

*The First Sunday After the Epiphany - The Baptism of Jesus*

January 17, 2010

Amazing Grace Lutheran Church - Pastor Chip Wilke

1 Samuel 16:1-13

*The LORD said to Samuel, "How long will you mourn for Saul, since I have rejected him as king over Israel? Fill your horn with oil and be on your way; I am sending you to Jesse of Bethlehem. I have chosen one of his sons to be king." But Samuel said, "How can I go? Saul will hear about it and kill me." The LORD said, "Take a heifer with you and say, 'I have come to sacrifice to the LORD.' Invite Jesse to the sacrifice, and I will show you what to do. You are to anoint for me the one I indicate." Samuel did what the LORD said. When he arrived at Bethlehem, the elders of the town trembled when they met him. They asked, "Do you come in peace?" Samuel replied, "Yes, in peace; I have come to sacrifice to the LORD. Consecrate yourselves and come to the sacrifice with me." Then he consecrated Jesse and his sons and invited them to the sacrifice. When they arrived, Samuel saw Eliab and thought, "Surely the Lord's anointed stands here before the LORD." But the LORD said to Samuel, "Do not consider his appearance or his height, for I have rejected him. The LORD does not look at the things man looks at. Man looks at the outward appearance, but the LORD looks at the heart." Then Jesse called Abinadab and had him pass in front of Samuel. But Samuel said, "The LORD has not chosen this one either." Jesse then had Shammah pass by, but Samuel said, "Nor has the LORD chosen this one." Jesse had seven of his sons pass before Samuel, but Samuel said to him, "The LORD has not chosen these." So he asked Jesse, "Are these all the sons you have?" "There is still the youngest," Jesse answered, "but he is tending the sheep." Samuel said, "Send for him; we will not sit down until he arrives." So he sent and had him brought in. He was ruddy, with a fine appearance and handsome features. Then the LORD said, "Rise and anoint him; he is the one." So Samuel took the horn of oil and anointed him in the presence of his brothers, and from that day on the Spirit of the LORD came upon David in power. Samuel then went to Ramah. (NIV)*

Choices, choices! Our lives are constantly filled with choices, aren't they? Already today you've made choices about what time to get up, what to wear, and even whether you would be coming to church. After you leave church you will face choices. If you go out for lunch you will probably look at a menu and make a choice.

On what do we base many or most of our choices? Why do we pick out certain clothes or try certain foods? Why did we chose a particular car or start dating a specific girl or guy? Would you agree that we often make our decisions based upon what we see? We like the way that outfit looks or that dish on the menu catches our eye or that young lady appears to be someone we would like to get to know. We base our choices on outward appearances all the time, don't we? Very often we also end up making bad choices too, don't we? I'm sure there have been times in our lives where we have learned the hard way that we can't always judge a book by the cover.

This morning we are going to focus on a choice, but thankfully it is one we do not have to make. God makes a choice. God's choices are always good. God has a huge advantage when it comes to making a choice. When God makes a choice God is able to do much more than just look at the outward appearance. The Lord sees and knows all. Today, God's grace is on display for us once again as we focus on: **God's wonderful choice. In choosing David. In choosing Jesus. In choosing us.**

Saul was the first king in the history of Israel and he was an impressive man who looked and acted the part. From day one Saul towered above the rest and the people all

rejoiced and agreed when they saw him as their king. Remember how Saul also started out humbly hiding among the baggage on the day he was anointed king. But too soon Saul started to disobey the Lord. He ignored the Lord's instructions and Word and started to do his own thing. He continued to grieve the Lord and resist the Holy Spirit. The Lord told his prophet Samuel that He had now rejected Saul as king. He had chosen another, a man the Lord said was after His own heart.

Now it was time for God to reveal His choice to Samuel. ***"The LORD said to Samuel, "How long will you mourn for Saul, since I have rejected him as king over Israel? Fill your horn with oil and be on your way; I am sending you to Jesse of Bethlehem. I have chosen one of his sons to be king."*** Afraid of Saul at first Samuel hesitates, but the Lord tells Samuel to go and make a sacrifice and invite the family of Jesse. So Samuel goes and invites Jesse and his sons to the sacrifice. ***"When they arrived, Samuel saw Eliab and thought, "Surely the Lord's anointed stands here before the LORD."*** Samuel sees Jesse's eldest boy and is impressed. He thinks this man surely is the king the Lord has chosen.

