

A Sermon Preached by Gregory Hall at Clarence Presbyterian on February 13, 2022

DAVID'S ANOINTING

But the Lord said to Samuel, "Do not look on his appearance or on the height of his stature, because I have rejected him; for the Lord does not see as mortals see; they look on the outward appearance, but the Lord looks on the heart." 1 Samuel 16:7

All during this program year we are focusing on the core stories from the Bible. These are the passages of Scripture that we believe everyone needs to know. These are the stories that shape our Sunday School program over a six-year cycle. Last week we completed the last story from the life of Moses. If Moses was the most important figure in the Old Testament, the second most significant person was David. Today, we begin our look at the meaningful events in the life of David.

At the beginning of the book of Samuel the people of Israel asked for a king. Samuel the prophet anointed Saul as the first king over the united tribes of Israel. Saul had a checkered record as king. He was disobedient to the commands of God. After some big mistakes by Saul, Samuel was told that God had withdrawn his favor from Saul, so Samuel was directed to anoint another king.

Samuel was guided to go to Bethlehem to make a sacrifice. He was told to invite the household of Jesse to the sacrifice. When the family came, the eldest child Eliab, who was a giant of a man, came before him and Samuel thought this must be the one. But the Lord responded **"Do not look on his appearance or on the height of his stature, because I have rejected him; for the Lord does not see as mortals see; they look on the outward appearance, but the Lord looks on the heart."**

Then Jesse presented another son with the same result and so it went down the line of seven sons. Finally, Samuel asked are these all of them? No, there was the small youngest son who was out tending sheep. He was brought in and anointed as the next king.

I believe a fundamental point of this story is found in the words- **"Do not look on his appearance or on the height of his stature, because I have rejected him; for the Lord does not see as mortals see; they look on the outward appearance, but the Lord looks on the heart."** In so many places in the Bible God chooses people not because of their outwards strengths but rather because of the potential that he sees in them.

David did not seem to be the first choice to be king among Jesse's sons from a worldly point of view. He was not the eldest son which carried with it a whole lot of importance in ancient culture. He was not a physically large person

which was an important quality for a king who would personally lead his people into battle. He was not experienced in leadership in any way. Yet God saw into his heart. He was the one to be anointed by God. God calls unexpected people to serve him in ways even they do not expect.

We know that David, the shepherd boy, became the hero who killed the enemy of Israel, Goliath. He went on to become the greatest King Israel ever had. He expanded the borders to what came to be called Israel. He captured and then made Jerusalem his capital. He began a family dynasty that lasted over 400 years. He is credited with writing many of the Psalms. He became the ideal of what a good king should be. Even though the Old Testament provides many examples of his failures as a person and king, he still is one of the few leaders of Israel that gets a favorable review. David was called “a man after God’s own heart.” He was not perfect but his heart was open to God.

This is a theme found throughout the Bible. God works not through the expected but through those whose heart is right. God worked through Jacob not Esau, he chose Moses even though Moses felt he was the wrong man. He chose Mary who seemed to have so little to offer. God did not look at outward attributes, but rather at the heart.

We find the same message in our New Testament lesson for this morning. In this passage Jesus gives Simon the fisherman a new name. The fisherman Simon becomes Peter, the rock of the disciples. This new name indicates the call of Peter as a disciple.

When Andrew brought his brother to Jesus, Simon would not have been an obvious choice to be part of Jesus’ inner circle. He did not have special talents that would have made him a prime candidate for leadership in a new religious movement. Simon was the son of John. He was married and made his living as a fisherman. Simon did not go to all the right schools. He was not educated in Jerusalem. Fishermen were mostly a rough lot, certainly not the first group one would suppose to begin a new religion.

Simon does not even seem to have been especially religious. His brother Andrew is the one who went out to hear Jesus. Andrew had the interest to try and find out what this new teacher had to say. He was the seeker and thinker in the family. When he got excited by what he heard from Jesus, he went and got his brother to come and meet Jesus.

Simon’s personal qualities were also suspect. He was blustery and impetuous. He was quick to speak and make promises he could not keep. He easily became angry and at times seems to be quite dense.

