

## The God of Ordinary People

1 Samuel 16: 1- 13

October 25, 2009

I want to continue my reflection on 1 Samuel this morning. The theme I am exploring through this series is the God who frames the stories of our lives. I submit that without this frame, our lives can seem pretty empty and quite pointless – particularly when we consider the many, many mundane and boring activities that occupy our lives in the big scheme of things. What I am hoping that we might learn through the life of the people in Samuel...is God is working on our behalf, even when things do not seem so clear to us.

今天继续撒母耳记上的信息。我这个系列讲道的主题是关于神塑造我们生命的故事。我要说，没有这样的塑造，我们的生命就变得空虚，没有方向。特别是当我们思考很多世俗的令人厌倦的事情，这些事情占据了我们的生活。我所希望的就是我们能够从这些人的故事中学习，了解神为我们工作，甚至在事情还没有显现出来以前，神就开始做工。

Furthermore, the kinds of choices we make in life either participates in some way in God's salvation work on planet earth - or not.. In those choices and actions we either move in the flow of God's grace or we can live a life of ungrace...and what we learn from Saul is a couple of things. The first is that God's big picture intent is for our well-being...and even if we choose to live differently, he respects the choices we make...yet he doesn't stop from his salvation of the human race and of planet earth.

另外，我们在生活里面所作的决定，或是份于神在世界上的拯救，或是毫不相干。在这些决定或者行动中，我们或者在神的恩典之下，或者我们活在这恩典之外。我们从撒母耳记里面的扫罗身上学到很多。第一就是神的计划是为我们好，甚至是当我们选择违背他的旨意的时候，他仍然尊重我们所做的选择，然而，这却无法阻止他在这个星球上对人类的拯救。

Chapter 16, is the story of the choosing of David, after Saul has decided to abdicate from the responsibility of kingship establishing himself as king... Saul as I mentioned last week, is a tragic story because he was a man who just could believe anyone – including God – could be so generous towards him...and in his attempt to earn and own his gift of kingship, he allowed it slip away.

第十六章关于大卫的故事，在撒母耳决定放弃扫罗，不再让他承担君王的责任的时候。扫罗的故事，我上周说道，是个悲剧，因为他是一个什么都不相信的人，他也不相信神能够慷慨的给他恩赐，他赚取王位的努力恰恰成为

他失去王位的过程。

And so we ended chapter 15 with a loss... Saul tragically going his own way, as God continues to strive for the goodness of his people ...looking for a man after his own heart. Chapter 16 begins with Samuel – mourning over Saul...- he is depressed over Saul's decision...perhaps even disappointed in himself in his failed attempt to mentor Saul...The Lord comes to Samuel in his time of loss and tells him that his work is not finished. He is asked to go to Bethlehem to the house of Jesse and take a heifer to sacrifice there. He is an old man by this time as he makes his way slowly to complete his task. As he gets to the town, our text informs us that the elders are afraid. Samuel is not known for casually dropping in for tea. He has been a larger than life figure in Israel in his role as prophet and judge... so if I was an elder I might ask why Samuel is joining our festival...perhaps, what does he want of us...and whether his demand of us would mean that we would be in king Saul's bad books. After all, word of Samuel's break with Saul must have spread throughout the 12 tribes by now. And so rightly they ask Samuel, do you come in peace. Samuel replies "I come in peace..." He informs them that he will be making a sacrifice. This seemed to appease them and Samuel invites a local farmer Jesse to be guest of honor in the feast that was to follow.

所以我们在 15 章面对失败，扫罗悲剧性的独自面对自己的命运，当神力求百姓的好处的時候，他去寻找一个符合自己心意的人。第十六章开始的时候，撒母耳还在为扫罗悲哀，他因为扫罗所作的决定而感到失望，或许，他也为自己灰心，因为自己没有做好扫罗的导师。当撒母耳因为自己的失败悲哀的时候，主来到撒母耳身边，告诉他工作并没有完成。他要去伯利恒，到耶西的家中，在那里献祭。在当时，他已经是个老人，他慢慢地走在路上，要完成自己的使命。到了城里，我们的圣经告诉我们长老都害怕。撒母耳不是一个到处走走看看的人。在以色列，他是一个大人物，他的职责是先知和士师，所以，如果我是长老，我会问为什么撒母耳要到这里过节，或许是要见我们，或者是有什么要求，或者是我们在扫罗王那里有什么麻烦。不管怎么说，撒母耳和扫罗的决裂一定已经传遍了整个 12 支派。如今，他们问撒母耳，你来的为了平安吗？撒母耳回答，我为平安而来。他告诉他们，他要在这里献祭。这让他们放心了，撒母耳也邀请了当地的农户耶西一家来参加随后的宴会。

It is this family, Jesse, grandson of Ruth the Moabite, that God has rested his eyes in his search for a replacement for Saul. And the story goes that Jesse introduces his sons to anxious Samuel, eager to see to whom the Lord has chosen.

