

## THE CHOOSING OF DAVID

Scripture Reading: 1 Samuel 16:10-13, RSV

After looking at all of his classmates and remembering some of their struggles to finish class requirements, a Takoma Academy graduate recently quoted from a Bible text: “The Lord works in mysterious ways his wonders to perform.” Many of the parents and friends of today’s 8th grade graduating class may share his wonder.

In a sense the Lord works in mysterious ways more often than we realize. There is a tendency in our culture to minimize the importance of children and of young people. We have fallen into the general trap of believing that bigger is better—whether it is bigger buildings, people, machines, cars, etc.

Israel had the same problem. When they wanted a king God helped them choose a king, but it is interesting that God helped them select a king whom they could respect. According to 1 Samuel 9 he helped them choose Saul who was so tall that he was about a foot taller than anyone else in Israel. The Bible says that he was the son of a wealthy man and he was handsome. “There was not a man among the people of Israel more handsome than he; from his shoulders upward he was taller than any of the people” (verse 2). In a crowd he towered over everyone else.

In studies which have been done about short and tall people, it has been proven that if two people of equal training and experience apply for a job, if one of the individuals is short, the taller person will get the job. There is a kind of discrimination we have against smaller people. This reaction is seen in our relationships to children and young people.

When it became apparent that Saul couldn’t be obedient to God and that the size of his physical body did not reflect the size of his commitment to the Lord, God said to the Prophet Samuel that he should go to the house of Jesse and there God would choose another king. Samuel did not tell anyone what his purpose was in going to Jesse’s home. Since Samuel’s position as prophet before Saul became king was the equivalent of a prime minister or president, Jesse assumed that it was a bad reason for this visit. Jesse thought he was in trouble, that Samuel had a message from God that would be uncomfortable to hear. Jesse told the elders of the city that Samuel was coming, and the Bible says that the elders tremblingly met Samuel at the city gates. They asked: “Have you come in peace?” Samuel’s response was: “Yes, I have come to sacrifice to the Lord; consecrate yourselves, and come with me to the sacrifice” (1 Samuel 16:5, RSV).

After the sacrifice Jesse’s seven sons came to be presented to Samuel and he inspected them carefully. The first was Eliab, who was tall, muscular and handsome. Samuel was just as much a product of the culture of Israel as anyone else, and he said, “This has got to be the one, He stands out in a crowd. He looks like a king. I’m impressed.” But the Lord spoke into Samuel’s ear and said, “Samuel, you’re wrong. He is not the king. Do not look on his appearance or on the height of his stature. I have rejected this man, for the Lord sees not as man sees. Man looks on the outward appearance, but the Lord looks on the heart.” As good as Eliab appeared, God didn’t trust him. He would have made a bad king. As each son was presented, Samuel was impressed with their appearance, but God rejected all of them.

Samuel was perplexed. “What is going on here?” He said to Jesse, “Are these all of your sons?” “Oh, no, I’ve got a little squirt out in the meadow taking care of the sheep. He doesn’t amount to much.” Samuel

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said, "Have someone go to get him. We won't even sit down to conclude this service until he comes." Naturally Jesse was totally baffled by this. Samuel was the prophet and Jesse assumed he knew what he was doing, but he certainly couldn't figure it out. Samuel passed up his tall, handsome sons and has asked for the young shepherd.

The Bible describes David as "ruddy," which means red. We're almost certain that that means he was a redhead. Esau was also mentioned as being ruddy and we suspect that he was redheaded. It was unusual to have a redheaded child. The Bible also says that David had beautiful eyes and that he was handsome. It seemed to be very important to the Jewish people to have handsome kings.

Samuel would never have chosen David on his own, but because the Lord told him to anoint David, he took the horn and poured the oil on his head. David had no idea why this happened and Samuel did not clearly tell him. He knew God was picking him out for something special, that the future involved a high destiny but no details were given to him. The Scriptures tell us that the Holy Spirit came upon him and filled him with deeper inspiration, love, zeal and devotion, and he went back to taking care of sheep.

I doubt if we can appreciate what it means to be a shepherd—by yourself day after day and night after night out in the hills protecting the flock from wolves and other predators, watching the lambs being born and seeing some of them dying. As a young boy David was learning tremendous lessons as a shepherd. He felt the grief and the pain. He felt the joy. The Bible says that he was a great musician. He loved to sing and composed his own music. After his experience with Samuel, he sang even more beautifully. In fact, later on David's ability as a musician and the beauty of his voice was brought to King Saul's attention. Saul had him come to sing and play for him to get him out of depressed moods.

