

Lost Donkeys and a Found Crown

1 Sam. 9:1-10:16

(preached 4/29/15; Pine Grove BC Wed PM)

Introduction

.While I was in seminary, most of you know that I worked in Juniors ministry at the church we attended out there.

Juniors ministry consisted roughly 300 or so 4th – 6th graders.

Well, it is both a very rewarding ministry and a difficult one as well.

Often times, I used students as part of the lesson on Sunday mornings...

And at times, I often needed to select a particular student.

Sometimes, I liked to use a particular rowdy kid to take part.

It seems that if you can involve a disruptive kid, he will often be more likely to pay attention the rest of the time and not disturb.

But sometimes, I needed to select a child who knew a little bit about the Bible to take part.

Well, the goal is to make it look random as possible when you are selecting these kids.

It's best not to appear to have favorites among students, and it's also best to not appear to be picking on a particularly bad kid.

So what I would do is fill a bag or bowl with slips of paper...

And I would say to the kids...

I am going to pick a name out of this bag to help me today...

Well, they assume that everyone's name is in there, but the truth is that all the slips have the same name on them.

I was always careful not to lie and say that everyone's name was in the name...

I always simply said, "I am going to find a helper by reaching into this bag and pulling out a name."

The only requirement on my part was to make sure all the names were the same.

Well, that is a look behind the scenes of how to make sure that who you want to choose is the one who is actually chosen.

In 1 Samuel 9-10 tonight, we are getting a look behind the scenes into how God chose Saul to be the first king of Israel.

And I hate to ruin part of next week's lesson, but it will help our understanding of what we are going to be looking at tonight..

You see next week in the second of 1 Samuel 10, Saul is going to be publically crowned as the first king of Israel...

And the process of selecting him next week is going to appear to be totally random...

We are going to see that Samuel is going to cast lots and the roll of the dice is going to fall upon Saul to be Israel's first king...

But we are going to know better...

First, we know that God controls the casting of the lot...

Proverbs 16:33...

³³ ***The lot is cast into the lap,
But its every decision is from the Lord.***

WE also know better than to think that Saul just happened to be selected king because....

#2, we have 1 Samuel 9 and the first part of 10 that are going to reveal that God has already selected Saul to be the next king.

Now as we look at how God chose Saul to be the first king of His people, I think we are going to get a close look at God's sovereignty.

What does it mean that God is in control?

Nearly all of us would affirm that, but what does that look like in the world...

Well, we are going to see four ways that God brings forth His plan in the world...

I. God Works on Ordinary Days (9:1-4)

II. God Brings Forth His Plan in Various Methods (9:5-14)

A. Arouses our Memory (5-6)

B. Supplies our Needs (7-10)

C. Directs our Steps (11-14)

III. God Prepares Hearts (9:15-10:1)

IV. God Equips People (10:2-16)

I. God Works on Ordinary Days (9:1-4)

So, let's begin our look behind the scenes by reading the first 2 verses of chapter 9...

9 Now there was a man of Benjamin whose name was Kish the son of Abiel, the son of Zeror, the son of Becorath, the son of Aphiah, the son of a Benjamite, a mighty man of ¹valor. ² He had a son whose name was Saul, a choice and handsome man, and there was not a more handsome person than he among the sons of Israel; from his shoulders and up he was taller than any of the people.

Now, just to get our minds in gear, let's review what we saw last week in chapter 8.

Though God had given Israel their first victory over the Philistines in 3 tries in chapter 7, one chapter later the people are ready to trade God in...

For a human king.

Up to this point in their history, Israel never had a human king.

They were led by Moses and Joshua and a group of judges, but never a king...

But that is what they wanted...

And chapter 8 was the story of Israel getting what they wanted.

Though God warned them that a human king would bring some severe consequences into the nation, the people still asked for a king..

And so in the final verse of chapter 8, Samuel sent every man to his own city in preparation for getting a king.

And that brings us to the first verses of chapter 9, where we meet Saul.

Couple things to notice about Saul.

He was from the tribe of Benjamin...

He was handsome...

And he was tall.

Just file those truths away in your memory; they will come in handy as we move through 1 Samuel.

So, Saul is introduced and then a problem is introduced in the next set of verses...

