

INTRO: How do you recognize a Christian leader? What do you look for, and why? This morning Scripture confronts us with a prior question, a more important question. Who does God choose? What criteria does He use for appointing people to leadership in his kingdom? Spoiler alert—God’s criteria are very different from ours. Let’s turn together to 1S 16:1-23, p.238 in your pew Bible. As we read, we’ll keep this question in mind: Who does God Choose to use? And I hope by the end of our time together you’ll not only see God’s criteria, but also see why God has chosen Jesus to be king of God’s kingdom, and maybe you’ll even realize that God’s criteria for using us is actually more encouraging than you might think.

16:1-3 *“The Lord said to Samuel, ‘How long will you grieve over Saul, since I have rejected him from being king over Israel? Fill your horn with oil, and go. I will send you to Jesse the Bethlehemite, for I have provided for myself a king among his sons.’ And Samuel said, ‘How can I go? If Saul hears it, he will kill me.’ And the Lord said, ‘Take a heifer with you and say, ‘I have come to sacrifice to the Lord.’ And invite Jesse to the sacrifice, and I will show you what you shall do. And you shall anoint for me him whom I declare to you.’ Samuel did what the Lord commanded and came to Bethlehem.”* The period for grieving Saul is passed. It’s time for Samuel to move on from Saul, because God has already moved on from Saul. *I have rejected him from being king.”* What’s more, God has a better man in mind. “I have provided for myself a king.”¹ It’s one of Jesse’s sons, and God commissions Samuel to anoint him.

But that poses a grave risk for Samuel. *“If Saul hears it he will kill me.”* That’s not Samuel being a drama queen. Knowing Saul, that would probably happen. Saul is desperate to keep the kingdom and save face, as we saw in chapter 15. If he found out that his successor was waiting in the wings, he’d go homicidal. Now, for us Western Christians, Americans especially, we see Samuel saying “Saul will kill me” And we expect God to say, “OH, yea, I didn’t think about that. You’re right, my command puts your life at risk. OK. Let’s think of plan be so that you don’t have to be scared.” That is not what God says. God’s response indicates that the risk is not a reason for Samuel remain hiding out in his home at Ramah. Samuel is not allowed to “shelter in place” just because Saul would put out a hit on him if he discovered what Samuel was doing. God’s command stands, regardless of the risk to Samuel’s life.²

Scholars disagree over what it means for Samuel to take a cow for a sacrifice. Some think God intends that as a cover, a public reason or excuse for Samuel to go out of his way to a backwater like Bethlehem. Maybe that would throw Saul off the track, or give Saul no reason for suspicion. Others just think the sacrifice is part of the anointing. Whatever the case, Samuel has to fear God more than Saul, because God is sovereign over our risks. Faith obeys God’s word in the face (and even in the teeth) of risk. Samuel can think of worse reasons to die than for obeying a clear command of God. Risk is often right. Safety is not God. God is God, even when he commands us to do something that does not feel safe. How ironic, then, that when Samuel obeys and goes to Bethlehem, he’s not the one trembling. They are.

16:4b-5 *“The elders of the city came to meet him trembling and said, ‘Do you come peaceably?’ And he said, ‘Peaceably; I have come to sacrifice to the Lord. Consecrate yourselves, and come with me to the*

¹ On *for myself*, R.P Gordon says “this king is Yahweh’s choice, in contrast with Saul, who, though officially Yahweh’s nominee..., was appointed in response to public clamour (cf. ‘for us (8:5), ‘for them’ (8:22))” (150). Yet it seems the emphasis is rather on God’s sovereign power to provide a king in spite of Saul’s failure and Samuel’s grief over it.

² So also Firth, Apollos 182; and Tsumura NICOT 416; but see R.P Gordon, who says the sacrifice was “a pretext for his trip” [150], and Baldwin “Already Saul had given Samuel reason to suspect that his hatred could flare up into murderous attack, but under cover of offering a sacrifice Samuel can carry out his task” (TOTC, 130). Borgman also says “God suggests a ruse whereby no one will know what’s happening” (*David, Saul, and God*, 39).

sacrifice. And he consecrated Jesse and his sons and invited them to the sacrifice. Now, if all you've read is chapter 16, then it's unclear why they are afraid of Samuel. But if you've just read the end of chapter 15, then you've just seen Samuel hack Agag to pieces before the Lord. Word of that kind of gruesome execution of a pagan king by a godly prophet would have spread like wildfire. Anyone would fear the sight of Samuel cresting the horizon after that episode. That's why the elders wonder if Samuel is still on the warpath.³ So he assures them he's not there for another execution. The only death today would be an animal for sacrifice. But even through verse 5, the elders and Jesse's family still don't know the goal of Samuel's visit. The matter of the kingship is still a secret between God and Samuel.

