

Bethlehem: A Town of Royalty

1 Samuel 16:1-13

(preached Pine Grove 12/2/18; Sunday PM)

Introduction

Each of us have images associated with certain towns and cities..

If you say Abbeville, SC, I will tell you that I see my dad's 78 Red Food truck broke down on the side of the road there as young boy.

If you say Summerton, SC, I will tell you that I see the Dairy Queen located there off I 95 where we would stop after leaving Santee Cooper for a burger and ice cream.

If you say Gallivants Ferry SC, I will tell you that the sign by the road there meant we were only a 30 minutes or so from arriving at Myrtle Beach for vacation.

This is the the names of places do to us.

They are etched in our minds as places of happiness or anxiety or maybe dread and despair..

This is power in the name of a simple town.

Bethlehem also has that power over us.

Bethlehem is the birthplace of our Savior, the one who rescued us from the death sentence of sin.

Bethlehem is the place where salvation came into the world in a bouncing baby boy..

Bethlehem is the place where two teenage kids gave birth to the King of kings..

And so, we have started a closer examination of this incredible place..

A town that only takes up 4 square miles of space today on the world map..

A town that is home to only 25,000 people today..

A town that would probably have only a few red lights if it were in modern day America..

This little town that was such a big part of God's plans in the world is now a place for us to examine and learn from in the age in which we live..

Last week, we saw that Bethlehem is a town of redemption..

It was the place where two widows named Ruth and Naomi found hope in a redeemer named Boaz.

This week, we look at Bethlehem as a place of royalty..

This little town 6 miles southwest of Jerusalem is going to be home to the two greatest kings in world history...

The first will be David, and the second will be Christ..

Now we know the story of Jesus and Bethlehem, but we may not remember the story of David and Bethlehem...

Yet, that was the first example of royalty in Bethlehem...

So tonight, let's look at this story in 1 Samuel 16:1-13...

We will look at this event in 3 parts..

The first part is THE MISSION in verses 1-5..

I. The Mission (1-5)

Let's simply begin the mission in verse 1..

16 Now the Lord said to Samuel, "How long will you grieve over Saul, since I have rejected him from being king over Israel?"

1 Samuel was written as Israel was undergoing a change of leadership..

Up until 1 Samuel, God had ruled his people by appointing their leaders, like Moses and Joshua...

And then in the years after that, God had sent judges to rule over Israel and settle disputes...

But in 1 Samuel, the people of Israel wanted a king like the other nations...

And God had given them Saul...

Who started out his kingship is a good way...

He showed humility...

He showed leadership in defeating Israel's enemies...

But it wasn't long before Saul disobeyed God, - not once but twice, and God rejected Saul as king over Israel...

Now, Saul was not removed from ruling Israel.

In fact, he is going to rule for another 20 years or possible 37 years depending upon how we understand the timeline of 1 Samuel.

But even though he is still the king, Samuel is grieved that the kingdom has been taken away from him..

And why would he grieve?

Well, Samuel would certainly be upset because he had played a role in anointing Saul and presenting him to the people...

He would grieve because he had no idea was the future was going to hold for Israel..

He would simply grieve because his friend had fallen into sin and disobedience...

And then we see what God then says to Samuel at the end of verse 1.....

Fill your horn with oil and go; I will send you to Jesse the Bethlehemite, for I have selected a king for Myself among his sons.”

Couple things to notice here....

First, God has allowed Samuel to grieve over Saul...

But second, God does not allow Samuel to grieve forever....

It is now time to get up and go find another king, and that king is going to be David...

And I think we learn a third thing here....

God gives hope in the midst of our grief...

Sorrow last for the night, but joy comes in the morning..

The famous saying tells us don't cry over spilled milk....

I think it is ok to cry when the milk spills, but then there's a time to get up and pour another glass...

Now is the time for Samuel to get up and go anoint a new king for Israel...

Look, David is not going to go to the throne and replace Saul immediately.

Saul still has years left in his reign, but the next king is going to be waiting in the wings...

It is Saul's job to make sure that this next king of Israel is anointed and ready once God decides Saul's reign is over..

But Samuel responds in an unusual way in verse 2...

2 But Samuel said, "How can I go? When Saul hears of it, he will kill me."

Samuel knows he must go.

This is a command from the LORD, but how could he go?

Here's a map of Israel...

Samuel is in Ramah, his home, and Saul is in Gibeah, his hometown...

And God has just told him Samuel to head to Bethlehem...

Samuel knows exactly what lays between him and Bethlehem, and that is a walk right through Gibeah..

And even if he didn't walk through Gibeah, word would get out that Samuel was headed there...

Saul probably had spies to watch Samuel's every move...

And Samuel knows that Saul is not going to allow him to anoint another king...

Furthermore, God has told Samuel to take his horn with oil...

Saul would know what a horn filled with oil meant...

