



Sermon Transcript February 23, 2020

God's One Story of Redemption Through God's Eyes

1 Samuel 16:1-13

This message from the Bible was addressed originally to the people of Wethersfield Evangelical Free Church on February 23, 2020 at 511 Maple Street, Wethersfield, CT, 06109 by Dr. Scott W. Solberg. This is a transcription that bears the strength and weaknesses of oral delivery. It is not meant to be a polished essay. An audio and video version of this sermon may also be found on the church website at www.wethefc.com

Sermon Text
1 Samuel 16:1-13

¹ The LORD said to Samuel, “How long will you grieve over Saul, since I have rejected him from being king over Israel? 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.”

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.

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?” 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.

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.

Introduction

There is a tension that surfaces in our passage that we all know very well. It is a tension that has to do with our eyes. It is a tension that has to do with what we look to for direction and guidance in life. And perhaps the most alarming thing we discover about this common tension that we all feel and know is that it is our tendency—it is our bent—it is human nature—to see life differently than the way God sees life. In verse 7, we read this very simple observation, “*For the LORD sees not as man sees.*”

I spent some time this week just staring at that statement. I invite you to stare at it right now. “*For the LORD sees not as man sees.*” Do you know what stood out to me when I stared at this statement? Just taking it in at face value and as it reads on paper, I was taken back by my arrogance and my foolish pride; to think that I would even consider looking at life differently than the way God looks at it. And yet, so often I do.

The foolishness of this is visually demonstrated in the English version of this verse. The word “*LORD*” is presented to us with four letters capitalized. In contrast, the three letters for “*man*” are all in lower case. This visual distinction—capital letters vs. lower case letters—portrays God as being greater and more reliable than man. Which of the two do you think “sees” what is best? Of course, this qualitative difference between God and man is all the more pronounced when you understand the Hebrew name for the *LORD*, “*YHWH*.” This name for God means that God is the self-existing God. God has no beginning and no ending. Like Dave showed us last week from Deuteronomy 6; “*The LORD is one.*” God is the consistent—unchanging—Sovereign Ruler of all that he has made. And then over here we have man, made by God from the dust of the earth and to the dust we return. We fade like the grass and our lives are but a vapor; here today and gone tomorrow. Which of the two do you think “sees” what is best?

So this is the critical issue that follows the story of the Bible from the beginning to the end. Will we live our lives based on what we think and deem to be best or will we look at life through the eyes of God? Will we trust the Word of God? That is what it means to see life the way God sees life. When tempted by Satan to turn the stones into bread, Jesus said. “*Man does not live by bread alone.*” In other words, we don’t live by what we see with our eyes. Rather, Jesus adds, “*but by every word that comes from the mouth of God.*” Living life by the Word of God is the key to living life by what God sees.

We see this truth at every turn in the story of the Bible. We began our journey through the story of the Bible with the letter “*C*” - which stands for CREATION. It was in the

Garden of Eden where God said to Adam and Eve that they may eat of all the trees of the Garden except for that one there in the center of the Garden. If you recall, that tree was at the center of the Garden because central to living life is to recognize that God is God and life is to be lived under his good rule and authority. Carol Kaminski put it this way, "Obedience to God's command requires Adam and Eve to acknowledge that YHWH is God and that his word is reliable and true. Human beings are not to make decisions based on what they see, but solely on God's Word."¹ But then we read in Genesis 3, "*So when the woman SAW that the tree was good for food, and that it was a DELIGHT TO THE EYES . . . she took of the fruit and ate.*" Turning her eyes from God brought death.

Contrast that with what we saw when we moved to "A" - which stands for Abraham. Did we not see Abraham as a "sample of faith" when God called him to do what to our "eyes" is unthinkable? He was called to sacrifice his son, Isaac. This was the long awaited son of promise and now Abraham was called to offer him up as a sacrifice. But Abraham looked at this command of God through God's eyes. God had promised that through Isaac God would fulfill his promise to Abraham. So either God would raise his son from the dead or God would provide a substitute. And so Abraham is held up to us as a sample of faith. He looked at life through God's eyes and was obedient to God.

