



+ This Sunday we reached the passage (1 Sam 16) where David is finally anointed as God's chosen king. West's soul was the king the nation wanted that they might be like everybody else and David is the king the nation needs he's a man after God's own heart.

**+ v1-5: don't be afraid - for God has a plan**

The passage begins with a despondent Samuel following the Lord's rejection of Saul. This was not how it is meant to go! Samuel had backed Saul and been with him from the start - personally, he seems to be taking it hard. It may also be that his concerns are national, for the state of the nation how will they cope without a king? Will there be division within the nation? Will they be attacked from outside (for example the Philistines or the Amalekites)? Samuel may be despondent but the Lord is not - he has a plan and he encourages Samuel to head to Bethlehem, to not fear and to trust him. We noted that the same principle relates to us. In our despondency and frustration with life or how situations have turned out, we can trust God that he has a plan and that he is good.

We also noted that Samuel (like us) is not given the entire roadmap for the process. He knows where to go, who to speak to and what to take with him, but then he is in the Lord's hands for the next stage.

**+ v6-12: don't think like the world - and God will show you Jesus**

Upon reaching Bethlehem Samuel gathers the family of Jesse, the elders of the city and, with the heifer he has brought, makes a sacrifice to the Lord. It is from this family the Lord has chosen the king the people need. Samuel though still seems to be thinking of a king like Saul - he expects the Lord to choose the tallest son. One by one each son is dismissed until Samuel awkwardly asks Jesse whether he has any more family! It turns out he has a youngest son who is a shepherd tending the family sheep in the fields.

At this point on Sunday we pulled into layby to consider the theme of shepherds through the Scriptures. There'll be some questions in the study section with verse

numbers to look up but we noted that from the first book of the Bible to the last, God is described as a shepherd as he provides and protects for, looks after and hunts for his sheep. We noted then because God is a Shepherd so leaders of his people are also often described as shepherds whether David the king or church pastors (the word pastor comes from the word shepherd). Ezekiel and Jesus both judge the religious leaders of God's people because they are shepherds only looking after themselves.

**+ v13-23: don't hide from the world - for Jesus can transform lives**

As Samuel privately anoints David so he receives God's spirit, equipping him for the task at hand. As David receives God's spirit so something of a swap happens because Saul loses God's Spirit. Because Saul has rejected the Lord and his word over him, so God has rejected Saul. We then reach a slightly thorny section that talks of an 'evil' spirit from God being sent to torment Saul - that is apparently calmed down by a form of music therapy. David ends up being summoned by Saul to bring some relief to his torment.

What are we to make of this episode? Firstly it's worth noting that the word 'evil' as the footnote mentions doesn't not necessarily mean 'evil' in the sense of demonic - but rather miserable or horrible. In the context that might make more sense as his suffering is alleviated as the harp is played. Regardless, it may simply be that Saul is undergoing a level of present judgment that our Sovereign God allows him to experience these episodes. Saul is increasingly volatile and paranoid but it's striking that God brings him relief through the music ministry of David. We noted a parallel to us in our context of seeking to be a means of grace to a world that has walked out on God and sits under his judgment.

**Here are some questions for your group...**

- Why do you think Samuel was so despondent at this stage? Do you ever feel despondent? Why?
- How do we see Samuel having to trust the Lord here? Why do you think the Lord only gives him a small part of the plan? Does the Lord do this with us? Any live examples? How do we feel about that?
- How are we inclined to look solely upon outward appearances? What does it mean to look upon the heart? In what areas of life is this relevant? How can we grow in this?
- Have a look at the following verses and ask what they teach us about shepherds in the bible...Gen 48v15, Rev 7v17, Psa 23v1, Ezk 34v1-16, John 10v1-18, 1 Peter 5v2-4, Why do you think shepherd is such a key metaphor for the leaders of God's people?
- What do you make of the 'evil' or 'miserable' spirit coming from the Lord to Saul?
- What do we see happening as soon as David is anointed by the Lord? How does this apply to Jesus? And us?