16:6-13 *"When they came, he looked on Eliab and thought, 'Surely the Lord's anointed is before him.' 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 sees not as man sees: man looks on the outward appearance but the Lord looks on the heart.' Then Jesse called Abinadab and made him pass before Samuel. And 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.' And Jesse made seven of his sons pass before Samuel. And Samuel said to Jesse, 'The Lord has not chosen these.' Then Samuel said to Jesse, 'Are all your sons here?' And he said, 'There remains yet the youngest, but behold, he is keeping the sheep.' And Samuel said to Jesse, 'Send and get him, for we will not sit down till he comes here.' And he sent and brought him in. Now he was ruddy and had beautiful eyes and was handsome. And the Lord said, 'Arise, anoint him, for this is he.' Then Samuel took the horn of oil and anointed him in the midst of his brothers. And the Spirit of the Lord rushed upon David from that day forward. And Samuel rose up and went to Ramah."*

As soon as Samuel sets eyes on Eliab, the prophet falls into the same pit as the people did with Saul (9:2; 10:23-24). "Surely he's the one. Look how tall he is!" Samuel's ready to open the oil and empty the flask...probably already looking for a step stool to get up there. He's as bad as Saul was in chapter 13 where Saul said *"I saw...I said...so I..."* Same thing here with Samuel—*"he looked...and thought, 'Surely.'"* He assumes he can intuit what God intends. Confident, but wrong...even for prophet. And God says as much. Quit measuring him by your own metrics. I've rejected Eliab just like I've rejected Saul, because I'm using a whole different criteria of qualification. The difference is between sight and insight. We see height. God sees heart. Ps 147:10-11 *"His delight is not in the strength of the horse, nor his pleasure in the legs of a man, but the Lord takes pleasure in those who fear him, in those who hope in his steadfast love"* (cf. Isa 57:15; 66:1-2). Psalm 51:17 *"The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit."*

It also becomes clear that God is the one making this decision, not Samuel, not Jesse, and not Jesse's sons. **God is sovereign over who he chooses as King of His Kingdom.** God rejects seven other sons of Jesse, which indicates the fullness of God's rejection of human strength and ways. That rejection is repeated for emphasis. *"I have rejected him...Neither has the Lord chosen this one... Neither has the Lord chosen this one...The Lord has not chosen these."* That's all that matters. God is not obligated to meet Samuel's expectation of what a king should look like. Nor is God obligated to meet **our expectations** for who we think looks the part to rule the kingdom.

Of course, after seven rejections, Samuel is at his wits end. Is everybody present and accounted for? WELL..., there IS the youngest of them, but *"...but behold, he is keeping the sheep."* You get the idea that the family didn't think David really belonged at the party. Too young to matter for this kind of

³ Bergen, NAC 178 n.26, notes that Youngblood (683) suggests this reason for their trembling as well. In context of Agag's recent and gruesome execution, it seems almost obtuse then for Tsumura to admit "It is not clear why they should tremble" (NICOT, 417).

moment.⁴ Yet he is already a better shepherd than Saul was. Remember when we met Saul? He had lost his dad's donkeys (10:22).⁵ We meet David here keeping track of Jesse's sheep, a contrast in faithfulness.

So they bring David, and while we don't get a measurement on him, he's easy on the eyes. Ruddy means reddish, like Esau was. So David's either a red-head, or he's got a good tan from being outside with the sheep all day—bronzed.⁶ That's not the reason he's anointed. The reason is that God sees his heart. Still, David is good-looking, both inside and out. Samuel anoints him king, yet it's still unclear whether his dad and brothers realize the royalty of the moment, since Samuel hasn't told them. Yet as soon as Samuel pours on the oil, God pours out his Spirit on David to equip and empower him for leadership. And it wasn't just a one-time outpouring for a particular moment. "*The Spirit of the Lord rushed upon David from that day forward.*" This was permanent. By contrast, we read in v.14...

