

God Chooses the Messiah

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[0 : 0 0] to one of the most important characters in the Bible, David. And he is important, not just because his name is fantastic, but because of the place that he has in the purposes of God.

Next week we begin the season of Advent, where we celebrate the first and second coming of Jesus. And we're going to take a break from 1 Samuel and come back to David and Goliath in the bleak midwinter.

But some of you may be tempted to think, why are we wasting time in the Old Testament? I mean, we are Christians who follow Christ. There's a lot of stuff in the New Testament we haven't even looked at.

Why are we wasting time back here a thousand years BC? The very simple reason is that Jesus is so magnificent, it takes God thousands of years of his word and his deeds to prepare us for the coming of Jesus Christ.

And this chapter, 1 Samuel 16, gives us one of the very big pieces to understand the person of Jesus, and it is the piece, Christ.

[1 : 1 6] I grew up in a Christian family, we call Jesus Christ, Jesus Christ. And when I was a child, I thought Jesus, that was his name.

Jesus was his first name, he was Mr. Christ. I was wrong. Jesus is not a name, sorry, Christ is not a name, it's title.

And in today's sermon, you're going to notice three Hebrew words I'm going to use. I'll teach one of them to you now. The word Christ simply means anointed, anointed with oil.

It's God's anointed king. The Hebrew word for anointing is Mashiach, from which we get Messiah. Hebrew Messiah, Greek Christ, English anointed one, all the same thing.

Whenever in the Bible you see the Lord's anointed, or Christ, or Messiah, it means exactly the same thing. Are you with me so far? Slightly louder grunting, please.

[2 : 1 9] You're with me so far? Okay, good. So, open the New Testament. What does it say? This is the genealogy of Jesus Christ, the son of David.

The lesson we read in John 1 today speaks about Jesus being the Messiah. All the Gospels emphasize this. Now, let's go to 1 Samuel 16.

This is very important. We begin again with the people of God in a mess. It's happened again. And you remember they chose, when they demanded a king back in chapter 8, Saul, they chose the wrong man for the wrong reasons, which is a great picture of the people of God because we often choose what we want rather than what we need.

Nothing wrong with kingship per se. It's the nature of the king. They wanted a king like the nations round about. It was too hard to trust the invisible God.

They wanted a king that they could see, that they could have some sort of control over by dynasty and succession. They wanted someone who had absolutely Hollywood good looks so that they could be just like the nations round about them.

- [3 : 39] That is the exact opposite of the people of God, their purpose. Do you remember in the book of Exodus 19, when God had brought his people to himself at Mount Sinai, he says to them this, you will be my treasured possession among all the nations.
- He says, although all the earth is mine, you will be holy, different, a kingdom of priests. So when God's people say, no, we want a king like this, it's like a unilateral withdrawal from the covenant.
- And do you know what God did? He gave them exactly what they asked for, which is a great lesson. Be careful what you pray for. They gave him a man that was outwardly impressive.
- He had height, he had good looks, he was an athlete, a warrior, and his heart was completely empty of real faith. Outwardly, he looked like a real winner.
- He had that leading edge, that je ne sais quoi. He was every inch a king and it was a complete disaster. And have you noticed the emphasis through the chapters we've just come across that again and again and again, the Lord says, he was your choice.
- [4 : 51] Chapter 8, you're going to cry out because of your king whom you have chosen for yourselves. Or chapter 13, the king whom you chose, you asked for.
- So it's a mess. And now Saul has been rejected. The question for us is, and this is the question of chapter 16, how does God establish his kind of king?
- And the key is the word anointing, Messiah, Christ. God tells Samuel to anoint David and this idea of anointing, this is what it means.
- In anointing this man, God creates a unique relationship between himself and the anointed one. So from now on, the Messiah is called the Lord's anointed.
- He belongs primarily to God. His primary loyalty and serving and focus and relationship is not with the people of God but is with God himself.
- [5 : 57] It's a different kind of king, you see. He's God's representative. He's going to bring God's kingdom. He wasn't elected in a ballot. He doesn't take instructions from us. He's God's.
- You understand? That's what the word Christ Messiah means. It means he's God's person. When you all voted yesterday, which you all did, if you didn't vote, you're not a Christian.
- I'm just kidding. A couple in front of us, she said, why are we voting? And he said, because you can't complain if you don't vote. So we vote so we can complain.
- But the Bible view of a Messiah is it's not a human invention. It's not an evolution in political thinking. It's God's king, God's design for God's people and as we go through this chapter, chapter 16, we will see it's God who initiates.
- It's God who chooses. In fact, the Lord, the word Lord is used more than any other word in this chapter 16 times. It's a completely fresh start for God's people who've messed things up again.
- [7 : 06] Here is God's response, his anointed one, his Messiah. And there are three paragraphs, three scenes and I just want to talk about the Messiah in each of them because that's the focus.
- The purpose of the Messiah, the choice of the Messiah and the work of the Messiah. So verses 1 to 5, what's the purpose of the Messiah? And the answer, I've called this Shalom by sacrifice.
- The chapter opens with Samuel, God's prophet, the kingmaker and kingbreaker wallowing in regret. Let me remind you verse 1, the Lord said to Samuel, how long will you grieve over Saul since I have rejected him from being king over Israel?