³ Now the donkeys of Kish, Saul's father, were lost. So Kish said to his son Saul, "Take now with you one of the servants, and arise, go search for the donkeys." ⁴ He passed through the hill country of Ephraim and passed through the land of

Shalishah, but they did not find them. Then they passed through the land of Shaalim, but they were not there. Then he passed through the land of the Benjamites, but they did not find them.

We may not think much about some lost donkeys, but in this day, it was a big problem.

It would be the equivalent of losing a paycheck today.

Donkeys were a sign of wealth and possessing them was a source of income for a family.

So, some missing donkeys would be a cause for concern.

And Saul's father sends him and a servant out to find the missing donkeys.

Put yourself in Saul's shoes.

He has no idea he is about to first king of Israel.

To him, this is just another ordinary day on the farm.

His dad asked him to go look for some missing livestock, and he simply obeys.

Now, what does that mean to us?

Simply put, being obedient to do the little everyday tasks can lead to great blessing.

Saul was simply obeying his father, but that obedience is going to carry him to a place of great blessing.

And that is a real good example of God working on an ordinary day in the life of an ordinary person.

As people we tend to ride a roller coaster in our lives..

We get ourselves so prepared and ready for what we think are big days in our life...

And we make sure that we do everything just right in preparation for those events...

But the pattern for the believer is to all things right every day.

To be obedient every day in all things because we never know what God is doing on ordinary days in our life.

Being obedient in ordinary tasks keeps the door of blessing open in our lives.

Saul obeyed his dad on a normal day in his life, but it led to his life being changed forever.

That leads us to verse 5 and the second part of our outline....

II. God Brings Forth His Plan in Various Methods (9:5-14)

A. Arouses our Memory (5-6)

So, Saul and his servant set out to look for the missing donkeys, but after some searching, they still couldn't find them...

And then we read this in verse 5....

⁵ When they came to the land of Zuph, Saul said to his servant who was with him, "Come, and let us return, or else my father will cease to be concerned about the donkeys and will become anxious for us." ⁶ He said to him, "Behold now, there is a man of God in this city, and the man is held in honor; all that he says surely comes true. Now let us go there, perhaps he can tell us about our journey on which we have set out."

I have a little map to look at on the screen.

Saul was from Gibeah, and his search for the missing donkeys led him to the land of Zuph, which may include a number of cities...

But while in Zuph, Saul is ready to head back home.

The search has turned up nothing, and he fears his father will now be more worried about his son than the donkeys...

But just then in verse 6, the servant remembers that there is a “man of God” in this city.

So, the servant convinces Saul to go visit this man of God to get information about where the donkeys are.

Now, isn't it interesting that the servant just happened to remember this...

And often God just simply arouses our memory at the right time.

He gives us instruction on what to do now as he directs our thoughts to a certain place, time or truth.

So, the two set out to find this man, but there is a problem in verse 7...

B. Supplies our Needs (7-10)

⁷ Then Saul said to his servant, “But behold, if we go, what shall we bring the man? For the bread is gone from our sack and there is no present to bring to the man of God. What do we have?”

It was customary to offer a gift to a prophet of God, yet Saul said wondered what would they bring to this man when they went to see him.

Verse 8...

⁸ *The servant answered Saul again and said, “Behold, I have in my hand a fourth of a shekel of silver; I will give it to the man of God and he will tell us our way.”*⁹ *(Formerly in Israel, when a man went to inquire of God, he used to say, “Come, and let us go to the seer”; for he who is called a prophet now was formerly called a seer.)*
¹⁰ *Then Saul said to his servant, “Well said; come, let us go.” So they went to the city where the man of God was.*

It seems a strange coincidence that the servant just happened to remember this man...

And then he just happened to have some silver to offer to him if they went to pay him a visit.

There are no coincidences with God.

If God puts you on His path, he will fill your pockets with what you need.

So, the servant reached took the silver, and the two set out to go see this man of God.

So, first God sovereignly brought a thought into the man's mind...

Then he sovereignly brought some silver into his hand...

But there is one more way we see God at work here...

He directs their steps right to the man of God...

C. Directs our Steps (11-14)

Verse 11...

¹¹ As they went up the slope to the city, they found young women going out to draw water and said to them, "Is the seer here?" ¹² They answered them and said, "He is; ^[b]see, he is ahead of you. Hurry now, for he has come into the city today, for the people have a sacrifice on the high place today.

