

## **UNEXPECTED SUMMER: GOD SEES**

**1 Samuel 15:34 -16:13**

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Summer is prime mission trip season! Our Kenya team begins their journey today. We have a mission team headed to Texas on Thursday for our Family Mission Trip. Our youth are gearing up for their mission trip to the Cincinnati area in just a few weeks. About the time they return, we have another team headed to Oklahoma! What a joy to be part of a church that sends people out to share the love of Christ!

I love watching God work in the individual hearts of those who participate in mission trips. He ALWAYS has something to show and teach us if we are listening and watching.

Twenty years ago I led my first mission trip. I was a seasoned Missions Minister.... by 3 months at that point. It was to Montreal, Quebec. Until that time, I had never been out of the United States. The first time I went through customs was with a mission team of 8 adults, and I was supposed to be the leader! I had never rented a vehicle before, and when we arrived I discovered that I had to make a difficult decision. I either had to pay extra or I would be the only driver as the credit card was in my name. In retrospect, I would have gladly paid extra! Montreal is a bit larger than Sedalia or Jefferson City. And did you know that all of the signs are in French? Though I had talked with them by phone and email, I officially met our mission partners upon arrival. All but one of my team members were older than me. They were leaders in the church with a variety of personalities...many had extensive experience traveling. I have to admit I felt a little intimidated. Well, okay, a LOT intimidated.

Just a few years before that I had moved to Sedalia to teach 4th grade and had been relying on my 4 year old nephew to give me directions to get around town! I've always been a bit directionally challenged. Having navigation on my phone now is a HUGE blessing! It would have been helpful on the Montreal trip, too!

In a few rare quiet moments alone on that trip, I found myself calling out to God and sincerely asking, "Are you sure you have the right person? I don't really seem to be the likely person to lead this team" Thankfully, God could see my heart and desire to follow as He leads. And He knew the plans He had for my life far beyond that week in Montreal. He knew of a partnership that would develop and that this was just part of the trust journey He was beginning for me to trust Him in everything. He knew that I needed to personally experience God using me in unexpected ways. And He knew this would be the first of many mission trip experiences ... and countless times when I have been amazed at how God used unlikely people for His glory. One of my favorite quotes is "God does not always call the equipped, but He always equips those He calls." I have found this to be true over and over. Whenever He calls us to something, He gives us whatever we need to carry out the task to which He has called us.

Have you ever had moments in your life where you followed as God had directed you but you paused for a moment wondering what God was thinking? Surely, He should have chosen someone else? Or perhaps you have been surprised by other people God has chosen to use.

Our Bible is filled with examples of people God used that seemed like unlikely or unexpected choices.

This summer, we are talking about Unexpected Summer....unexpected ways God is actively working among God's people. Pastor Melissa has been teaching us about Samuel this month, and we are continuing with parts of his story today.

Last week, we learned Saul messed up. He had not listened very closely to God but had chosen to direct his own course. God had allowed him and the people of Israel to experience some consequences.

We pick up the story when it is time for God to choose a new leader....someone who was after God's own heart....not after Saul's own heart. We begin by learning that "The Lord was sorry that He had ever made Saul king." What an incredibly sad statement. The thought of God being sorry for choosing me for something absolutely pierces my heart. Can you think of anything much more devastating? Other translations use words like "the Lord regretted", "the Lord repented," and "God was sorry he had ever made Saul king in the first place."

It wasn't that God stopped loving Saul or that He refused to forgive him. And it wasn't that God had not given Saul what he needed to be a good king. But Saul got his priorities out of order and his focus was on himself rather than truly glorifying God. He chose to only partially obey God's commands.

And while God invites us to carry out His purposes and plans, He doesn't rely or depend only on us. He is certainly able to find other people who can carry out the tasks He calls us to. We're the ones who miss out.

Samuel was heartbroken over this. Scripture said that he mourned and grieved for him.

So much so that God said, "how long are you going to grieve and mourn" One paraphrase even said, "How long are you going to mope around?"

God tells Samuel that He is going to select a new leader and He wants Samuel to go to Bethlehem.

Samuel is a little apprehensive at first.

The LORD said to Samuel, "How long will you grieve over Saul? I have rejected him from being king over Israel. Fill your horn with oil and set out; I will send you to Jesse the Bethlehemite,

for I have provided for myself a king among his sons.” Samuel said, “How can I go? If 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.’ Invite Jesse to the sacrifice, and I will show you what you shall do, and you shall anoint for me the one whom I name to you.

### **1 Samuel 16:1-3**

I find it fascinating that God is going to choose a King from Bethlehem ... and that the King will not be the one they first suspect? Hmm... sound familiar? I think maybe God was giving a sneak peak of what was to come!

