



17 June 2018

Preacher: Jen Smith

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**Hymns:**     **677**    **“Christ is made the sure foundation”**  
                  **728**    **“O God, you search me and you know me”**  
                  **161**    **“Speak O Lord as we come to you”**  
                  **611**    **“Brother sister let me serve you”**  
                  **682**    **“God of grace, God of glory”**

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**Readings:**   **1 Samuel 15.34-16.13**  
                  **Psalm 8 (801)**  
                  **Mark 4.26-34**

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### **“Finding our David”**

#### *Prayer*

*Holy God, break your word among us as bread for the feeding of our souls. And may the words of my lips, and the meditation of all our hearts be acceptable to you O Lord our strength, and our redeemer. AMEN.*

Sometimes in a household in the old days when we had one phone in the kitchen – you know, on a cord so you had to stop what you were doing and go to answer it when it rang?

Sometimes the phone would ring and two people would go for it – let’s pretend as it is Father’s day, a Dad or uncle gets there first and answers, has a brief conversation, and then hangs up – and his younger adult relative arrives to stand there in frustration not knowing who had called, as his relative looks at him – he finally gives in and asks ‘who was on the phone?’

‘WELL’ – says Dad, or Uncle – with a pause - and then proceeds to give you a whole family history with extra references running to three generations on either side, a further opinion about transport infrastructure and policies of successive governments, and comments on the ultimate basis of justice, love, and truth, before you hear the answer.

‘It was your cousin, he is late.’

And if you are a wise younger adult, and I think this holds true for all different cultures and kinds of people – if you are a wise younger adult, you will stay still and listen – not just because it will only take longer if you interrupt, and bring fire down on your head.

Woebetide the child who tries to chivy their Dad or uncle or aunty too quickly to the end when they are taking the long way around!

Stay, and listen - because sometimes the backstory, the edges, is where the action is.

Sometimes the important bit is not the thing in the foreground – but is in the disregarded parts I am too busy to listen to, or the world has taught me has no wisdom, nothing good to offer!

I am talking about our scriptures today, now – and the story of Samuel refusing to give up until he had seen David - and I am talking about where God has always planted the seeds for new life in our lives.

This is about finding our David – God’s purpose in the thing we haven’t even thought to listen to, to even speak about.

This is about overcoming the particular blindness that assumes God’s choice must be in once of the first seven sons Jesse showed to Samuel, and in something bigger and bolder than a mustard seed.

How do we find our David?

Well. Get comfortable because I’m going to take you a little way to come back to the point.

All of our readings today are about the surprising way God makes choices and gives power in this world.

God is consistent always, God keeps consistently choosing from the edges and the forgotten – always. God uses the backstory and the near miss and the accident. The stone the builders rejected is become the cornerstone is a real description of how God works – not just something for when things are good so we have a little breathing space and can afford to take a risk. All the time.

But let’s back up –In between the reading last week and this, on God’s command Samuel anointed Saul as king. Done and dusted.

And through a series of events you can read earlier in chapter 15, Saul proved to be in it for his own greed and power – just what Samuel said a King would be like, but there we go. Warning, it is certificate 18. It is NOT a pattern for our action, even if we sometimes see ourselves, our peoples and nations repeating the atrocities of the past.

So we find Samuel following God’s further instructions to visit Jesse and get ANOTHER king – remember, Jesse is the grandson of Ruth!

And Ruth, well she was a foreigner and a widow, only having children at all because she followed her mother in law Naomi back to Naomi’s home– she would not abandon her - and when she was refugee starving, she caught the eye of Boaz a landowner.

Ruth is one of two women (the other being that wheeler dealer, Rahab) who are going to be listed by name in the Genealogy of Jesus. So there are clues that is important.

And Jesse, this father of sons, is terrified – it is not in his plans to challenge the sitting King Saul, he is not stupid! He is not knocking on the doors of the palace trying to get power for his family! Far from it. But at least, he might have expected Samuel to choose one of his first seven sons.