¹³ As soon as you enter the city you will find him before he goes up to the high place to eat, for the people will not eat until he comes, because he must bless the sacrifice; afterward those who are invited will eat. Now therefore, go up for you will find him at once." ¹⁴ So they went up to the city. As they came into the city, behold, Samuel was coming out toward them to go up to the high place.

Consider this....

You would think it would have been enough for God to put the idea in their head to see this man...

And you think it would have been enough for God to supply a gift to give to this man...

But on top of that, God is going to take them directly to him...

First they meet some ladies, who direct them straight to this man of God...

Who is none other than Samuel.

Now again up to this point, remember....

Saul and his servant are just simply going about an ordinary day...

They are simply seeking out the man of God to help them find the donkeys...

They still have no idea what God has planned for Saul..

Yet, this brings us to our third outline point beginning in verse 15...

III. God Prepares Hearts (9:15-10:1)

In verses 15-17, we get the key to understanding this entire passage that we are reading...

¹⁵ Now a day before Saul's coming, the Lord had ^[c]revealed this to Samuel saying, ¹⁶ "About this time tomorrow I will send you a man from the land of Benjamin, and you shall anoint him to be prince over My people Israel; and he will deliver My people from the hand of the Philistines. For I have regarded My people, because their cry has come to Me." ¹⁷ When Samuel saw Saul, the Lord ^[d]said to him, "Behold, the man of whom I spoke to you! This one shall rule over My people."

The big secret is that God has already selected Saul to be the next king.

And according to these verses, the first one to know that was Samuel, who was told that the day before.

Now notice something here is what God tells Samuel...

He says that he has heard the cry of the people and is sending Saul to deliver them from the hand of the Philistines.

Well, it is clear that the Philistines are a thorn in Israel's side.

Every time they turn around, the Philistines are ready for a fight, and Saul is going to be a help in Israel's fight against the Philistines...

But isn't it amazing that God is going their selfish cry for a king and he is going to use that king to answer their cry for help.

There is two things going on here in the person.

First, the people are getting what they want.

They want a human king instead of God as their king.

But they also want deliverance from their enemies.

Now, where does deliverance come from?

Well God is their only source of help.

And you would think that God would simply abandon his people, give them a human king, and then smile when they go down in defeat.

But God doesn't think like we do.

What is our human nature?

We give people what they want and then we sit back and watch while they hurt themselves with it..

Almost enjoying and then saying "I told you so."

But that is not the nature of God.

He knows that a king is not good for Israel.

Yet instead of giving them a king and then watching them get destroyed by the Philistines..

HE is going to give them a king, but he is also going to use that king to deliver them.

O the grace of God!

To see our foolish requests, then to grant them and protect us from the horrible consequences.

That is mercy and compassion at its finest.

And the story picks back up after this juicy bit of information about Saul in verse 18...

¹⁸ Then Saul approached Samuel in the gate and said, "Please tell me where the seer's house is."

¹⁹ Samuel answered Saul and said, "I am the seer. Go up before me to the high place, for you shall eat with me today; and in the morning I will let you go, and will tell you all that is on your mind."

²⁰ As for your donkeys which were lost three days ago, do not set your mind on them, for they have been found. And for whom is all that is desirable in Israel? Is it not for you and for all your father's household?" ²¹ Saul replied, "Am I not a Benjamite, of the smallest of the tribes of Israel,

*and my family the least of all the families of the
[e]tribe of Benjamin? Why then do you speak to me
in this way?"*

Here is a great scene.

Samuel knows exactly what is going on, but Saul has no idea.

He came to ask about some donkeys.

And now he is going to eat with Samuel.

And then in verse 20, Samuel drops the bombshell on this conversation...

Don't worry about the donkeys, they are fine.

And then he tells Saul that he and his family are the focus of all of Israel's hopes...

What does that mean?

Israel is looking for a king, and that king is going to come from your family and it is going to be you Saul.

Saul replies humbly...

"My family is nothing."

The tribe of Benjamin is the smallest.

It is almost his way of saying...

“You sure you have the right guy?”

But Samuel knows this is God’s chosen because God Himself pointed him out to Samuel...

And so in verse 22, they go eat.

