

1 Samuel 16:1-13

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.’”

3Invite 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.”

4Samuel did what the Lord commanded, and came to Bethlehem. The elders of the city came to meet him trembling, and said, “Do you come peaceably?”
5He said, “Peaceably; I have come to sacrifice to the Lord; sanctify yourselves and come with me to the sacrifice.” And he sanctified Jesse and his sons and invited them to the sacrifice.

6When they came, he looked on Eliab and thought, “Surely the Lord’s anointed is now before the Lord.”

7But 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.”

8Then Jesse called Abinadab, and made him pass before Samuel. He said, “Neither has the Lord chosen this one.”

9Then Jesse made Shammah pass by. And he said, “Neither has the Lord chosen this one.” 10Jesse made seven of his sons pass before Samuel, and Samuel said to Jesse, “The Lord has not chosen any of these.”

11Samuel said to Jesse, “Are all your sons here?” And he said, “There remains yet the youngest, but he is keeping the sheep.”

And Samuel said to Jesse, “Send and bring him; for we will not sit down until he comes here.” 12He 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.”

13 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.

“Sacred Sight”¹

How many of you have seen the movie "The Matrix"? It is one of the most famous movie's of our time. Those of you who haven't seen it, you can borrow it from me. But let me tell you a little bit about the Matrix. In this futuristic film, sentient machines control humans by creating a simulated reality called "The Matrix."

One of the prophetic characters in the movie, Morpheus, is looking for the chosen one, someone who will liberate humanity, and fight against the machines.

I know the plot of the movie sounds a little wild, but let me get to the point. Morpheus, our “Matrix prophet”, finds someone who he thinks will be the “savior” of Zion. His name is Thomas Anderson and he is an ordinary computer programmer. Mr. Anderson is also called "Neo" in hacker circles, as he is not a fully law abiding citizen.

Morpheus has wisdom and discernment. He instinctively knows that the young geek, Neo, is the chosen one, who will set Zion free. Morpheus knows that Neo will help people wake up and fight against the machines which guard the illusion, and keep people enslaved in the Matrix.

Neo accepts the call and jumps in right away. He starts the hard work of liberating humanity. But here I must stop, I don't want to spoil the plot. I encourage you to watch the movie to find out the ending.

Like the prophet Samuel in our Bible reading, Morpheus chooses Neo. And this young, insignificant, corporate cubicle worker becomes the hero of

¹ Worship in a Flash for Lent and Easter, 2013 by Abingdon Press, Lectionary Preaching, Year A, Old Testament. Written by Mike Graves.

the story. Morpheus chooses Neo because of an inner hunch, a divine intuition. He trusts his heart.

Our main scripture reading from the First Book of Samuel is a bit similar to Neo's story. We have a grumpy prophet, Samuel, who is looking for the hero of the story, which is Israel's next king. The scene is a bit comical. God is constantly talking to Samuel. I can imagine this old, grumpy Jewish prophet seemingly talking to himself, as he walks around.

On the other hand we have Jesse, the proud father, who parades all of his best sons in front of Samuel. One by one Samuel rejects them. This weird, old man, with voices in his head, picks the least likely son, a stable boy, who is outside herding sheep.

At this point of the story, David is insignificant. He is the youngest, and he is a simple shepherd boy. He seems way too young to have political ambition. David is so young and unimportant, that his own family forgets about him, when they gather together to eat the sacrifice with Samuel.

When the prophet Samuel was looking for a new king, naturally he was looking for a great, muscular, handsome guy, whose voice thunders over thousands in battle. However God had a different plan.

Remember the part where Samuel looks at Jesse's sons? They are all handsome, tall, good-looking guys. One of them must be the future king of Israel. Samuel is ready to pour oil on one of these young men's head.

But for some strange reason, God doesn't want the first born, or any of the others. Seven sons parade in front of Samuel but God doesn't want any of them. Samuel gets impatient and a bit confused.

He asks Jesse, "Do you have other sons?" Jesse says, "Oh, just the youngest, but he is taking care of the sheep." Samuel asks Jesse to bring home the youngest son. Samuel, the prophet is simply following God's instructions as he hears them in his heart.

And who is this youngest son? Who is the little boy watching the sheep and goats?

He is David, the future King David, the greatest and most beloved king of Israel. He will establish Jerusalem as the capital of the united kingdom of

Judah and Israel. He will become a great warrior and king, a poet, and a musician. A large part of the Book of Psalms contains his name as either the author or someone to whom the Psalms were dedicated.

So what's going on in our reading? Why did God choose the youngest boy, instead of the natural born leader, the oldest? Why did Morpheus in the Matrix choose a googly-eyed young hacker, like Neo, to free humanity?

The answer in both cases is this: the prophets had sacred sight. In the Biblical case, we hear the inner conversation between the Prophet Samuel and God. Let me read it for you. When Samuel looked at Jesse's oldest son, Eliab, he thought, this must be the one.

