

10/31/2010

Scripture: from our narrative lectionary series: 1 Samuel 16:1-13 – David anointed as king; and from texts for Reformation Sunday: Roman 3:19-28 – justified by God’s grace; John 8:31-36 – the truth will set you free

Reminder: We continue with learning the practice of seeing ourselves in the Bible:

1. Where do I find myself in the story?
2. Where is God?
3. Where/What is the claim?

Prof. Rolf Jacobson, one of the instigators of the narrative lectionary, wrote in an article: “Comfortable congregations prefer to hear tame sermons about mustard seeds and the lilies of the valley rather than be disturbed by the genuinely human behavior of David and his court. If [we] domesticate God and shy away from stories such as these, then [we are] ready to exchange God for a lesser god of our own design.”

No problem here as we move from last week’s venture into the book of Judges and this week’s move to 1 Samuel. In the book of Judges the people fell into a pattern:

- People do evil
- Sold to the enemy/hardships
- Cry to God for help
- Pattern is broken when God raises up a deliverer – a judge to oversee

God continued to hear their cries and respond, even when the oppression/hardship was deserved. However, when the book of Judges ends, it ends with a descent into chaos – “In those days Israel had no king; everyone did as he saw it (Judges 21:25).” It seemed as if there would be no solution and this lasted for about 200 years.

God’s relationship with his people did continue in our Biblical story. 1 and 2 Samuel connects the time when the judges ruled Israel to the time of the kings. Within these Biblical stories we can read about the relationship between prophets, such as Samuel, and kings, such as Saul and David.

Today we are introduced to David, someone that is mentioned more than any other character in the Old Testament, yet usually in our Lutheran 3-year lectionary only hear about him three times. In 1 Samuel 16 it is the story where he is anointed and chosen to be king. He appeared to be an unlikely candidate for this choosing because he had to be brought in from the field

where he was tending the sheep. And, his father had not even thought to bring him in to be considered.

We know that something has changed because David is not the first king. Back in 1 Samuel 8, we find that the people of Israel are not happy with the pattern they have fallen into and not happy with the leadership that they have and they ask for a king: “. . . now appoint a king to lead us, such as all the other nations have (1 Samuel 8:5b and 8:19b-20).”

The story of David takes us from 1 Samuel into 2 Samuel and into the beginnings of the book of 1 Kings (as well as repeated in 1 Chronicles 11-29). David unites the 12 tribes into one nation, captures Jerusalem and moves the ark of the covenant there and is told by God that one of his descendants would forever be king (2 Sam 7; Ps 89, Ps 132).

David’s role as king will be one of setting direction for the people of Israel. He is selected as king in the midst of the chaos and unfaithfulness of King Saul. Yet what is interesting about David being chosen as king is that he, too, is not perfect. He will also make some decisions that put himself first instead of God. Yet, God keeps him in his leadership position and chooses to work through him. Why? Maybe it is because, unlike Saul, David recognizes his own sin and turns back to God to continue a relationship with God.

When David is chosen to be king, for this leadership role for the people, he is chosen by God and anointed by the prophet Samuel. David, himself, does not do anything. It is God who tells Samuel to anoint him. It is God’s spirit who comes to David for this role. Once again, it is not about what the chosen human does, but it is about the actions of God.

What about the actions of God and what does it mean for us on not only on this Reformation day, but this day where two of our young people will publically affirm their baptisms?

To answer that, we return to one verse in our text – “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 does not see as mortals see; they look on the outward appearance, but the Lord looks on the heart (1 Samuel 16:7).” It all comes down to the heart, the place of loyalty and faith, the place that is the center of all things and that which is strengthened by God in the midst of God’s story.

Today, for Connor and Mikahla, it is not just about each of them affirming the promises that were made for them by their parents and guardians on the day of their baptisms (which they will do); it is also about their recognition that it is God who has chosen and continues to choose them. God gets to the heart of the matter, for as we discover in our reading from Romans, it is God who chooses to give us the gift of grace! God chooses forgiveness, grace, hope, and love

for Connor and Mikahla and hands them over – not just once, but again and again (as God does to each of you)! This is God’s choosing, God’s claim made to us as it was to the servant David who became a king and became a predecessor to the coming of Jesus.

God continued to work through David, who became king despite being a sinful person because he recognized the importance of the gifts God gave and of a relationship that God offered to him. It is my hope that Connor and Mikahla, as well as each one of you, recognize the gifts of the heart given by a God to us who, despite not deserving them, receive them anyway.

To remind you of the gift of grace from God, I’ve chosen a specific verse for each of you, based on the faith statements that you wrote:

Connor – “I can do all things through Christ who gives me strength.” Phil. 4:13

Makahla – “The Lord is my light and my salvation whom shall I fear? The Lord is the stronghold of my life of whom shall I be afraid?” Psalm 27:1

### **Helpful Resources**

- *Quest Study Bible*
- Narrative Lectionary podcast for Oct. 31, 2010 by Prof. Craig Koester and Prof. Rolf Jacobson
- *Word and World*, Vo 23 #4 – especially article, “Preaching the David Story” by Rolf Jacobson (in-depth articles on David)
- *Beginners Guide to the Books of the Bible* (helpful resource for quick overview of key events and themes in individual books of the Bible)