22 Then Samuel took Saul and his servant and brought them into the hall and gave them a place at the head of those who were invited, who were about thirty men. 23 Samuel said to the cook, “[f]Bring the portion that I gave you, concerning which I said to you, ‘Set it [g]aside.’” 24 Then the cook took up the leg with what was on it and set it before Saul. And Samuel said, “Here is what has been reserved! Set it before you and eat, because it has been kept for you until the appointed time, [h]since I said I have invited the people.” So Saul ate with Samuel that day.

Saul gets the choice portion of the meal.

He is now God’s anointed king, and he is first treated that way at this meal...

Even though no one except Samuel actually understood what was going on.

There is no indication that the dinner guests even knew.

Saul probably is still in shock.

Remember, he just came to ask about his missing donkeys...

And now he sitting down with the man of God and eating a meal prepared for a king.

Then Saul gets a better understanding of what is happening in the next set of verses..

Verse 25...

25 When they came down from the high place into the city, Samuel spoke with Saul on the ^[i]roof.

26 And they arose early; and at daybreak Samuel called to Saul on the roof, saying, "Get up, that I may send you away." So Saul arose, and both he and Samuel went out into the street. 27 As they were going down to the edge of the city, Samuel said to Saul, "Say to the servant that he might go ahead of us and pass on, but you remain standing now, that I may proclaim the word of God to you." 10 Then Samuel took the flask of oil, poured it on his head, kissed him and said, "Has not the Lord anointed you a ruler over His inheritance?"

As Samuel and Saul prepare to part ways, Saul is preparing to reveal more of what is happening..

They head to the edge of the city and Samuel even sends Saul's servant away so even he can't hear what is going on...

And he begins to tell Saul that God has chosen him as the first king of Israel.

Then Samuel blesses him and anoints Saul's head with oil...

And with that symbolic act, Saul is now God's chosen man to be king of Israel.

And what do we see about God's sovereignty in this section?

God simply prepares hearts to carry out his plan.

HE prepared Samuel's heart to meet Saul a day before it happened.

He even slowly prepared Saul's heart for what was about to occur.

His heart was set on finding some donkeys and going back home....

But then he changed his heart to go meet Samuel...

He changed to heart to forget about the donkeys and accept an invitation to dinner..

He even prepared his heart to sit down and eat a king's meal, even though he probably is not clear on all that is going on...

As I look back over my life, I get glimpses of how God prepared my heart to make the decisions that I have made over the years..

My life hasn't been a series of God's voice from heavn telling me what to do..

But he has changed my desires, my likes, my preferences to line them up with His will for my life.

And here is an example in the Scriptures of that taking place.

Saul never heard a voice out of heaven telling him to go meet Samuel for supper so he could be anointed the first king of Israel.

No, he went out looking for donkeys and ending up finding a crown...

And that is the providence of God at work...

In the minute things of life...

In the ordinary tasks of life...

In the ordinary people in life...

God brings forth his plans..

It doesn't happen under the spotlights of the big stage often.

It simply happens as God's people live lives of simple obedience.

That is where God quietly works to direct hearts to bring forth His plans.

God is a sovereign God, but he is not necessarily a loud God.

Much of his work takes place without little notice..

And I am grateful for that because that means there a purpose in everything we do each day...

But not only does God prepare hearts to do his will, he also equips people to do his work...

This final outline point is found in verse 2-16 of chapter 10...

IV. God Equips People (10:2-16)

Verse 2...

² When you go from me today, then you will find two men close to Rachel's tomb in the territory of Benjamin at Zelzah; and they will say to you, 'The donkeys which you went to look for have been found. Now behold, your father has ^[a]ceased to be concerned about the donkeys and is anxious for you, saying, "What shall I do about my son?"'

³ Then you will go on further from there, and you will come as far as the ^[b]oak of Tabor, and there three men going up to God at Bethel will meet you, one carrying three young goats, another carrying three loaves of bread, and another carrying a jug of wine; ⁴ and they will greet you and give you two loaves of bread, which you will accept from their hand. ⁵ Afterward you will come to ^[c]the hill of God where the Philistine garrison is; and it shall be as soon as you have come there to the city, that you will meet a group of prophets coming down from the high place with harp, tambourine, flute, and a lyre before them, and they will be prophesying. ⁶ Then the Spirit of the Lord will come upon you mightily, and you shall prophesy with them and be changed into another man. ⁷ It shall be when these signs come to you, do for yourself what ^[d]the occasion requires, for God is with you. ⁸ And you shall go down before me to

Gilgal; and behold, I will come down to you to offer burnt offerings and sacrifice peace offerings. You shall wait seven days until I come to you and show you what you should do.”

