

1 Samuel 15:34 -16:13

## **More Than Meets The Eye**

### *Chosen by God who knows our heart*

It is a complex dance that we sometimes do in our human interactions. We say one thing, do one thing, but are actually up to something else. We try to distract, to take the attention off of what we are actually up to by doing something else. In movies or on the small screen we see examples of it all the time, a lead in a case that takes all of the police to one area only to find that the action is happening in another. Something more is going on than meets the eye.

My sister's fiftieth birthday was a surprise party. Many of us had arrived the night before and stayed in motels so she wouldn't know we were there. Mom and Dad were given instructions to stop any plans my sister might try to make, particularly the hope she had to be with her two-year-old granddaughter in Edmonton two hours away as they share the same birthdate. She was getting pretty irate when her husband suggested they go for a drive. Well the drive actually brought her to the hall where the party would take place and all of us, including her granddaughter, were waiting. There was more going on than she could know. More than met the eye.

However, sometimes what is really going on can be hurtful. Someone with an addiction may be saying that they are doing one thing, going for groceries or to run an errand but really what is going on is that they are using the money or time to get a fix, whether it be gambling, sex, drugs, alcohol or name your poison. There is more to their story than meets the eye.

The scripture reading today has all kinds of "more than meets the eye" moments. Last week we read about the people demanding from God and the prophet Samuel that a king be appointed over them. The people were warned that to have an earthly king appointed meant they would also suffer the consequences of that earthly ruler. Still they demanded it. So Saul, good looking, strong, a man of means, is chosen. It starts out okay, but because at some point all people will fail us, Saul failed his people and God. Saul did not trust God to do what God said he would do and instead took a situation into his own hands.

At that point Samuel says to Saul, "You have done foolishly; you have not kept the commandment of the Lord your God, which he commanded you. The Lord would have established your kingdom over Israel forever, but now your kingdom will not continue; the Lord has sought out a man after his own heart; and the Lord has appointed him to be ruler over his people, because you have not kept what the Lord commanded you." (1 Samuel 13:13-14)

And this is where we come into the scripture reading today, and more is going on here than meets the eye. You see Saul is not a very emotionally or mentally stable guy at this point and it's only going to get worse. But here we are with one king still sitting on the throne and not ready to give up his power and God making plans for another. And Samuel, the prophet, gets sent on a dangerous mission to anoint a new king.

To do so Samuel has to travel from his home town of Ramah, through Saul's territory of Gibeah, to get to Bethlehem, and there is the very real danger that Saul will try to have Samuel killed. So God says, "Take a heifer with you, and say, 'I have come to sacrifice to the Lord.' Invite Jesse to the sacrifice, and I will show you what you shall do." (1 Sam. 16:2c-3) It is a ruse, a little deception. It is not a lie, Samuel is really going to sacrifice the heifer, but more is going on than meets the eye. Still the sacrifice story it is enough to get Samuel safely from one place to another.

But when Samuel arrives in Bethlehem, "The elders of the city came to meet him trembling, and said, 'Do you come peaceably?'" (1 Sam. 16:4b)

You see they knew that a prophet showing up in their community was significant. Prophets didn't have a habit of showing up on a whim. Something was going to happen. The story of a sacrifice is enough to assure them they are safe. Then Jesse's family is invited to be with them for the sacrifice. Again, on the surface it appears innocent enough, but God is up to something.

Now Saul knows that he is there to anoint a king from the family of Jesse. Saul looks upon the oldest son and thinks he has it all figured out. This is the one God is going to choose. The oldest son, a tall man and good appearance. After all this was the type of guy Saul had been, people would respect an eldest son, especially one who was strong and able. But for God there is something more going on here than meets the eye.

God says to Samuel, "Do not look on his appearance or on the height of his stature, because I have rejected him; for the Lord does not see as mortals see; they look on the outward appearance, but the Lord looks on the heart." (1 Sam. 16:7).

Samuel knows his purpose is to anoint a king from the sons of Jesse so he goes to the next in line, and the next, and the next, until he has met seven of Jesse's sons. Still, not one was chosen. Finally, Samuel says, "Are all your sons here?" Then Jesse tells Samuel about the youngest one who is keeping the sheep. We are not even told his name. But we know that the sacrifice of the heifer is not going to happen until they fetch this boy from the field.

Again, there is more here than meets the eye. You see a leader in Israel was always metaphorically understood to be a shepherd of the people. There were strong undercurrents of God going on in this literal finding of shepherd who is tending sheep. It is an image used of Jesus in the New Testament. This image is so strong in the Bible that when this church was built The Good Shepherd window that you now see in front of you was installed.

Once David arrives to meet Samuel, and even though God has already said “Looks don’t matter” the writer of the story could not help but share that the boy “was ruddy, had beautiful eyes, and was handsome.” (1 Sam. 16:12b)

We talk about first impressions all the time. We make judgements of people based on first impressions. Jobs have been offered or lost based on first impressions, we hear of love at first sight. First impressions are important to us. But to God there has to be more to us than meets the eye. For him David was a man who had a heart for God. He says to Samuel, “Rise and anoint David, for this is the one.”

The one that no one else would have deemed worthy or able, the one who wasn’t even considered important enough to have present with all the other brothers, the one who was young and small and insignificant to others, this was the one that God chose.

But again, there is more to this story than meets the eye. You see, Saul is still in power. Where his anointing as king was public, David’s is private. Only enough witnesses to be able to say as David’s story continues, that this boy who grows into a man was anointed. They were there to witness it. David is going to go back out to the flocks for a while before his story really takes off. Samuel will head back home to Ramah. Nothing big will happen that day. There will be no fanfare or parade. But when “Samuel took the horn of oil, and anointed David in the presence of his brothers, then the spirit of the Lord came mightily upon David from that day forward.” (1 Sam. 16: 13)

More had happened than the seeing eye could see. God had been at work the whole time. He had chosen, planned, and made it happen. God saw something in David, in David’s heart that was not known to others. And as you hear more of David’s story you will learn that he didn’t do life perfectly, he didn’t always get it right, in fact he did some pretty horrible things. The difference between Saul and David was that David always turned back to God. He always repented, he learned from his errors, and he never stopped loving God.

Of all the Biblical characters David is one of the most relatable. We can all relate to screwing things up, sinning, making poor decisions. But we find in his example the ability for forgiveness, redemption, hope. As Christians in particular, David’s story is one of being able to start again, many times. It gives us hope that if we have a heart for God then God will not give up on us.

In fact, despite all that we are, we can trust that God will take our imperfect selves and use us, choose us, anoint us for God’s purposes. That unlike other people whose first impressions can determine how they look upon us, never going further, God sees deep within us, takes a chance on us, chooses, loves, and forgives us, and sees what we are capable of, many times long before we can know it for ourselves. Sometimes even despite what we think we are able to do. Like David, each of us is chosen by God to do something special with our lives, but it is up to us whether we answer that call. God knows there is more to us than meets the eye. It is up to us to listen and respond. Thanks be to God.

