Hi,

Today’s updates:

* This Sunday in my 11am class we will be continuing the series, *Seven Books That Rocked the Church*. We’ll be talking about Galileo and his book, *Dialogue concerning the Two Chief World Systems*. We will do our best to separate fact from myth in the story of Galileo and the Church. I hope you will join us [on my Facebook page for ministry](https://www.facebook.com/Scott-Engle-St-Andrew-UMC-110365790736617/?modal=admin_todo_tour).
* The links to my on-line classes, the video recordings of the classes, the class audio podcasts, and the archive of these daily emails can all be found at [www.scottengle.org](http://scottengle.org/scotts-weekly-classes/). All the postings are up-to-date.

Today, we embark on an email series looking at the stories of King David through the lenses of his personal relationships, beginning with David’s relationship with God. It will be a fascinating journey, as the Bible devotes more narrative space to the stories of David than to any other person, with the exception of Jesus. The question is why. Granted, David came to be seen as the idealized king of Israel. And yes, he was the one with whom God made an everlasting covenant. But still, what will we find in these stories that God wants us to see? What will we learn about our own life with God from David’s life with God? Eugene Peterson writes:

“The way of David is rich in so much of what is involved in dealing with all we deal with – men and women, enemies and friends, sex and children. The story is woven in a rich tapestry of love and war, deeply textured in all the emotions that express the highs and lows of daily existence. David is nothing if not *interesting*. There is a charismatic verve to his life that compelled the attention of everyone. The stories about him quickly developed in Israel into something approaching a national myth. The people of Israel remembered and talked about everything and everyone that had to do with this man.”

Our question will be simply, why? So, we begin at the beginning, when God sends Samuel to find Saul’s successor, as the next king of Israel.

***1 Samuel 16:6-13(NRSV)***

**When they came, he looked on Eliab and thought, “Surely the Lord’s anointed is now before the Lord.” 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.” Then Jesse called Abinadab, and made him pass before Samuel. He said, “Neither has the Lord chosen this one.” Then Jesse made Shammah pass by. And he said, “Neither has the Lord chosen this one.” Jesse made seven of his sons pass before Samuel, and Samuel said to Jesse, “The Lord has not chosen any of these.” Samuel 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.” He 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.” 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.**

***2 Samuel 7:8-17 (NRSV)***

**Now therefore thus you shall say to my servant David: Thus says the Lord of hosts: I took you from the pasture, from following the sheep to be prince over my people Israel; and I have been with you wherever you went, and have cut off all your enemies from before you; and I will make for you a great name, like the name of the great ones of the earth. And I will appoint a place for my people Israel and will plant them, so that they may live in their own place, and be disturbed no more; and evildoers shall afflict them no more, as formerly, from the time that I appointed judges over my people Israel; and I will give you rest from all your enemies. Moreover the Lord declares to you that the Lord will make you a house. When your days are fulfilled and you lie down with your ancestors, I will raise up your offspring after you, who shall come forth from your body, and I will establish his kingdom. He shall build a house for my name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever. I will be a father to him, and he shall be a son to me. When he commits iniquity, I will punish him with a rod such as mortals use, with blows inflicted by human beings. But I will not take my steadfast love from him, as I took it from Saul, whom I put away from before you. Your house and your kingdom shall be made sure forever before me; your throne shall be established forever. In accordance with all these words and with all this vision, Nathan spoke to David.**

*Setting the stage*

When the twelve Israelite tribes conquered and settled in Canaan, they were not ruled by kings. Instead the Lord God was their king and they were led by men and women called judges. Samson, Gideon, and Deborah were a few of these leaders.

Things did not go well in the time of the judges. The people drifted further and further from God. They even began to clamor for a human king, so they could be just like all their neighbors. The last of the judges, a prophet named Samuel, confronted them about their desire for kings. Kings are *takers*, he warned. Kings *take* sons for his armies and daughters for his cooking. Kings *take* the best of the fields and the vineyards. Kings *take* property. *Take*, *take*, *take* (1 Samuel 8). But the people didn’t listen; they persisted and God relented, granting their wish.

So, God found a king for his people. His name was Saul and he certainly looked the part, for “there was not a man among the people of Israel more handsome than he; he stood head and shoulders above everyone else” (1 Samuel 9:2). Interestingly, so far as the people were concerned, Saul was chosen by lot (1 Sam. 10:17-27a).

But despite Samuel’s anointing of Saul as the first king of a united Israel, Saul proved to be a disappointment. He might have looked like God’s king, but he showed himself to be disobedient to God, figuring that, as king, he knew better. Saul even tried to supplant Saul in some of his duties (see 1 Samuel 13-15 for more on Saul’s disobedience). And so, “The Lord was sorry that he had made Saul king over Israel” (1 Sam. 15:35).