16:14-23 "*Now the Spirit of the Lord departed from Saul, and a harmful spirit from the Lord tormented him. And Saul's servants said to him, 'Behold now, a harmful spirit from God is tormenting you. Let our Lord now command your servants who are before you to seek out a man who is skillful in playing the lyre, and when the harmful spirit from God is upon you, he will play it, and you will be well.'* So Saul said to his servants, 'Provide for me a man who can play well and bring him to me.' One of the young men answered, 'Behold, I have seen a son of Jesse the Bethlehemite, who is skillful in playing, a man of valor, a man of war, prudent in speech, and a man of good presence, and the Lord is with him.'⁷ Therefore Saul sent messengers to Jesse and said, 'Send me David your son, who is with the sheep.' And Jesse took a donkey laden with bread and a skin of wine and a young goat and sent them by David his son to Saul. And David came to Saul and entered his service. And Saul loved him greatly, and he became his armor-bearer. And Saul sent to Jesse, saying, 'Let David remain in my service, for he has found favor in my sight.' And whenever the harmful spirit from God was upon Saul, David took the lyre and played it with his hand. So Saul was refreshed and was well, and the harmful spirit departed from him."

The Spirit has just rushed on David, and now the Spirit departs from Saul. The leadership transition is now in full swing. God is raising up David and rejecting Saul, just as Hannah prayed in 1S 2. It's hard to know whether Saul is even aware of what's happening in and around him. But that's also part of Saul's spiritual dullness. The dynamics of relationship with God have been totally lost on Saul from the outset. Here, he has to have his servants tell him that he has a harmful spirit from God; yet he doesn't seem to realize the Holy Spirit has left him. When it comes to the things of God, Saul is clueless.

What makes us feel clueless is that phrase repeated four times in this paragraph, "*A harmful spirit from the Lord tormented him*" (14, 15, 16, 23). That word harmful is a great translation, because it translates a general word for bad or evil.⁸ But things can be bad either morally or practically, and here it's a practical

⁴ Tsumura rightly reminds us that "The choice of the youngest is a motif known elsewhere in the OT," noting the examples of Jacob and Ephraim (NICOT, 421).

⁵ *Contra* Tsumura, who seems to see no leadership significance here in David's vocation as shepherd.

⁶ "...red-tinted hair or a bronze complexion" (NAC 178; so also Tsumura, NICOT 423, noting Esau in Gen 25:25).

⁷ Tsumura helpfully notes "Saul's recruiting policy" from 14:52, which may induce the servant to list qualifications for David that are irrelevant to his initial entry-level post in the Saulide administration. David is Saul's kind of guy.

⁸ The word for harmful each time is *ra'ah*, bad, evil (see HALOT, 1250-1251). Gen 2:17; 6:5; 8:21; It can mean both moral evil (1Kg 11:6; 13:33; 14:22; 15:26; 16:25; 21:25; 22:52; 2Kgs 3:2; 17:13, 17; Jer 7:24) and practical or natural disaster (1Kgs 22:8, 18; 2Kgs 2:19; 4:41; esp Isa 45:7 "I make success and created disaster" [so also Baldwin TOTC 131, who also notes Job 2:10 and 2Cor 12:7-10]; Jer 7:6; 24:2; 49:23; Amos 6:3; Mic 1:12). Torment is *ba'at*, terrify, terrorize, frighten, seize with fear (HALOT 147). "Saul's evil spirit is on a par with the lying spirit in Ahab's prophets (1Ki. 22:21-23)" (R.P. Gordon, 152). It's like a spirit of suspicion, paranoia. So also Bergen, NAC, quoting Hoftijzer, 182 n.36 "the word refers to an experience of

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badness, a badness of outcome, a spirit that makes everything go wrong for Saul. But isn't God the one who makes everything go well for everyone? Short answer, no. God is the one behind all things. He himself says it in **Isa 45:7** "I form light and create darkness, I make well-being and create disaster, I am the Lord, who does all these things." And this is why Job says to his embittered wife in the middle of their suffering, "Shall we receive good from God, and shall we not receive evil (same word, disaster)?" In all this Job did not sin with his lips." We've already seen this earlier in the Biblical storyline. God tells Moses beforehand "I will harden Pharaoh's heart so that he will not let the people go" (Ex 4:21). We read

in Judges 14:3-4 that Samson the Nazarene has a thing for a Philistine floozy, but "it was from the Lord, for he was seeking an opportunity against the Philistines." Even when this same word does mean moral evil, it's under God's sovereign rule and control, to promote His glory and purposes in the world. And Jeremiah admits as much about the disaster of exile in **Lam 3:38** "Is it not from the mouth of the most High that good and bad come?" (cf. Amos 3:6). This harmful spirit from the Lord will reappear in Saul's story (1S 18:10; 19:9). It's the spirit that drives Saul into a homicidal rage against David. Yet because it is from God, that spirit is **a lion on a leash**. We'll do well to remember that in the coming weeks.

