Feb. 13/14, 2016

The Heart of a Leader

Courage to Lead Series

1 Samuel 16:1-23

Pastor Bryan Clark

Sometimes you hear parents say something like this to their children: "You know, little Johnny, you can be anything you want to be." That sounds good and so full of hope, but the problem is it's just not true...it's just not true! Not every kid can be an NBA basketball player. Not every kid can be an NFL quarterback. Not every kid can be a brain surgeon. Not every kid can be a rocket scientist or a fighter pilot or a world-class cellist or an opera singer. It's just not true. As a matter of fact, this idea of kind of a *self-made* man, a *self-made* woman is ridiculous. About 95% of what defines your story, you've had virtually no control over. You may work real hard and be very disciplined within your 5%, but the majority of what defines your story, you've really had no say over. So we understand it: The world is filled with a small percentage of high performers and then there's the rest of us. It's almost like the lottery and most of us didn't draw a winning ticket.

So here's the question of the day: Is God limited to only using the high performers to change the world or can God use anyone? Asked a different way: Is God's economy—God's world—is God's world like this world or does God operate differently, even radically different? Well that's what we want to talk about. If you have a Bible, turn with us to 1 Samuel, Chapter 16. If you are new with us, we're just working our way through the Old Testament book of 1 Samuel. We find ourselves in chapter 16 this morning. Chapter 16 is in kind of the middle of the book. It's literally in the middle of the book, but it's also the big transition. Verses 13 and 14 are the historic transition from Saul to David, so it's a very important chapter. There's really no way to know how much time has passed between the end of chapter 15 and the beginning of chapter 16. My best guess would be months, not years. Verse 1:

> **Now the LORD said to Samuel, "How long will you grieve over Saul, since I have rejected him from being king over Israel? Fill your horn with oil and go; I will send you to Jesse the Bethlehemite, for I have selected a king for Myself among his sons."**
>
> **(*NASB, 1 Samuel 16:1)**

So God comes to Samuel and gives Samuel an assignment to go anoint the new king of Israel. One of the things to notice in this text is some familiar language. We find out this is going to be a *son of Jesse*. We find out they're from *Bethlehem*. We know this then would be the tribe of *Judah*. All that starts to sound familiar. "**There will come one day the promised Messiah, a Son of Jesse, a Bethlehemite and from the tribe of Judah**," so just some details that tell us that this next king of Israel will actually be a shadow or a type of the Christ to come. So just little hints in that verse that we want to make sure we notice. Verse 2:

> **But Samuel said, "How can I go? When Saul hears of it, he will kill me." And the LORD said, "Take a heifer with you and say, 'I have come to sacrifice to the LORD.' You shall invite Jesse to the sacrifice, and I will show you what you shall do; and you shall anoint for Me the one whom I designate to you." So Samuel did what the LORD said, and came to Bethlehem. And the elders of the city came trembling to meet him and said, "Do you come in peace?" He said, "In peace; I have come to sacrifice to the**

LORD. Consecrate yourselves and come with me to the sacrifice." He also consecrated Jesse and his sons and invited them to the sacrifice. (Vs. 2-5)

One of the things that's interesting in this paragraph is how much fear dominated the land. You see it in Samuel; you also see it in the elders of Bethlehem. Anytime you have an insecure, fearful person with power, there is going to be fear in the land. That's just the way it works. Whatever has transpired, Samuel has come to the conclusion that if Saul knows he's going on a mission to anoint the next king, he will kill me. Now think about how far Saul has come that that's now the circumstance. In order for Samuel to get from Ramah where he lives down to Bethlehem, he has to go by Gibea of Saul. Saul knows that God has rejected him as king. Saul knows that God will anoint a new king and it would be fairly obvious that God will use Samuel to anoint that next king. So it's likely that Saul was keeping close track of Samuel and Samuel knows that; so he's fearful that Saul will kill him. So God tells him to take a heifer and tell him he's going to offer a sacrifice, which is true; it's just not all he's going to do. So he shows up in Bethlehem and the elders are afraid. Are they afraid of Samuel? Are they afraid of God? Are they afraid of something Saul will do because Samuel is there? We don't know. We just know they are fearful. Samuel tells them he comes in peace and wants the family of Jesse to gather together. To consecrate themselves would be basically to take a bath, put on clean clothing, and they will gather.

