

A Special Heart

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1 Samuel 16:1-13

Welcome to Family Worship! How is everyone? To start our summer family worship series this year, I thought I would just give you a little quiz. Now I know you kids are thinking “I just got out of school and there’s a quiz?” But this is a good quiz. There are prizes. It’s going to be awesome! The name of the quiz is this: “Can you recognize the king?”

Here’s how it works. I’m going to give you a clue and put up a picture of a famous king. The first person to raise their hand and, when I call on them, tell me that king’s name wins a prize, OK? Here we go. Can you recognize this king?

- This king has his kingdom in Africa: Lion King
- This king was recently crowned: King Charles
- This king rules “under the sea:” King Triton
- Some people think this king is still alive: Elvis Presley
- This king was a little short: Lord Farquaad (not a king!)
- This king is in India: King Louie
- Most of you know this king: Pastor John.

I was homecoming king in my class of 27 people, because in a class of 27 people it was just my turn.

Anyway this quiz brings up an important question, and the question is this: How do you recognize a true king? What kinds of things do you look for? Do you look for a crown? Power? Do you see if they’re handsome? Or do you look for something else? How do you recognize a true king? That’s an important question, because kings are powerful:

- A king is someone you should follow.
- A king is someone whose approval you try to gain.
- A king is someone who has authority in your life. If you make someone king, you’ve got to obey them!

It’s also an important question because, in the end, you will become like your king. You will become like the person you follow. The person whose approval you seek, the person you give authority to is the person you will be like. What we crown, we copy. So it’s important to know how we recognize a true king. That’s what we’re going to talk about today: How to recognize a true king.

Today we are starting our family worship series on the life of one of Israel’s most famous and best-loved kings. We are going to study the life of King David. We’re going to start when God chooses David and recognizes him as King of Israel. Today we’re going to look at the story of David’s anointing, and we’re going to see:

- 1) What people look for when they want to recognize a king.
- 2) We’ll see what God looks for when he wants to recognize a king,
- 3) We’ll talk about how that relates to you and me.

Let me invite you to turn in your Bibles to 1 Samuel 16. We want to start by talking about what people look for when they want to recognize a king, and most of the time the answer is this:

WHEN PEOPLE LOOK FOR A KING, THEY LOOK AT THE OUTSIDE.

When people look for a king to follow to serve, to obey, they tend to look at things we can see on the outside, things like power, and beauty, and money. They tend to look at the outside of a person, but I'm getting ahead of myself. Let me tell you our story and I think you'll see what I mean that people look on the outside. Our story begins around 1,000 BC in the early days of Israel's kingship. Before Israel had a king, they were led by guys like Moses and Joshua and, for a while, they were led by a prophet named Samuel. But after Samuel had led Israel for a while, the Israelites began to do what the Israelites did best. They began to complain. They said "We don't want to be led by a prophet. We want a KING!" They told Samuel exactly what kind of king they wanted. They said "Give us a KING like the all the other nations have. Give us a king that is strong and powerful, a king that can frighten our enemies and go to battle for us. We want a king that looks like a king on the outside."

That is exactly what they got. God gave Israel what they asked for. There was a man named Saul who was strong and handsome and taller than anyone else in all of Israel. Everybody else in Israel only came up to about here on Saul. The Bible says "He was without equal" on the outside. On the inside, Saul wasn't so great. His heart didn't totally belong to God.

At first, he seemed really humble, but the longer he was King, the worse he got. He became impatient. He wouldn't wait to hear from God before he did things. He started setting up monuments, statues to himself around Israel. He started disobeying God whenever he thought he had a better idea.

Now, after a while God told Samuel he had had enough of this! He had Samuel tell Saul that his days were numbered. God was going to take the kingship away from Saul and give it to a man after God's own heart, a man with a special heart, a heart that was like God's heart.

Now, this news made Samuel very sad when he thought about Saul. Samuel had really hoped that Saul would be a good king, that he lead Israel well. Samuel had cheered for Saul. He had tried to help him by telling him what God said to do, but now it was all over. Saul had failed, and Samuel was grieving.

In verse 1 of our passage, God speaks to Samuel again. Look at what he said:

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."