We then came to "S" - which stands for Sinai. It is here where the descendants of Abraham are formed into the people of God. Their calling as a people of God is to demonstrate to the world what it looks like to live in relationship to God. Entering into covenant with the people of Israel, God gives them his commandments. God promises to pour out his blessing on them if they trust him and live in obedience to his commandments. This is why God gives these instructions to Joshua as he is about to lead the people of Israel into the promised land. He says in Joshua 1:8, "*This Book of the Law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate on it day and night; so that you may be careful to do according to all that is written in it. For then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have good success.*" In other words, as you enter the promised land, be careful to look at life through God's eyes.

It shouldn't surprise us that as we come to a new letter this morning, the letter "K" - which stands for Kings, that we find once again this observation of life, "*For the LORD sees not as man sees.*" It is a statement that is made in the context of Israel choosing a king to lead them. In this passage you find a contrast between the kind of a king man sees and man chooses to and the kind of king God sees and God chooses. In this passage we see a contrast between King Saul and King David. Through these contrasting kings we discover the difference that comes when we look at life through God's eyes.

King Saul: Looking at Life through Man's Eyes

So we begin with Saul, the first king of Israel. And we read in verse 1, "*The LORD said to Samuel, 'How long will you grieve over Saul, since I have rejected him from being king over Israel?'*" Now I understand we are stepping right into the middle of a story. And we are stepping into the story at the point where God is already moving on from Israel's first king. But how did we get here? What do we need to know to understand what is happening in this verse and why God has rejected Saul as king over Israel?

Last week, Dave brought us to Joshua 1, as Israel was poised to cross over the Jordan River and into the land of Canaan—the promised land. Through the military leadership of Joshua, the people of Israel occupied the land of Canaan and each tribe received their allotted portion of land. After Joshua died, there was no successor. God was their king.

But as you come into the book of Judges, you discover that they struggled to follow God, to look at life through God's eyes. Having failed to fully remove the Canaanites from the land, they often found themselves worshiping the gods of Canaan. This began a cycle that was repeated throughout the book of Judges: the children of Israel disobeyed God, God gave them into the hand of an oppressor, the people cried out to God for deliverance and then God raised up a deliverer to save them. But each time they passed through this cycle, things got darker. By the time you get to the end of Judges—some 300 years later—both the national and individual morality of the country resembles what we read about happening in Sodom and Gomorrah. In fact, the final summary at the end of Judges reads like this: "*Everyone did what was right in his own eyes.*"

Do you know what part of the problem was for Israel? There was no king. In fact, five times in the book of Judges it makes that observation as if to offer an explanation as to why things were so bad in the land. The totality of the final verse of Judges reads like this, "*In those days there was no king in Israel. Everyone did what was right in his own eyes.*" Richard Belcher puts it this way, "This refrain emphasizes that a king is needed to give spiritual leadership to God's people . . . A godly king is needed to keep Israel on the path of holiness so that she can fulfill her mission."²

When Abraham Lincoln became President of the United States, several states from the south seceded from the Union. Reflecting on this, David Rubenstein asked Doris Kearns Goodwin, author of the biography on Lincoln called *Team of Rivals*, "Why doesn't Lincoln say to these southern states, 'Go away if you want to go away. We'll just have our country be the North?'" Goodwin's response to this question was fascinating. She

said it was because Lincoln believed in what America stood for and that our democracy was a “beacon of hope” to other countries in the world. And if our Union was broken, the United States would no longer be a “beacon of hope” to the world.³ In God’s economy, that is the role Israel was to play in this fallen world. A couple of weeks ago we were parked at Mt. Sinai where God formed Israel into his people and made them into a *kingdom of priests and a holy nation*. They were to live for God in the midst of the nations and as they trusted God, they would become a light to the nations—a beacon of hope. But here we are at the end of Judges, and they are anything but a “beacon of hope” and a light to the nations. The conclusion of Judges is that they need a king.

Perhaps you may be surprised to hear that Israel needs a king because when the leaders of Israel come to Samuel and ask him to give them a king, this request displeased Samuel. In fact, when Samuel took this request of the people to God, God responded in 1 Samuel 8:7 by saying that this request for a king was a rejection of God being king over them. But the problem was not their desire for a king. Rather, the problem was their motivation for asking for a king. In 1 Samuel 8:20 they indicated the reason they wanted a king. By having a king, they wanted to be like the nations around them and they wanted someone who would go out and fight their battles for them. The irony of this is that in the previous chapter, God fought their battle and delivered them from the Philistines. So really at the heart of their problem is a trust issue. Where will they put their trust? Will their eyes look to God or to man?