*God chooses a new king . . . well, yes and no*

God decides to replace Saul and sends Samuel to the home of Jesse, who lives in Bethlehem. Jesse has eight sons. Samuel is to fill his animal horn with oil for he is going to anoint a new king, though Samuel doesn’t yet know who it will be.

The first son, Eliab, is brought before Samuel. Like Saul, Eliab looks like he is from central casting. But God tells Samuel that Eliab is not the one. God won’t look at outward appearances but at the heart. So, one by one, Jesse parades his sons before Samuel, who says that none of them have been chosen by God. Finally, Samuel asks if there are any more sons and learns that the baby of the family is out back tending the sheep.

So the young shepherd is brought in and Samuel instantly knows that he is the one. Yes, young David looks both healthy and handsome, but we know that God has looked on his heart and seen what God wanted to see. So Samuel took the horn of oil and anointed David, after which the Spirit of the Lord “came mightily upon David from that day forward” 1 Sam. 16:13). And, in the next verse, we learn that the Spirit of the Lord departed from Saul.

Do David and Saul know what has happened, that the young shepherd has been handpicked to replace Saul? “No” is the simple answer and the ensuing tension grows inexorably as the lives of these two men, one king and one a young shepherd, become ever more entwined. God’s king, David, *will* take the throne. The only questions are when and how.

Thus, David’s relationship with God begins when God looks into David’s heart and finds a heart to God’s liking. Despite all that lies ahead, God would confirm this choice when David finally sits on the throne of Israel. Today’s second Scripture passage is from 2 Samuel 7. The prophet Nathan brings God’s word to David, word that David’s family would always sit on the throne of Israel. This dynasty would last four centuries until the Babylonians conquered Jerusalem and deposed the king in 587BC. By the time of Jesus, the Israelites/Jews waited anxiously for a Messiah (which simply means “anointed one”) from the house of David who would lead the people to freedom.

*A bit more -- Samuel’s story*

It was more than a thousand years before Jesus, and darkness had fallen across the Promised Land. For nearly 200 years, the Israelites had conquered and settled Canaan. Though God had been their king, the generations of Israelites had been caught in a descending spiral of godlessness and violence. Unwilling to embrace and live out the covenant they had made with the Lord God, “all the people did what was right in their own eyes” (Judges 21:25). In the midst of this darkness, an Israelite woman named Hannah wept bitterly because she could have no children. She prayed to God that she would conceive, promising to dedicate her child to the Lord’s service if God would only grant her request. Hannah did conceive, bearing a son whom she named Samuel. True to her word, when the boy was still very young, Hannah took him to be raised in the house of the Lord at Shiloh, by Eli, the priest, and his sons. She “left him there for the Lord” (1 Samuel 1:28).

But the darkness had settled even upon the Lord’s house at Shiloh, for “the sons of Eli were scoundrels; they had no regard for the Lord” (1 Samuel 2:11). In this troubled house, all we are told about the boy Samuel is that he “continued to grow both in stature and in favor with the Lord and with the people” (2:26).

One evening, the boy is sleeping in the tent sanctuary near the ark of the covenant when he is awakened by a voice. Thinking that he has been called by Eli, Samuel hops up and runs to Eli’s room. But Eli, probably thinking that the boy has been dreaming, tells Samuel to go to bed. It happens a second time and, again, Eli sends the boy back to bed (if you are a parent, you can picture this). Samuel is awakened yet a third time and this time, Eli seems to realize that something big is going on. Eli tells Samuel to go back and say to the Lord, “Here I am, for you called me” (3:8).

And so God calls the boy Samuel to a life of ministry, saying, “See, I am about to do something that will make both ears of anyone who hears it tingle,” for God would let none of Samuel’s words “fall to the ground” unheard. The young boy would grow to be the one who would lead Israel from the darkness of the judges to the seeming hopefulness of the first kings. He was Israel’s last judge and the first in a line of prophets who would anoint the kings of Israel and, later, Judah.

Though God had been their king, the Israelites insisted on having a human king like other people had. In 1 Samuel 8, the tribal elders gather to demand that Samuel appoint a king. God reassures Samuel that the people are rejecting God and not the judgeship of Samuel. So Samuel brought to the people God’s words of warning: *they would regret that they ever asked for a king, for kings are takers*. But, in the end, God relented and told Samuel to anoint a young man named Saul as Israel’s first king. When Saul proved to be a big disappointment, God told Samuel to anoint David as the second king of the united Israel, even while Saul was still king.

1 Samuel 25 records Samuel’s death. We are told that “all Israel assembled and mourned for him.” However, in 1 Samuel 28, Saul calls Samuel’s ghost back from the grave to help out in a battle against the Philistines! But Samuel reminds Saul that God has handed the kingdom to David for a reason.

‘til tomorrow, grace and peace,

Scott