- 1 Samuel 16:1

God tells Samuel to stop being sad. He says “Listen Samuel, I’m going to appoint another king for Israel, but this time it's not the kind of king they choose. It will be the kind of king I choose.” He tells Samuel to fill his horn with oil. In those days whenever someone was chosen to be a prophet, or a priest, or a king, one of the things they did was mixed some nice smelling spices into olive oil and pour it over their head! I know it sounds kind of strange now that I'm saying it, doesn't it? Walking around with olive oil in your hair and face. But it smelled good and it was a sign that that person belonged to God. It was God's way of letting everyone know “This person is my special servant. They are set apart to me, and they will serve me in a special way.”

God tells Samuel to go to Bethlehem and anoint as king one of the sons of a man named Jesse. But there was a BIG problem. Look at verse 2:

And Samuel said, “How can I go? If Saul hears it, he will kill me.”
- 1 Samuel 16:2a

Saul really liked being king. He was jealous of his kingship. Saul knew that God was going to choose another king. Samuel had told him that, so Samuel is saying “I can't just go walking the ten miles to Bethlehem with a giant horn of anointing oil in my hand. If Saul hears about that, he'll have his soldiers kill me so that I won't be able to anoint a different king.” It was a problem! But God had an answer:

And the LORD said, “Take a heifer (young cow) with you and say, ‘I have come to sacrifice to the LORD.’ 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.”
- 1 Samuel 16:2b-3

God is saying “When you go to Bethlehem, take a young cow with you, offer it as a sacrifice, have a big feast for the whole town and, while you're there, I'll show you which one of Jesse's sons to anoint his king.” Verse 4 tells us what happened:

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?”
- 1 Samuel 16:4

The Elders were trembling. They were trembling because if a prophet came to a village like Bethlehem it could be good news or it could be very bad news! So they're asking “Do you come peaceably? Or is something wrong?” 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.
- 1 Samuel 16:5

So now Samuel has overcome the problem of Saul trying to kill him. He's made it to Bethlehem. The elders have welcomed him. He's offered the sacrifice. They're getting ready for the feast. He's told Jesse and his sons what's going on, and now it's time to anoint the next king of Israel.

But now there is an even BIGGER problem. Everybody keeps looking at the outside! Everyone keeps trying to recognize who should be the next king of Israel by looking at things they can see, like strength and age and looks! This is a big problem. This is how Israel got Saul as a king. He was bigger, and stronger, and better looking than others, and that was a disaster! But now everybody does the same thing all over again! They look at the outside! I mean Samuel does it, even though he's a prophet! Look at verse 6:

When they came, he Samuel looked on Eliab (who was the oldest of Jesse's sons) and thought, "Surely the LORD's anointed is before him."

- 1 Samuel 16:6

He's like "This has got to be the one!" Eliab was probably like Davis Sutton. He was a big hunk of a man broad shouldered. How tall are you, Davis? Big mop of curly hair, speaks Hebrew. That's what Eliab was probably like So Samuel was like "He has got to be the one!"

But the LORD said to Samuel, "Do not look on his appearance or on the height of his stature, because I have rejected him. (Sorry Davis!) For the LORD sees not as man sees: man looks on the outward appearance, but the LORD looks on the heart."

- 1 Samuel 16:7

Samuel was looking on the outside, and the brothers were also looking on the outside! Look at:

Then Jesse called Abinadab and made him pass before Samuel. And he said, "Neither has the LORD chosen this one." Then Jesse made Shammah pass by. And he said, "Neither has the LORD chosen this one." And Jesse made seven of his sons pass before Samuel. And Samuel said to Jesse, "The LORD has not chosen these."

- 1 Samuel 16:8-10

All the brothers go before Samuel one at a time. As they do, each one of them has to be thinking: "It's me. It's me. I know it's me!" "Here she comes." They're probably thinking it's them. It was probably like in 2015, when Steve Harvey crowned the wrong Miss Universe, if you remember that! In fact, in the next chapter (the story of David and Goliath) the brothers give David a really hard time, like they're jealous because he got picked when they thought it should have been them! So the brothers are looking on the outside. In fact, even Jesse, the father, is looking on the outside! Look at verse 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."

