

MINISTRY BY MAIL
Lutheran Conference of Confessional Fellowship
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Second Sunday after Epiphany, January 15, 2017

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(Hymns found in The Lutheran Hymnal, CPH, 1941)

Hymns: 37, 59:1-2, 532, 518:1-4, 644.

Lessons: Isaiah 55:6-13, 1 Corinthians 1:18-31, Mark 1:1-11.

Sermon Text: 1 Samuel 16:1-13.

Sermon by Pastor Robert Mehlretter

In the name of Jesus Christ, Dear Fellow Redeemed,

When you have to choose something, you try to make the best possible choice. If it is an important choice, you will try to examine all the evidence and weigh all the contributing factors so you can make the best choice possible.

But God made a choice for the next king of Israel that we probably would not have made. God, of course, is omniscient. He knows all things. His choices are the right choices. But to our way of thinking, a different son of Jesse should have been chosen. Why would Samuel choose the youngest? Because God chose and it worked well for the history of God's people and for all mankind it was the right choice. For the Savior was to be a descendant of David.

When

SAMUEL ANOINTS DAVID, A SHEPHERD BOY, AS KING

Let us realize that

1. **David would probably not be the man we would choose, but**
2. **God's ways are not our ways.**

In the history of Israel, we find a number of occasions when people would have chosen differently than God chose. When Israel heard the report of the spies sent into Canaan just before they were to go into Canaan, we read: *"All the Israelites grumbled against Moses and Aaron, and the whole assembly said to them, 'If only we had died in Egypt! Or in this desert! Why is the LORD bringing us to this land only to let us fall by the sword? Our wives and children will be taken as plunder. Wouldn't it be better for us to go back to Egypt?' And they said to each other, 'We should choose a leader and go back to Egypt.'"* Numbers 14:2-4 (NIV) Yet Moses – led and directed by God – had led them this far and God's chosen leader, Joshua, would lead them the rest of the way.

In another matter of God's choosing, we could look at the entire nation of Israel. God tells them through Moses: *"The LORD did not set his affection on you and choose you because you were more numerous than other peoples, for you were the fewest of all peoples."* Deuteronomy 7:7 (NIV)

If you are going to choose a leader, you want to select the man whom you think will do the best job. That would probably be the most experienced man. But God had other plans for Samuel and for Israel and for mankind. God told Samuel *"I have rejected [Saul] as king over Israel."* Samuel, by now an old man, for he had anointed Saul as king many years earlier, was afraid Saul would take some kind of revenge on him if he found out a new king was to be anointed.

God tells Samuel to go and offer a sacrifice to the Lord with Jesse and his sons. *"Invite Jesse to the sacrifice, and I will show you what to do. You are to anoint for me the one I indicate. Samuel did what the LORD said. When he arrived at Bethlehem, the elders of the town trembled when they met him. They asked, 'Do you come in peace?' Samuel replied, 'Yes, in peace; I have come to sacrifice to the LORD. Consecrate*

yourselves and come to the sacrifice with me.' Then he consecrated Jesse and his sons and invited them to the sacrifice."

The elders of the village had heard about Saul and were afraid. Samuel had evidently visited places from time to time and rebuked any wrongs and evil conditions which he found.

Samuel tells them part of the reason he had come. He had come to sacrifice to the Lord.

We tend to judge people by what we see – by appearance, age, skin color, or clothing. But thank God, he doesn't! Your worth before God rests entirely in Jesus Christ. God is most delighted when he sees in us his best gift, a heart of faith – a heart that admits its sin and seeks God's forgiveness. Through the gracious outpouring of his Holy Spirit, we are given such hearts, and are called God's "beloved."

Jesse brought Samuel his oldest son, Eliab. ***"Samuel saw Eliab and thought, 'Surely the LORD's anointed stands here before the LORD.'"*** He was impressed by his appearance and he thought that the oldest son, Eliab, was the one. One son after another, seven altogether, passed before Samuel. Any one of them, it appeared, would have been an outstanding choice.

Yet it was not to be. ***"The LORD said to Samuel, 'Do not consider his appearance or his height, for I have rejected him. The LORD does not look at the things man looks at. Man looks at the outward appearance, but the LORD looks at the heart.'"***

Samuel ***"asked Jesse, 'Are these all the sons you have?'"*** Jesse seemed almost reluctant to mention David. "Well, there's the youngest, but he's tending the sheep." Notice Jesse didn't even mention his son by name.

"Samuel said, 'Send for him; we will not sit down until he arrives.' So he sent and had him brought in. He was ruddy, with a fine appearance and handsome features. Then the LORD said, 'Rise and anoint him; he is the one.' So Samuel took the horn of oil and anointed him in the presence of his brothers, and from that day on the Spirit of the LORD came upon David in power."

He was healthy, young, and good-looking, but that didn't suggest someone capable or strong enough to rule the nation. But God knew better. David's humility and trusting heart were exactly what God was looking for.

David was the one chosen by the Lord in spite of his youth. His brothers were witnesses of the solemn act; and ***"the Spirit of the LORD came upon David in power."*** He received a special endowment with gifts and powers for his royal calling, so that he was gradually led forward to full development, to complete fitness for his life's work.