It would mean that Samuel was preparing to anoint a new king...

And so Samuel fears for his life.

So, the LORD tells him what to do at the end of verse 2...

“And the Lord said, “Take a heifer with you and say, ‘I have come to sacrifice to the Lord.’ 3 You shall invite Jesse to the sacrifice, and I will show you what you shall do; and you shall anoint for Me the one whom I [a]designate to you.”

Ok, here's the plan Samuel...

Take the horn and oil but also take a heifer, and tell anyone who asks what you are doing that you are going to offer a sacrifice to the LORD.

Many would assume that the oil was part of the sacrifice, and since you are a priest...

The idea of going to do a sacrifice was not alarm anyone too much....

Now, here is distraction #1 for a lot of people because many people have accused Samuel and God of being dishonest here...

But that is not the case at all...

Samuel is going to sacrifice the heifer.

What God told him to say is completely true..

There will be a sacrifice.

There is no dishonesty here at all.

Take your horn with oil, take your heifer, and tell everyone that you are headed to Bethlehem to do a sacrifice.

There's no need to advertise that you are also going to anoint a new king.

And so in verse 4, Saul sets out for Bethlehem and finally arrives in town..

4 So Samuel did what the Lord said, and came to Bethlehem. And the elders of the city came trembling to meet him and said, "Do you come in peace?" 5 He said, "In peace; I have come to sacrifice to the Lord. Consecrate yourselves and come with me to the sacrifice. He also consecrated Jesse and his sons and invited them to the sacrifice."

When he arrives in town, the town council comes out terrified...

Why would they be so frightened?

Maybe they are fearful that some great sin has happened in their town...

They know that Samuel is a prophet and judge of God...

It would be like the FBI rolling into Fairview and setting up a command post at the café...

People would run and ask what was going on....

In addition to that, word may have gotten to Bethlehem that Samuel just hacked Agag into pieces at Gilgal.

So, the elders of the city run out to meet him trembling...

Samuel calms their fears and says that he comes in peace, but asks the elders and all the town to go consecrate themselves to the LORD...

In preparation for a sacrifice...

This would have the effect of sending everyone in Bethlehem to their homes....

So that they could begin cleaning themselves in preparation of the sacrifice...

And that would allow Samuel to head to Jesse's house almost unnoticed to everyone else...

So the mission has begun, but now we get to verses 6-11, where we turn to THE MISSING...

II. The Missing (6-11)

The scene shifts to Jesse's house in verse 6...

6 When they entered, he looked at Eliab and thought, "Surely the Lord's anointed is before Him."

In verse 6 as the people of Bethlehem are busy consecrating themselves for the sacrifice, Samuel is in Jesse's house, knowing that one of his sons is going to the next king of Israel...

The first of Jesse's son to catch Samuel's eye is Eliab...

He must have had that look to him...

Probably tall....square jaw..... great smile.....

All the traits of what a king should look like...

But then we read this in verse 7...

7 But the Lord said to Samuel, "Do not look at his appearance or at the height of his stature, because I have rejected him; for [b]God sees not as man sees, for man looks at the outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart."

That is an incredible look into the mind and heart of God...

In case you didn't already know, God is not forced to act and choose who we want Him to choose...

God is not obsessed with outward appearance...

God looks past the exterior and right into the heart....

Guess who makes decisions in the Bible based upon what they see on the outside?

Scribes and Pharisees...

Now, the point is not that you need to be ugly to please God...

The point is that the outside of a man is not always an indication of what is on the inside...

And so even Samuel is corrected in his thinking here...

And that is real interesting because Samuel has always been the hero of this book...

He has always been the one who has tried to please God, but even Samuel gets it wrong here....

And what is the point of that?

The point is that only God knows what is best for Israel...

And sometimes the one who is best is not always the one who looks the best from the outside....

So, Samuel continues the search in verses 8-10...

8 Then Jesse called Abinadab and made him pass before Samuel. And he said, "The Lord has not chosen this one either." 9 Next Jesse made [c]Shammah pass by. And he said, "The Lord has not chosen this one either." 10 Thus Jesse made seven of his sons pass before Samuel. But Samuel said to Jesse, "The Lord has not chosen these."

Okay, we have eliminated 7 of Jesse's sons...

It is none of them, but is one of Jesse's sons missing?

Verse 11...

11 And Samuel said to Jesse, "Are these all the children?" And he said, "There remains yet the youngest, and behold, he is tending the sheep." Then Samuel said to Jesse, "Send and [d]bring him; for we will not sit down until he comes here."

Now, this is interesting for a few reasons...

Jesse didn't even call to David to get him to come inside and get washed up for the sacrifice...

What are we to think of that?

Well, nothing more than what is here I guess, but I can't help feel for David a little bit here..

The youngest is made to stay behind and watch the sheep....

We would expect Samuel to say...

“Oh, you have sheep! Oh well that's fine. I understand why he's not here..”