耶西，是摩押人路德的地孙子，神要在他家找一个代替扫罗的人。故事继续下去，耶西介绍他的儿子们，这让撒母耳很激动，因为他急于看到神拣选的人。

The first son is Eliab, tall and handsome, a man's man. In many ways, his size and stature reminded Samuel of Saul – He dominated the room when he entered...His charisma evident in the way his presence commanded respect - Quickly he is the centre of attention....surely Samuel thought 'This is the guy' – I mean just look at him... I am told that decisions to hire top executives for most company happens in less than a minute – just on looks alone. This is human nature. The outward appearance is very important to us – otherwise we wouldn't be supporting a multi billion dollar cosmetic and fashion industry. So even prophet Samuel is in good company – easily impressed by outward appearances. Jesse continues to parade his sons in front of Samuel – Abinadab, Shammah,...and 5 others – unnamed... Perhaps from Jesse's point of view he had just paraded the best to the least capable of his sons before Samuel...and it must have been puzzling to him that none of them – particularly the ones he was most proud of, Eliab, Abinadab and Shammah were suitable.. Are these all your sons?, asked Samuel...- quite a revealing question I think. We do not know how much time lapsed before Samuel asked this question but I'd imagine some time had to have lapsed as he tried to discern why the chosen of the Lord was not among the sons of Jesse as he was told... But that he had to the question reveals to me that at the very least, Jesse didn't think that David was worth mentioning – after all, anyone who could of any substance among his sons were in that room!

第一个儿子是 Eliab，又高又英俊，男人中的男人。很多方面，他的身材和外形让撒母耳想到扫罗。Eliab 进入屋子就惹人注目，他的吸引力让他受到人的敬重，很快他就成为人们注目的中心，很明显，撒母耳决的就是这个人，我是说，一看到他就觉得他就是那被拣选的。我听说很多公司的高层执行人员的雇佣是在一分钟之内决定的，就是一眼就决定这个人是否合适。这是人类的本性。外在的模样对我们很重要，否则我们就不会有价值几百亿的美容产业。所以即使是撒母耳先知也一样，很容易被外在的形象吸引。耶西继续让儿子们走过撒母耳眼前，让他诧异的是，没有一个人，特别是耶西感到骄傲的几个儿子 Eliab，Abinadab，shammah，还有另外五个儿子们，没有一个人被拣选。撒母耳问，你的儿子们都来了吗？我想这个问题很说明问题。我们不知道撒母耳在问这个问题之前用了多少时间。但是我想他一定花了很多

时间去明白为什么神没有从这些儿子中拣选。但是这个问题也提醒我们，对耶西来说，大卫不值一提，毕竟，他儿子中比较重要的今天都在这个地方了。Well, 'yes', replied Jesse...there is one more...the youngest one...the one we send out to live with the sheep so that he is kind of out of the way, no bother to those of us who are responsible for more important things... Norman Archer, in his commentary on David makes this observation:

是的，耶西回答，还有一个儿子，最小的，他被派去放羊，在外边，不要管他了，我们有更重要的事情要做。Norman Archer，在他对大卫的注释中这样说，“...it would seem to me that David lived in a family that ignored him, did not understand him, and did not sympathize with his dreams...It is my opinion that David was in the unfortunate predicament of being the unblessed son... It is fascinating to read the psalms and see how they express the turmoil of David's heart...Psalm 51, he writes...'...Behold I was shapen in iniquity; and in sin did my mother conceived me....'; Psalm 25:7 “Remember not the sin of my youth Psalm 27:10... When my father and mother forsake me...;...” David, Norman Archer, p. 12 -14)

对我来说，大卫的家庭觉得他不重要，他们也不理解他，也不同情他的梦想，我觉得大卫处于一种尴尬的境地，他在诸子之中不被祝福。很奇妙的是在诗篇里面我们看到大卫心中的挣扎，在 51 篇里面，他写道。我是在罪孽里生的，在我母亲怀胎的时候，就有了罪。诗篇 25：7 求你不要几年我幼年的罪愆，诗篇 27：10，我父母离弃我。