There's a hint of rebuke there. Fill your horn with oil and go. I will send you to Jesse the Bethlehemite. I have provided for myself a king among the sons and Samuel said, how shall I go if Saul hears he will kill me?

So there's Samuel wallowing in grief and his grief is real and his grief is right. But Samuel has a tendency, have you noticed, to overly identify with his ministry.

[8 : 17] Do you remember when the people of God chose Saul in the first place? Samuel gets very upset and God has to say to him, they haven't rejected you, man, they've rejected me. And Samuel has a, he has a little bit of the dramatic about this but now he said, God says to Samuel, it's time to move forward.

Get your oil, I'm going to have you Messiah, a son of Jesse, I'm going to send you to that little tiny out of the way place that nothing ever happens, Bethlehem, I've chosen a king there.

And what does Samuel say to God? Lord, you cannot be serious. You've got no idea how dangerous that is. What you are asking of me is just too much.

Now, I find God's response here wonderful, very interesting. Do you notice he completely ignores Samuel's pushback? He doesn't deal with the question of danger.

He disregards the fact that Samuel is sliding from fearing God to fearing Saul. It is as it though, it is as it were, there's something more important to God. Look at halfway through verse 2.

[9 : 29] The Lord said, take a heifer, a cow, with you and say, I've come to sacrifice to the Lord. Invite Jesse to the sacrifice, I will show you what you shall do and you shall Messiah for me, him whom I declare to you.

It just seems like God's not concerned with the things we're concerned about. He doesn't play games. And when he speaks, the way of wisdom is the way to obey. The lovely thing about this is this is a pattern in the Bible.

God calls, we say no, we raise all our concerns with him, he ignores them and calls us again. I love Jeremiah.

At the beginning of Jeremiah, God calls Jeremiah to be a prophet. And Jeremiah answers, Lord, look, I don't know how to speak, I'm only young. So how does God address it?

He says, do not say I'm only young. To all whom I send you, you shall go. My favourite is Moses where God appears in a burning bush and calls him to go to Pharaoh to rescue Israel from Egypt.

[10 : 38] And Moses says, no. Let me give you some quotes from Exodus 3 and 4. God says, come, I will send you. Moses says, oh, who am I that I should go?

God says, I will be with you. Moses says, they will never listen to me or believe me. God says, here is a sign that you can take so they will. Moses says, I'm just not a public speaker.

God says, who made your mouth? Moses says, please send somebody else. It's wonderful, isn't it? And we are brilliant excuse makers.

But you see, the issue at stake for us is never what we think it is. It's never our gifts or abilities or confidence or safety. It's always something bigger.

I mean, with Moses, God was about to rescue his people out of slavery and bring them into the land. And God's purpose for you and for me is always better and always bigger than we imagine. And whatever it is you think that disqualifies you from serving God, it does not.

