

Pastoral Transition

1 Samuel 15:34—16:13

There's Good News for us in the story of how David was chosen to be the second, and greatest, king of Israel ... but, before we get to that, here's what happened last week ...

- We eavesdropped as the Israelites demanded a king to lead them when Samuel was getting ready to retire.
- We watched as God worked with Samuel to select Saul as the first king.
- And we learned that the Holy Spirit is present to guide us in times of transition like the one we have just entered.

This week, we hear about the Israelites' next leadership transition ...

Saul fails as a leader ...

- The reason for the failure is hard to understand ... but the process that leads to the selection of David as the next king gives us a lot to think about ...

And Samuel grieves over Saul ...

- Samuel was invested in Saul ... his grief is understandable ... and grief tends to linger ...
- The story suggests that Samuel has been grieving for a while, and that God is pulling him out of his grief, and into the brighter future that God intends ...
- This interaction between God and God's prophet Samuel reminds us that God meets us in our brokenness ... but does not allow it to become the end of our story.

Worship is crucial in the selection process ... God tells Samuel to gather Jesse's family for a worship service ...

- Worship brings people together ...
- Worship helps overcome and deal with fears ...
- Worship acknowledges the role of the Holy Spirit in identifying new leaders ...

Then there is the issue of appearances vs. character ...

- Perhaps we should be encouraged by the fact that Samuel (like us) is at first drawn to Eliab, who immediately impresses Samuel as being the right choice because of his commanding appearance.
- David is not even on his radar, until God helps him see.
- The import of this passage is to focus on what is in the heart—not just the hearts of other people but our own hearts as well. We are invited to live with integrity, speaking what we truly believe and, above all, grounding what we believe in God-inspired love.
- The passage prompts reflection on God's nature, as wise and discerning, but also willing to take risks, allowing humans the freedom to make mistakes.
 - God will walk with David, as God walked with Samuel, and as God promises to walk with us, correcting us, forgiving us, protecting us, and directing us ever again to see what God sees.
 - King David was flawed, and his reign was complicated. Yet David never lost God's Spirit, and so he has been hailed ever since as Israel's greatest king.
 - Finally, the Gospels portray David as a forerunner for Jesus ... who, like David, came from an obscure background, and was filled with the Spirit of God.

This is the good news for us ... here and now:

- God chooses whom God chooses, and once chosen, God's Spirit comes down mightily on that person ... as it did on David and Jesus.
- The choosing and giving of the Spirit are not our actions, but God's.
- We can ... and must ... prepare ourselves as best we can with education, experience, and prayer ... but in the end, the Spirit of God empowers leaders for God's people.

To the Lord our God, Alpha and Omega,
be all glory and honor forever. Amen.