When they entered, he looked at Eliab and thought, "Surely the LORD'S anointed is before Him." But the LORD said to Samuel, "Do not look at his appearance or at the height of his stature, because I have rejected him; for God sees not as man sees, for man looks at the outward appearance, but the LORD looks at the heart." Then Jesse called Abinadab and made him pass before Samuel. And he said, "The LORD has not chosen this one either." Next Jesse made Shammah pass by. And he said, "The LORD has not chosen this one either." Thus Jesse made seven of his sons pass before Samuel. But Samuel said to Jesse, "The LORD has not chosen these." And Samuel said to Jesse, "Are these all the children?" And he said, "There remains yet the youngest, and behold, he is tending the sheep." Then Samuel said to Jesse, "Send and bring him; for we will not sit down until he comes here." So he sent and brought him in. Now he was ruddy, with beautiful eyes and a handsome appearance. And the LORD said, "Arise, anoint him; for this is he." Then Samuel took the horn of oil and anointed him in the midst of his brothers; and the Spirit of the LORD came mightily upon David from that day forward. And Samuel arose and went to Ramah. (Vs. 6-13)

So Samuel gathers Jesse and his sons and they begin the process. The oldest son comes in. By tradition that would be the logical choice. It appears he was tall, dark, and handsome, much like Saul, and in Samuel's mind, that's got to be the one. But the Lord says, "Actually, no, he is tall, dark and handsome, but I've rejected him."And then some critical lines—some of the most important theology in the book of 1Samuel—when we are told that God does not look at people the way man looks at people, because man looks at the outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart. If you understand what the Lord just said to Samuel, it is theology that is absolutely life-changing!

We talk a lot about the struggle to resist a performance-based value system. We talked about it last week—this idea that based on externals, based on my performance, based on how I look, based on my status, my money, my car, my house, my title, based on all these performance-based issues—I find my significance; I find my value; I find my identity. It is the value system that defines most Americans, and I would even go so far as to say it is the value system that ultimately defines most Christians. Because it is so pervasive it's easy to get drawn into that value system. The reason is

stated in the text. It is true that man looks at the outward appearance. If you're full of insecurity and you are determined to impress the people around you—like Saul, you want to be somebody—then it is true that man looks at the outward appearance and what will impress them is a performance-based value system. There is no doubt that what impresses the people around me will be my title, will be my house, will be my car, will be my bank account. In our culture that is what is necessary to impress the people around you. That's what makes that value system so alluring; that is true. So you have a handful of high performers and then you have the rest of us losers.

I mean, think about this. Jesse invites the top seven sons. In the Bible seven is often a term of completion. They go all the way through the seven sons that were the likely choice and none of them is God's choice. Samuel has to press the issue: "Do you have one more son?" He wasn't even invited to the party. David was such an unlikely choice, he's not even invited; he's not even on the team. He's out in the field watching the sheep.

This makes me think of life in elementary school. Recess, lunch, recess—three times a day you go out on the playground. In my world sports was everything and so the first thing you do is you pick two captains and then you go through the process of picking teams for whatever the sport was going to be. The best were picked first always, and then you work your way down through the average, through the below average and then the ones that nobody wanted. It was the same every recess and every lunch. It wasn't until years later, as an adult when I had my own kids, it started to dawn on me what that must that have been like for those who were not picked at the top of the list to be on the team. Three times a day!! Every single day they were reminded again and again and again, "You're not wanted because you're not very good."

In my previous ministry my office window looked over the elementary playground across the street. It was still the same thing every day—always the same kids all by themselves in the corner, always the same kids that were never picked to be on the team, and one can only imagine the depth of that pain day after day after day after day. It's not just sports. It's music; it's academia; it's in so many ways. But the voice of the culture reminds us again and again and again, "You're really pretty average," and you start to define yourself according to the voice of the culture. Eventually you are convinced, "I am a loser. I got a losing lottery ticket. I'll never be a high flyer. That's just my story." And as soon as you start defining yourself that way, you will live that way. It's a self-fulfilling prophecy.

Years ago I had a high school kid—a teenager—who was a friend of mine. He was a kid I really liked; I liked to spend time with. We did a lot of things together, but he struggled. He wanted to be popular. He wanted to fit in. He wanted to be an athlete. But he just wasn't made that way. He didn't really fit in; he wasn't really popular. He was never going to be an athlete. He wasn't good in school; he barely made it through high school. He left to go on to college, took classes here and there and basically bombed out of all of those classes. I remember one winter he came back on the Christmas break and we got together and were talking and he said that he had changed his major again. Now he was pre-law. I knew for a fact he had gotten D's and F's in all the classes he had taken. This was just not going to be a reality. I asked him, "Why do you want to go to pre-law? Why do you want to be a lawyer?" He said, "I am going to go to law school. I'm going to become a lawyer and I am going to go back to my class reunion and prove to those guys I'm not a loser." I gave him my best shot to convince him that he needed to find his identity in Christ, not in that value system, but so many years of convincing him he was a loser—so much insecurity in him—he just couldn't get past that label. A couple of years ago I got a phone call. He had taken his own life. He just couldn't live in this world as a loser one more day.