[11 : 42] So how does God lead Samuel on? He says, take a cow and sacrifice it. Now, you would be absolutely amazed at what some of the commentators do with this.

A number of commentators say that God is teaching Samuel here that he ought to trick the people in Bethlehem. That is, he ought to deceive them. Don't tell them the real reason you're going.

Say I've come to sacrifice and it's kind of a ruse. Just pretend and then you can do the real anointing thing. One commentator says, and I quote, God will lie if necessary.

But I think the commentators are making Samuel's mistake. They're missing out on the deep issue that's going on here. This sacrifice is so important that in verse 3, 4, 5 it's mentioned no fewer than five times.

The sacrifice is not there to deceive anyone. The sacrifice is not just an afterthought by God. Oh, you know, it's a good idea to have a barbecue while you anoint David.

[12 : 51] It's not a ritual for ritual's sake. Sacrifice always reestablishes harmony between God and his people. The whole system of sacrifice was given by God to the people of God so that they could live in fellowship and harmony with him.

And if you read the book of Leviticus, have you ever read the book of Leviticus? You should do it. It's a very fine book. There are three levels of sacrifice. The first is the guilt offering and then there is the dedication offering and then there is the peace offering and each offering brings us into peace, into fellowship, into restoration and harmony with God.

Here's the point of the sacrifice. There can be no shalom peace apart from sacrifice. This is crucial throughout the book of Samuel.

In chapter 1, where was it that Hannah was when she prayed and God answered about giving a son? It was at the sacrifice. In chapter 2, why is it that God brings judgment to Hophni and Phinehas?

It's because they treat the sacrifice of God with contempt. Where is it where God attacks the Philistines in chapter 7? It is when Samuel, it's in the middle of the sacrifice.

[14 : 11] What's happening when Saul is anointed? It's the sacrifice. Why is it such an offence for Saul to take the sacrifice into his hands? It's not his job.

He's not a priest. And that is why here in verse 4, when Samuel arrives at Bethlehem, the elders ask him, is there peace? They're not afraid he's going to attack them with a cow somehow.

In the Hebrew, in verse 4, it literally says, is peace to come of you? It's not, do you come peaceably? Is peace to come of you? Now here is, here's time for the second Hebrew word.

It's the word shalom, which I'm sure you all know. This is the Hebrew word for peace. It's a very, and it's a huge Bible word. It means, it's not just the absence of war.

It's not just inner peace. It is wholeness, soundness, prosperity, happiness, completeness. It's refreshment.

[15 : 12] It means harmony with God and with each other and with ourselves and with all of creation. It's the thing we work so feverishly for, giving ourselves and giving ourselves. But the problem is, the Bible says, we can't achieve it.

It comes from outside ourselves. It comes from God because shalom with God is a thing underneath all the other shaloms and it cannot come except by sacrifice.

Nicholas Volterstorff has a wonderful book, Until Justice and Peace Embrace. And he says this, the peace which is shalom is not merely the absence of hostility.

It's not merely being in right relationships. to dwell in shalom is to enjoy living before God, to enjoy living in one's physical surroundings, to enjoy living with one's fellows, to enjoy life with oneself.

And he notes that's why technology can never give us peace. And in verse 5, when Samuel answers the elders, it literally says, he doesn't say, I've come peaceably, he says, peace to sacrifice to the Lord I came.

[16 : 26] Samuel has come to Bethlehem to anoint God's Messiah and what is the work of the Messiah? It is to bring shalom through sacrifice.

I think, I find it spine tingling this chapter. I mean, we don't have time to develop this but you can see how deeply this shapes Jesus' view and Jesus' life and Jesus' ministry.

I mean, the beauty and transparency of the death of Jesus on the cross, apart from this great shalom restoration, it's hard to make sense of the crucifixion. This is why Jesus says again and again, the Messiah must suffer.

He will bring shalom through sacrifice. That's his purpose. Second, second paragraph, the choice of the Messiah. This is verses 6 to 13. Very famous passage about how we go, you know, we reel through the sons, Jesse's sons until we come to David.

