

The Covenant with David

Sunday, March 14, 2021

"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

While many countless books and research has been written on birth order, have you considered the ways it plays out in scripture? In our own families, siblings are aware of how expectations fall differently on each individual. Older children are expected to set a good example for the younger ones, and the younger ones are left to either live up to those examples or learn from the mistakes. It's what you might expect with any family of multiple kids.

We expect that of Jesse's many sons, of course the oldest should be crowned king. Like Samuel, everything we know of families and birth order and birthrights leads us to this conclusion. But this is not just any king. This king is chosen by God, who favors the lowly, the youngest, the very last one that any of them, Samuel included, thought would be chosen. Time and again, God surprises us all, and we are reminded that making a covenant with God will not look anything like what we expect. The youngest son who tends the sheep. The man who is born blind. So little is expected of them; yet God chooses *them* to reveal God's self.

God reminds Samuel that humans judge by outward appearance, by that which we see. God, instead, judges by our hearts, inwardly — by that which we cannot see. Even with the most intentional process of discernment, with pro/con lists, and thoughtful, rational conversation partners, our decision making will always be limited because there will always be an element of unknown, of mystery. In prayer and our Lenten journey, God invites us to look deeper into that mystery and see past what is right in front of us.

God is patient with us and with Samuel, pushing us further, gently. God waits for all of Jesse's sons to be presented, and then asks, 'Is this all the sons you have?' At God's prompting, Samuel looks for more and digs a little deeper. In doing so, he finds the next king in an unexpected and not so glamorous place - with the sheep. The sheep, the

lowly animal who not only need a lot of attention, but are also smelly, dirty and would be lost were it not for the shepherd who cares for them. God chooses the one who isn't even around to be seen, who is engaged in a role that, while important, is lowly, and kept out of the spotlight. Samuel is blind to God's desire for David to serve as King, because he is making assumptions based on human expectations.

We all have our blind spots. It is easy to make assumptions about why someone is unkind, unhappy, poor, homeless or sick, and sometimes, those assumptions are not without cause. But they do not invite us to look deeper into the hearts of those we encounter. They do not invite us to see where God is waiting to surprise us. They do not allow us to see the surprising expectations God may have in store for us.

What does the world look like through our eyes? What does the world look like through *God's* eyes? How can we adjust our vision toward God's way of seeing things?

Brief daily reflections for the remainder of the week:

Monday, March 15, 2021

Jesse is astonished when God chooses his youngest child. David is the least expected choice; it goes against how he expects his children's birth order to play out. As a child, how did your upbringing influence how you came to understand and operate in the world?

Tuesday, March 16, 2021

God reminds Samuel that, whereas humans judge by appearances, God judges by that which we cannot see. Have you fallen victim to judging by appearances? How? What do you tend to see first in those who you encounter?

Wednesday, March 17, 2021

Discernment requires that, in conversation with God, we work to see as God sees. Indeed, this is how Samuel comes to see David not as a lowly shepherd boy, but as the king he will grow up to be. Where has discernment changed your views in this Lenten season?



Reflection for the Fourth Week of Lent

Thursday, March 18, 2021

To say the least, David is a surprising choice for a king and prophet. How have you been surprised by God?

Friday, March 19, 2021

Our commitment to Catholic health care means that we are committed to the poor, marginalized, and forgotten. God's choice of David is just one biblical illustration of that commitment, in what other ways or instances do we see God choosing the lowly or forgotten?

Saturday, March 20, 2021

God tells Samuel that judgment should be of the heart—by that which we cannot see. How can we adjust our vision toward God's way of seeing?