But listen to what God says 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.**”*

This is good news for many of us. If you are not the most beautiful, the smartest, the coolest, the richest person in your family or among your friends, don't worry about it. God still loves you and God is choosing you to do great things in the world.

God doesn't care about the things people care about. God doesn't care about your background, your nationality, if you are rich or poor, tall or short, if you have pretty blue or brown eyes, are young or “young at heart”. God only cares about what's in your heart.

God sees your sacrifice right now. You are reading a sermon to find a message from God for these difficult times. You are not simply watching the news on TV, but also listening to God's word. You are making sure that you have a strong relationship with God, even when the Coronavirus threatens the balance of our world finances.

In these times, you know where your strength is coming from. You know that even when governments crumble, God is still in control. Your strength is in God, who is there with you in this moment, holding your hand – spiritually

speaking – and talking to you in your heart. God sees your sacrifice. God sees everything, even the future, and will take care of you.

Even though, we people usually look on the outside, God sees with sacred sight. God sees into our hearts and chooses us to make this world a better place.

There are so many small things we can do for each other – especially now when we have to stay home. We can be kind to those we live with, even if they get on our nerves a bit sometimes. :) It can be irritating to be stuck inside with our family members. We can choose to let go of petty arguments, and really love each other in spite of the inevitable irritation.

There are lots of things we can do spiritually. We can pray for our suffering world and especially our loved ones. We can call people up who are elderly and need a few encouraging words. We can print out communication (like this sermon) from Shiloh Church and bring it or send it to a shut-in and those who don't have Internet access. In this new and unprecedented time, God chooses us to learn how to *see* our world in a new way.

Many times in the Bible we discover that God loves people who are not loved by anyone. Jesus often talked to outcasts, Samaritans, women, children, tax collectors, prostitutes, all the people the world ignored.

We may not become prophets or kings or world saviors soon, but we all have a task. We are all chosen by God to bring peace and hope into this scary world. We are called to be Christ's imperfect, but joyful hands and feet. God is right here, where we are in this moment, calling us to a better life, to a life filled with God's presence, support, and love.

There is no greater task and calling in this world than to love each other. Here I'm not talking about romantic love. That's sweet, too. I'm not talking about cheap love, either, like we love "everyone" in the whole world, especially those who are far away... (but we are not so nice to our closest family members). I'm talking about Agape-love, love that sacrifices for others, the type of love that Jesus loved with, a love that makes life better.

As you saw earlier in our scripture reading, God doesn't always have good taste in choosing people. :)... Imagine this! God chose me, a woman from Transylvania, to bring good news to you. You know me. I am not perfect. I make mistakes every day, but God still chooses me to lead. The same way God

is choosing every single one of you who are reading these words to be leaders in your own families, and to bring hope into the larger world.

In the end, David, the young shepherd boy, turns out to be a great warrior and a powerful king. Even though his success seems unlikely, God blesses David and the kingdom of Israel. Samuel, the struggling and fearful prophet, receives encouragement and sacred sight from God and this holy discernment makes the whole world better.

The story goes on today. Today we are discerning the path forward. We are listening for solutions to very real problems in the 21st century. We need faith to be prudent and steady, as we deal with the outbreak of the Coronavirus. We all need discernment and sacred sight right now. Today, we are chosen by God to bring something meaningful and beautiful into our struggling world.

How do we listen to God? How do we discern God's will for us?

You are doing it right now. You are in God's presence where God speaks to our souls in a special way. When you listen to sermons, pray, read the Bible, and teach your children about God, you are doing God's will. You are discerning that the spiritual life is beneficial. When we enter discernment this way, patiently looking for an answer, God speaks to us in the silence of the heart. We get a hunch, an intuition, and suddenly, the direction seems clear.

So today be comforted and rejoice! For God is with you. God has chosen you to do good in this world. You have been chosen to be the hands and feet of Christ. So be glad, and keep the faith. Keep putting one foot in front of the other. Keep living in the moment with joy, keep looking for discernment...and keep praying for sacred sight.

Amen.

Prayer for 3-22-2020

Generous and loving God, we thank you for teaching us and guiding us every step of the way. Today we pray for discernment and sacred sight. Show us the way. Guide our steps toward you and help us to do your will.

Today we thank you for teaching us through the example of Samuel, the prophet, and David, Israel's greatest king, that the outside is not everything.

You see our hearts. You know our souls. Help us to become your hands and feet in this world, where suffering and pain have made people hungry for your comfort.

Knowing that you are a loving and compassionate God, we ask you to send your healing to all people who are in hospitals, nursing homes, or confined to their own homes. Be with the lonely and those who are mourning the loss of a loved one. We pray for peace in our country and every country in the world. Lord, help us love our neighbor as our selves.

We also pray for the people on our prayer list... Silence
We thank you for all our blessings...Silence

Loving God, now we pray for our Congregation, Shiloh UCC. Inspire us with your Holy Spirit and give us your sacred sight

Silence

The Lord's Prayer