How does God choose a Messiah for himself? And there's a contrast in this section between outward and inward, what the eyes and what the hearts see.

[17 : 35] Okay, verse 6. Samuel says, Jesse, let's see your boys. And the first one comes, he's handsome, tall, very good looking.

This guy looks like a king, thinks, Samuel, where's my bottle? Verse 7. Look at verse 7. The Lord said to Samuel, do not look on his appearance or on the height of his stature because I have rejected him.

For the Lord sees not as man sees. Man looks on the outward appearance, but the Lord looks on the heart. This can mean two things, two levels. One level, it means God sees things as they really are.

We are so taken in by appearances. The best we can come up with humanly is just a point of view. This is a sort of a post-modern text. You may have friends who discover you are Christian and when they discover you are Christian they say something like, I'm really glad for you that you've got that point of view.

Implication, stop talking about it, it's not my point of view. And that experience, and you feel like if you say anything more about Jesus Christ, somehow you're being disrespectful and imposing your view.

[18 : 48] But this verse says, no, there is actually one who sees things according to how they really are, which has huge implications. It means that there is a true understanding of reality, that we're not free just to construct reality as we please.

It means that our lives have meaning. It means that shalom is possible. It means we have a remarkable privilege here week by week of entering into the mind of God, being taken up into the mind of God because of his words.

And it's the thing, you see, outward appearances can be so deceiving. King Saul, he was the man of consummate outward appearance. Do you know when he's first introduced in chapter 9, we are told he was taller and more handsome than anyone in all Israel.

He was mighty, strong, better looking, just like Dan. Nine and a half congregation didn't laugh at that.

The only problem is, you see, you can't bring God's kingdom, you cannot establish shalom with human strength, might, power, ability, good looks.

[20 : 08] It only comes, it only comes through sacrifice and spirit. And even in the last chapter, as we watch Saul's demise, he's so committed to the externals.

In 1512, he builds a monument to himself for a battle that he didn't win. In verse 15, he justifies his disobedience to God by saying, oh, let's have a big sacrifice. I didn't obey so that we could have this big sacrifice.

And then in verse 30, when the kingdom is literally torn from him, he is so frightened of what the leaders think of him, he asks Samuel to pretend to do him an honour. But you see, God looks differently at things.

And as these sons come by Samuel, one athletic son after another, God says, no, no, no, no.

And in verse 11, Samuel says to Jesse, is that it? Jesse says, well, there's the littlest one that he's out with the sheep. And Samuel very smartly says, get him now, we're not going to have the barbecue until he gets here.

[21 : 12] So look at verse 12. And he sent and brought him in. Here's the first description of David. Now he was ruddy from the word red, which has made Aaron very excited this week.

He had beautiful eyes and was handsome, which means you don't have to be ugly to serve God, you see. It just doesn't matter to him. Arise, the Lord said, arise, Messiah him, anoint him, for this is he.

Samuel took the horn of oil and Christed him, anointed him in the midst of his brothers and the spirit of the Lord rushed upon David from that day forward and Samuel rose up and went to Ramah.

So how does God choose his Messiah? How does he do it? We've got to go back to verse 7 to look at this because while it's true that God looks past the externals and sees into our hearts and that is the way verse 7 is usually taken.

It's usually taken to mean God was looking around to see who had the really good heart, who had great inner motives and David had so he chose him but I don't think that's what it means. This is the way people usually take that reference two chapters ago where God says, I'm looking for a man after my own heart.

[22 : 24] It's usually taken as though God's heart is, sorry, David's heart is really good but I think it's true that God sees past the outward appearances but that's not what this is saying.

Verse 7 reads literally, I'll read you the second half of the verse. For the Lord sees not as man sees, man sees according to the eyes but the Lord sees according to the heart and the heart is not David's heart, it's God's heart.

It's not about the condition of David's inner motives, it's about God's purposes and God's intention because God is just as unimpressed with the goodness of our hearts as he is with our outward beauty.