But listen to what the Lord says to Samuel: ***"Do not consider his appearance or his height, for I have rejected him. The LORD does not look at the things man looks at. Man looks at the outward appearance, but the LORD looks at the heart."*** The Lord can see what man can not! He sees the heart. He looks for a heart that trusts in Him and His Word. He sees what others can't and as the other sons of Jesse all pass by the Lord makes it known that He had not chosen any of them. And then Samuel asks Jesse, ***"Are these all the sons you have?" "There is still the youngest," Jesse answered, "but he is tending the sheep."*** Jesse didn't even think to bring his youngest along but left him to tend the sheep. Jesse doesn't even speak his name. But Samuel says to go get him. ***"So he sent and had him brought in. He was ruddy, with a fine appearance and handsome features. Then the LORD said, "Rise and anoint him; he is the one." So Samuel took the horn of oil and anointed him in the presence of his brothers, and from that day on the Spirit of the LORD came upon David in power."***

The Lord makes it clear this youngest shepherd boy is to be the next king of all Israel. God sets David apart as His choice. If you know your Bible history you know that David holds a unique place. More is written about David than almost anyone else. He was a man of greatness, yet also a man of serious weakness. He was admired and acclaimed, persecuted and pursued, hated and beloved, a sinner and a worshiper of God. He brought down a great giant, and was taken down by a bathing beauty. David knew triumph as well as tragedy. His life is full of lessons and applications for us. During David's time the Lord would bring Israel to heights as never seen before. Yet through it all David was a man who had real heart for the things of God and a humble trust in the Lord. Just read his psalms. As Psalm 23, a favorite of many, says, the Lord was David's shepherd so he lacked nothing. David was God's wonderful choice indeed, but if it was left up to Samuel who only looked at the outward appearance David would not have been chosen.

Isn't the same true for a much greater choice the Lord made? I am talking about the one who was David's Son and yet David's Lord. Who would have chosen that the Christ would come out of Nazareth? Which man would have picked a son of a carpenter to be the Messiah? No one else would have anointed Jesus as the Savior of all? Yet, on this day we celebrate the baptism of Jesus we see that God made His choice. Jesus is

revealed as God's anointed. God makes His choice very clear as the heavens open and the Holy Spirit in the form of a dove descends on Jesus and the voice of God speaks: ***"This is my Son, whom I love; with Him I am well pleased."*** God makes it clear that Jesus is the one God has chosen and promised since the Fall.

Jesus is God's most wonderful choice of all. For no one could have or would have come up with a plan that God would become man and take the place of sinners. Yet that's what Jesus, our substitute, did. Jesus faced every temptation that we do but unlike us Jesus was without sin. Jesus remained holy. He took his unblemished life to the cross on Calvary where Jesus became sin for us. He took our place by suffering the punishment we deserve and by dying the death we have earned. When Jesus finished paying for all sin He came back out of His grave on the third day to prove it. God's wonderful choice delivered us so that we can enjoy forgiveness, life, and one day eternal life.

That's because God also in time made another wonderful choice. He made you and me His own. For most of us that took place when we were just little babies. God set us apart not with oil but with the water and the Word of baptism. In baptism, God has bound Himself to us. He says *"you are mine"* and saves us. For others God made that choice when He came to us with the good news of what Jesus has done to save us and sent His Holy Spirit into our hearts to believe His message. The fact that we are God's children is nothing less than God's wonderful choice.

I will ask once again: on what do we base many or most of our choices? For when we consider that and then look at why God makes His choices we see a huge difference. God's choices are out of pure grace. David did not do a thing to earn or deserve being the next king of God's people. God's undeserved love made David king. Why did God send Jesus and chose Him as the Christ? Only because God so loved the world. God's choice in sending Jesus to be our Savior is the very definition of God's grace in action. Why did God chose me? Do you think David, the young shepherd boy, ever asked that question? When we ask it we will find the same answer. It is grace, my friends. God loved us and made us His children not because of the righteous things we have done, but because of His mercy. I am so glad to have a God who sees more than just the outward appearance. If the Lord looked only at what I do I would be in trouble - big time trouble. Because if God only sees what we have done He would have to send you and me to hell because of our many sins.

But while man only sees the outward appearance, ***"the LORD looks at the heart."*** Thankfully, through His gospel the Holy Spirit has given us new hearts and set us apart as God's children. He has given us a heart of faith - a heart that clings to Christ and His cross. Our hearts now belong to God because He has made us His own through His anointed One, our Savior. That's God's wonderful choice. Because of God's wonderful choice, His pure grace, now you & I want to make God-pleasing choices in all we do. God has given us His Word and His Spirit to lead the way. Amen.

