

17 June 2018
Samuel 15.34 - 16.13
Mark 4.26-34

Marg is pulling back from messy church leadership at St Paul's. It is too much. She has carried a huge load this past year. Her role is changing.

I want to thank her for her leadership in making messy church happen, in envisioning and creating a wonderful team to offer this ministry..

From small beginnings, after one year, this ministry is now growing and flourishing with between 35 and 40 people attending each month.. this Sunday afternoon church attracts many, about half, who would never come on a Sunday morning. We are growing a new community.. I wonder how things will unfold as we move forward, who will be called to leadership? Who, to following? What will change? One thing is certain, it is in God's hands, and we wait and listen for God's leading, then we respond.

'From little things, big things grow' The seed has sprouted and is beginning to bear fruit.

This week, alongside preparing for messy church, and many other things, I have been sitting with a richness of readings, beginning with the story of Samuel anointing David: Samuel, the one who we heard of a few weeks ago being called by God, and learning to listen.

This week Samuel is much older. He has anointed king Saul, who has now fallen into disfavour because of his disobedience to God.

God has now asked Samuel to anoint another king in waiting. In fear and trepidation he goes off to look for this King. He has his part to play. As do the elders, and all of Jesse's family.

This passage is about being chosen by God for a particular purpose.

Samuel is chosen to anoint a future king of Israel.

Jesse is chosen to provide a son as the next king even though this constitutes treason and could, we might infer, lead to his death.

The Bethlehemite elders are chosen to be present at David's anointing and to, therefore, support his legitimacy as the future ruler.

Thus, we see how the community plays a vital role in owning God's choice of leader.

Similarly, David's brothers are chosen to set aside the old traditions and power structures, and support their youngest brother's anointing even though, according to the social rules of the time, David was not entitled to this honour.

Finally, David is chosen by God to be the future ruler. Each character's role is essential in bringing about God's vision.

Jesse brings his eldest son before Samuel. He looks like a good potential King, but he is not the one. The eldest has to step aside.. then the next son and the next and the next and so on. Jesse must have been beginning to worry and wonder, as must the elders, and Samuel. What did God have in mind? 'the Lord does not see as mortals see; they look on the outward appearance, but the Lord looks on the heart', we hear.

'Do you have any more sons?'

'Yep, there is young David, but he's out looking after the sheep. He's not even an adult yet.'

'Go and get him..'

The youngest, David, 'now he was ruddy, and had beautiful eyes, and was handsome'.

"He is the one," God said. "He will be the next king of Israel. Rise and anoint him with oil."

He wasn't the oldest, he wasn't the tallest, and he wasn't the strongest. He was only a shepherd boy. But when God looked at David, God saw a king. Why? Because God does not look on outward appearances, God looks at the heart.

Sometimes we may think that we are too young, too old, too poor, too vulnerable, too busy, not enough faith, not good enough.. to do anything important for God. If those thoughts ever come to your mind, remember the story of David. When others looked at David, they saw a shepherd boy. When God looked at David, God saw a king.

Yep, he's the one. God does not look on outward appearances but what is in the heart. Samuel poured out his horn of oil on young David, the one chosen to be king, 'and the spirit of the Lord came mightily upon David from that day forward.'

Throughout the text, we encounter the Hebrew word, *sama*, meaning to listen or hear. In this context, it also means "to obey." To be chosen therefore requires two things: **to listen and to respond.**

Like David, each of us is chosen by God to do something special with our lives, yet it is up to us whether we answer that call.

To be chosen is to be renewed, because in Christ "there is a new creation: everything old has passed away; see, everything has become new!" (2 Corinthians 5:17). We only need to have faith as small as a mustard seed to begin. (Mark 4:26–34).

Once anointed, David has to wait a long time for this calling to be fulfilled. Similarly, the mustard seed must wait its time to grow into a bush.

I wonder what is germinating in the rich, dark soil of our congregational life that requires patience and trust?...

We often want assurance that the final result will be a success before we're prepared to embark on the journey. We can only trust that we've been anointed for a special purpose. We go, step by step.

Throughout our lives, we move through transitions: school, work, promotion, losing a job, marriage, separation, having children, retirement, ill health, moving house. We grow and change, just as the mustard bush grows and changes. With each change, our calling may change also.

To where is God calling you now, whoever you are?

Each of us is chosen by God to do particular things, the nature of which will change over time. As we pass through various life transitions, we may feel temporarily lost as the role for which we

were initially chosen fades away or is no longer possible to accomplish. At these times, we remember that God chooses us again and again at every phase of our lives; that we are never abandoned or considered useless.

Now may be a time to unearth hidden gifts or take up new responsibilities. Perhaps you may be called to step down from a leadership role to take up more of a prayerful, supportive role. The world needs followers as much as it does leaders... (I look at the messy church team. It is a powerful community harvesting so many gifts, so many callings..

In the eyes of the world, David was an unlikely choice for king. But God saw differently. Today, we are invited to see everyone through God's eyes; to know each one of us is chosen for something particular, and to recognise and share these gifts.¹

Imagine,
To where is God calling you now?

(Anointing

In today's Bible reading, David is anointed by Samuel for a special purpose. Like David, we are also chosen by God for a particular purpose, and we've been given gifts to achieve that purpose for every gift has a corresponding service. Today, we are recognising our own chosenness and the chosenness of those in our community through an anointing. I invite you to come forward to be anointed with oil with the sign of the cross:

This week's readings invite us to consider what it means to be chosen by God, be that as a leader or a follower.

What special things are you called to do or be? Each little word or action can have far reaching effects..

“You are God's chosen child.”)²

¹ Seasons of the Spirit™ SeasonsFusion Pentecost 1 2018, Copyright © Wood Lake Publishing Inc. 2017

² <http://paintedprayerbook.com/2012/06/12/secret-of-the-seed/>

Jan Richardson reflects not on the seed itself, “but the space that waits for the seed, that holds itself in a shimmering emptiness, already loving what it cannot see but aches to enfold. How the green of growing already reaches toward the seed, the gold of harvest even now anticipates the way it will paint itself across the fruit that will be months in coming. How they love this mystery, this

from little things big things grow...

Susanna

space where the seed will grow in secret while the rest of us sleep and rise night and day, our lives encompassing what we cannot see but lean toward in love”.

*Blessing that Holds
a Nest in Its Branches*

The emptiness
that you have been holding
for such a long season now
that ache in your chest
that goes with you
night and day
in your sleeping,
your rising:
think of this
not as a mere hollow,
the void left from
the life that has leached out
of you.
Think of it like this:
as the space being prepared
for the seed.
Think of it
as your earth that dreams
of the branches
the seed contains,
and of the nest
the branches will hold.