All of what you see in these verses is God confirming what Samuel had told Saul.

Samuel begins to list all this interesting events that are about to occur in Saul's life on his journey back home.

These are meant to confirm in Saul's heart that God was behind what he had seen, heard and experienced over the past few days.

You are going to meet two men who know where the donkeys are...

You are going to meet three men who will give you some bread..

You are then going to meet some prophets of God with instruments...

Then you are going to get the Spirit of God and will be able to prophesy with these men..

Then you will go to Gilgal and wait for me there...

Now, obviously, this is not an ordinary day in the life of a farmer's son.

And all of these events will be assurance that God is with you in the task that he has called you to do.

And that is yet another example of God's sovereignty.

He knows we are frail creatures, constantly battling doubt and unbelief.

So even though his hand is clearly working in the life of Saul...

To cause the donkeys to disappear..

To cause him to meet Samuel...

To cause him to be anointed king..

God graciously continues to encourage his faith..

God doesn't take us somewhere he wants us to go and then leave us to fend for ourselves...

No! Where God sends, he also equips.

Moses stuttered, but when God sent him to Pharaoh, his speaking ability was not an issue.

He communicated just fine.

And if Saul is his chosen king, his trust in God needs to grow.

So, he gives Saul some signs that indicate that nothing is beyond God's control.

You need to find the donkeys, some men will come with news about them.

You need some bread because you are hungry, some men will give you some bread.

You need some wisdom? God's spirit will come upon you and empower you.

I am with you Saul, and I am not only going to say it, I'm going to show it!

Look at verse 9...

⁹ Then it happened when he turned his back to leave Samuel, God changed ^[e]his heart; and all those signs came about on that day. ¹⁰ When they came to ^[f]the hill there, behold, a group of prophets met him; and the Spirit of God came upon him mightily, so that he prophesied among them.

Is God a God of His Word?

You bet he is!

And Saul learned that very quickly on this day, and his faith in God grew..

Finally, two interesting things happens in verses 11-16...

The first is Saul's interaction with the crowd...

¹¹ It came about, when all who knew him previously saw that he prophesied now with the prophets, that the people said to one another, "What has happened to the son of Kish? Is Saul also among the prophets?" ¹² A man there said, "Now, who is their father?" Therefore it became a proverb: "Is Saul also among the prophets?" ¹³ When he had finished prophesying, he came to the high place.

Simply put, the people who knew Saul couldn't believe what they were seeing.

Saul? A Prophet?

Yet, that is what they were seeing.

Quick lesson for us all.

When God changes a man's heart, the world should be stunned by what they see.

Saul was different, and it was clear to everyone.

The second thing to note happens in verses 14-16...

As Saul speaks with his uncle...

¹⁴ Now Saul's uncle said to him and his servant, "Where did you go?" And he said, "To look for the donkeys. When we saw that they could not be found, we went to Samuel." ¹⁵ Saul's uncle said, "Please tell me what Samuel said to you." ¹⁶ So Saul said to his uncle, "He told us plainly that the donkeys had been found." But he did not tell him about the matter of the kingdom which Samuel had mentioned.

Of all the things that had happened in Saul's life that day...

When asked about it, he only told his uncle that the donkeys were safe...

No mention of dinner with Samuel...

No mention of what Samuel had told him...

No mention of Samuel anointing him king...

Why is that?

Saul's heart has been changed by God.

And guess what a sure sign of that is?

Humility.

We are going to see more of this in the lesson next week, but I think we get a glimpse of that right here..

Look, I would have been calling the newspaper and TV station if it were me..

But not Saul...

He has been called to an important job, but he refuses to act like an important man...

And though that will change in the coming chapters, it is good to see here...

Conclusion

How would I sum this up as we get ready to leave....

God does in mysterious ways.

It is true.

But he doesn't work in mysterious people..

He works in everyday people living in everyday obedience...

And then he takes that obedience and turns it into tremendous blessing.

Let us pray.