

**“A New Thing”; Series: Always Reforming – The Reformation and the Life of David**

1 Samuel 16:1-13

Westside Fellowship CRC; 17 September 2017

Rev. Heidi S. De Jonge

When I was little, my family participated in a program called, “Walk Through the Bible.”



In it, we learned motions to go along with the story of the Bible. (At this point, I did several of the motions to the whole story. See the whole video here:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bnZPak04SPU>

Two bits about that... David is one part of a long story of God working out the salvation of God’s people. He is a link in the chain, and anything that he does that we celebrate him for and encourage each other to emulate is small in comparison to what God does through and with David to bring about the story of his love for us.

And the other bit: the state of David’s heart (full/whole) and his dynamic, messy, changing and transforming relationship to God is what makes his life an excellent lens for us as we consider the Reformation of the church 500 years ago and as we consider our own continued need for Reformation, as a church, and as individuals.

Chapter 16 begins smack dab in the middle of uncertainty and questions about leadership and authority. It turned out that tall, dark, and handsome Saul was not the kingly material that God and Samuel had thought he was going to be. Saul had ‘no heart’. And it was time to move on. No time for a long mourning period. God had plans. He had plans to do new things. “Forget the former things; do not dwell on the past. See, [Samuel!], I am doing a new

thing! Now it springs up; do you not perceive it? I am making a way in the wilderness and streams in the wasteland” (Isaiah 43:18-19).



And Samuel says, “How can I go? If Saul hears about it, he will kill me!” (1 Samuel 16:2a). Samuel stands in a long, long, long line of But-Godders. From Sarah to Moses to Jeremiah to Isaiah to Zechariah to Mary... How can I go? How can I do this? How can this be? This doesn’t make sense. This won’t work. I’m traveling into certain death.

I imagine that the Reformers of the 16<sup>th</sup> Century had moments like this as well. It was a time of uncertainty and question about leadership and authority in the church. We are not privy to what God said to Martin Luther and John Calvin and others who lead mini Reformations here and there, but it may have been something like what God said to Samuel. Do not mourn for this situation. I have plans! Plans to reform my church through you. See, Martin! See, John! I am doing a new thing! Now it springs up; do you not perceive it? And perhaps John and Martin and all the rest had times when they thought. How can I go forward with this? The pope is going to kill me!

And we, too have moments when we are absolutely frozen by questions of leadership and authority, either in church, or in organizations or groups that we work with, or the leadership in our own lives. Because I believe in the power and purpose of lament, very rarely will I say, “Do not mourn” for something. But when you think of the church and the stuck-ness we get caught in, I sometimes want to say, “Do not mourn!” Don’t grieve for the ‘good old

days'. Now is the time that God is doing a new thing! And the whisper of the Spirit comes to our ears as well... telling us that it is time to move on or that it is time for a big change – or that it is time for personal or group transformation – and we say, How can this be? How will this work? I don't know if I can do this. Doing things differently just might kill me!

And God comes up with a plan. Cuz, remember, God has plans. And he has plans to take care of his plans. In 1 Samuel, God says, "Take a heifer with you and say, 'I have come to sacrifice to the Lord' and invite a man named Jesse to come to the feast" (1 Samuel 16:2b).

Interesting tidbit, Samuel never makes a sacrifice to the Lord. After his real mission is done there, he's done. He goes back to Ramah. So, did God tell Samuel to... LIE? All sorts of interesting theological questions hidden in this text! Whatever happened here, what we know is that God had a plan – a plan to do a new thing – and that plan included other plans that were all designed to bring about the salvation of the people. God works unconventionally to bring about his will.

So, too, in the Reformation. Reformers were being called by God to push back on the way things were done in order to bring the church back to God and God's grace. And as the church continues to reform, prophets like Samuel and shepherd boys like David are called to move in unconventional ways to bring about transformation... and this sometimes involves crossing boundaries, and breaking rules, and ruffling feathers, and disturbing the peace, and risking life. This sometimes involves hiding Jews in basements. This sometimes involves nonviolent protesting unjust laws.

And in your own life. God's got sneaky plans. Unlike Samuel's story, God is likely not telling you to tell a lie in order to bring about his plan. But, as you look back on the twists and turns in your life, don't you sometimes say, Wow, if I hadn't gone through that difficulty or storm or detour, I would not have met this person, or grown in my trust of God, or ended up in this amazing and life-giving job. God moves in mysterious ways.

And so, Samuel goes to Bethlehem, meets up with the elders of the town who know very well that Samuel brings along with him structure shift. And so they trembled when they met him. He diffused their anxiety with his little story about the heifer and gathers up Jesse and Jesse's seven sons... They all think they're just getting ready for a sacrifice – everybody getting

themselves consecrated, but Samuel has a different and unspoken agenda. As Jesse's sons mingle around him, Samuel and God have a private conversation. And the tension builds. Not one of these handsome men is the one that God has chosen. Not Abinadab. Not Shammah. And five more no's. Their hearts were not the right hearts. They were not the ones.