From David's own words, you begin to piece together the kind of struggles he must have wrestled with as a child... “...I was shapen in iniquity...in sin did my mother conceive me...” – how did he know this? There is absolutely no mention of David's mother...could it be that her absence in his life shaped how he felt about himself? Or how about the statement ‘...when my father and mother forsake me...’ – has he felt the pain of parental rejection? Does this statement shed any light on Jesse's actions with Samuel?...- furthermore...even as an adult is he still wracked by the burden and guilt of sin...he has carried with him as a young person.

从大卫自己的话里，你可以拼凑出他个人童年的挣扎。我在罪中被孕育，在罪中，我母亲怀了了。他生命中的缺憾，造成了他对自己的这样的感觉。那么，关于，我父母离弃我的话，是不是说他经历父母的遗弃呢？是不是这样的话恰恰帮助我们理解了耶西在撒母耳面前的举动呢？更有甚者，甚至，大卫成年后，仍然为自己的负罪感感到挣扎，而从少年，他就背负了这些。

Eugene Peterson makes this commentary "...the Hebrew word is baby brother – *haqqaton* - .. carries undertones of insignificance, of not counting for very much – certainly not a prime candidate for prestigious work. The family runt.

Eugene Peterson 这样写道：“希伯来语里面的小弟弟 *Haqqaton* 这个词包含着重要的意义，就是不重要，很明显，这个词不能用在重要的人或事上面。只能用在家庭中不重要的人身上。”

Nevertheless runt or not Samuel orders that they send for David...and as David enters Samuel's presence, it is clear to Samuel that this was the man – after God's heart – that God has chosen to replace Saul.

不论他是不是小人物，撒母耳都要求见到大卫，而当撒母耳一看到大卫进来，就清楚就是这个人，是符合神心意的人，神拣选代替扫罗的。

This choice of David brings to mind St. Paul's words to the Corinthian Church – a troubled church who, of the many issues they were struggling with, fought over who was the most spiritual... He writes in 1 Corinthian 1: 28, 29

在哥林多书里，对格林多这样一个充满麻烦，充满冲突和挣扎，彼此争竞谁是最具灵性的这样一个教会，保罗在拣选大卫这段记载的启示下，写下了 林前 1：28-29

God chose the lowly things of this world and the despised things—and the things that are not—to nullify the things that are,<sup>29</sup> so that no one may boast before him<sup>1</sup>

神拣选世上卑贱的，被人厌恶的，以及那无有的，为要废掉那有的，使一切有血气的，再神面前一个也不能自夸。

David the least of the least of Jesse's family – *haqqaton* – useless...runt...rejected from the inner circle...is to be anointed to be a sign of God's representative in human life and history. The story of David – the shepherd king – will occupy much of Biblical narrative. There is more written of the life of David than any other person in the Bible...

大卫是最小的耶西家里面最小的一员，一个无足重轻的小弟弟，没有用处，小家伙一个，所有的重要决定都不会参考他的意见，而他，被膏立，成为神在历史中拣选的人性的代表。大卫的故事，一个牧人君王，在圣经里占有重要地位。大卫的故事比圣经里任何人的故事都要长。

So what can David's story – this story inform us about our story – in God's story?

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<sup>1</sup>*The Holy Bible : Today's New International Version*. 2005 (1 Co 1:28-29). Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan.

大卫的故事在神的故事里面是怎样的？我们的故事在神的故事中呢？

Well, for me, one of the most important observation from this text is that ordinary people are the raw material for God's salvation work on planet earth.

对我而言，最重要的发现就是我们普通人是神塑造救恩的工具。

This is significant, I think as we consider our own lives. Many of us...perhaps most of us feel that we do not quite measure up in some way. We are reminded of this everyday we stand at a lineup to pay for our groceries. As we wait, we are bombarded with magazine covers of beautiful men and women – none of whom are in our lineup. These people on the magazine covers don't line up to pay for their groceries at Superstore... None of the women...or the men in my line up look anything close to the perfection of people on the magazine covers...

