

Baptism of Our Lord – January 13, 2019

1 Samuel 16:1–13

1 The LORD said to Samuel, “How long will you mourn for Saul, since I have rejected him as king over Israel? Fill your horn with oil and be on your way; I am sending you to Jesse of Bethlehem. I have chosen one of his sons to be king.” 2 But Samuel said, “How can I go? Saul will hear about it and kill me.” The LORD said, “Take a heifer with you and say, ‘I have come to sacrifice to the LORD.’ 3 Invite Jesse to the sacrifice, and I will show you what to do. You are to anoint for me the one I indicate.” 4 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?” 5 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. 6 When they arrived, Samuel saw Eliab and thought, “Surely the LORD’s anointed stands here before the LORD.” 7 But 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.” 8 Then Jesse called Abinadab and had him pass in front of Samuel. But Samuel said, “The LORD has not chosen this one either.” 9 Jesse then had Shammah pass by, but Samuel said, “Nor has the LORD chosen this one.” 10 Jesse had seven of his sons pass before Samuel, but Samuel said to him, “The LORD has not chosen these.” 11 So he asked Jesse, “Are these all the sons you have?” “There is still the youngest,” Jesse answered, “but he is tending the sheep.” Samuel said, “Send for him; we will not sit down until he arrives.” 12 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.” 13 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. Samuel then went to Ramah.

When a university math department is looking to hire their next professor, they do not scout the local preschools to see what three or four year old would make the best fit. When a ballet company is looking to bring in new dancers, they do not audition any three hundred pound NFL linemen to put on the tutu and ballet slippers. When an organization is looking to present its humanitarian of the year award, they do not look to the FBI’s most wanted list or a roster of prison inmates for the most exemplary candidates. When someone has been diagnosed with a brain tumor, they do not search the local classified ads for someone who is offering surgical services out of their basement. There are just some choices that may seem too strange to make and even should not be considered at all. There is some of that in our sermon text for this morning/evening as David was not Samuel’s first choice or the logical choice to be the next king of Israel. With that in mind we will see that **The Lord Uses the One He Chooses**. As we are celebrating the Baptism of our Lord we will also then apply this to Jesus and then to ourselves.

As chapter 16 begins, it was time for a new king in Israel. The Lord had rejected Saul as king (v. 1) because he had rejected the Lord and failed to follow his instructions. In the previous chapter the Lord had ordered the total destruction of the Amalekites and their possessions but Saul had spared their king and the best of their livestock. This was not the first time that Saul had disobeyed. He had established a pattern of trusting more in his own power and ability than the Lord.

So the Lord sent Samuel to Bethlehem, to the house of Jesse. He had chosen one of Jesse's sons to be the next king and would let Samuel know which one to anoint. Verse 6: "When they arrived, Samuel saw Eliab and thought, 'Surely the LORD's anointed stands here before the LORD.'" Eliab was Jesse's oldest son and Samuel thought he fit the part of future king with his height and appearance. He probably brought to mind a young Saul whom Samuel had also anointed. Saul had been described as "an impressive young man without equal among the Israelites—a head taller than any of the others" (1 Sa 9:2). But 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" (v. 7). While Eliab may have looked the part, looked like a leader that men would follow, God could look inside and know that Eliab was not the right fit to be the next king.

The same was true for six more of Jesse's sons. Abinadab, Shammah and the rest were also not the Lord's choice. When Samuel asked if there were any more, Jesse admitted his youngest was tending the sheep (v. 11). David was seemingly an afterthought for his father. He had not thought him either old enough or ready enough to attend this sacrifice with Samuel and his brothers. While he would not have been the first choice of Jesse or Samuel, when he arrived then the Lord said, "Rise and anoint him; he is the one" (v. 12). Anointing, the pouring of oil on someone's head, was used to mark them as chosen for the service to the Lord, whether as a king or a priest or a prophet. We do not know here if Samuel revealed at this time the purpose of the anointing. Possibly he kept it quiet to protect David and his family from Saul. But with this anointing, a change still happened. "From that day on the Spirit of the Lord came upon David in power" (v. 13). The Lord had chosen David and he would give him the help and the gifts to succeed. The Lord would use him as arguably the greatest king that Israel and Judah would ever see. While he would certainly stumble into sin at different times and have his faults as a father, he would remain faithful to the Lord throughout the forty years of his reign. The Lord would use well the one he chose to serve him.

David's anointing brings to mind a different type of anointing in our gospel lesson, one who was a descendant of David. When Jesus came to be baptized by John, he was not coming for the same reasons as the crowds—to repent for the forgiveness of his sins. He was perfect and had no need for baptism in that way. But as Peter would preach in the book of Acts, he came to be anointed with the Holy Spirit and power (Ac 10:38). For centuries God had promised to send a Savior—the Messiah or Christ—both names which mean "anointed one." No one would have looked at Jesus and thought—there he is, the Messiah is here! But at his baptism God revealed his choice. The Holy Spirit came in the form of a dove and the Father spoke from heaven (Lk 3:22) to reveal that this man standing before them was the Son of God, he was the long-promised Messiah, the anointed one. Many would reject him, including the religious leaders, because he was not who they thought the Lord should choose. But in the end their rejection would be used for God's purposes. He had come to be used for the purpose of saving the world—living a perfect life to earn our righteousness and dying on the cross to pay for all sins. The Lord would use the one he chose, his Son, to be the Messiah and Savior of all people.

While we were not anointed with oil like David, the Lord still has chosen us to be his children. And we too would not have been seen as the first choice, or best choice, or really any choice that should have been made at all. We were born into this world as enemies of God, born with sin inherited from our parents, born with a sinful nature that wants nothing more than to fight against God every step of the way. And yet in his love and mercy God still chose us. And baptism played a powerful role in that. As Paul wrote to Titus: "He saved us through the

washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit” (Ti 3:5). The water of baptism when combined with God’s Word is a powerful tool. It is able to wash away sin. It is able to turn God’s enemies into God’s children, “heirs having the hope of eternal life” (Ti 3:7). In our baptisms we receive all the benefits of what the Messiah, the Anointed One, came to do to save us.

Not only has the Lord chosen us, he also uses us. Of course he does not use us as a Messiah or even as a prophet, priest or king, but in a different kind of service. In addition to our old sinful self, we have a new self created in us that wants nothing more than to serve our God and follow his commands. And so God uses us to take his gospel message and share it with those around us. God uses us to raise our families in the training and instruction of the Lord. God uses us to give of our wealth in support of others. God uses us to correct and rebuke our fellow Christians whose sinful nature is gaining the upper hand. God uses us simply to live as his children and shine our lights in a world of darkness. For the times that we fail we go back to our baptisms to drown our sinful nature under the water of our baptism so that our new self can daily arise to serve God. We do not do these things on our own. Just as he helped David, the Holy Spirit comes to us to strengthen us in these tasks and give us the gifts to serve. The Lord will use us because he has chosen us to be his children.

We will never see a preschooler professor or a lineman ballerina or a criminal humanitarian or an amateur surgeon because those are not choices anyone would expect or should even make. But with our God anything is possible. He chose the young boy David to become a great king and lead his people. He chose his Son to be the long-promised Messiah to save this world. And he chose us to be his children to serve him in everything that we do. We thank him for this great blessing that came to us in our baptisms and continue to make daily use of our baptisms as we wait as his heirs, having the hope of eternal life. Amen.