

God's Plans

1Samuel 16:1-13

Have you ever had something not work out the way you expected?

I've had that happen many times in life.

For as long as I have been the pastor of this church I've lived in Kingsville.

When we first started looking for a house we looked in Leamington to be close to the church, but after seeing several homes we couldn't find anything that worked for our family within our price range.

After a while though we found the house where we still live on McCallum Street in Kingsville.

On occasion over the years we again considered moving to Leamington, but things did not work out the way I expected.

Once we found a house in Leamington, decided to put our house up for sale and make a conditional offer on the place in Leamington.

The real estate agent was supposed to come on Monday to start work on a listing and our hot water tank flooded the basement on Saturday.

Instead of listing we were ripping up flooring and installing a new hot water tank.

The next time I considered selling we ended up needing to replace our roof.

On another occasion our drain tile for the eavestrough pulled apart and flooded the basement again.

Instead of moving we were digging up around our house with the help of some good friends to fix the situation.

None of those situations worked out the way I expected.

That is just the way it is sometimes with plans we make.

They don't always work out the way we thought they would.

Do you know that never happens with God?

I find that amazing.

Now there are times were on the surface of the situation it may appear to us that things are not working out according to God's plans, but that is only because we are short sighted and do not see the big picture.

The fact is in the end things always turn out according to what God has said.

[We are reminded of that truth in our text this morning **1Samuel 16:1-13**. At the beginning of this chapter we are told that the LORD has rejected Israel's first king named Saul and God tells the prophet Samuel that it is time for him to anoint a new king. These things are all a part of God's plan to redeem a people to Himself. The LORD in this chapter is putting into action things that He has decided to bring about His will in the world. As we listen in on these events there are some important lesson for us to learn about God's plans. Here is the first...]

Point #1 – God’s people sometimes have a hard time with God’s plans. (Verse 1-3)

I think if we are honest there are times when even the most godly among us struggle with how the LORD is running things.

As far as we can tell from what is written in the book of first Samuel, no one of that time period had a closer relationship with God than Samuel.

Here is a man who from a very early age heard the audible voice of the LORD and we know it was God speaking to him because as he gave God’s word to God’s people everything he said came to pass.

Despite his godliness, he was having a tough time with what had happened with King Saul.

When the people asked for a king, they asked with godless motivation which displeased the prophet.

Despite that he followed God’s instructions and anointed Saul as king.

At first the young man was humble and did fairly well, but as time went on he grew prideful and disobedient and so God rejected him as king.

The whole thing bothered Samuel. We know that because God asks the prophet a question here in the **first part of verse 1**.

The sense of the question suggests that Samuel had been mourning Saul for a substantial amount of time perhaps months or even a year.

Even though he knows God so very closely he is struggling with the way things turned out. It could be he had developed an affection for Saul and was heartbroken over the direction he had turned.

It could be that he was saddened for the nation because Saul’s actions spelled trouble for the people.

Or perhaps it was something else, but clearly the way things had turned out made him unhappy.

After a while God comes with this question which sounds like a rebuke and then gives Samuel the next part of the plan and there too Samuel has a struggle. (**Verse 1b-3**).

It’s like God says, “Quit your crying and get to work to anoint the next king.”

Samuel considers this a dangerous task because the current king is refusing to accept his rejection and will want to hang on to power even if it means taking the life of God’s prophet.

It may be that Samuel is asking God this question out of fear, and it may simply be a question that is seeking to understand how to complete the assignment successfully.

Either way he is struggling to see how God’s plan is going to work here.

Graciously God gives him more of the plan so that he can see how it is going to work, but before that we can clearly see Samuel wondering how this was all supposed to go.

[When I was thinking about this I couldn't help but think of the apostle Peter. I love Peter. Yes he was far from perfect, but he demonstrated great faith as well. Remember when Jesus asked His disciples the question, "Who do you say that I am?" Peter answered and said, "You are the Christ the Son of the living God!" Exactly right Peter and the LORD commends him for it. But then just moments later Jesus starts talking about suffering and dying. Guess who speaks up? Peter and he says, "Never LORD! This shall never happen to you!" Amazing. He is all in on Jesus being the Messiah/Saviour, but he struggles with what Jesus says is the plan.]

If that can happen with godly men like Peter and Samuel, it shouldn't be a surprise that it happens to us too.

It is one thing to know in our heads that we are still subject to the brokenness of this world until Jesus comes, but when we get sick or suffer a life changing injury we often ask, "Why me, Lord?"

It is one thing to read words like, "Take up your cross and follow me!" but when we actually start to feel the weight of suffering for Christ we may find ourselves struggling to see what good can come of it.