这很重要，我想，当我们思考我们的生活，我们很多人，或许大多数人，都感觉我们不那么重要。每天，当我们站在商店里面排队付款的时候，都有这样的感觉。当我们等候的时候，边上的杂志封面上都是漂亮的男人女人，这些人不会和我们站在一起等着付账。这些封面上的人不会来超市买东西。我们排队买东西的这些人，与那些杂志封面上，看起来那么完美的那些人，完全的不同。

But what is important about our text is that in God's economy, we all matter. David's beginning informs us that ordinary folks, undistinguished people, lacking in social status and peer recognition...have a destiny in God's divine purposes... The choice of God on an individual is not a popularity contest and not based on our proven or latent abilities, looks or status in life...

但是我们的圣经告诉我们，在神的计划中，我们很重要。大卫开始告诉我们，那些普通人，没有出众之处的人，缺乏社会技巧的人，不被同辈认可的人，他们的命运与神永恒计划相连。神拣选一个人，不是看他们是不是被众人看好，不是根据我们对他们能力的认可，也不看我们生活的处境如何。

This value of God for ordinary folks stands in opposition of popular culture. As already mentioned, in our culture, it is the outside appearances that set people apart – that determine whether they are of value or not. Our value for outside appearances encompasses not only physical looks but can also include the kind of credentials we carry – as if the more degrees we have makes us more competent. And people with the right credentials become the 'expert'. In religious circles this translates itself into our understanding of 'clergy' – and 'lay'. And clergy, can be viewed to be 'expert' religious people. And while it is true that those of us who are clergy have had the opportunity to

have training, and concentrated engagement in the study of God's word...It is important for us for us to acknowledge that we are not by any means 'experts'...we are fellow pilgrims with those who have acknowledge the call of God in our lives setting us aside to devote ourselves in the study of God's word and in prayer for the benefit of God's people. I have studied theology for most of my adult life...and whist I began having such confidence in my knowledge of God and his work – the older I get, and the more learning I have received, instead making me a 'expert' has actually done the opposite...I feel like I know nothing – except that God loves me and sent his son to die for me – this I know, and continue to try to know... In fact God has become more mysterious to me now that He ever was in my youth – and I find I need more faith – not less – to keep on this journey than when I began...And so 'expert' should be the last word on the lips of clergymen and women – not at all experts, as far as God is concerned we are all laity.

神看中普通的人，这与主流文化价值观格格不入。就好像我说过，在我们的文化里面，人们根据外在的标准评价区分人们。决定我们是不是有价值。这样的标准不仅仅是外在的模样，还有我们所拥有的文凭，如果我们有更多的学位，我们就显得更有竞争力。有某些学位的人就被当作某领域的专家。在宗教领域，用另外一个词就是神职人员和平信徒这样区分。作为神职人员，可以被当作宗教领域的专家。确实，我们作为神职人员有机会接受训练，投身于神的话的学习之中，很重要的是，我们不是专家，我们只是朝圣旅程上的一员，我们回应神的呼招，把我们分别出来，专门学习神的话语，专门为神的百姓祷告。我成年以后才开始读神学。

Eugene Peterson makes this observation: Our culture holds experts and professionals in a regard that's inflated out of all proportion to reality. The corollary of this is that we regard the lay person as a near idiot, competent only when consulting with or deferring to the expert. The consequences aren't encouraging... (leap over the wall, p. 18)... Then he goes on to observe how society has turned out...and asks the question whether deferring our freedom to expert and professions – including in the religious field – has made our lives any better? And do we really have to go any further than our current economic crisis to answer that question? – who got us in this mess? – not people like my in-laws who saved and spent only what they had...but our experts in mortgage selling, stock options...and whatever economic stuff out there...

Thankfully God looks out for ordinary folks because it in the community of ordinary people – people who may not have a lot to offer – that God can do his greatest work. This beginning story of David is the story of an ordinary person 'called', set aside by

God...ordained to ministry – while he was just a haqqaton – and what is significant about this text is that there is not a hint in it that David would be inadequate for the task.

David, out in the cold David, marginalized David...rejected haqqaton David – is anointed to be the future king of Israel – and slated to become the ancestor of Jesus of Nazareth – Savior of the world. In their wildest dream no one in Jesse's household or in the town of Bethlehem could ever have imagined this...

The challenge to Samuel and to us...is to look past the veneer of appearances. Like Samuel, our tendency is to look at appearance and immediately make a judgment of others...which in all likelihood is far from accurate. The lesson that God is teaching Samuel in this parade of Jesse's sons, is that we are more than what meets the eye and before we make any judgment of anyone, we need to inquire of the Lord and wait for the heart to reveal itself to us...and that my friends takes time.

