

Prayers

Opening prayer

We praise You Great Lord of all Creation
You are the One who makes all things perfect!
You are the One who knows what is right and wrong!
You are the One who graciously forgives our sin!
You are the One who liberates us for Glory!
Alleluia – AMEN!

Prayer Suggestions

General theme of the week: TRANSPORT

1. For yourself

Give thanks to God for every means by which you get about in daily life, and ask the Lord's blessing on any journey you are planning, whether for holidays or for work

2. For your friends and family

Give thanks to God for your family and friends; pray that a generous spirit will pervade your relationships so that help will be offered to those who need it especially in getting about from place to place

3. For the church and its work

Pray for the work of the church amongst travelling communities and those who are always on the move

4. For your neighbourhood, your country and the world (News)

Pray for the transport needs of your country. Political decisions are taken all the time about transport, which affect the lives of billions; pray that God will speak to politicians through people of faith and goodwill, so that wise decisions are taken

Meditation

You know all things about everything, O lord;
and yet You give of Your time to me.

You hear the sounds of the Universe, O Lord;
and yet You listen to what I say.

You are truth and justice personified, O Lord;
and yet You save me from my sin.

You create new things every day, O Lord;
and yet You rejoice in all I do.

You speak Your Word to the Universe, O Lord;
and yet You whisper in my ear.

Forgive me when I am selfish, O Lord,
and fail to give my attention to You.

Bible Study

Bible passage – 1 Samuel 16:6-13

⁶ When they arrived, Samuel saw Eliab and thought,

'Surely the LORD'S anointed stands here before the LORD.'

⁷ But the LORD said to Samuel,

'Do not consider his appearance or his height, for I have rejected him. The LORD does not think about things in the same way as people; they look at outward appearance, but the LORD looks at the heart.'

⁸ Then Jesse called Abinadab and had him pass in front of Samuel. But Samuel said

'The LORD has not chosen this one either.'

⁹ Next, Jesse had Shammah pass by, but Samuel said,

'Nor has the LORD chosen this one.'

¹⁰ Now Jesse had seven of his sons pass before Samuel, but Samuel said to him,

'The LORD has not chosen these.'

¹¹ So he asked Jesse,

'Are these all the sons you have?'

And Jesse answered,

'There is still the youngest, but he is tending the sheep.'

Samuel said,

'Send for him; we will not sit down to eat until he arrives.'

¹² So Jesse sent and had him brought in. He was healthy-looking, with bright eyes and good-looking. Then the LORD said,

'Get up and anoint him, for he is the one.'

¹³ 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 upon David in power.

Samuel then left to go to Ramah.

Review

Samuel goes to Bethlehem under the guidance of the Lord to anoint the young David. The story describes the way God singles out David, who is the youngest and least important within his family, but he has an appealing nature and moreover, God has seen his heart.

It took great courage for Samuel to accept that he should go in search of a King of Israel yet again. He had anointed King Saul only a few years earlier, but this man had proved to be unfaithful to God and had been rejected (15:27f.). Our passage today describes what happened when Samuel obeyed God's call to anoint a new King from the family of a Benjaminite named Jesse. He gathered the family of Jesse for a worship service typical of those days, which centred on the sacrifice of an animal, but the sacrifice was not the most important part of this particular ceremony. Samuel had come to anoint a king but he did not know which son of Jesse was the one!

We can imagine the scene. Jesse was a man of wealth and influence, as the size of his family showed, and it is most likely that he was well aware of what Samuel was doing. To anoint a new king while Saul was on the throne was highly dangerous; it was treason. Yet for whatever his reasons in the politics of the day, and we will never know, Jesse went along with what Samuel required, and presented his sons.

Jesse then did what would have seemed most natural for someone of his day; he presented first his eldest son Eliab, making sure that this son came across as a fine upstanding example of an Israelite. Samuel was clearly impressed by the man, but the Lord had other plans. In the strongest hint possible of what was to come, the Lord spoke firmly to Samuel, saying, '*people ... look at outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart.*' This word is a summary not only of the way that God chose David from the sons of Jesse, but it is also the reason why God had chosen some of the great fathers of Israel. He chose Jacob instead of Esau, he favoured Joseph over his brothers, and he selected Judah as the principle tribe in Israel, not that of Jacob's firstborn, Reuben.

The Lord's ways are not always easy for us to perceive, even though they often seem so obvious afterwards. The Lord told Samuel that He was making His choice by looking 'at the heart', but Samuel could not see this. The prophet was dependent upon God's direct guidance to anoint the right son. A total of nine sons of Jesse passed before Samuel before in exasperation, he pleaded with the Jesse to search even further down the long list of favoured sons, and at last, Jesse confessed that his youngest son was to be found tending sheep. As soon as the young man came it seems that Samuel knew immediately that his quest was over. He refused to start the sacrificial worship unless this young man was present (16:11).

When David was bought before Samuel, there was something about him that seemed right. Samuel's description of David is intriguing; Scripture reports that he looked 'healthy' and had 'bright' eyes (16:12). In ancient times it was believed that you could see into someone's soul through their eyes, moreover, eyes revealed the spirit within. The description of David here in our passage struggles with words to express a spiritual truth; David was a man whose spirit was alert to the things of God, and Samuel heard the Lord's prompting, '*get up and anoint him, for he is the one.*' Samuel did just this.

Much has been made of David's appearance by commentators who have written about this passage. Some have supposed that David was close to God because he was a shepherd of sheep, and someone who did such tasks would surely fit the bill. But to dwell on this would be to become carried away with a scriptural theme about shepherding that has not yet reached its fruition, and we miss the point. God chose David by divine authority, and when Samuel anointed him, he was given honour in the sight of his brothers (16:13), and divine power in the form of the '*spirit of the Lord*' (16:13).

The Bible does not record what David felt about this. He was fully aware of what had been done to him, but how does a young man come to terms with something as amazing as this? What would he do? Would he tell everyone to be obedient to himself, and then grasp all the authority he could get? David the shepherd boy knew that if he tried to be authoritarian in manner with sheep, they would run away from him; he knew that their respect had to be gained through care and over time, and so it would be for men and women. So after his momentous anointing, David made no move at all. He followed his life as it panned out before him, confident that the Lord who had kept him safe in the fields and had led him safe thus far would do so in the future.

Discipleship

Questions for groups

1. Discuss in your group whether we can draw any conclusions for today from this story about how God chooses people for His ministry?
2. Why did God call David to be a leader of Israel over other apparently more worthy candidates?
3. How can you be obedient to God? Can you give any examples of how obedience has been the spur to greater things in God's service?

Discipleship challenges

- *There may have been moments in your life when you have felt 'specially chosen. Recall these and see if there are any lessons for you to learn about how God has used your life.*
- *How is a church leader anointed today? Discuss with your one of your church leaders how they came to be appointed. Pray about the future of God's people today, and pray for a 'David' to lead them.*

Final Prayer

Bless us this day, Lord Jesus. Bring praise to our lips and open our hearts to offer You the highest praise our hearts can offer. Speak through spiritual tongues which transport us to the throne of grace and into the presence of Almighty God Himself, and may our praises be worthy in His presence; AMEN