[The fact is we may have the best of theology rolling around in our brains, we may know in our heads that God has a plan and in carrying it out, but that doesn't automatically make it easy to understand or accept. It is a powerful reminder of our need of God's grace. Both God's rebuke of Samuel here and His telling him to make a sacrifice are examples of His grace. Our hope is not to be like robots, our hope is not in our own power or strength, our hope is in the fact that God carries His people through their struggles. Here is something else we learn from this text about God's plans...]

Point #2 – God's plans, in their early stages, are often hidden from people. (Verses 4-5)

When the LORD sets something into motion He often uses things that go unnoticed by the vast majority of people.

Earlier in this book we learn that part of Samuel's ministry was to take regular tours through the land of Israel visiting people and administering justice.

Having installed Saul as king, Samuel more or less went into retirement which means that taking these kinds of trips typically would be for something serious.

That is likely why the elders of the town ask what they do in **Verse 4**.

When the guy who speaks for God comes to town it is natural to wonder, "Oh dear what did we do wrong? Is he coming to pronounce God's judgement on us?"

It is sort of like the police knocking on your door.

When you answer the door you are most likely going to say something like, "What's the problem officer?"

To the relief of the elders of Bethlehem we read this in **verse 5**.

Instead of judgment Samuel has come for worship and celebration.

What particular kind of sacrifice is left unsaid here, but multiple commentators think it is one of the sacrifices that involved the worshippers eating the meat of the sacrifice. These meals were different than your everyday meals. It symbolized fellowship with the LORD, sitting down at His table, enjoying His forgiveness and fellowship.

Because of that Samuel tells them to ‘consecrate themselves’.

Consecrate is very closely related to the word holy in the original language meaning to set something/someone apart.

This likely involved some ceremonial washing and changing clothes in order to prepare for the meal.

Samuel uses that opportunity to go to Jesse and his sons for the primary purpose of his mission.

Here’s the thing, most of the people in the town are totally unaware of this.

They only perceive what is happening with the sacrifice, not the bigger plan.

[That happens all the time. Think for a moment about Joseph the son of Jacob. If you are doing the five day reading plan with us then you have just read about his life. When his brothers sold him into slavery, did they think for a moment they would be bowing before him years later? When he got tossed into prison on account of a false accusation did anyone think he would end up as the most powerful man in Egypt next to the Pharaoh himself? Nope, not a chance. True Joseph saw how it all worked at the end looking back but I highly doubt he had much of a clue in the beginning.]

That is how it often is with the plans of God.

That is certainly true for His larger plans of redemption. No one was expecting the Messiah to come the way he did.

When Jesus is born in Bethlehem most people missed it, only a handful got to experience it and it’s not clear how much they even understood at the time.

Nazareth was a most unlikely place for Jesus to live.

No one was expecting the Christ to die on a cross and yet that is the very means by which we can be forgiven for our sin and made right with God through faith.

I believe this is true of His plans for our lives as individuals as well.

Think about your walk with Jesus for a moment. Can you look back at instances in your life and say, “I can’t believe this came from that?”

Events that at the time seemed insignificant or even detrimental and the LORD used those things to shape our lives in really significant ways.

[I'm a Christian because of corn de-tasseling. I'm a pastor because of a five minute conversation. I'm married to my wife because of laying cement blocks. I could not have predicted any those things would bring about the things they did and that is often the way it is with God's plans. Here is another lesson. This one is absolutely critical for our life and understanding as Christians. It is that...]

Point #3 – God's plans are formed according to His wisdom. (Verses 6-12)

While it is good and right for us to think upon and affirm that the LORD knows absolutely everything, we come to the end of ourselves rather quickly when we start to think about that because we know almost nothing. Because that is true there are always going to be things that we don't understand about Who God is and what He does.

It's hard to say exactly how many people came to the sacrifice because we do not know how many elders Bethlehem had at the time, but it is likely safe to say that we are talking about a small group of people.

Whoever was in that room probably figured out that this was about more than celebrating a sacrifice because they would have all been familiar with the significance of anointing.

Everything proceeds according to the human wisdom of the time.

When Jesse and his seven sons show up Jesse has them stand before Samuel in their order of birth from oldest to youngest.

The first born is Eliab. His name means "God is my father." That is a fantastic name for a king of God's people.

Samuel thinks he is the one right away (**Verse 6**).

It's a mistake to pass over this comment too quickly and move on to what is said next.

We have to keep in mind that Samuel is a godly man.

Further, he is a wise man having lived a long life in service to the LORD and faithfulness to His Word.

When he sees Eliab he sees someone tall and having a good appearance.

These are qualities that people regarded as important for a king in the ancient world. Further, these were the qualities that Saul possessed.

It is natural for the prophet to think that God would choose someone like Eliab.

To have someone of Saul's stature with a greater desire for godliness would be just what the nation needed.

God knowing what Samuel is thinking says this in verse 7.

The LORD reminds the prophet that He has insights that people do not have.

No man can look into the heart of another apart from the power of God.

Neither can any man hide anything in his heart from the LORD.

