

Last week The Rector spoke about Saul and the decision to make him King. Today we move on in time to the anointing of a new king but before we tackle that I think it would perhaps be good to fill in the gap as to what went on between these two events.

Saul was popular with the people of northern and southern Israel and his early victories in battle proved him to be a capable military leader. Thus, "He began his reign with great promise but ended it in shame. His weakness was his rebellious nature"<sup>1</sup>. As a result, he made a number of errors. The first was his failure to wait for Samuel at Gilgal and instead assumed the role of priest himself. The second was to ignore Samuel's instructions and then lie about what he'd done. So demonstrating that he could not be trusted to do God's will but asserted his own will instead.

Although Saul remained King for the rest of his life he was disturbed by fits of insanity. He failed to unify the various tribes into one nation and allowed the religious life of his people to decline as well. A big part of Saul's problem was that he wanted to please the people and himself rather than obey God.

How often are we tempted to do the same? To court popularity rather than stand firm in our Christian beliefs. To take the easy and comfortable way rather than the way God is leading us?

So, God sends Samuel to Bethlehem to seek out and identify the new King He has chosen to succeed Saul. Arriving at Jesse's place the first thing he does is to gather Jesse and his sons to make sacrifice to God together. The process of selection is interesting for at no point do either Jesse or any of his sons know why this selection is taking place. Each of the sons of Jesse come before Samuel and each time Samuel thinks this must be the one. But God doesn't look on the outward appearance but on the heart.

It is so easy to Judge people by their outward appearances and first impressions.

How often we are influenced by what we see on the surface, wealth and success, achievement and prosperity and fail to look at the inner motivation or consider the compassionate response to a situation.

However, back to the story because the narrator likes a bit of dramatic build up, for when all of Jesse's sons who are present have filed before him, Samuel still hasn't found the one God wants to be anointed successor to Saul. I wonder if at that point confronted by all these handsome men, Samuel was tempted to pre-empt God and make his own choice, but he didn't, he continued to rest in God's guidance and asked Jesse if these were all his sons only to find that there is one missing the youngest of the eight brothers who is looking after the sheep! David is fetched and at last Samuel had found the one God had chosen. The anointing ceremony takes place not in the context of a great coronation ceremony in front of a gathering of dignitaries but simply in the presence of his father and brothers.

---

<sup>1</sup> Illustrated Bible Dictionary; Hodder and Stoughton ©Thomas Nelson 1987

**So what was he like (apart from having beautiful eyes) We know that he demonstrated bravery and trustworthiness for it is recorded that he defended the flocks of sheep against attacks from both a lion and a bear, and he is reported to have been a talented musician and skilled player of the harp. (We hear more of this later in his story.) We are also told a few verses on in Chapter 16 that he is known as some on who is “prudent in speech and a man of good presence” ch16 verse18.**

**This youth upon whom the Spirit of God came was then required to wait to take up his task as king until Saul had died.**

**Waiting is hard and we flawed humans have a strong tendency to want instant gratification we need it to happen now. Sometimes things do happen quickly but quite often we need to wait for the right time. God is a long-term planner. And if we need to wait for his perfect timing we often find that In the meantime God prepares us for the task ahead. David was identified as King but the events and training he would experience in the years before this came about would help to equip him for the task.**

**It is sometimes good to take time to think back and see the hand of God at work in our lives and the ways in which He has moulded trained and taught us so when the time came we were ready and equipped for a particular task that he has for us to do. David put his trust in God and like Samuel went forward in faith.**

**The Psalms which we sing each Sunday are attributed to him Here is what Psalm 28 says this**

**7 The LORD is my strength and my shield;  
in him my heart trusts;  
so I am helped, and my heart exults,  
and with my song I give thanks to him.  
The LORD is the strength of his people;  
he is the saving refuge of his anointed.  
O save your people, and bless your heritage;  
be their shepherd, and carry them forever.**

*Please find below some questions for reflection:-*

- *How often are we tempted to do things to gain the acclaim of other people rather than to the glory of God? Are their times when your motivation has been to gain popularity or praise from other people rather than do what you know to be right?*
- *Do you know what it is to want to take the easy and comfortable way rather than the way God is leading you?*
- *How often we are influenced by what we see on the surface, wealth and success, achievement and prosperity and we fail to look at the inner I person their faith their character and their motivation. Think for a moment how easy it is to judge people by outward appearances and first impressions and the times you have done this.*
- *It's hard to wait patiently. Take time to think back and see the hand of God at work in your life and the ways in which He has moulded trained and taught you so when the time came you were ready and equipped for a particular task that he had for you to do.*

