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*Sunday 4<sup>th</sup> July – Fifth Sunday after Trinity*  
*Readings: 2 Samuel 5:1-5, 9-10 & Mark 6:1-13*

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## **2 Samuel 5:1-5, 9-10**

### **David becomes king over Israel**

All the tribes of Israel came to David at Hebron and said, 'We are your own flesh and blood. In the past, while Saul was king over us, you were the one who led Israel on their military campaigns. And the Lord said to you, "You shall shepherd my people Israel, and you shall become their ruler."'

When all the elders of Israel had come to King David at Hebron, the king made a covenant with them at Hebron before the Lord, and they anointed David king over Israel.

David was thirty years old when he became king, and he reigned for forty years. In Hebron he reigned over Judah for seven years and six months, and in Jerusalem he reigned over all Israel and Judah for thirty-three years.

David then took up residence in the fortress and called it the City of David. He built up the area around it, from the terraces inwards. And he became more and more powerful, because the Lord God Almighty was with him.

## **Mark 6:1-13**

### **A prophet without honour**

Jesus left there and went to his hometown, accompanied by his disciples. When the Sabbath came, he began to teach in the synagogue, and many who heard him were amazed.

'Where did this man get these things?' they asked. 'What's this wisdom that has been given him? What are these remarkable miracles he is performing? Isn't this the carpenter? Isn't this Mary's son and the brother of James, Joseph, Judas and Simon? Aren't his sisters here with us?' And they took offence at him.

Jesus said to them, 'A prophet is not without honour except in his own town, among his relatives and in his own home.' He could not do any miracles there, except lay his hands on a few people who were ill and heal them. He was amazed at their lack of faith.

## **Jesus sends out the Twelve**

Then Jesus went around teaching from village to village. Calling the Twelve to him, he began to send them out two by two and gave them authority over impure spirits.

These were his instructions: 'Take nothing for the journey except a staff – no bread, no bag, no money in your belts. Wear sandals but not an extra shirt. Whenever you enter a house, stay there until you leave that town. And if any place will not welcome you or listen to you, leave that place and shake the dust off your feet as a testimony against them.'

They went out and preached that people should repent. They drove out many demons and anointed with oil many people who were ill and healed them.

## **Reflection**

My younger son has a children's Bible to which he is particularly attached. Showing a dedication to biblical study which puts his father somewhat to shame, he insists on being read a Bible story every night – always as the third of his three stories. Which means that, again putting me to shame, he has read the Bible cover to cover at least five times. Now this particular Bible may not be the most theologically learned version that I've ever come across and it possibly lacks some of the intricacy and detail of more traditional versions, but what it does have is a refreshing clarity, simplicity and directness that can make one feel rather wistful when ploughing through 1 and 2 Samuel in the NIV.

Now, it's often said that the Old Testament acts as a signpost to Jesus. To which my response - as I try to work through the dimensions of the tabernacle in Exodus or the calamities that befell Jeremiah – is that I've obviously not got a very good sense of direction. Yet in the Jesus Storybook Bible, at the end of pretty much every Old Testament story, the same point is repeated. The story points to Jesus.

Perhaps this is the point that those clever people in the Church of England who write the lectionary were trying to make when they decided to put 2 Samuel 5 and Mark 6 together in today's readings. At the beginning of 2 Samuel 5, David (who in a rather pleasing symmetry, gets a mention in the latest Jesus Storybook Bible story as the great-great-great-great-great grandfather of Jesus's earthly father, Joseph) is 30 years old. The shepherd boy, born in Bethlehem, is anointed King over Israel and is told by God - 'You will shepherd my people Israel.' While in Mark 6, Jesus, who Saint

Matthew describes in the first verse of the New Testament as 'the son of David', is, at the same age, at the beginning of his earthly ministry. A ministry in which he will be a shepherd for the whole world for the whole of time. And here he is sending out his disciples armed only with a staff ('used to hook a sheep's head to guide it back to the flock' as one source tells me).

Which means that, even with my very poor sense of direction (but with the help of the Jesus Storybook Bible) I think I can see the signpost. That David, the greatest King that Israel ever had, was just a forerunner to Jesus, the Lord and Saviour of all. As Jesus himself said to those religious leaders who criticised him – 'You diligently study the Scriptures because you think that by them you possess eternal life. These are the Scriptures that testify about me ...' (John 5:39).

And just in case we've missed the signpost, worth a quick check back with the Jesus Storybook Bible. The story of David is entitled 'The Good Shepherd' and concludes like this:

'Another Shepherd was coming – a greater Shepherd. He would be called the Good Shepherd. And this Shepherd was going to lead all of God's lambs back to the place where they had always belonged – close to God's heart.'

Other Bible commentaries are available, but for now I might just stick with the Jesus Storybook Bible. For, as Jesus said (maybe this one is from the NIV rather than the Jesus Storybook Bible) 'anyone who will not receive the kingdom of God like a little child will never enter it. (Mark 10:15). Sometimes the Bible can seem very complicated. But let's not forget that, at its core, just as in the Jesus Storybook Bible, it's very simple. Jesus died so that we might live. Believe that, repent and accept eternal life.

*Jon Howard*