So, Samuel asks, Do you have any other sons? And I just imagine that the Israelites, as they are listening to the story being read, the reader would get to this line and do a dramatic pause. Do you have any other sons? ..... And then these words like gold, "There is still the youngest. He is tending the sheep." And the crowd goes wild. Yes! Yes! Yes! This is it! He's the one... the hidden, insignificant, outsider... the one who hasn't even been consecrated along with his brothers! The 8<sup>th</sup> one – the imperfect one – for he was one number beyond the full number of seven - The little one. This is the new thing! This is the way in the wilderness and the stream in the wasteland.

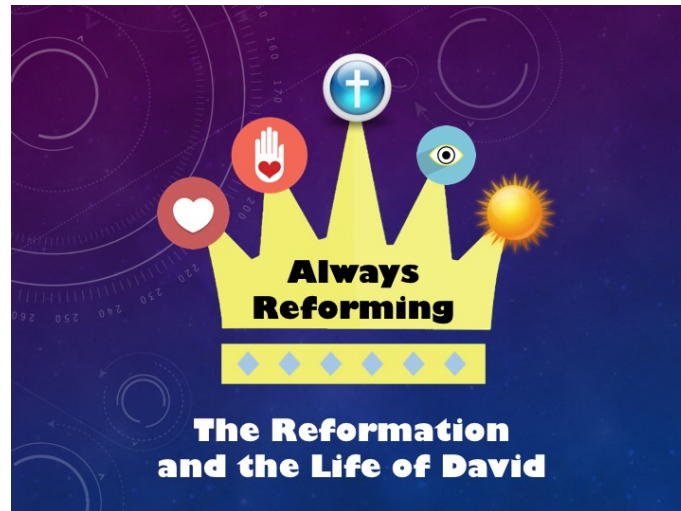
But the people *in* the story know none of this. Samuel simply asks for him to be retrieved and tells them all to wait. And then he arrives, and his heart is so beautiful and whole that it spills out in a glow of health and fineness – and the crowd listening goes even wilder.

Of course, anyone who can read wonders why David was so obviously handsome when we just had read that looks don't matter to God... but I love what Brueggemann says about the explicit reference to David's features:






The young David is one of the marginal people. He is un-credentialed and has no social claim to make. Those who fastened on to this story most passionately may have been those who, like David, were marginal with no credentials and no social claim. For such people it would be important to assert and celebrate that among the marginal there are beautiful people, that among the little ones there is the potential for greatness. In the hearing of the story are the seeds of hope for all those who joined the company and the narrated imagination of David. (Walter Brueggemann, *Interpretation Commentary: 1 and 2 Samuel*, p. 124)

And in the story the Lord tells Samuel to get up and anoint him, for he is the one. And the oil from Samuel's horn slides down the boy's face and the wind of God RUSHES down on him. And we hear his name in the text for the first time. David. And the crowd goes wild. And one more step in the history of salvation is completed.

As we touch on several of the stories of the life of David in the next 5-6 weeks, we will also be traveling through the main emphases – the Solas ... of the Reformation, which, incidentally, match quite nicely with the core values that we embrace in our congregation.



1. We will see in the life of David that salvation is through faith alone (*Sola Fide*) – as we encounter the **courage** of David in his interaction with Goliath.
2. We will see in the life of David that salvation is through grace alone (*Sola Gratia*) – as we encounter David **authentically** living through his sin, shame, and guilt and receiving God’s grace.
3. We will see in the **love** of David for his son, Absalom, the love of God for his people – a love that culminates in the sending of his own son, Jesus, for our redemption. Salvation is in Christ alone (*Solus Christus*).
4. We will see through the psalms of David a love for and an embodiment of the word of God (*Sola Scriptura*). As we receive the word of God through the psalms of David, we are given language to speak to God. And in the raw beauty of the psalms, we find that our prayers to God can be filled with gratitude and need and confession and sadness and curiosity and wonder. In fact the disposition of **curiosity** is an excellent disposition before the word of God. God, what would you teach me? What would you have me learn?
5. And finally, we will see in David’s life, and in his final words, a life of **integrity** lived for the glory of God alone (*Soli Deo Gloria*).

	<b>Sola</b>	<b>Value</b>	<b>David</b>
	<i>Fide</i> Faith	COURAGE	Goliath
	<i>Gratia</i> Grace	AUTHEN- TICITY	Bathsheba
	<i>Christus</i> Christ	LOVE	Absalom
	<i>Scriptura</i> Scripture	CURIOSITY	Psalms
	<i>Deo Gloria</i> Glory to God	INTEGRITY	Last Words

And it is my prayer as we walk through the story of David, that God would do new things in our lives and through our lives – sometimes mysteriously, and that in fact, God’s mysterious and new movements would help us as individuals and as a church to move in mysterious and new ways.

“Forget the former things; do not dwell on the past. See, I am doing a new thing! Now it springs up; do you not perceive it? I am making a way in the wilderness and streams in the wasteland” (Isaiah 43:18-19).