“Don't worry about it. God must have been wrong in sending me to you.”

But Samuel believes the word of God and simply tells Jesse...

“Go get him. In fact, we aren't going to offer the sacrifice in town and eat the meal of the leftovers until he gets here..”

Let's now move to the final verses of this section which describe for us the arrival of..

III. The Monarch (12-13)

Verse 12...

12 So he sent and brought him in. Now he was ruddy, with beautiful eyes and a handsome appearance. And the Lord said, "Arise, anoint him; for this is he." 13 Then Samuel took the horn of oil and anointed him in the midst of his brothers; and the Spirit of the Lord came mightily upon David from that day forward. And Samuel arose and went to Ramah.

Now, David was ruddy.

That's not a word we use everyday, but it simply means red...

So, David was a handsome red haired teenager or possibly in his early 20s with beautiful eyes...

And when he walked in, God said anoint him...

So Samuel poured the oil on him in the middle of his brothers in the house...

And then God's Spirit came upon David in a mighty way...

Now before we draw some principles from 1 Samuel 16:1-13, let me remind you of some truths about the Holy Spirit in the OT..

Here are the basics of the Holy Spirit when we read about him in the OT..

The Spirit has existed as part of the Trinity forever...

Father, Son, and Spirit...

In our time, in the church age, the Spirit indwells every believer...

We can talk about that more of what that means at another time...

But in the OT, the Spirit would come upon people and also depart from people...

And what you need to remember is that the Spirit's presence in the OT was not always an indication of salvation..

The person empowered in the OT by the Spirit may or may not have been saved...

The Spirit would simply come upon someone in the OT to empower them to do a great task...

Saul was empowered by the Spirit to lead Israel into battle and win great victories...

So, the Spirit comes upon David here to empower him to do some great things as well....

However, the Spirit is also going to make David a marked man as well...

Though he is going to slay giants, he is also going to be on the run for his life as well....

The gift of God's Spirit upon David is a blessing, but the presence of the Spirit is also going to lead to conflict with others...

No much has changed even to this very night...

A person gets saved and then sealed with the Spirit, but that is no guarantee that there won't be trouble for the rest of his or her life...

When that happens, you are in good company...

The Spirit came upon David and he ended up hiding in caves...

The Spirit came upon Jesus at His baptism and he was sent to Satanic temptation in the wilderness..

The same for Paul...the same for you....the same for me...

Right here in Bethlehem, in a place where the Spirit of God is going to do some mighty works in the world, David is empowered by the Spirit in the living room of his father's house...

Israel's greatest king was actually a forgotten son right before Samuel anointed him..

Conclusion

So what do we learn here in terms of this little town that served as the place for the anointing of David?

#1 - Bethlehem is proof that God works continually.

When Samuel heard that Saul's time as king was over, he was filled with grief.

What had Samuel done wrong in anointing Him?

What was going to become of Israel?

What would God do now?

You fill this same sadness and anxiety when things in your life don't go as planned...

What did you do wrong?

How is your life going to change?

Does God even care?

Well, Bethlehem is proof that God already has plan in place..

Bethlehem was the home of Israel's next king.

Bethlehem was the home of what God was going to do next.

Bethlehem was a reason for Samuel to stop worrying..

Bethlehem was evidence that God is always two steps ahead of where we are..

So I would tell you tonight..

In the darkest of days, God has a Bethlehem where he is already working on tomorrow...

While Samuel was grieving, God was at work preparing David as an end to Samuel's sadness and anxiety...

#2 - Bethlehem is proof that God looks inwardly.

David and Bethlehem have much in common in that neither had an outstanding outward appearance..

David didn't look the part of a king ,and Bethlehem didn't look the part of a birthplace of a king...

Here is a picture of the home where Abraham Lincoln was born..

A simple one room cabin on the frontier of Kentucky.

Not quite the place you would expect the 16th president of the United States to be born...

Well, Bethlehem and I am sure Jesse's house didn't look like the place where royalty is born, but God is not concerned with outward appearance..

And further proof of that is that David's king was born in a feeding trough in the same podunk town..

Jesus came into the world, not in a cabin and not in a shepherd's home, but rather Jesus came into the world in a place where sheep eat..

Yet, God is not concerned with outward appearance.

God is concerned with the heart.

Bethlehem is proof that outward appearance is no guarantee of inward goodness..

Heaven is not a destination for the most beautiful or the strongest or the wealthiest..

Heaven is a destination for all those who love God from the heart..

Sadly, the world spends some much time and effort on the outside to impress man...

Yet the reality is that God looks beyond the outside to what is in the heart..

Sadly, there will be a lot of people in hell who look like they should have made it to heaven on the outside...

And there will also be a lot of people who look like they should have went to hell who make it to heaven..

God is not a God of outward appearance, and Bethlehem is forever proof of that.

Let us pray.