For now, it is this very lion on a leash that becomes the impetus for Saul to invite his own royal replacement into his service. And here we begin to see God's invisible but unmistakable providence orchestrating circumstances behind the scenes. God is so firmly in control, in fact, that the harmful spirit in Saul elicits a need for a skilled musician like David, and God's provision of a king to replace Saul comes at Saul's own invitation, "Provide me a man." God had said in v.1, "I have provided for myself a king." And the way he provides that king is by inducing Saul himself to say "Provide for me a man."⁹ Saul thinks he's serving himself to keep his senses and his throne. Little does he know, he is serving God and replacing himself.

It's been pointed out that Saul initially thought the arrangement would be temporary, because once he has David around for a while, he sends word back to Jesse in v.22 saying "let David remain." David becomes indispensable to Saul, even beloved. And God is the one behind all of it. God makes Saul need David (14-17). God makes Saul aware of David (18-19). God moves Saul to send for David (20), then God makes Saul love and favor David (21-22), and God makes Saul benefit greatly from David (23). God is sovereign over all of it, and it all starts, at least in this paragraph, with "a harmful spirit from the Lord that tormented him."

extreme fear and incapacitation." Thus Bergen concludes that *ra'a* here does "not mean that the Lord sent a morally corrupt demon but rather another sort of supernatural being—an angel of judgment (cf. 2Kgs 19:35)—against Saul that caused him to experience constant misery (182). Similarly Tsumura, NICOT 426, convincingly argues for a pragmatic rather than moral sense of *ra'a*, based not on semantics but grammar, noting that "the term *rā'āh* is a f.s. noun ('evilness') here rather than an adjective ('evil'). Thus... 'a bad spirit of God... is 'bad' because the effects of his possession are negative and destructive for the object'" (quoting Block), and later concludes he phrase should be translated something like "the spirit which brings forth disaster" (427).

⁹ Borgman notes "David says nothing, and does nothing except on request....The first David Saul meets, then, is quiet, receptive, and musical—a servant responding to solicitation, not a person initiating action or conversation. The quiescence here is almost a passivity....But this is not the only David" (41). Firth notices the repetition of the verb 'provide' (*r'h*), but doesn't seem to note how Saul's command to provide actually accomplishes God's command to provide. "In 16:1 Yahweh could declare he had provided (*r'h*) himself with a king, whereas Saul can only command that his servants provide (*r'h*) him with a harpist" (Apollos 188). Though he does notice a paragraph later "Yahweh has provided a new king for himself, and Saul paradoxically provides the platform for him to come to prominence" (189). R.P. Gordon is clear, "Saul's unwitting furtherance of Yahweh's purpose is brought out in 'Provide for me' (v.17), answering to Yahweh's 'I have provided for myself' (v.1)" (346 n.6, emph. orig.).

POINT: God is sovereign to send His chosen savior to rule us in righteousness.¹⁰ God is sovereign to bring down the evil (in 2 senses!) and raise up the righteous.

APPS

God chooses to use the small and unassuming (16:7, 11). David was a nobody from a nowhere backwater town. But he was a godly nobody. He shepherded his own heart well, and that did not go unnoticed by God. He guarded his heart and his dad's sheep. That was David's resumé. He was not a physically foreboding persona. He had an artsy musical side that might have made you wonder how he'd be on the battlefield. He was the baby brother of the family—the last born, not the firstborn—and nobody even thought to invite him to Samuel's sacrifice. But the Lord loves using small people to do his greatest works. God's sovereign choice of diminutive David illustrates God's gospel ways with people in 1Cor 1:26-29 *"For consider your calling, brothers: not many of you were wise according to the flesh, to many were powerful, not many were of noble birth. But God chose what is foolish in the world to shame the wise; God chose what is weak in the world to shame the strong; God chose what is low and despised in the world, even things that are not, to bring to nothing things that are, so that no one might boast in the presence of God."*