- 1 Samuel 16:1-11

Jesse didn't even bother to let David come to the feast. Jesse was like "Sorry David, feasts are for potential kings. You can stay at home and take care of the sheep." Why? Because he's the youngest. He's the shortest. He has the least impressive track record of any of the brothers. There's nothing on the outside that says he should be king, and everybody was looking on the outside!

Now do you know why everyone was looking on the outside? That's what people do! We look at the outside! We look at things like how attractive someone looks or how strong they are. We look at their clothes to see if they're rich or popular or really smart.

A few weeks ago Kelly and I read an interesting article in the Wall Street Journal. They were talking about the connection between someone's looks and the way people perceive them. Researchers found out that if someone is attractive, not only do most people think they are smarter (which you may have heard), but most people also think they are a better person. We think they are more honest, more kind, more virtuous all because they are attractive on the outside! We are way more likely to follow them because, when people look for a king, they often look to the outside.

Let me ask you a question: Is that what you do? Do you look at the outside when you're looking for a king? When I say "king," I don't just mean someone who wears a golden crown and sits on a throne. I mean someone we put in charge of our life, someone we follow, someone whose approval we are trying to gain, someone who has authority in our life, someone we obey. That's what a king is.

But so much of the time we choose our kings because of the outside. Kids, maybe you're at school and you see someone who's really popular. Maybe they're good at sports. Maybe they're attractive. Maybe they dress in the latest clothes, and you decide that person is basically going to be king of your life. You're gonna do everything you can to please them. You're going to let them decide what you wear and how you talk and who your other friends are' all because of the outside. If you're single, maybe your king is your boyfriend or girlfriend or the person you wish was your boyfriend or girlfriend. You live for them. They're in charge. They're king! Or parents, maybe it's someone at work who's more powerful than you. You would do anything for their approval. When people look for a king, we often look on the outside. But we have to be careful, because we've become like the kings we follow.

We look on the outside, and sometimes (like with Saul) that doesn't work out so well. But you know it's not just people that choose kings. In our story, God says HE is going to be the one who chooses Israel's next king. God chooses kings. God chooses in a different way than we do.

1) When people look for a king, they look at the outside. But:

WHEN GOD LOOKS FOR A KING, HE LOOKS FOR A SPECIAL HEART.

God doesn't just look at the outside. He looks at the heart. He looks for a special kind of heart. By the time Samuel has looked at all David's brothers, God has already told him He is going to look at the heart. Remember what God said:

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."

- 1 Samuel 16:7

God told Samuel he was looking at the heart, and here's the thing: God had already told Samuel what kind of heart he was looking for. When Saul first began to disobey God, God said this to Samuel:

The Lord has sought out a man after his own heart, and the Lord has commanded him to be prince (or ruler) over his people.

- 1 Samuel 13:14

God said he was looking for a man "after his own heart." In Hebrew (the language the Old Testament was written in), what God literally says there is that he is looking for a man "according to his heart." In other words, God was looking for someone with a heart in line with his own heart. God was looking for someone with a heart like his, someone who loved the things God loved and hated the things God hated, someone who thought and felt like God. That's what God was looking for. He wasn't looking on the outside. God was looking for a heart like his own heart. When God saw David, he found it! Look at:

And Jesse sent and brought him in. Now he was ruddy ("red") and had beautiful eyes and was handsome. (so it's not that David was ugly but God was looking at the heart!)

And the LORD said, "Arise, anoint him, for this is he." 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.

- 1 Samuel 16:12-13

So God found the heart he was looking for in David, in the boy nobody even thought to ask to the party. God found in David not a perfect heart. We're going to see that even David had his moments of disobedience, but God found a heart that was according to his own heart, a heart that loved what God loved, a heart with many of the same thoughts and feelings that God has.

At this point of the story, we aren't given the details of exactly what God saw in David's heart, but if we look at the rest of the Bible, we can see some of the qualities that made David's heart special. David loved to worship! Israel's hymn book (the psalms) had 150 songs in it. Almost half of them were written by David. He loved to worship! David had zeal. He had passion for God's honor. He fought battles to defend God's honor, not his own. He had zeal.