Samuel obeys. He heads to Bethlehem prepared to anoint a new king of Israel. The elders of the city met him at the gate trembling and fearful that something must be wrong for Samuel to come. They seem to be bracing themselves for bad news, but Samuel assures them that he comes in peace and invites them to consecrate themselves and join him for a sacrifice to God. He also makes sure Jesse and his sons are invited to consecrate themselves and come as well.

The word “consecrate” is not necessarily a word we use in our daily vocabulary, but it is a word that we find often throughout scripture. It is sometimes defined as “Separate from anything sinful”, “prepare yourself”, “dedicate for a sacred purpose.” Sometimes this meant literally and physically cleaning up in anticipation of God doing something.

I’m imagining Samuel as the crowd gathers. He’s glancing around. He knows God is about to choose the next King. This is a sacred moment, and the crowd doesn’t really know what is about to happen. God has told Samuel that it will be one of Jesse’s sons, so he pays careful attention to these young men.

Ah, there’s Eliab. Samuel smiles slightly and takes a deep breath. Surely, he must be the one.

But God says, “Nope. This is not the one whom I have chosen to be king.”

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.”

### **1 Samuel 16:7**

Ok. Samuel moves to the next son. Surely, it will be him. And God says, “No, it is not him.”

This continues. Seven times, Jesse’s sons are presented to Samuel. Each time, the Lord says, “This is not the one.”

I'm guessing Samuel was sweating a bit by now. He knew he had heard God tell him that He had chosen one of Jesse's sons but he was seemingly at the end of the line. What was going on? I'm sure he was a bit perplexed.

And so he asks Jesse, "Do you have any more sons?"

Jesse responds, "I have one more, but he's the youngest. He's out tending the sheep." Surely, God would not choose a young shepherd boy to be King, would He? Samuel tells Jesse, "Go and get him! We are not going to go anywhere until he comes. We will not sit down until he is here." And so David is summoned to come from the fields.

He sent and brought him in. Now he was ruddy and had beautiful eyes and was handsome. The LORD said, "Rise and anoint him, for this is the one." Then Samuel took the horn of oil and anointed him in the presence of his brothers, and the spirit of the LORD came mightily upon David from that day forward. Samuel then set out and went to Ramah.

### **1 Samuel 16:12-13**

There is an old Ray Boltz song that sums up this story with the phrase "when others see a shepherd boy, God may see a king."

We serve a God who sees...who really sees. He sees beyond our imperfections. He sees beyond our outer shell that the people around us may see. He sees beyond our skills and talents or the lack thereof. He sees our potential. He sees His creation....someone He dearly loves. And He sees the heart.

It's true; He's not choosing you and me to be the King of Israel today, but He is choosing us to be His children. He is choosing to invite us to be part of His story. He has great plans for you and for me.

Are we ready? Are our hearts focused on Him? God selected a shepherd boy named David that day. David certainly was not perfect, but he is remembered as being someone after God's own heart.

Many years later, Paul was preaching and recounted the story in this way: In Acts we read:

**16 So Paul stood up and with a gesture began to speak: "Fellow Israelites and others who fear God, listen. The God of this people Israel chose our ancestors and made the people great during their stay in the land of Egypt, and with uplifted arm he led them out of it. For about forty years he put up with them in the wilderness. After he had destroyed seven peoples in the land of Canaan, he gave them their land as an inheritance for about four hundred fifty years. After that he gave them judges until the time of the prophet Samuel. Then they asked**

**for a king, and God gave them Saul son of Kish, a man of the tribe of Benjamin, who reigned for forty years. When he had removed him, he made David their king. In his testimony about him he said, 'I have found David, son of Jesse, to be a man after my heart, who will carry out all my wishes.' Of this man's posterity God has brought to Israel a Savior, Jesus, as he promised. (Acts 13:16-23a)**

Others saw a shepherd boy, but God saw a man after His own heart who would ultimately point people to Jesus. What a testimony. May we be people after God's own heart, and may future generations be pointed to Jesus as a result.

What is God asking of you today? Are you hesitating because you think you are an unlikely choice? Do you have a list full of reasons why God may want to choose someone else?

Sometimes God calls us to something for a season and then prompts us to respond to the next plan He has for us. As my sister said to me this week, "About the time we get comfortable with sheep, He calls us to people." As both Saul and David found out, God is not desiring just one act of obedience. He is continually teaching and shaping us to make us more like Him. He works in unexpected ways. He chooses unlikely people. He can take a 4th grade teacher who has never traveled outside of our country and invite her to depend on Him to lead mission trips. And He can take a mission trip leader who has now led many mission trips and invite her to depend on Him to teach 4th grade students in a small rural school in Missouri. As God is moving in my life in unexpected ways, I am confident that He is moving in your life, too. Are you listening?

Let's pray.

*Dear Lord,*

*Thank you for seeing our hearts even better than we could ever do so. You see value and worth simply because we are Your creation but You invite us to trust You....to trust You even when Your plans are different than we expect. Thank you for inviting ordinary, unlikely people like us to play a part in Your story. We love you. Amen.*