If we were serving on a church nominating committee looking for candidates for the Session, you and I probably would not have considered Simon for the office of Elder. He just did not seem to have the right qualities.

But Jesus did not concentrate on Simon's liabilities. While he may well have been aware of Simon's shortcomings, Jesus saw the possibilities in Simon. Jesus saw in Simon, Peter, a rock on which to build his church.

Peter responded in faith to Jesus' call. He followed Jesus. For the next three years Peter was beside Jesus during his earthly ministry. He saw all that Jesus did. He heard Jesus' teaching. Peter grew in his faith and understanding.

Peter became a leader of the disciples. He was given a place of respect by the others. Many times Peter spoke on behalf of the other disciples. He demonstrated both great faith and great doubt. When Jesus asked the disciples, "Who do you think I am?" it's Peter who said, "You are the Christ, the Son of the Living God." Peter showed great faith when he said he would never betray Jesus and also great doubt when a few hours later he did deny Jesus.

Peter was a witness to the resurrection. He experienced the Risen Jesus. He was in the upper room at Pentecost at the coming of the spirit. On that day it was Peter who preached to the crowd on behalf of all the apostles.

Who could have believed that the simple, rough, uneducated fisherman Simon could become Peter the rock? Who could have thought that Simon born in Palestine and who had never traveled more than fifty miles from his home would die in Rome as a leader in the young Christian movement? Who could have seen the possibilities in this young man, except Jesus himself?

God sees us not only as we are, but also sees what we can become. Jesus sees the possibilities within each of us.

Michelangelo was one of the greatest artists of the Renaissance. He worked in several mediums. Once while he was working on a sculpture, he was asked what he was doing. He replied, "I am releasing an angel from the rock." Michelangelo did not see merely a great block of rock in front of him, he saw an angel waiting to be released.

So it is with God. We know what we are like. You and I know all too well our limitations. We know our faults. All too often we concentrate on our limits and failures. God know these limits as well as we do.

But God does not focus on our limitations. God concentrates on our possibilities; Jesus sees things in us that we cannot see. The Spirit has plans for us that we cannot know. The more that you and I try to follow Jesus the more we will become. You and I cannot even begin to guess what God sees in us.

Giovanna Bernadetto was born into a wealthy Italian family. He lived a rather useless early life. He was one of the wild kids in the community. He was the kind of teenager many people would conclude would never amount to much. Giovanne might have ended up in prison, if he did not have a wealthy and influential father. Then he came down with a serious illness. During this crisis he

promised to begin serving Jesus. He began by rebuilding an abandoned church building near his hometown. Others came to join him in living a simple life of faith. By the time of his death Giovanni Bernadetto the playboy had become Francis of Assisi who had inspired and purified the church.

Dorothy Day was born to middle class parents in 1897. She went through a typical rebellious phase in her late teens and twenties. In common pattern of the post-World War I period, she flirted with communism which was the great hope of intellectuals in those days. Communism was thought to be the great hope for the poor. Dorothy seemed to fit the pattern in which one would have expected her to return to a normal middle-class life after she really “grew up.”

But God had other ideas. After the birth of her daughter, Dorothy had an experience of God’s love, which led her to join the Roman Catholic Church. But she did not lose her love for the poor and outcasts. She not only cared for them, she and her associates lived with them in the slums of New York City. So began the movement that became known as the Catholic Worker, this movement has touched the lives of the poor in many cities across the nation. This movement is at work today in Buffalo.

Simon the simple fisherman became Peter the rock.

Giovanni Bernadetto became Francis of Assisi.

Dorothy the middle-class girl became the helper of the poor.

And David the young shepherd boy became a great king.

As Oswald Chambers tells us: **All of God’s people are ordinary people who have been made extraordinary by the purpose he has given them.”**

What about you and me?

What great thing does God want to do through us?

What great possibilities does he see in us, if you would just place a greater trust in him?

For when Jesus looks into our hearts he sees greater potential than we can imagine. May we allow God to work his will through us.

“Do not look on his appearance or on the height of his stature, because I have rejected him; for the Lord does not see as mortals see; they look on the outward appearance, but the Lord looks on the heart.”