

## **1 Samuel 15:34-16:13**

Then Samuel left for Ramah, but Saul went up to his home in Gibeah of Saul. Until the day Samuel died, he did not go to see Saul again, though Samuel mourned for him. And the Lord regretted that he had made Saul king over Israel.

### **Samuel anoints David**

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.'

But Samuel said, 'How can I go? If Saul hears about it, he will kill me.'

The Lord said, 'Take a heifer with you and say, "I have come to sacrifice to the Lord." Invite Jesse to the sacrifice, and I will show you what to do. You are to anoint for me the one I indicate.'

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?'

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.

When they arrived, Samuel saw Eliab and thought, 'Surely the Lord's anointed stands here before the Lord.'

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 people look at. People look at the outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart.'

Then Jesse called Abinadab and made him pass in front of Samuel. But Samuel said, 'The Lord has not chosen this one either.' Jesse then made Shammah pass by, but Samuel said, 'Nor has the Lord chosen this one.' Jesse made seven of his sons pass before Samuel, but Samuel said to him, 'The Lord has not chosen these.' So he asked Jesse, 'Are these all the sons you have?'

'There is still the youngest,' Jesse answered. 'He is tending the sheep.'

Samuel said, 'Send for him; we will not sit down until he arrives.'

So he sent for him and had him brought in. He was glowing with health and had a fine appearance and handsome features.

Then the Lord said, 'Rise and anoint him; this is the one.'

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 powerfully upon David. Samuel then went to Ramah.

## **Mark 4:26-34**

### **The parable of the growing seed**

He also said, 'This is what the kingdom of God is like. A man scatters seed on the ground. Night and day, whether he sleeps or gets up, the seed sprouts and grows, though he does not know how. All by itself the soil produces corn – first the stalk, then the ear, then the full grain in the ear. As soon as the corn is ripe, he puts the sickle to it, because the harvest has come.'

### **The parable of the mustard seed**

Again he said, 'What shall we say the kingdom of God is like, or what parable shall we use to describe it? It is like a mustard seed, which is the smallest of all seeds on earth. Yet when planted, it grows and becomes the largest of all garden plants, with such big branches that the birds can perch in its shade.'

With many similar parables Jesus spoke the word to them, as much as they could understand. He did not say anything to them without using a parable. But when he was alone with his own disciples, he explained everything.

## **Reflection**

Both of today's readings are about things which appear to be small but become something large and mighty. Something that could easily be discounted as insignificant but if it is given a chance will reach a potential that will surprise people.

In the reading in 1 Samuel, God is planning who will become king after Saul's death. Saul will continue to be king for another 15 years but because his reign is so disastrous, God wants to get the next king in place. So Samuel goes to visit Jesse as God tells him that one of his sons is his chosen one. Jesse brings seven of his sons before Samuel, but he knows that none of them are who God is calling. In desperation Samuel asks if there are any other sons and he is told that the youngest is off tending sheep. He comes before Samuel and God confirms that this is his anointed one. And through David - the baby of the family, the unexpected king - God

sets in place the greatest king that Israel will have and a family line which will lead to Jesus.

Samuel had to look deeper to recognise who God was calling. When he sees Eliab, Jesse's oldest son, he is sure this is who God will want as king. But God says words which are powerful and beautiful: "Do not consider his appearance or his height, for I have rejected him. The Lord does not look at the things people look at. People look at the outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart."

With these words we see straight to the heart of God's love for us. A love based on who we are and not what we look like or what we can do. A love that sees our potential rather than our limitations. A love that has plans for our lives which go beyond our wildest dreams.

This is so countercultural to what the world around us tells us is important. Society tells us that how we look is important - that we should spend money and time on making ourselves beautiful. It tells us that the higher your job status is, the more valuable you are. It says that you matter when you are rich, when you achieve success, when you are powerful.

But the Kingdom of God is so much deeper and wonderful. Jesus tells us that it is like a mustard seed - that although it might appear to be small and insignificant it grows and grows to be the largest plant. And if, like me, you've ever spread a little too much mustard onto your sandwich you'll know the power that comes from that tiny little seed!

So if you feel insignificant, overlooked, discounted, that you have very little to offer then remember that the smallest things become mighty when they are planted and nurtured. If you compare yourself to others and always feel less popular, less attractive, less successful then remind yourself that God sees you as full of potential. If you doubt your ability then go back to the bible and read the stories of Moses, David, Mary and Paul and remember that throughout history he has called people who might not be the obvious choice but that he has always equipped them to do his work. And he will do the same with you because he is a God who has created each one of us uniquely to serve him in a way that only we can.

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