

June 17, 2018  
1 Samuel 15:34-16:13  
Pastor Rosanna McFadden  
Creekside COB

### **“Be Careful What You Ask For”**

**Good morning! It’s good to be back with you this Sunday. It was also good to know that you were in good hands last week -- not just the planning and leadership from worship Team, but the word which was brought by Nina Lanctot. Thanks to the Media Team for recording and posting that message so I could hear and see it. If you missed it, Nina talked about being led by God, especially those times when God says No. It is such a good word, and I believe a necessary perspective as we are winding up our Pentecost reflections on the question, “What is the Spirit up to?”**

**Our text today from 1 Samuel is kind of a long one: I make no apologies for making you listen to the Bible being read on Sunday morning -- Karen did a fine job. 1 and 2 Samuel have a story to tell. It’s the story of the birth of a nation, political intrigue, war, adultery, and murder. In short, it’s pretty interesting stuff -- and if it makes you think that people haven’t changed that much in the last 3500 years or so, you’d be right. But ultimately this is not a *human* story; it’s a story about how humans are part of *God’s* story. These books are named for Samuel, God’s prophet and mouthpiece, and the keeper of the Temple. In an age when there were not many visions from God, Samuel was the man whom God talked to and the person whom God talked through.**

**You may remember two weeks ago that we met Samuel as a young boy, when he lived at the Temple and heard God’s voice calling him -- four times! -- in the middle of the night. I’m going to skip over a couple chapters of 1 Samuel -- most of Samuel’s life, actually -- as this fledgling nation tried to fight off their neighbors the Philistines, and tries -- sort of -- to avoid false gods and follow the Lord. Samuel is made the judge of Israel. Chapter 7 verse 15 says “Samuel judged**

Israel all the days of his life.” That is, he administered justice, and continually called the people back to the Lord, since they continually wandered away.

But the people of Israel are getting restless. They look around at their neighbors, and like you might look across at another booth at a restaurant, they say, “Give me what they’re having.” The people go to Samuel and say, “We want a king.” And Samuel says, “God is our king.” And they so, “Naw, not like that -- a real king. You’re getting old and your sons are no good; we want a king.” So Samuel tells this to the Lord what the people said, and the Lord tells Samuel -- Listen, don’t take it personally, the people have been rejecting me ever since I rescued them from slavery in Egypt. Listen to the people, but give them this warning: God tells Samuel, and Samuel goes back to the people and says, this is what a king will do for you: he will conscript your sons for his army, he will take your daughters to work as cooks and bakers, he take the best orchards and vineyards and give them to his courtiers. He will levy taxes and take the best of your fields and your livestock and your land. You will be his slaves.

And the people say: Yes! We want a king! We want someone who will fight in battle for us! So Samuel reports this to the Lord -- who undoubtedly knew it already -- and the Lord says, alright then, give them a king. So, Samuel gives them a king. Do you remember that king’s name? Saul. Saul’s father is Kish and he’s from the tribe of Benjamin, but apparently he is chosen to be king because he’s handsome and he’s taller than everyone else. Chapter 9 verse 2 says he stood head and shoulders above everyone else.

This tall handsome guy does OK at first -- obviously a favorite of the people, and he has some success in battle, but he doesn’t follow God’s battle plans, and by Chapter 15, the Lord tells Samuel, “I regret that I made Saul king.” Let that sink in for a moment. God *regrets* what God did. Saul was not the right man for the job. So now God has someone else in mind, but that puts Samuel in a tough spot. Saul is not going to be happy if he hears that Samuel has anointed someone else to be king while Saul is still in power. But it’s tough to argue with the word of the Lord, so Samuel does as he is told and goes to Jesse, a man from Bethlehem who has eight sons. What happens there is the subject of today’s text.

Besides being a great story, here's are some of the things which intrigue me about this text. Jesse brings out each of his seven sons, oldest to youngest, and Samuel, reasonably is like Psst, God, how will I know which is the right one? And God says don't look at his appearance or how tall he is -- that didn't work out so well the last time, remember? -- for God looks on the heart. So there's this kind of pageant of the sons of Jesse, and God says Uh uh to each one, and Samuel says Neither has the Lord chosen this one. What would it be like to not be chosen? Neither Jesse or the boys know quite what is going on, but Samuel was a prophet of the Lord, and something was up. Whatever it was, seven of the boys were not chosen. Most of us know what it is like to not be chosen: for the team, for the school, for the job. I believe this is part of the Divine NO that Nina talked about last week. Sometimes NO may be the clearest direction we get from God, and sometimes it may be the most compassionate direction we get. Being able to discern the work which is NOT ours to do is an important part of finding the right path. When I was finishing college, I thought that I wanted to graduate studies in English literature. I applied for a program, was accepted to that program, went to a special hearing to be granted Indiana residency so I could afford that program. I don't know where I would have ended up if I had done that graduate program: I'm sure God would have used me, but I probably wouldn't be here. That NO was an important directional shift in my life.

But Samuel, now, what's he gonna do? God has sent him to anoint one of Jesse's sons, and seven of them have paraded past, and the Lord keeps says Nope, not that one. So Samuel asks Jesse Have you got any more sons? Like seven isn't plenty. And Jesse says, Well, there's my youngest, but he's out watching the sheep. Well go and get him: nobody's setting down until he gets here. And when David arrives, the Lord says, Get up and anoint him. This is the one. And Samuel anoints David and we're told that "the spirit of the Lord came mightily upon David from that day forward." That is what the Spirit is up to in this story: anointing and empowering God's chosen.

And here's an interesting thing: the very next verse says "Now the Spirit of the Lord departed from Saul." Saul had been anointed by Samuel, chosen by God, and now God was un-choosing him. This

story raises some very interesting questions about God. I'm not going to answer them, but I'd encourage you to read and reflect on I Samuel –especially chapter 8 and chapter 16 -- and let me know what you think. Here are some of my questions:

1. Chapter 8 is the record of the people asking God -- through Samuel -- to give them a king. Does God ever allow us to have what we ask for, even if God knows it is not the best thing for us?
2. In Chapter 10, Samuel anoints Saul as king and gives him the Lord's blessing. Saul does not obey God, and by chapter 15, the Lord is sorry that he ever made Saul king of Israel. Can human action make God change God's mind?
3. When David is anointed in Chapter 16, the Spirit of the Lord comes mightily upon him, and the Spirit of the Lord departs from Saul. Can God un-choose what God has anointed?

Of course, any question about God is also a question about us and about our relationship to God. For instance, if God allows us to have what we ask for even if it is not the best thing for us, than we'd better be careful what we ask for. Perhaps there is some good solid theological grounding in the prayer that Jesus taught his disciples to pray part of which says, Your kingdom come, your will be done. This is a principle which Jesus embodied at the most difficult NO from God anyone could experience. This oil painting represents his prayer in the Garden of Gethsemane "Father, if you are willing, let this cup pass from me, yet not my will, but yours be done."

I am going to offer the service of anointing during our final song this morning. The song lyrics are taken from the words of Isaiah which affirm that we are God's beloved. I would set that idea next to this text from 1 Samuel which uses anointing as a sign of God's commission and blessing for service. I would encourage anyone who wishes to come forward during the song for anointing for healing of mind, body, and spirit, but also to be anointed as God's chosen. I will not be anointing you as king or queen, but I trust that whenever we ask for blessing and healing from God, it is with the humility to seek and accept not our own will, but God's will for our lives. Because

**through that seeking and acceptance that we are blessed, whatever the outcome.**

**I invite you to come forward during the song, and we will have an opportunity to pray together when you have been anointed.**