David had amazing loyal love. That's one of God's main qualities, and David showed his faithfulness to his friend Jonathan and even to Saul (the King he was going to replace). David would not attack Saul, no matter what he did. So David had worship. He had zeal for God's honor. He had loyal love, and he had absolute trust in God. David faced one situation after another where he really had to trust in God, and time after time, he did. He trusted God again and again with his life.

So that's who God chose for a king. God didn't look at the outside. He didn't look at things like size, or appearance, or popularity, or money. God looked for a special heart, a heart that was according to his heart in its worship, its zeal, its loyal love and its trust. That's the kind of person God chooses when he looks for a king.

So that's the story of David being chosen and anointed as king, but we're not done yet! Because God doesn't just tell us stories in the Bible to tell us stories! God tells us stories in the Bible so we can learn things. He always tells us stories to teach us something. So why did God put this story in the Bible? What did he want Israel to learn what does he want us to learn from the story of David's anointing? What do we learn from this story?

Well, there are lots of things we might learn from this story. When we think about God looking at David's heart, we might learn that God sees OUR heart, so we need to be careful what we think about, what plans we make and what desires we encourage in our hearts. And you know, that's true. God can see our hearts. When God looks at us, he doesn't just look at the things we say or do on the outside. He looks at our thoughts and our motives, so we could learn that God sees our heart from this passage.

Or we could learn that we need to try and have a heart that is according to God's. We should try to have a special heart a heart like David's. That is also important to God. In Romans 12, God tells us we need to renew our minds. We need to learn to think like God thinks. We need to have a heart like God's, so those are good things. Those are things we could learn from our passage. But I think there's something much more important going on here.

I don't think that's the main reason God told this story to Israel. I don't think that's the main lesson that Israel was supposed to learn or that we are supposed to learn from this passage. If you think about it, this passage doesn't really tell us how to have a heart that thinks like God. So this story is not just about our hearts.

Rather what this passage is about is choosing a king. Think about it with me. This passage was written after King David died. After David died, Israel would have to choose other kings to follow. So this passage was written to teach them what kind of king they should follow. Should they follow a king like Saul or Eliab, a king who looked good on the outside? Or should they follow a king with a special heart, a king whose heart was like God's heart? A king who worshipped with all his heart? A king who had zeal for God's honor? A king who had loyal love like God's? A king who trusted God completely?

What do you think the answer is? How should they choose a king? They should look for a king with a special heart, a heart like God's. That's what this story was written to teach Israel and that's what it teaches us. It teaches us this: We should look for a king with a special heart.

We have all kinds of people that might be king in our lives. They have different reasons we might want to follow them. Maybe they are attractive or strong or rich or popular or smart. The passage teaches us that's NOT the kind of king we should choose! We shouldn't choose according to the outside.

Rather we should look for a king with a special heart, a king with true worship and zeal for God's honor, and loyal love, and trust in God. Whether it's Israel or whether it's us, that's the kind of king God has always wanted his people to look for and follow, because in the end, we will become like our king.

But how are we going to do that? We can't see someone's heart. How do we know? Well, there's good news. It's not just that we should look for a king with a special heart. If we read the rest of the Bible, we'll see that we have a king with a special heart

God chose for us! Just like in the passage, God himself provided a king! We have a king whose heart wasn't just like David's. It was better than David's! David had a descendant, a great, great, great grandson who was everything David was and more. His name was Jesus. He didn't just worship and write songs like David. He introduced the world to true worship, to spiritual worship of God. He didn't just fight battles because of his zeal for God. The Bible tells us his zeal for God and God's temple would consume him. It would cause his death! He didn't just have loyal love like David did. Jesus sticks with his people (like he's stuck with Peter) through thick and thin, and he has an eternal love! And Jesus didn't just trust God with his life (although he did that). He trusted God with his death. He was a true king, a great king with no faults, and he gave his life for his people, but God raised him from the dead.

The bigger point of this story about David's anointing is this: The Bible told us about this king (King David) so that we could recognize that King (King Jesus), so that we could see his special heart and choose to make him King of our lives.

He is the true King. It's him we should follow it's his approval we should seek it's him we should obey. Because in the end, we will be like our King. Jesus is the True King, the King with a heart like God's.