Eliab gets passed over and so Abinadab the 2nd born whose name means "My father is noble" comes before Samuel and he too is passed over.

Next Shammah Jesse's 3rd son whose name means
 "Astonishment" comes and he too is rejected.

Verse 10 says that seven of Jesse's sons come before
 Samuel and they are all rejected.

That's a head scratcher. God clearly said the next king was the son of Jesse, but God says no to them all, which leads to this in verse 11.

The word translated 'youngest' here implies unimportance and insignificance.

Nobody even considered getting David in from the field to come to the sacrificial feast.

He is out tending the sheep and is in no way ceremonially prepared to eat a meal.

Why is he out in the field? Because he is on the low rung in the family in comparison to his brothers.

That is not to say he was unloved or mistreated, his name actually means 'beloved', it simply means he was the youngest and so started out doing the chores of the youngest.

Samuel says, "Go get him and we are not gathering around the table until he comes" which brings us to **verse 12**.

David is a red head. Very unique among Jewish people. He is also good looking and so we can see that God's choice does not automatically discard such things, it merely means they are not primary in His decisions.

"He is the one." The LORD says to Samuel.

Now this raises an important question in my mind.

Why go through all of this?

Why not say to Samuel before he even gets to Bethlehem, "It's David, anoint him."

God goes through all of this for Samuel's benefit and for ours as well.

It's one lesson among many in the Bible that teaches us that God makes decisions based on information we do not have and He often decides to do things in a way we never would.

He decides according to His own wisdom and we need to learn to rest in that.

[Just think for a moment. God has all the information about everything across all time and space. He knows the outcome of every choice and decision made by everyone. He knows exactly what He needs to do in order to bring every one of His plans to fulfillment. I can barely begin to scratch the surface of what that means. If we look at the world and wonder what is going on, we are in good company. But if we are wise we will remember that God is still on His throne running things according to His unsearchable wisdom bringing things as we know them to a conclusion in order to make all things new and gather all of His people to Himself forever. That brings us to one last

lesson very much related to this third lesson. In addition to God's plans being formed according to His wisdom we also see here that...]

Point #4 – God's plans always depend on His power. (Verse 13)

The purposes of the Almighty will never fail because He always has the ability to do everything He desires.

Any older siblings in the service this morning?

Let me ask you, how many of you would like it if your youngest brother or sister was put in charge of you?

That's basically what happens here in **verse 13**.

We know that at least David's oldest brother Eliab was less than excited about David being chosen by God because of how he treats him in chapter 17.

This is not the normal way of doing things, but it does seem to be a bit of a theme in the bible.

Jacob is put ahead of Esau.

Joseph the second youngest ends up in charge of everything.

Ephraim is put ahead of Manasseh.

It is just not the way things normally go in the ancient world.

Why does the LORD do things this way so often?

Why does He bring His plans to pass through people that are often considered irrelevant and insignificant?

One more question, why do God's plans always work out according to His design when He chooses to implement them in this manner?

Look again at the second part of **verse 13**.

I have no doubt that David was a very strong young man. We know from his description that he was a very good looking man, but it is not his own strength nor his good looks that eventually bring him to Israel's throne.

It is the Spirit of the LORD empowering him for the task that places the crown upon his head.

We'll see that time and again in his life and it is a lesson that we should take to heart.

God's plans are sure because He has the power to bring them to pass.

[Have you ever seen people run through obstacle courses? The most challenging obstacle courses in my opinion are the ones that require a variety of skills that challenge balance and strength. The only people who make it to the end are the people who possess the skill and the power to complete all the tasks. To everyone else it is impossible.]

That is an imperfect picture of the LORD working out His plans.

Listen, God's plans and purposes from a human perspective are impossible.

No one, no matter how talented and strong they may be, no one can accomplish what God has planned.

Who can conquered sin, and death, and hell?

Only God has done that in Jesus Christ because only God has the power to do it.

His power that is at work in all of us who trust in Christ is the same power that was at work in the life of David.

We can have great confidence in what God is doing in our lives brothers and sisters, not because we are strong but because the LORD has the power to do all that He pleases.

I know that there are many times that life doesn't seem to make a whole lot of sense.

There are times when we struggle with God's plans.

Why is He doing things this way?

Our struggles do not mean that God has fallen off His throne or that somehow His plans have changed or been defeated.

We need to remember that He is always at work even if we fail to see it at times.

He sets plans into motion in ways that are often imperceptible to most people. Who knows what we may look back on years from now and say, "Wow I can't believe God did this from that."

We need to know that His plans are formed in His mind from all eternity past according to His own wisdom that we will never fully understand.

While we may never fully understand all that He does we can be sure that His plans for our eternal good in Jesus Christ will come to pass because it depends upon His power which will not fail.

May we learn to find rest and peace in these glorious truths regarding God's plans.