The Lord sees according to his own intention. It's exactly the same two chapters ago. God was looking for a man literally according to his own heart which is not about the place of God in David's heart, it's about the place of David in God's heart.

See? This whole chapter is about God's choice, a man for myself. His primary responsibility is to me. I've not chosen a liar, I've not chosen, not chosen, not chosen these boys and when David arrives this is the one, Messiah him, he is the one on whom I set my heart.

[23 : 54] And do you remember on the day in Jesus' life when he went up on the mountain with three disciples? A voice sounded from heaven and God said, this is my son, my chosen one.

Listen to him. And in Matthew's gospel after four chapters of amazing miracles, Matthew writes, this was to fulfill what was spoken by the prophet Isaiah, behold my servant whom I have chosen, my beloved with whom my soul is pleased.

I will put my spirit upon him and he will proclaim justice to the Gentiles. See, we don't get to choose who God makes Messiah.

We don't get to define it, we don't get to elect him. Shalom can only come through sacrifice and it can only come through God's chosen one. So, the purpose of Messiah, the choice of Messiah and thirdly, the work of the Messiah very briefly and we just get the first picture of David in action in verses 14 to the end, this third big paragraph and it's a sad section and full of irony.

Let me just read the first verse. Now, the spirit of the Lord departed from Saul and a harmful spirit from the Lord tormented him. Now, I don't know what to make of this, frankly.

[25 : 21] It's quite possible, commentators say, the word small s spirit can be mood or disposition. It may be that the Lord's withdrawing his Holy Spirit just leaves Saul to his own devices.

Whatever it means, Saul is in bad shape. And his servants come around and suggest some music therapy. Find a man who's really good at playing because if you find a man who's not good at playing, it's only going to make things worse.

And the irony is that the words that are used here are the same words God used in verse 1, provide for me a man. And the irony continues as one of the servants says, you know, in that little town of Bethlehem, there's a guy who's really good at this.

So Saul, who is God's rejected Messiah, invites David, God's chosen Messiah, into the court and God's chosen Messiah enters and serves God's rejected Messiah.

The one with the Holy Spirit serves the one with the harmful spirit. And though he will later come to hate David, Saul loves him now and even invites him into his personal, being his personal bodyguard, trusting him for safety and spirit.

[26 : 38] And in verse 23, whenever the harmful spirit from God was upon Saul, David took the lyre and played it with his hand. So Saul was refreshed and was well and the harmful spirit departed from him.

The word refreshed is literally he was inspirited. The Holy Spirit was available to him. And well is the word tov, mazel tov, goodness.

It's a shalom type word. And both of these are offered to the rejected king by the sweet psalmist of Israel, God's chosen king. It's great kindness of God to do this for Saul.

Although he's rejected as a king, as a man, he may still at any time repent and return to the Lord. And each time David plays his lyre, God holds out his spirit to Saul the king.

And now, today, God holds out his spirit to us through Jesus, his Messiah. It doesn't matter who you are, it doesn't matter why you're here, our great desire, our great need is shalom.

[27 : 45] And I think this chapter is just a magnificent, it's a picture of the whole Bible in miniature. It has this great shape. It begins and ends with shalom.

God made us for shalom to enjoy living before him, enjoy living with each other, with ourselves and in this world. And in that first section it shows what happens when we follow our own self-made Messiahs.

Messiahs who give us what we want not what we need. You know, Messiahs who won't ask too much of us, certainly don't talk about sacrifice, who will give us grace without the cost, peace without justice, which is a terrible thing.

You see, our false Messiahs cannot give us shalom or the spirit because they can't restore us to God. And the chapter ends with this overwhelming kindness. It's a beautiful thing with God's Messiah offering the spirit and shalom to the very man who troubled Israel, who hadn't listened to God's word in the tender realities of his domestic brokenness.

And in the middle is God's choice of God's man, God's Messiah. This is what the heart of God is all about.

[29 : 01] God's chosen one, David's Lord, who came not to be served but to serve and to give his life as a ransom for many. And in that great sacrifice on the cross, Jesus takes all our self-made shalom attempts, all our disobedience and disarray and defiance and he dies, he is sacrificed for our sins and he offers us a different music, a music from a different world, a freshness, the peace of shalom.