This is a devastating, destructive value system that destroys so many peoples' lives. It is true man looks at the outward appearance, and that's what makes that system so appealing. But the system never ultimately has winners. If you sit here this morning and you struggle with low self-esteem, you struggle with a low sense of value, a sense of insignificance—"I'm never going to amount to anything and I'm just going to be average or a loser for the rest of my life," that is a clear indication that you have bought into this performance-based value system. You have listened to the voices of the culture and they have convinced you that you are a loser.

There is another way! The text is very clear—that God does not look at you the way man looks at you! God does not look at the externals; God looks at the heart. And here's the reality: every single person in the room has equal opportunity to have a heart for God. The adequacy comes from the Spirit of the Lord. The text is very clear: "...**the Spirit of the Lord came on David"**. It was the Spirit of the Lord that would make him adequate to be the greatest king in the history of Israel. All God needed from David was a heart—a heart to obey, a heart to believe in Him, a heart to follow Him. And every single person in this room this morning has an equal opportunity to cultivate an obedient heart before God. With the power of the Spirit of God, God can use anyone to change the world! Verse 14:

> **Now the Spirit of the LORD departed from Saul, and an evil spirit from the LORD terrorized him.**

So you have the Spirit of the Lord coming on David (new king); the Spirit of the Lord departing Saul (rejected king). I don't think the text is saying that somehow God is limited to space and time so in order to come on David He had to vacate Saul. It's a theological statement that somewhere the Spirit of the Lord had left Saul because of his disobedience. He was rejected as king and the Spirit of the Lord would now empower David to be the new king.

But verse 14 does have some difficult theology to deal with. The first part is okay: **Now the Spirit of the LORD departed from Saul**. The second part...**an evil spirit from the LORD terrorized him**, now sometimes people try to kind of mediate this by saying, "Well, really the Spirit of the Lord departed from Saul which left a vacuum and means God allowed then an evil spirit to come in." But that's not what the text says. It's actually very proactive: **...an evil spirit from the LORD**. So what does that mean? First of all, a lot of discussion's around **evil spirit**. It could be a demonic spirit. Well, that would be rather odd in kind of Old Testament theology. That may be the case. But that same word is often used for a spirit like a spirit of bitterness, spirit of anger, spirit of anxiety, spirit of paranoia, some sort of almost like a mental illness; so that's entirely possible as well. The word **evil** can also be translated *harmful* or *injurious*. So no matter how you dissect the language, you can't really sort it out. Was it a demonic spirit or was it an injurious spirit of anger, anxiety, depression, bitterness—something like that? But it does create some interesting discussion.

First of all there's no question this was a judgment from God. For some reason we get it in our head that we should be able to do as we please with no consequence. God couldn't have been more clear to Saul: "Obey Me and I will bless you. Disobey Me and I will judge you." Saul chose the way of disobedience, the way of rebellion and this is judgment from God. But it opens up some interesting discussion as it relates to the effect on Saul. If you think about this in terms of physically, mentally, and emotionally: consider you are dealing with some physical symptoms, possibly some sort of mental illness, and some sort of emotional disorder, which then moves us into an interesting discussion related to this. It's also a very delicate conversation, so I'm just asking that you listen carefully.

I would say there are two extremes when the culture talks about these things. There is kind of the extreme within the Christian camp that tends to spiritualize everything. So the reason you have physical illness, the reason you have mental illness, the reason you have some sort of emotional disorder is because of your sin. So if you just read the Bible more, have a quiet time and pray more, it will all be better. That's kind of one extreme. You move it to the other extreme and that would be the voice of the secular culture: Because there's no real belief in morality, then nothing is my fault. Physical illness, mental illness, some sort of emotional disorder—none of it's my fault! I'm a victim in all of it and there's nothing I can do about it. That's kind of the other end of the extreme.

So biblically, what is the correct understanding? I would suggest to you it's kind of in the middle because there is some of both. In a case like Saul's, there's absolutely no question that Saul did not disobey and rebel because he had a mental illness. It's because he was sinful; he was rebellious; it's because he rejected God. The text was abundantly clear. Because of his sin, God passed down judgment; there will be physical effect; there will be a mental effect—forms of mental illness—and there will be an emotional effect. That will become evident as the story unfolds. So the solution would be about repentance and confession and surrender because the root of that problem is his sin.