Samuel anointed David. But he didn't really say what he anointed him for. Samuel left with no specific instructions for David or his family.

"Samuel then went to Ramah," back to his home. It is probable that the significance of the ceremony was not made known to the other sons of Jesse, who may have been under the impression that David was simply to be regarded as a pupil of the great prophet. But the Lord's will went forward in due time. It happens quite often that the Lord chooses men for his work who are without honor before men. But he fills such instruments with his Spirit, making them fit to perform the work of their high calling.

One writer said "By this simple act God put a 'reserved' sign on David's life. The Holy Spirit came upon the young shepherd in renewed measure that day. Under the Holy Spirit's guidance David would grow in faith and love toward God. And in time David would come to appreciate what the Lord had done for him this day – how he had placed him in the line of his Anointed One, the great Good Shepherd and King of all kings," the Redeemer of all mankind.

The next words in this chapter tell how God helped lead David to fulfill his calling. ***"Now the Spirit of the LORD had departed from Saul, and an evil spirit from the LORD tormented him. Saul's attendants said to him, 'See, an evil spirit from God is tormenting you. Let our lord command his servants here to search for someone who can play the harp. He will play when the evil spirit from God comes upon you, and you will feel better.' So Saul said to his attendants, 'Find someone who plays well and bring him to me.'"*** 1 Samuel 16:14-17 (NIV) That young man was David, and he in this way began serving Saul and thus also serving the Lord in a special capacity.

Then the very next chapter gives the history of how David killed Goliath, the heathen Philistine giant who taunted the Israelites and mocked the God of the Israelites.

Let's move from Samuel and David to all of mankind. All mankind were and are sinners.

Just as God did not choose the most logical human choice to be the next king of Israel, so he did not choose any way of saving mankind eternally that would be logical and reasonable to human minds.

Isaiah tells us as you heard in our Old Testament lesson: ***“As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts.”*** Isaiah 55:9 (NIV)

Paul explains that idea in this way in our Epistle lesson: ***“But God chose the foolish things of the world to shame the wise; God chose the weak things of the world to shame the strong. He chose the lowly things of this world and the despised things--and the things that are not--to nullify the things that are, so that no one may boast before him. It is because of him that you are in Christ Jesus, who has become for us wisdom from God--that is, our righteousness, holiness and redemption. Therefore, as it is written: ‘Let him who boasts boast in the Lord.’”*** 1 Corinthians 1:27-31 (NIV)

Mankind would like to think they can earn salvation. Haven't you met people who think, if they talk about it at all, that their good works and good deeds will be rewarded with God taking them to heaven? Haven't you met people who think that if they just 'do the best they can' here on earth that God will reward them with eternal life? But those ideas are totally false and unscriptural.

Strangely enough, most people want something free. But they don't, by nature, seem to want free salvation. Why? Maybe it has something to do with the fact that Satan doesn't want to be obligated to anyone – least of all God. We can think of his first words to Eve: ***“Did God really say ...?”*** Genesis 3:1 (NIV) Satan wants us to doubt God when God tells us ***“For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith – and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God – not by works, so that no one can boast.”*** Ephesians 2:8-9 (NIV)

Mankind cannot earn salvation. God offers and gives it to mankind. That is the way God chose for us to be saved. And that gift becomes our possession by faith. ***“Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved, but whoever does not believe will be condemned.”*** Mark 16:16 (NIV)

God's ways are not our ways. Our ways are not God's ways.

Life after death is a gift, not something to earn, not something we can ever earn.

And look at the way God fulfilled his plan of salvation. The Savior of mankind was born under the most humble of circumstances – born in a stable to poor parents, with the first visitors and well-wishers not family, but shepherds called in from the fields to glorify God.

Then that Son of God was raised in Nazareth, a town that had a reputation that caused Nathaniel to ask ***“Nazareth! Can anything good come from there?”*** John 1:46 (NIV) Isaiah describes him in this way: ***“He had no beauty or majesty to attract us to him, nothing in his appearance that we should desire him.”*** Isaiah 53:2 (NIV) He didn't win any great military victories but lost two trials although he was totally, completely innocent. ***“He humbled himself and became obedient to death--even death on a cross!”*** Philippians 2:8 (NIV) He was crucified like a common criminal. Yet this humility led to his exaltation: “he descended into hell; the third day he rose again from the dead; he ascended into heaven and sitteth on the right hand of God the Father Almighty; from thence he shall come to judge the quick and the dead.”

And finally we must realize that when it comes to a matter of choosing, God did some more very special choosing.

Knowing what you know about yourself, would you choose such a person to receive the gift of eternal life? Surely not, for you know what you deserve from a just and righteous God.

But God's Word tells us: ***“he chose us in him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight.”*** Ephesians 1:4 (NIV) Paul writes ***“But we ought always to thank God for you, brothers loved by the Lord, because from the beginning God chose you to be saved through the sanctifying work of the Spirit and through belief in the truth.”*** 2 Thessalonians 2:13 (NIV) James writes: ***“Don't be deceived, my dear brothers. Every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of the heavenly lights, who does not change like shifting shadows. He chose to give us birth through the word of truth, that we might be a kind of firstfruits of all he created.”*** James 1:16-18 (NIV)

May we always be good, God-pleasing fruits of Christ's work! Amen.