

St. Luke's Evangelical Lutheran Church – Watertown, WI
Pastor Mark Gartner
Sermon for Baptism of Our Lord – January 10th and 13th, 2013

1 Samuel 16:1-13 (NIV 2011)

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?”⁵ 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 had him pass in front of Samuel. But Samuel said, “The LORD has not chosen this one either.” Jesse then had Shammah pass by, but Samuel said, “Nor has the LORD chosen this one.” Jesse had 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.

Dear Fellow-Redeemed and Friends in Christ:

What is in your heart this morning? Verse 7 of today’s text states the Lord looks at our heart. Maybe in our heart there are those things we don’t want anyone to know about or to see or to hear. For sometimes in our hearts are those deep, dark things that ought not to be brought out into the light. Jesus reminded the scribes and Pharisees that it wasn’t their outward appearance that mattered. From their hearts came evil thoughts, murders, adulteries and every evil.

Three thousand years ago, God chose a young man named David to be the king of Israel. Out of all the sons of Jesse, the favor of God landed on a young man named David. David was the youngest son of a man from the tiny town of Bethlehem. David was a young man who was not even necessarily respected by the members of his own family. Yet, by the grace of God, David became the greatest king in the history of the nation of Israel. He also became an ancestor of the Lord Jesus Christ. He is listed among the great heroes of the faith in Hebrews 11. During his life, he received great promises and remarkable blessings from the hand of God. But, greatest of all, David became a man after God’s own heart. David didn’t claim this for himself. This is what God said of him.

Now, David was not perfect. In fact, he was far from it! He failed, and he failed big. So how could God call him a “man after his own heart?” Perhaps, more personally, could God ever call us that? Could God say you or I am a man/woman after his own heart? God is able to do great things. The prophet Ezekiel wrote: **“I will give them an undivided heart and put a new spirit in them. I will remove from them their heart of stone and give them a heart of flesh” (Ezekiel 11:19).** Today, that promise has come true. Today, we are reminded in our text:

Theme: The Lord Anoints His Servants

- 1. With divine choice**
- 2. With the Holy Spirit**
- 3. To fashion us after his heart**

This was an important time in the history of the children of Israel. Things were going to change. Saul had been chosen by God to be the first king of Israel. Saul was coming to the end of his rule. Saul had forgotten about God until God had to reject Saul, as king. There was going to be a new king. So God sent the prophet Samuel to Bethlehem. When he arrived at Bethlehem, **"Samuel saw Eliab and thought, 'Surely the LORD's anointed stands here before the LORD.'" The Lord said, "No."** He explains why: **"The LORD does not look at the things man looks at. Man looks at the outward appearance, but the LORD looks at the heart."** The Lord knows what is in the heart, and the Lord always looks at the heart of each person. Likewise he went through all seven of Jesse's sons, but the Lord says that none of these were the one. Samuel wonders, "Well, there has to be more." So he asks Jesse, "Is there another son?" Of course, there is. When that son comes in, what do we see? "Then the LORD said, 'Arise and anoint him; he is the one.'" The youngest was the chosen and was anointed as God's servant. We note that now Jesse's youngest son was anointed as God's servant. Before this time Saul had been anointed as king. Before him, Samuel had been anointed as prophet. In all these cases it wasn't necessarily what the people thought should happen, but it was what the Lord wanted done. It was the Lord's divine choice.

It is still the same today. In our world, mankind looks all around at all kinds of different things for success: accumulation of wealth; abundance of property and possessions or positions of honor. Those are important to make people seem to have a great standing in this world. When the Lord looks at people, he sees very simply into our hearts. He chooses the weak in spirit. He chooses those that are hungry and thirsty for righteousness. He chooses the humble and the broken and the blind and the lame in spirit. Paul says in Corinthians: **"But God chose the foolish things of the world to shame the wise; God chose the weak things of the world to shame the strong"** (1 Corinthians 1:27).