But it is equally true that we live in a fallen world and because we live in a fallen world, sin has brought chaos and disorder and it affects us physically; it affects us mentally, and it affects us emotionally. And because of what we might call general sin in the world—not specifically tied to my choices but just sin in the world—that there are physical defects. We have heart disease and we have diabetes and cancer. There's mental illness that through no fault of someone, it's just part of the breakdown in the world, and it is something beyond that person's control. Same is with some sort of emotional disorder; it's because there's sin in the world and beyond someone's control, there are chemical imbalances and things going on that aren't related to that person's personal choices, but sin in the world. Those people need professional help. They need someone to help them learn to manage that and maybe medicate that and help them address something that defines their story.

So it could be either, which leaves us with the realization that before we are too quick to pass judgment or throw stones, we need to understand these things can be very complicated and often it takes a lot of kind and compassionate help to get to the root and figure out what is happening and what are the best steps forward. In Saul's case there's no question it was because of his sin and rebellion, and it will show up physically, mentally, and emotionally. Verse 15:

> **Saul's servants then said to him, "Behold now, an evil spirit from God is terrorizing you. Let our lord now command your servants who are before you. Let them seek a man who is a skillful player on the harp; and it shall come about when the evil spirit from God is on you, that he shall play the harp with his hand, and you will be well." So Saul said to his servants, "Provide for me now a man who can play well and bring him to me." Then one of the young men said, "Behold, I have seen a son of Jesse the Bethlehemite who is a skillful musician, a mighty man of valor, a warrior, one prudent in speech, and a handsome man; and the LORD is with him." So Saul sent messengers to Jesse and said, "Send me your son David who is with the flock." Jesse took a donkey loaded with bread and a jug of wine and a young goat, and sent them to Saul by David his son. Then David came to Saul and attended him; and Saul loved him greatly, and he became his armor bearer. Saul sent to Jesse, saying, "Let David now stand before me, for he has found favor in my sight." So it came about whenever the evil spirit from God came to Saul, David would take the harp and play it with his hand; and Saul would be refreshed and be well, and the evil spirit would depart from him.** (Vs. 15-23)

So whatever is going on with Saul, it is obvious enough to his servants that they address it and they offer a solution—find a musician; you know, music sooths the savage beast. For whatever reason, they thought music might help. And so Saul says, "Let's go with it," and one of the servants says, "By the way, I know just the guy." The description of David is interesting. We know none of the background of that description. David is a very young man. As far as we know he's just a shepherd with the sheep. But in an ancient culture, by the time you were 12 or so, you were in the army; you were fighting in skirmishes. So there must have been something along the way where David established himself as a warrior and a courageous man and the different things described, as well as a musician. So David is sent for and it's very interesting that Jesse, David's father, sends him with three things: with bread, with wine, and with a goat. Hopefully those sound familiar. If we go back in the story when Samuel anointed Saul to be king of Israel and Saul was struggling to come to grips with that: in order for Saul to know that God was in this, Samuel gave him signs and one of the signs was: on his way back home you're going to meet three people and what are they going to give you? Wine, bread, and a goat.

I think this part of the text is telling us as readers that this is a sign that God is superintending—sovereignly—moving in the process to take a young, unexpected shepherd boy from the field into the presence of the king in order to begin a long, painful transition from Saul to David. How does a young, unknown shepherd boy end up in the personal space of Saul, the king? Answer—God! And God is orchestrating the events.

So David plays; Saul is soothed. Saul loves him, makes him his armor bearer. Probably reflecting also David being courageous and a man of valor, Saul just kept David with him everywhere he went. And not only was he the armor bearer, but when Saul got funky, David played the music. Funky is kind of the technical word for it there (*laughter*). This, then, sets up what is one of the most beloved and well known stories in the Bible—the encounter between David and Goliath, which is the story we will look at next week.

As we wrap this up this morning, stop and think about this with me: The day before Samuel came to Jesse, David's life was primarily the youngest brother, out in the field, watching the sheep. As a matter of fact, even after David was anointed by Samuel to be the next king of Israel, Saul finds him back in the field watching the sheep. The day before he could not have imagined that he would be anointed and empowered by the Spirit of God to be the greatest king in the history of Israel. David was such an unlikely choice.