So God gives them the kind of king that they ask for. He gives them a kind of king our eyes might be drawn to. In 1 Samuel 9, we are introduced to Saul. “*There was a man of Benjamin whose name was Kish . . . a man of wealth.*” Well there you go—he comes from money. “*And he had a son whose name was Saul, a handsome young man. There was not a man among the people of Israel more handsome than he.*” He was very good looking. “*And from his shoulders upward he was taller than any of the people.*” He has a commanding presence and he stands out among the crowd. You read this description of Saul and you realize that nothing has really changed after all these years. These are the kind of things our “eyes” are drawn to and trust. Money still talks. Those with good looks are still celebrated and drawn to. The person who can command a room can easily command our hearts. That is the issue here with Israel’s request for a king and with God giving them what they want. They are looking at life through man’s eyes. They are putting their trust in man and not in God.

This is the tone that characterized Saul’s reign. In 1 Samuel 13, Saul is poised to lead the army of Israel into battle, but he is instructed to wait for Samuel to come and make an

offering to the LORD. Samuel is delayed and so Saul gets nervous and takes matters into his own hands by making an unlawful sacrifice. And so when Samuel shows up, he says to Saul, *“You have not kept the command of the LORD your God, with which he commanded you.”* Then in 1 Samuel 15, instead of carrying out the command of God by completely destroying the Amalekites, he keeps the best of the spoil for himself and he builds a monument to himself. And so Samuel comes again and says, *“For you have rejected the word of the LORD, and the LORD has rejected you from being king over Israel.”* The people of Israel need a king in order to be a “beacon of hope” and a light to the nations. But not just any king will do. It can’t be a king of man’s choosing. It has to be a king of God’s choosing.

And so now we are caught up in our passage and we read, *“The LORD said to Samuel, “How long will you grieve over Saul, since I have rejected him from being king over Israel? 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.”*

King David: Looking at Life Through God’s Eyes

In our passage, we find Samuel on his way to Bethlehem to anoint the next king of Israel. God assures Samuel in verse 3 that when he gets there God will show Samuel what to do. He says, *“And you shall anoint for me him whom I declare to you.”*

Before we look at what Samuel does, I want to share something with you that I think helps us understand what is happening in this passage. Back in 1 Samuel 13, when Samuel first announces to Saul that his kingdom is being taken away from him because he didn’t *“keep the command of the LORD,”* Samuel goes on to say, *“The LORD has sought out a man after his own heart, and the LORD has commanded him to be prince over his people.”* Whenever we hear that phrase *“a man after God’s own heart”* we automatically think of David. That is a common tagline that is associated with David, *“a man after God’s own heart.”* No doubt, that is who Samuel was referring to.

But often when we hear this tagline applied to David we assume that it is a testimony to David’s character or his pious and spiritual nature. We take it to mean that David was a spiritually sensitive and mature young man of faith. I have no doubt that he was a young man of faith. But this phrase may not be pointing primarily to David’s heart, but to God’s heart. In other words, God chooses a king after his own heart. This is the king of God’s choosing by his own reason and his own will. The king that Israel needs is the king of God’s choosing. And that is who Samuel goes to anoint. Don’t forget, that the

word for is the Hebrew word for *Messiah*. In essence, God is saying that this is My Messiah. I will make him known.

So Samuel does what God commands. And he calls out Jesse and his sons. The first of Jesse's sons, Eliab, passes in front of Samuel and he says to himself, "*Surely the LORD's anointed is before him.*" To which 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 sees not as man sees; man looks on the outward appearance, but the LORD looks on the heart.*" Probably, much like Saul, Eliab was tall and strong and handsome. While those are the things we tend to be drawn to, God looks on the heart.

