

Renewed Thinking for a New Start
Resolved: To See with Our Ears, not with Our Eyes!
New Year's Message 2022

Text: 1 Samuel 16:1-13

*“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.**” 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. 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.”*

Introduction

New starts are exciting – and they are especially so when they come at the beginning of a new year. The old year with all of its trials and blessings is done and before us lies 365 fresh days filled with the promise of God’s blessings, grace, and sustaining mercy. Typically as we start a new year, at some point in the process we stop and reflect over

what happened in the past, where we are in the present, and what we are hoping for in the year to come.

And as we work through our conclusions about the past and our hopes for the future, we make resolutions for the present. We decide things that will shape how we think, respond, and act in the coming year.

At the start of a new year millions of Americans are making resolutions they believe will have positive impact on their lives, families, finances, health, careers, and happiness.

A resolution is defined as: “The act of resolving or determining a course of action marked by firmness of purpose (commitment) to bring it about.”

Here are the top 10:

1. Exercise more – 44%
2. Eat healthier – 42%
3. Spend more time with family/friends – 34%
4. Lose weight – 31%
5. Live more economically – 30%
6. Spend less time on social media – 24%
7. Improve job performance – 23%
8. Reduce job related stress – 20%
9. Quit smoking – 19%
10. Cut down on alcohol consumption – 15%

As you can see, most people take at least some time at the start of a new year to think about how to recalibrate or restart in some major area of life. This morning I want to ask you to consider the importance of taking the time to do this with your spiritual life and your ministry for the Lord.

So how does this happen in the life of a believer and more importantly, is there an account in Scripture where God began a new season in the life of a

person that we can learn from as we enter into a new season of life and ministry personally and corporately as a church?

While new starts are always fresh, they are not always trouble-free! In fact, some new start are ones we would rather not make.

- Some of you are starting a new year and things are very different for you then they were last year.
- God has led in ways different than the ones you expected or wanted and now you are facing a new year very differently than you have faced such times in the past.
- Do the Scriptures have anything to say that might help us? YES! 1 Samuel 16!

Scene – a new start in Old Testament Israel – God is doing a brand-new thing in the life of the nation and also in the life of Samuel, His prophet!

- We know from reading the Bible that the old thing really had to change – Saul.
- We also know that the new thing is going to be good – David, and eventually Messiah.
- BUT – someone very involved in the situation doesn't know all of that – Samuel. All he knows is that things have changed – and as far as he can see, not for the better!
- Additionally, God has not yet revealed the next move and so the way ahead seems very dark! And so, we find him having to deal with the fact that God introduced a radical change into his life at a very uncomfortable time – and that change did not come easy.
- Change had come at the point of a sword (Agag) and in the tearing of a robe (Saul). (*Loss of a kingdom, a king, a friend, and a dream*)

However, the plan has been announced (to Saul) and there is no going back. So, our prophet friend trudges sadly home to nurse a broken heart – and that is were we find him at the start of our text – at home in Ramah,

- mourning over what had been the past!

- fearful and a bit resistant to what might be in the future!
- All in all – desperately needing to hear from God – and –thankfully, that is just what happens!

These 13 verses are a very important part of a much larger story of what God was doing in His world. It was important to God that His faithful prophet learn these lessons because God had some great things ahead for the nation, the new king, and even for Samuel.

You and I sometimes find ourselves in Samuel’s sandals – saddened by the changes that God has brought into our lives – fearful about what might happen to us or to those we care about in the future. When we find ourselves in such a situation, these verses have some very important and valuable lessons that will help us walk forward for God in a way that honors Him, grows us, and blesses others around us!

In short, when we can see what God has done but we can’t seem to see why He has done it, then we need to learn that we may not be seeing everything that God doing! And, if we could, instead of mourning, we would be jumping for joy!

So, what are the lessons and where do they show up in the text?

I. We Must Accept God’s Decisions About the Past (16:1)

“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

A. Even When We Don’t Desire Them

How long are you going to mourn over Saul?

- Idea here is of deep grief – loss of life
- Idea here is of prolonged grief – weeks and even months

- BUT – Saul wasn't dead. He was still king. So, what exactly was Samuel upset about? He was upset about a decision God made that he disagreed with!
- Samuel had not wanted the people to choose a king – but they did. Samuel had not wanted God to appoint their choice – be He did.
- Now, some years later God has just announced a major change of plans – the old king must go! And Samuel is the one God sent to to tell him!
- Samuel has just done so (chapter 15) – but that didn't mean he was happy with the decision. In fact, when God first told it to him privately, he was actually angry and argued with God all night about God's decision.