The number seven, as I mentioned, is often the number of perfection. The number eight is often the number of new beginnings. David was the eighth son—so unexpected he wasn't even invited to the party. He wasn't even invited to be part of the team. One would have to think that had been David's story. David is so unexpected, his father, Jesse, was the grandson of Ruth, the Moabitess, one of the four scandalous women in the genealogy of Christ. The likelihood that a Moabitess would be in the genealogy of Jesus was unimaginable, yet that was David's lineage. David had cultivated his skills as a musician—you don't do that overnight—year after year after year after year of practice, most of the time playing to an audience of sheep. The day before,David's life was normal; he played his instrument for the sheep. How could he possibly have imagined that God would take that skill in order to sovereignly place him in the presence of the king to begin a long, slow transition? As a matter of fact, how could David have imagined out there on the hill playing his instrument to the sheep, that people three thousand years later would still be deeply comforted by the lyrics of his songs recorded in the Psalms. It is a skill that God would use to bless the people of God for thousands of years.

So this morning your life may not be exactly as you wish it was. There may be all kinds of things you wish were different, but they're not different. Today this is your story. So what does it mean to be faithful today? What does it mean to cultivate character today? What does it mean to develop the skills that you can develop today? Maybe today all you're doing is cultivating your skills to play your instrument in front of a bunch of sheep and you wonder, "Is this all it's ever going to be?" You have no idea that maybe tomorrow God will anoint you and call you to take that skill and with His power be a world changer. What are you doing today to pursue a heart for God, to grow your skills, to grow your life, because tomorrow you may get the call? God's economy is radically different from the rest of the world. Man does look at the outward appearance and those voices are loud and they are compelling but God doesn't see as man sees. God looks at the heart and every person in this room has an equal opportunity to cultivate a heart for God. The question this morning is not: can God use you to be a world changer? The question is: do you have the courage and the faith to believe that, to be faithful today, not knowing whether or not tomorrow God may call and empower you to change the world?

Our Father we celebrate this morning that Your value system is so much different than the rest of the world. God, according to the value system of this world, there's a handful of high-flyers in the auditorium this morning; most of us are not. But in Your economy what you look for is the heart. God, every single one of us has the equal opportunity to love You with all our heart, to trust You, and to believe that You can use us to change the world. God, that is my prayer, that we would have the courage and the faith to believe that tomorrow may be our call to change the world. In Jesus' name, Amen.

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The Heart of a Leader

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I Samuel 16:1-23

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Opening Discussion

1. Parents sometimes tell children, "You can be whatever you want to be." Is that true? Why or why not?

2. Have you ever been in an environment where the high performers were chosen for something and that clearly did not include you? How did that make you feel? Does life in general sometimes feel that way to you?

3. If you were to ask most people what defines a leader in our culture, what would they say? What are believed to be the necessary characteristics of a leader?

4. Can you think of leaders in the Bible who did not fit the typical description of a leader?

Bible Study

1. Read I Samuel 16:1-13. Why was Samuel fearful and the elders fearful? Typically insecure leaders create fear among those they lead. Why is that?

2. Take some time to discuss God's statement to Samuel in 16:7. What are the implications of that statement? What does this have to do with a performance based value system? How does this statement help us understand why we are so easily lured into a performance based system?

3. God tells Samuel He looks at the heart when calling a leader (see also 13:14). While we do not all have the same talents, skills, personalities, education, training, opportunities, etc... we do all have the same chance to have a heart for God. How might this change our perspective concerning how God might use us? What can I control in my life and what can I not control? According to this text there is one thing I must have to be used by God as a spiritual leader. Is that something I can control or not?

4. Read I Samuel 16:14-23. There is no way to really know if the evil (injurious) spirit is a demonic spirit or simply an injurious spirit such as anger, bitterness, depression, etc… What we do know for sure is that it resulted from Saul's disobedience and rejection of God as his King. Discuss the difference between mental/emotional/physical health issues that may

simply be the result of general sin in the world (not necessarily directly related to my choices) verses issues that are directly related to my rebellion and disobedience. How are they different and how is the process of dealing with them going to be different? How can one discern the difference in his/her own life?

5. What does God use to maneuver David step by step into the presence of Saul the King? Do you think David ever imagined that God would work in such a way as to use something like his music to allow him to stand before the King? What do we learn from this part of David's story?

Application

1. What are some practical things we can do to avoid having the Saul story become our story? Are there any mental/physical/emotional issues in your life right now that you think may be a result of bad choices you've made? If so, what might be some good next steps for you to take?

2. No matter who you are or how a performance based culture might view you, what is really necessary for you to be used by God in a significant way? Does everyone have an equal opportunity to have a heart for God and if so, how does that level the playing field for who God can use to be a spiritual leader? So what prevents you from being that leader?

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