuel sees Eliab, the eldest,

and thinks, “surely the LORD’s anointed is before him!”

Saul had been head and shoulders taller than the rest of Israel,

so Samuel may be excused for thinking that Eliab was God’s choice.

But Samuel now learns the full lesson of Saul:

*Do not look on his appearance or on the height of his stature,
because I have rejected him. (v7)*

The LORD says this about Eliab.

God has rejected Eliab.

But underlying this statement is God’s rejection of Saul.

Saul had been an outwardly impressive man –

a head taller than anyone else in Israel!

But outwardly impressive men do not necessarily make good kings.

For the LORD sees not as man sees.

Man looks on the outward appearance, but the LORD looks on the heart. (v7)

God gave to Israel an outwardly impressive king in Saul.

But Saul’s heart was not right –

when tested in the heat of the moment, Saul did not fear God more than he feared man.

Now, God will give to Israel a man after his own heart.

This is what a king should look like!

But as the seven sons of Jesse pass before Samuel, he says, Neither has the LORD chosen this one.

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.” (v10-11)

We will not sit and partake of the peace offering together until the youngest (lit. the smallest) comes.

Just as Saul was hiding among the baggage and did not put himself forward,
so also David must be sent for.

God is taking the youngest son and making him his firstborn!

The eighth son of Jesse will become the firstborn son of God!

And while David may have been the youngest and the smallest,

he was ruddy and had beautiful eyes and was handsome.

David was still a good looking fellow—just not as impressive a specimen as his eldest brother!

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.

His work is complete – and he returns to his retirement again in Ramah.

2. The Refreshment of Saul (16:14-23)

a. The Spirit of the LORD and the Harmful Spirit from the LORD (v13-14)

¹³ *And the Spirit of the LORD rushed upon David from that day forward.*

¹⁴ *Now the Spirit of the LORD departed from Saul, and a harmful spirit from the LORD tormented him.*

What does it mean that the Spirit of the LORD rushed upon David?

Verse 14 helps us understand this.

The Spirit of the LORD could not be upon *both* Saul and David at the same time, because the Spirit had been given to Saul *as king*.

The anointing of David signaled the transference of the Spirit from Saul to David.

The LORD is no longer *with* Saul.

We heard that Saul was a year old when he became king, and he reigned for two years.

He will continue as the placeholder for many years to come.

But his Spirit-anointed reign is officially over.

And verses 14-23 illustrate what happens when the Spirit departs (as will chapters 17-18).

When the Spirit of Yahweh departs from Saul,

an evil spirit is sent to torment him.

This evil spirit is said to be “from Yahweh.”

Neutrality is impossible.

Either God will be with Saul or against him.

And this was evident to all.

b. The Healing Power of Music – in the Hand of the LORD’s Anointed (v15-23)

¹⁵ *And Saul’s servants said to him, “Behold now, a harmful spirit from God is tormenting you. ¹⁶ Let our lord now command your servants who are before you to seek out a man who is skillful in playing the lyre, and when the harmful spirit from God is upon you, he will play it, and you will be well.”*

Once again, we see how Saul has failed.

Saul is not a wise king who correctly diagnoses the problem—
it is his servants who have to try to fix it for him!

And their diagnosis is that there is a harmful spirit from God.

The term “harmful” is the same word translated “evil” –

so it is correct to say that it is an evil spirit from God.

How can it be an evil spirit *from God*?

Because rules all things!

Even the demons obey his will!

¹⁷ *So Saul said to his servants, “Provide for me a man who can play well and bring him to me.”*

¹⁸ *One of the young men answered, “Behold, I have seen a son of Jesse the Bethlehemite, who is skillful*

in playing, a man of valor, a man of war, prudent in speech, and a man of good presence, and the LORD is with him.”

It might seem odd to refer to David as a “man of valor” or a “man of war” –
since at this time, he does not seem to have had any military experience!
But if you think about what the speaker is doing,
he is trying to persuade an irrational king to do something for his own benefit –
so he may be overstating David’s qualifications!

Or, in the eyes of our author, this young man is a prophet – who sees clearly what David is:
skillful in playing
a man of valor – a man of war
prudent in speech and a man of good presence –
and the LORD is with him!

You might as well be describing the qualities one should look for in a king!
But his recommendation works!

¹⁹ *Therefore Saul sent messengers to Jesse and said, “Send me David your son, who is with the sheep.”*

And so for a second time, a message arrives in Bethlehem that will alter the fate of David.
One can only wonder what Jesse thought!!

Has Saul heard about what Samuel did?
How can I protect my son?!

What fear rules your heart?
Samuel had come to Bethlehem in peace – with the *shalom* of the LORD.
And that peace that passes understanding now rules in the hearts of Jesse and David –
and the elders of Bethlehem.

And so when the king says, “send me your son...”
Jesse does not hesitate.

At least, our text gives us no reason to believe that he hesitated!!
(How many alternative stories *might be true*?
Did Jesse fear that Saul was trying to kill David – and so tried to find some way out?
Did Jesse offer excuses – or a different son – or...)

It doesn’t matter.
Whatever human frailty may have *also* happened –
the important thing is that

²⁰ And Jesse took a donkey laden with bread and a skin of wine and a young goat and sent them by David his son to Saul.

Bread and wine – and a young goat.
Bring a present to the King!

²¹ And David came to Saul and entered his service. And Saul loved him greatly, and he became his armor-bearer. ²² And Saul sent to Jesse, saying, “Let David remain in my service, for he has found favor in my sight.” ²³ And whenever the harmful spirit from God was upon Saul, David took the lyre and played it with his hand. So Saul was refreshed and was well, and the harmful spirit departed from him.

Later we will be somewhat perplexed that Saul does not appear to know David in 17:55-58,
but there may have been some time in between these events.

Or it may be that in his own arrogance and perplexity,
Saul didn't pay attention to who David's father was.
Sure, David was his armor-bearer and his musician,
but why should Saul care to know anything more about him.

But the point of our passage tonight is that when David, the LORD's anointed,
played upon the harp,
it brought refreshment to Saul, the LORD's anointed.

The hands of a king are the hands of a healer.
The king is to be the one who brings peace to his people.
And so even while Saul sits on the throne,
David is exercising kingly authority over Saul—
and yet he does so humbly – quietly – faithfully – as Saul's servant.

A thousand years before Jesus said it, David demonstrated it:
whoever would be great among you must be a servant!