Even though David was young and small God knew his heart. He knew that David loved him. He loved all that God had created in nature. The hours that he had spent as a shepherd had made him wise beyond his years. David had great potential that his father and older brothers couldn't see. But God could see it.

The potential in this 8th grade class cannot be suspected by most of us. They can just barely perceive it themselves. It's easy for us to think with our human limitations that we know what these students are capable of becoming. The teachers think they know. Sometimes the fellow students think they know. Most of us have seen college and high school yearbooks with notations beside a student's picture saying, "Voted most likely to succeed." None of them ever said "Most likely to fail." You got the idea that they thought that most of the class would fail but one individual probably would succeed. I wish someone would do a doctoral dissertation on those in this category and see how many of them really were successful. I think we'd be surprised.

It is true that in every graduating class the teachers have one person that they usually pick as the one who is most likely to fail. "If that fellow/girl has potential, it's undiscoverable." David did show promise as a young man but many people don't think that some young people do show promise. I want to tell you about a friend of mine who didn't show any promise when he graduated either.

When Ron Halvorsen was going through school, he fought all the time. He was surly and incorrigible. He wouldn't study. He hated school. He hated to listen to good music. You couldn't catch him dead in

an art gallery. He would never attend a concert of good music. He thought the reading of poetry was for sissies. When he opened his mouth, he murdered the English language. He worshiped the Brooklyn Dodgers, his friends and his gang. He didn't have any use for God. I suspect that if the president of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists had visited his school and tried to pick out the future leaders and evangelists, he would never have picked Ron. When he went through a Christian academy the same thing happened. All of the high school teachers felt that he was a hopeless case. "Why don't we encourage him to go to another school until he's 16 and can quit?"

It's interesting that God knew Ron's heart. God can see what man could never observe. God could see courage. God could see a willingness to risk and think big. God could see potentiality for growth. The same Ron Halvorsen who wouldn't be caught dead in an art gallery, now paints for recreation. He even takes art lessons. Not only does he love to read poetry, he also loves to memorize it. The change is miraculous. Human potentiality by itself may look very small but when blessed by God even the smallest potential can be greatly increased.

The anointing of David is another way of saying that God chose him. As long as David allowed, God was going to be David's coach throughout his life. In the Washington area if you want to play basketball seriously, there are two or three high schools you should choose to attend. The percentage of graduates from De Matha, for example, who go on to play at name colleges and the NBA is surprisingly high.

There are probably a number of fellows in this class who have the ability to play basketball. I guarantee you, however, that if they are never coached they will not amount to much as a basketball player. Their natural abilities can take them only so far. They need to be coached.

I didn't realize this until I went to college. Having gone to an Adventist high school, I had never been coached in basketball. There were a few fellows in my freshmen college class, however, who had been trained by a coach. They didn't seem to have more natural ability than some of the rest of us, but when you watched them play you could see that their play was smart, that they knew when to pass the ball, that they knew where to position themselves to take the best shots. Their speed, strength and leaping ability may not have been greater, but they knew how to use their skills better. The coaching they had received made an incredible difference.

It's interesting to note that when students get on the De Matha team they don't complain about long hours of practice, they don't complain when the coach criticizes their ball handling, they don't mind learning to play as a team member and not taking all the shots. Instead they become better players because they realize that they need a coach in their lives.

The anointing of David and the consecration of the young people today is a way for us to say to the graduating class, and for them to say to themselves, you have certain abilities. You have tremendous potential. None of us can see it clearly. Some of you are really going to surprise us happily. The consecration service is a way to say that in life you want Jesus Christ to be your coach. In a sense you can make it through life without him, but you'll never live up to all that's possible for you. God even blesses those who reject him. People who don't accept Christ as Lord can live. They can make money. They can know some degree of happiness on a temporary basis. What happens is that they settle for a much lower level of happiness, of life and of fulfilling their potentials. The problem with the world is

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that just like David's parents and Samuel, it is assumed that the strongest, the best looking, is the best. That is not true. God looks on the heart. We tend to reward people for being beautiful instead of honest. We honor the rich instead of the loving. We pay our sports players 10 times more than we would ever think of paying a teacher. We use our minds to make weapons instead of resolving differences and bringing peace. I want you to understand that everything in the world is upside down, it's backwards, it's wrong. Let Christ be your coach, your Savior. Give your life to him fully. Let him show you how to live the fullest possible life as a Christian. Be a young person whose heart is seen by God and God can say to you, "I don't look at outward appearances. I know the heart of this person. I anoint him/her to be a king/queen in my household."

May God bless each of our graduates today.