1 Samuel 15:11 "I greatly regret that I have set up Saul as king, for he has turned back from following Me, and has not performed My commandments." And it grieved Samuel, and he cried out to the LORD all night.

- Have you ever been angry at God and argued with him over something He did that you thought He should not have done or affected your life in ways you wish it hadn't?
- If so, you are not alone. Samuel did. Cain did when God rejected his sacrifice (Genesis 4:5). David did when God killed Uzza for touching the Ark (2 Sam 6:8). Jonah did when God spared Nineveh (Jonah 4:1). And frankly, sometimes we do as well.
- God's question to us during these times is – How long are you going to continue to mourn over what I have decided to do? How long will you take to accept my right to make decisions for my people and for your life?

B. Even When We Don't Understand Them or are Fearful

- Samuel was mourning because he disagreed with God – but also because he didn't understand what God was doing or how it could be good for the nation.
- Why do we need a new king? The old king didn't work, so why another? Why not just go back to the old way – the way I wanted us to stick with to start with. We never should have done this king thing! Things were so much better when it was just the two of us! I don't understand why we need a king – God, you make a fine King and I was a pretty decent prophet!

C. Even When We Are Asked to Participate in Them

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

- It is one thing to disagree when a change has been made – it is another thing to be asked to help bring about the change!
- God does not let Samuel sit and sulk over the change. Instead, God gives Samuel a personal instruction – get involved! Make this happen! Get your horn and oil and get down to Bethlehem– you have some anointing to do!

God's ways are not our ways and when our ways diverge from God's revealed way, we must leave our way and join God.

The best way to demonstrate that we are content with God's decisions when they affect our lives is to get involved in making sure they happen the way God intends them to happen (even when we are uncomfortable, disagree, or wish things were different!)

II. We Must Respond to God's Direction About the Future (16:2-3)

"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."

- As we are faced with a new direction from God, obstacles will surely arise that stand in the way of compliance. In this case the

- obstacle was very real and very powerful – an angry and suspicious king who could make things very difficult for Samuel.
- Furthermore, at times the danger involved can have serious impact for a larger group of people. Given Saul’s propensity to violent reactions, Samuel’s obedience to Yahweh’s direction would put more than just himself in harm’s way. The elders of Bethlehem understood the potential danger facing both them and the citizens for whom they were responsible.
 - Finally, responding to God’s direction may also appear to jeopardize the very thing God intends to accomplish. In taking this action and risking Saul’s anger, the very family out of which God had called His anointed could potentially be destroyed.
 - How is a believer to respond in the face of such overwhelming obstacles? The text provides at least two important suggestions.

A. By Being Attentive to God’s Instruction

and I will show you what you shall do

- When God calls us to a difficult task He does not leave us to do it on our own.
- He promises to provide guidance for each step of the way.
- While Samuel may not have known the identity of the individual he was to anoint for God, he had been given enough information to make a good start.
- God promised to show Samuel what to do when the time came.
- But, what of the obstacles? Yahweh had a solution.

B. By Being Confident in God’s Protection

Take a heifer with you and say, ‘I have come to sacrifice to the LORD.

- When we obey God’s will, He will protect us in the way.
- Frequently that protection will require that we turn to God’s revelation. God revealed to Samuel by means of Divine speech exactly what to do to avoid and overcome the obstacles.

- He was to take a heifer and go to Bethlehem to offer a sacrifice. If anyone asked him the purpose for his trip, he was to answer as Yahweh instructed.
- ***In obeying God’s word explicitly Samuel would find protection.***
- However, obeying God not only involved knowing God’s revelation, it involved knowing how to use that revelation wisely and maturely.
- God instructed Samuel to use the truth to conceal the truth from those who had no legitimate right to know God’s real purpose in sending Samuel to Bethlehem.
- This demanded maturity and skill on Samuel’s part as he handled God’s revelation carefully. At no point did he lie. And at no point, did he reveal what God had asked him to conceal.

III. We Must Obey God’s Instructions in the Present (16:4-5)

“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.”

A. We Must Obey Personally

B. We Must Obey Promptly

C. We Must Obey Fully – (in heart and in substance)

- Vs 1-2 contain two commands (imperatives in vs. 1) and several specific instructions from Yahweh to Samuel.
- Samuel was discontent with Yahweh’s decision regarding Saul and fearful of the consequences of Yahweh’s decision regarding David.
- However, in spite of both his discontentment and his fears, Samuel arose and went. He did exactly what the Lord told him to do. He modeled exactly what he told Saul – to obey is better than sacrifice!