There are layers of irony – that God sends Samuel to a family who come from the edge, and then within that family, tells him to go to the forgotten edge even of that family to find their king. And then from among the edges again, to find Jesus himself?

Do you not think God is trying to tell us something here? Our remarkably consistent, seed planting God, planting again and again at the edges?

I want us to hear that this is our family. Whoever we are, wherever we are from, this is our ancestors and our lineage I am talking about. Remember what Jesus said last week: here is my mother, my brother, my sister.

And it was small groups of people, just normal folk – who built the Foundery chapel not far from here. It was overlooked folk, small groups that organised food and medical care, and education – books – and safe housing and a political voice and reform and freedom to pray and the privilege of loving our neighbours in practical ways.

Mustard seeds grow to be homes for birds and their nests.

Friends we are sitting among Davids today - it is us, we are the ones God is calling. Well we are still here, and Jesus is still talking about the mustard seed, and Samuel is still looking for the one God wants to be King.

And yet, how quickly we move to anoint one of the seven first sons who looks better, acts better - The kind of people you would hope for as leaders of the government, or you might want to be your minister, or who might run for president of the USA?

And there is nothing wrong with them – they are righteous, prepared – just what we need to make everyone feel safe enough that they can check out and pass responsibility to someone else!

We know that God does not judge people in worldly terms – like whether they are big or small, brown or beige, what kind of passport or credit rating they have. We know God does not love us more if we pass our exams, or make a lot of money, or meet all our professional goals - though God will use all the skill and learning we bring, surely.

It is not just that we miss our David looking as the world sees, judging by worldly standards, but that in our self awareness, we self censor and decide in advance what parts of ourselves might be acceptable to God, and a blessing for the kingdom.

We all have parts of our lives, our hearts that are sort of the youngest forgotten child – our hard parts, our broken parts? The parts it would not occur to us God might be preparing to yield fruit?

The mustard seed grew. David grew. We know, not every seed does.

But as Samuel would not sit down until he found the one for whom he had been sent, we should not sit down from prayer, from study, from worship, from serving each other – until we come to know God's blessing in the parts of ourselves that have been neglected by the world.

By these things – simple things like listening and praying with and for each other – by serving our community and coming to know God more, we will get eyes to see beyond the obvious.

The seeds in us have a better chance of sprouting.

This church, its history – the Methodist tradition – it is part of what God has given into the world right now. And we may not be the obvious choice.

But God has put before us and among us hungry people, and angry people, and people in need of all kinds of healing – histories in need of healing.

God has put before us people in need of encouragement. Of reassurance and a world desperately in need of joy.

And God has said 'the kingdom of God is like this' about our lives and the mustard seeds in them. Has helped us to be at peace with the broken parts of our own hearts.

From tiny dust like seeds, bushes flourishing with nests for birds and limbs for children to climb on.

How will we find our David? As we always have – by looking and listening with the eyes of God, at the whole creation around us and at the landscape of our own hearts.

God is remarkably consistent. Remarkably tenacious. Seeds are planted everywhere.

Remember at the beginning what I said about the phone call and the Dad, uncle or aunty taking forever around the houses to answer a simple question?

Sometimes the thing that is most important for us to find – our David - is the backstory, the sidebar, the edges. So settle in and listen when your uncle, your aunt, your older friend begins answering a question and you know you are going to take the long way around.

And then there will come the humbling day when you answer the phone yourself, and then some younger friend or relative comes and asks you the simple question like, 'Jen, who was that on the phone,' and you will hear yourself take a deep breath -

'Well – ' The day comes, and you hear yourself begin the long way round and if you are lucky, see their tolerant smile, and there is nothing you can do to stop yourself, and the story grows, and builds, and belongs to a next generation. Children of God, sisters and brothers of Jesus.

Sometimes in scripture, as in the work of God, as in sermons, the thing God wants us to hear is at the edges.

A Happy Father's day to all.