This is God's divine choice. He takes sinners and chooses them to become saints. He takes those alienated from Him by sin and chooses them to become his children. God chose you and me. God in Ephesians says: **"For he chose us in him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight. In love he predestined us to be adopted as his sons through Jesus Christ, in accordance with his pleasure and will"** (Ephesians 1:4,5). Another miracle--God chose us. We did not choose him. The Lord anoints his servant with his divine choice. The Lord also anoints his servants with the Holy Spirit as the guarantee of that choice.

2. With the Holy Spirit

Everybody knew that someday, sooner or later, this youngest son would be king. **"From that day on the Spirit of the LORD came upon David in power."** This teenager grew in a strong faith. David's name means "beloved." God's choice was upon him, and the Holy Spirit was poured out on him. David would rule with wisdom and with faith, which the Lord God almighty provided.

On this first Sunday after Epiphany we hear a lot concerning baptism. Today's readings tell of the baptism of Jesus in the Jordan River. This reminds us of our baptism when the Lord anointed us with the power of his word connected with water. In 2 Corinthians Paul sums this up by saying: **"He (God) anointed us, set his seal of ownership on us, and put his Spirit in our hearts as a deposit, guaranteeing what is to come"** (2 Corinthians 1:22).

Paul uses that same Old Testament idea — God anointed us. He tells us how God has anointed us. We don't picture us getting oil dumped on our heads in the New Testament times. Through baptism we became children of God. We were born into this world as enemies of God. We are snatched out of the snares

of Satan and place into the hands of our gracious God through the miracle of the Sacrament of Baptism. God's choice was upon us. Paul writes in Titus: **"He (God) saved us, not because of righteous things we had done, but because of his mercy. He saved us through the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit"** (Titus 3:5). This describes baptism. Our sins are washed away. Our heart of stone is changed to a heart full of the Holy Spirit. We are anointed by the gift of the Holy Spirit. That's God's seal of approval. That's God's seal of renewal.

So it really is God who fashions us to be a man, a woman, a child after His own heart. We become God's friends when, he takes off our sinful rags and covers us in the perfection of His Son Jesus. God keeps no account of our sins, for they are washed away in the blood of the perfect lamb sacrificed on the cross for us. There is now no condemnation for us in Christ – because of God's grace. He has recreated us – holy and blameless in his sight. That's why you and I are men and women after God's own heart.

That's what God sees when He looks at us. He looks in our hearts but He doesn't see our sin, shame and guilt. He sees the perfection of Jesus. He sees a man, a woman after His own heart. And He gives us the Holy Spirit to guarantee that what He sees. Like David, we are going to sin big time. But like David we go to the cross and cry out "God be merciful to me a sinner." And God looks at us covered in the blood of Jesus and he sees a heart that loves him. It doesn't make sense to us. God chooses us, anoints us in baptism, blesses us and then rewards us with His love. But that's the whole point. That's grace!

3. To fashion us after his hearts

Does that mean we can just take it and run? Of course not. Remember what Paul said in our reading, **"I have found David son of Jesse a man after my own heart; he will do everything I want him to do."** This miracle makes all the difference in the world for us. As our hearts are changed, our lives are also changed. The lives of all the people in our readings were changed: Samuel, David, Jesse, John the Baptizer. All these lives were changed because they were people of faith. In Romans we are told: **"You, however are controlled not by the sinful nature but by the Spirit, if the Spirit of God lives in you."** (Romans 8:9).

This is also the same Holy Spirit given to us through baptism. This is the same Holy Spirit given to us as we study God's word and read God's word day after day and year after year. This means that we do not always do what the sinful nature wants. Instead, we do what God motivates and inspires us to do because of God's great love for us. What we now do by faith is described in Colossians: **"Therefore, as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience"** (Colossians 3:12). This passage states our motivation. God has chosen us and made us holy. God loves us so dearly that he sacrificed his Son. That's why we choose not to look at things as the world does. That's why we choose not to live the way the world lives. That's why we are different. So God looks around this congregation this morning and he looks into each of our hearts. And you know what He says? He says, "There are my friends -- Friends whose hearts are filled with the Holy Spirit!"