- It is very easy to look at something the Lord has decided to do that affects us, those we love, or a ministry that we are a part of and excuse our lack of an obedient response to God on the grounds that we either are discontent with what He has allowed to happen or we are fearful about what might happen if we obey.

IV. We Must Wait For God’s Revelation Patiently (16:6)

“When they entered, he looked at Eliab and thought, “Surely the LORD’s anointed is before Him.””

- When we are in the midst of fulfilling the task God has assigned us, we must be careful to depend on God and His Word for direction
- This narrative teaches us an important lesson about what happens when God’s servant gets ahead of God and makes an evaluation independent from God.
- The consequences could have been embarrassing to say the least and potentially devastating. What do you say when you almost anoint the wrong king? If Samuel were here today, I am sure he would warn each of us about the danger that we so easily fall prey to – the danger of running ahead of God instead of waiting patiently for Him to act. Waiting patiently on God involves two disciplines:

A. We must Resist Rushing to Wrong Conclusions

- God specifically told Samuel that He would *show* him the chosen one. However, God is silent when Eliab comes through the door. In the excitement of seeing Eliab’s apparent qualifications, Samuel fails to “hear” the silence of God.
- Rashly, he runs ahead and concludes “Surely, God’s chosen one stands before Him.” Samuel’s example reminds us to wait on God before we conclude who or what God has chosen.

B. We must Refuse to Rely on Our Limited Perceptions

- this text warns us against placing too much emphasis on external appearance. Just because something looks good does not necessarily mean it is so.
- In other words, the real dilemma for us in making spiritual choices is this, “How in the world are we going to know what is really going on underneath the surface where it really counts? That is the point God addresses in the next verse.

V. **We must Depend God’s Evaluation Receptively (16:17)**

“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.””

- This verse provided the key that unlocks the lesson of the story.
- God is finally going to reveal to Samuel the identity of His chosen one. However, as important as that might be to the throne of Israel, there is an even more important revelation God wants to make.

A. The Reason for Wrong Perceptions

- After Samuel concludes that Eliab is the chosen one, God intervenes. You can almost see Samuel about to uncork his horn and get ready to do some anointing. However, God abruptly and forcibly intervenes and stops everything by revealing to Samuel that he is about to anoint the wrong son!
- And, God revealed to Samuel that the reason he arrived at the wrong conclusion is that he made the same mistake the nation had made earlier when they concluded that Saul was the man for the throne. The mistake they both made was choosing a man on the basis of his appearance.
- In other words, Samuel was looking – but in the wrong place and at the wrong thing!

B. The Reality about Right Perceptions

- Appearances can be deceiving which is why we need to get past the appearance and penetrate to the inner reality – the truth about a man or a matter.
- God does! He does not look on the outward appearance – He always looks on the heart! And, because of this, He never makes a mistake!
- The nation and Samuel looked on the surface and were very impressed with the men before them, yet in both cases they were wrong. But when God looked at their heart, He saw the truth about them! NOTE: no one would have been impressed by God’s choice of David – not even Jesse!

C. The Reminder for our Own Perceptions

- There is one final and most important point – God states that He does not look like man looks and then tells us how man looks – externally.
- The point is that this is the only way man can look! We can’t see the way God sees because we are not God – we don’t have His ability to see into a man’s heart!
- So, since we are not omniscient or like God in this way, we are limited to looking with human eyes that stop at the external appearance.
- So – if we are limited in this way – and if external appearance is a bad way to make our choice regarding circumstances or men – then what are we to do?
- Answer – God is not limited like we are! He always penetrates into the heart of a matter. And, He has given us access to that knowledge in three specific ways:
 1. His Word
 2. His Spirit
 2. His Godly Shepherds/Leaders

Saul's whole problem was that he did not like God's word, he did not think he needed God's wisdom, and he rejected Samuel, God's leader sent to guide him – and he lost his kingdom. On the other hand, David was very concerned to know God's word, he wrote entire psalms praying to God for help and wisdom in every set of circumstances, and he responded to God's prophet Nathan!

Conclusion

God is the only one with a vision strong enough to penetrate to the heart of a matter or a man. If we are going to succeed in 2022 or in life, we are going to need to learn to see with our ears and not just our eyes!

With that in mind, will you make three resolutions this morning?

1. Resolved: I will joyfully accept God's will for my life this past year.
2. Resolved: I will eagerly anticipate God's direction for my life this coming year.
3. Resolved: I will purposely prioritize and engage with God's work in this coming year.