The other observation is that the formation of our hearts above all else is what God looks for in any individuals. In verse 7 where we read these words.

7...“Do not consider his appearance or his height, for I have rejected him. The LORD does not look at the things human beings look at. People look at the outward appearance, but the LORD looks at the heart

It stands to reason, that if our hearts are where God looks then it is important that we should devote time in cultivating our hearts. For our hearts can betray us. Jeremiah describing the human heart as deceitful and desperately wicked, who can know it? (Jeremiah 17:9) Wickedness and its outworking begins at the level of our hearts...but our hearts need not be a source of wickedness and bitterness...it can instead be a source of joy and of good works. And so though the human heart can be the source of wickedness, the scripture say that we can tame this heart. Let me just list some references to encourage you. Psalm 16:7 - 9

<sup>7</sup>I will praise the LORD, who counsels me even at night my heart instructs me.

<sup>8</sup>I keep my eyes always on the LORD. With him at my right hand, I will not be shaken.

<sup>9</sup>Therefore my heart is glad and my tongue rejoices; my body also will rest secure

Psalm 77:3-6

<sup>3</sup>I remembered you, God, and I groaned; I meditated, and my spirit grew faint.

<sup>4</sup>You kept my eyes from closing; I was too troubled to speak.

<sup>5</sup>I thought about the former days, the years of long ago;

<sup>6</sup>I remembered my songs in the night. My heart meditated and my spirit asked:

## Psalm 119:9 - 11

<sup>9</sup>How can those who are young keep their way pure? By living according to your word.

<sup>10</sup>I seek you with all my heart; do not let me stray from your commands.

<sup>11</sup>I have hidden your word in my heart that I might not sin against you.

David was set aside most his childhood life out with the sheep away from the more worthy sons of Jesse. In solitude, I'll bet he had a lot of time to ponder, to pray, to play... David reveals much of himself through his songs. He reveals his struggle with sin, his meditation on God's word, his questions of faith, his doubts and his fears... That is why the psalms are such a comfort to us because they expose a human being's challenges in life, struggles with faith and yet then through it all reveals a profound hope in a God he does not see but knows intimately through the challenges of life. Jesse perhaps didn't give much thought to David by...but instead he was training David's heart so that he could be used by God.

If there is a time in human history, where cultivation of the human heart needs more attention it is today. In this noisy, frenzy and competitive environment, we need to intentionally cultivate this heart that is so prone to wickedness and wildness to and tame it into a place of beauty that bears fruit for our souls.

My wife grew up on a beautiful piece of property. When I was dating her I use to visit her on the front lawn of her parents house. I have never walked on grass so soft. We'd go barefoot and the grass was so soft that you literally can see our footprints on the grass. The front of the renovated farm house was a huge garden that grew the sweetest corn I've ever tasted. Our kids grew up playing all over that magical land...where apples and pears, raspberries and strawberries seem to grow wild. And the property was filled with flowers there were rose gardens and dahlias and tulips and sunflowers...in the spring and summer there was colour of every shade everywhere. My in-laws retired and sold the property to someone who promised to take care of it...but was really trying to develop it. Well because of where the property is located, it cannot be subdivided nor developed...and so the new owner soon lost interest in it. Grace went back to walk around the property last week...and all the flowers are gone...the house is gone...many of the fruit trees are gone...the raspberries are gone...the lawn is gone...the garden was nothing but wild grass. The only thing that has remained were the large cedar and spruce trees on the property... it was almost as if no one has ever lived there at all...

Jeremiah's condemning words '...the heart is deceitful and desperately wicked ...' is the natural state of the human heart – but it does not have to remain that way...it can be

cultivated by God's word and Spirit...and can be changed – with the help of God – into a heart that trusts and a heart that loves righteousness...

As we continue to engage in the story of David, you will see that David is a man, like us – with a lot of faults. He doesn't always get it right...but there is one thing that David is able to do that Saul was not...He was always able to say he was sorry and take responsibility for his actions... It wasn't because David was any better man than Saul...but his heart shaped by solitude and brokenness...was more able to learn...and changed. We will talk more about that in the next few weeks. Bottom line from our David story is that God looks for ordinary people – not super people - whose hearts are malleable, willing to submit to Him...whenever it is required of us. May we as we tell the story of David learn to cultivate the hard ground of our hearts so that the seed of God's word and the water of the Holy Spirit, may give birth to a life that bears much fruit to the glory of God and the benefit of others. Amen.