Seven sons of Jesse are paraded before Samuel and none of them are chosen. Samuel looks to Jesse and asks, "*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.*" As David comes before Samuel, this is his first impression of him, "*Now he was ruddy and had beautiful eyes and was handsome.*" This is the same phrase that is used of David in the next chapter when he goes out to meet the giant, Goliath. It says that when Goliath first saw David he disdained David "*for he was but a youth, ruddy and handsome in appearance.*" Somewhat insulted that this is who Israel sent to fight him Goliath says, "*Am I a dog, that you come to me with sticks?*" The impression is that David is a boy. He is boyish in looks. The armor is too big for him. His oldest brother, Eliab, even scolds him for coming to the front lines. He doesn't belong there. He is a boy. At least, that is what you see with your eyes. But this is the one God has set his heart on and he says to Samuel, "*Arise, anoint him, for this is he.*"

As soon as Samuel anoints David it says in verse 13, "*the Spirit of the LORD rushed upon David from that day forward.*" I like what David Palmer says about this scene. He says, "The Spirit of the Lord rushes on David, and that makes all the difference. From this moment, the Holy Spirit begins to produce something in the king after God's own heart, the one after his sovereign choice."⁴ Palmer is identifying the same sequence of events that God works in our lives: the Lord calls us and justifies us, forgives us, fills us with his Spirit, and we begin to walk in his ways. In other words, we have a king in Jesus who enables us to be a "beacon of hope" to a lost world? How so? He changes us. And so it is incumbent upon us to no longer look at the world through the eyes of man, but through the eyes of God. This is what happens when the Spirit of God comes upon you. Looking at David's life, Palmer suggests three things that will happen to you when the Spirit of God comes upon you and causes you to look at life as God sees life.⁵

Courageous in Battle: The very first thing we see after David is anointed the next king is God's anointed one winning the battle. Goliath, the giant of the Philistines—nine feet tall—decked out with all the gear you would think would give him an advantage over anyone who comes against him. No one has ever defeated this giant of a warrior and where was the king like the nations? Where was Saul? He was hiding and trembling. So was everyone else in Israel's army, including David's brother, Eliab. But here comes David, that ruddy and handsome, youthful, boyish lad. Goliath said to David, *"Come to me, and I will give your flesh to the birds of the air and to the beasts of the field."*

But David comes to this giant with great courage. Do you know what David knows as God's anointed? The battle still belongs to the Lord. David is a king who doesn't reject God as Israel's king. Rather, he relies on God as king. He says to Goliath, *"You come to me with a sword and with a spear and with a javelin, but I come to you in the name of the LORD of hosts, the God of the armies of Israel, whom you have defied. This day the LORD will deliver you into my hand, and I will strike you down and cut off your head. And I will give the dead bodies of the host of the Philistines this day to the birds of the air and to the wild beasts of the earth, that all the earth may know that this is a God in Israel, and that all this assembly may know that the LORD saves not with sword and spear. For the battle is the LORD's, and he will give you into our hand."* Now that is the kind of king Israel has been longing for and has long needed. With one smooth stone, David fells the giant.

What do you trust when the "giant" or "the battle" looms in front of you? Do you trust in your own gear? David said in Psalm 33, *"The king is not saved by his great army; a warrior is not delivered by his great strength. The war horse is a false salvation, and by its great might it cannot rescue. Behold, the eye of the LORD is on those who fear Him, on those who hope in His steadfast love, that He may deliver their soul from death."* In the battle—whatever it is—we turn to God and trust him. It is like Dave said last week about the "x" variable in algebra—the unknown factor. How do we walk into the unknown? We do so with courage. We trust God even when we are not sure how it will all turn out. And that is what gives us courage.

Constant Seeking the Lord's Will: All throughout David's life, he demonstrated what it is like to live life through God's eyes because he was constantly seeking God's will as to what to do. *"Shall I overtake them?"* (1 Samuel 30:8) *"Shall I go up into any of the cities of Judah?"* (2 Samuel 2:1). One of my favorite prayers of David is one that I read often when I visit someone in the hospital, Psalm 34. Here David gives testimony: *"I sought the LORD, and he answered me and delivered me from all my fears."*

And so very simply put, one of the ways we look at life through the eyes of God is to turn to God in prayer. Is your confidence in yourself or is it in God? The way to answer that question is by simply asking, “do you pray?” Martin Lloyd Jones once said, “We must cease to have so much confidence in ourselves, and in all our methods and organizations, and in all our slickness.”⁶ That is the stuff of king Saul. The stuff of David is to turn to God in prayer and simply ask, “What do you want me to do here?” It is a cry that expresses our need for help. We need help to see as God sees. When you come on a Sunday morning, offer this simple prayer. “Lord, what do you want me to see?” He will answer that prayer through a song, Scripture reading, a prayer, a sermon or a word from a brother or sister. Continually seek God in prayer.