And I reckon as a church, if we build ourselves on Jesus Christ, if we continue to try to do it, there will be shards of shalom in our life and community together.

And I think it's a good thing to begin praying for that. So let's kneel, shall we? Ali comes and leads us in prayer. Amen. Thanks, mate.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

Lord God, thank you for this day and for this place to worship. Thank you for your grace that you choose to both inspire and answer prayer.

[30 : 23] You know us and you know our needs before we do. Help us to be humble and bold as we come to you now. Lord, in your mercy, hear our prayer.

We thank you for your word that you speak to us, but it reminds us of who we are and what we are like. We think that we know what we need.

We look at the outward appearance. We mess up. We make excuses. We therefore pray for ourselves because we are selfish and we need your forgiveness.

O God, our Father, we are aware of the many ways that we have let you and let others down. Forgive us for the things which we have left have done and for the things which we have not even begun.

Forgive us for the plans that we made and did not carry out, for the promises which we made to you and to others and did not keep. Forgive us for any word of comfort, of praise, of thanks, which we might have spoken and did not speak.

[31 : 31] Forgive us for any help we might have given to someone in need and did not give. Forgive us if we have made things more difficult for anyone. Help us now to receive your forgiveness, your peace, your Messiah.

Help us now to enjoy a right relationship with you and others. Lord, in your mercy, hear our prayer.

We pray for the needs of our church family. We bring before you the ongoing and trying dealings with the Diocese of New Westminster. We pray for a way forward in the face of resistance and ask you to grant justice.

Please give wisdom, patience, and peace of mind to all involved. Lord, in your mercy, hear our prayer. We bring before you now those who are in special need of the comfort of your presence and healing touch.

We name Rowena, Derek, Mel, Merv, Marilyn, Gail, Graham, Susan, and Michelle.

[32 : 40] We thank you for the life of Shirley Dundas and ask you to console her husband, Bob, and her family as they grieve. And in this moment, we bring before you others on our heart.

Lord, in your mercy, hear our prayer. This morning, we think especially of those involved with our TITSO as men and women are identified, encouraged, and trained for ministry.

We ask that they would be your faithful people, gifted by you to teach, bringing others to yourself. We ask your blessing on Eric as he leads this ministry.

Lord, in your mercy, hear our prayer. We thank you for the work of those who organized the October Open Houses. We ask that any seeds of curiosity and faith that were planted would grow in the coming days and weeks.

Lord, in your mercy, hear our prayer. This morning, we pray for our missionaries who take your love into the world. For Catherine Gwinnett in Campbell River, working with North American Indigenous Ministries.

[33 : 53] For Sharon Thompson with Wycliffe Bible Translators. And for the work of Ratnak International under Brian McConachie. Lord, in your mercy, hear our prayers.

In a world which has so many needs, it is almost overwhelming to know what to do. We will pray. We ask relief for the people of Bangkok who have been underwater for three weeks.

Despite their hardship, they have shown creativity, resilience, and determination. Please bring the floods under control for them. Lord, in your mercy, hear our prayer.

As winter sets in and the nights get colder, we think of those in our city and communities who do not have a warm place to call home and no family circle to call their own.

You are their Lord, and we ask you to bless those who are lonely and broken. Lord, in your mercy, hear our prayer. O Lord, our God, in whom we live and move and have our being, help us never to forget that you are beside us through this day.

[35 : 04] O Lord Jesus, who has promised that you are with us always, help us never to forget your presence all this day. So grant that all this day every word we speak may be fit for you to hear, that every deed we do may be fit for you to see.

That every thought of our mind and every emotion of our heart may be fit to bear your scrutiny. Grant that every task we do may be so well done that we can take it and show it to you.

Grant that every pleasure in which we share may be so honorable and so clean that we can ask you to share it with us. So bring us to evening with nothing left undone, nothing badly done, with nothing to regret, and nothing to make us ashamed.

Through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.