Contrite Over Sin: The final thing we learn from watching how the Spirit of God shaped David’s life towards seeing life as God sees is by seeing how he responds to his own sin. You could argue that some of David’s sins rival Saul’s sins. The most notable of all is that he committed adultery with Bathsheba and had her husband murdered on the front line of battle. When confronted with his sin, David falls down and cries out, “*Have mercy on me, O God, according to Your steadfast love; according to Your abundant mercy blot out my transgressions.*”

God hears the prayer that is contrite over sin. He always hears it. It is a prayer that asks for God to wash away your sin. It is a prayer that asks for a new heart. It is a prayer that asks God to restore your joy. God always hears that prayer. Do you know what David says about the alternative? The alternative is to stay silent. The alternative is to not confess your sin. He says of this in Psalm 32:3, “*For when I kept silent, my bones wasted away through my groaning all day long.*” This is part of what the season of Lent is all about. It is a season of lament. It is a season where the church laments the brokenness and the sorrow of our lives and the injustices and brokenness of our world. In our brokenness and sorrow, we turn our eyes to God.

Conclusion

This is the kind of king Israel needed. This is the kind of king we need. Later, David is told that his kingdom would endure forever and that he would have a descendant that would sit on his throne and rule over God’s kingdom with peace and justice forever. Martin Luther said it this way in the hymn *A Mighty Fortress is Our God*.

Did we in our own strength confide, our striving would be losing
Were not the right man on our side, **the Man of God’s own choosing**
Dost ask who that may be? Christ Jesus, it is He!

“For the LORD sees not as man sees.” Where are your eyes? In closing I offer you these words from Psalm 119.

Then I shall not be put to shame, having my eyes fixed on all your commandments. (6)

I will meditate on your precepts and fix my eyes on your ways. (15)

Open my eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of your law. (18)

Turn my eyes from looking at worthless things; and give me life in your ways. (37)

May we be a “beacon of hope” as we learn to look at life through the eyes of God and the finished work of our King—Jesus! Trust him! Turn to him in prayer! Be contrite and lament over the our common brokenness as we wait for the day when all things will be made new.

¹Carol Kaminski *CASKET EMPTY Old Testament* (Casket Empty Media,2012) 11

²Richard Belcher *Prophet, Priest and King* (Phillipsburg: P & R Publishing, 2016) 117

³David Rubenstein *“The American Story: Conversations with Master Historians* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2019) 147

⁴David Palmer “K is for Kings” Sermon preached at Kenwood Baptist Church, Oct. 15, 2017
<https://kenwoodbaptist.org/pdfs/sermons/09-24-2017---a-is-for-abraham.pdf>

⁵Ibid

⁶Martin Lloyd Jones *Revival* (Wheaton: Crossway, 1987) 19

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COMMUNITY GROUPS

Getting To Know Me Questions

1. "For the LORD sees not as man sees: man looks on the outward appearance, but the LORD looks on the heart." What do you learn from this verse and in what ways do you find it challenging?

Diving Into The Word

2. Read 1 Samuel 8:1-9, 19-22. Why does Israel ask for a king? What is wrong with their request? How do you put your trust in other things besides God?
3. Read Deuteronomy 17:14-20. What do you observe about God's instructions for the future kings of Israel? How do you relate to these instructions?
4. Read 1 Samuel 16:1-13. What do you observe about God in this passage? Does it surprise you that God's call of David is not based on birth order? What does this tell you about God's work of grace in your life?
5. Read 1 Samuel 16:13 and compare the work of the Spirit in David's life to the work of the Spirit in your life.

Where do you need courage for the battle you are facing?

Where do you need to turn to God in prayer?

Where in your life do you need a contrite spirit?

What causes you to "lament" over the brokenness of our world?

Taking It Home

6. Which of the prayers from Psalm 119 (pg. 11) do you want to concentrate on this coming week? Why?
7. What is one thing you are taking from your conversation? Who can you tell?