The Lord sees not as man sees. We look at measurables and metrics that impress us—numbers, size, strength, power. We look at height. **God looks at heart**. Isn't that why Jesus ripped into the Pharisees in Luke 11:39-42 *"Now you Pharisees cleanse the outside of the cup and of the dish, but inside you are full of greed and wickedness. You fools! Did not he who made the outside make the inside also? But give as alms those things that are within, and behold, everything is clean for you. But woe to you Pharisees! For you tithe mint and rue and every herb and neglect justice and the love of God."* God made both your body and your soul, your outside and your inside—and he sees all the way through you. God sees what fills your heart—whether it's Scripture, sorrow, self-righteousness, or sin; You can't hide what's inside, whether it's godliness or greed. So friend, whatever it is in your heart, bring it to the Lord, and let him re-shape you from the inside out. Repent. Don't just give God your tithe. Give God everything inside you—heart and soul, thoughts and feelings, motives and purposes, fears and hopes, sorrows and joys, sins and all. What God wants—what he has wanted all along—is not just your Sunday—he wants your soul, your heart, all of it. *"Love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your might."*

God controls the bad attitudes and bad experiences of bad actors. We don't naturally like that about God, mainly because it means He has what we want—control. But that's what it means to be God, and only a God as good and righteous as the real God deserves to have that kind of control. God is the one who sent a spirit of badness to torment Saul with a paranoia so intense it made him want to impale David with an 7 foot spear right through his thorax. That spirit of practical badness moved Saul to do morally bad things. And yet if we've been paying attention, Saul was a bad man before God sent this bad spirit. Saul is not a pawn, he is a perpetrator, not victim. Never did God use Saul against Saul's own will or nature. God simply acts according to Saul's nature and will, and then superintends Saul's bad intentions for God's good ends. Bad rulers are overruled by a good God who is sovereign even over the bad spirits that move bad actors to do bad things. **Prov 21:1** *"The king's heart is a stream of water in the hand of the Lord; he turns it wherever he will."* Sometimes that means God turns the king's heart to favor God's people, **Ezra 6:22** *"the Lord had made [the returned exiles] joyful and had turned the heart of the king of Assyria to them, so that he aided them in the work of the house of God, the God of Israel."* **Ezra 7:27**

¹⁰ I find confirmation for this summary understanding, and thus the title of the sermon, in Tsumura's structural note "So far, ch.16 has introduced David, giving the answer to the question, Who is God's choice? On the other hand, ch.17 will give answer to the question about David, What does he do?" (NICOT, 433).

Blessed be the Lord, the God of our fathers, who put such a thing as this into the heart of the king, to beautify the house of the Lord that is in Jerusalem.” But sometimes it means God turns people’s hearts to hate God’s people, **Psalm 105:25** *“The lord made his people very fruitful and made them stronger than their foes. He turned their hearts to hate his people, to deal craftily with his servants.”* **1S 18:10** *A harmful spirit from God rushed on Saul and he raved...I will pin David to the wall.”* (Cf **1S 19:9**). That is from God too, or else he is not a God worthy of the name.

Paul admits as much in 2Cor 12:9 when he says his thorn in the flesh was a messenger from Satan to keep him from becoming conceited.¹¹ John Piper is famous for saying that keeping Paul humble is not Satan’s purpose in afflicting Paul. It is God’s purpose. The Lord was sovereign over Paul’s messenger from Satan, to use it for God’s righteous and good and loving purposes, just as God was sovereign over Saul’s spirit of badness, just as he is sovereign over every sorrow and spirit that troubles your soul. God is in control, and the right response is not to grumble over that truth, but to give God glory and to trust that His goodness and righteousness perfectly directs his power over everything that is bad, whether it’s moral evil like sin or natural evil like syndromes. God is not merely like-you-but-more-powerful. He is a whole different order of being who operates on a moral plane that is beyond our ability to comprehend, yet just within range of our adoration and wonder and awe.

There is a real experience of the Spirit that is neither lasting nor saving. Saul had a real but non-saving, temporary experience of God’s Spirit. The Spirit of the Lord departed from Saul, never to return (16:14). If you’re a non-Christian, beware of this. You can still have this kind of real but non-saving experience of God’s Spirit today. Hebrews 6:4-6 warns that you can be enlightened in some spiritual way, taste the heavenly gift, have shared in the Holy spirit and have tasted the goodness of the word of God and the powers of the age to come, and then fall away and prove you were never saved to begin with. You can come here to church and hear God’s word preached and prayed and sung and read. You can get chills when we go acapella on the 4th verse of It is Well. You can be impressed, convicted, melted, affected. You can see other people changed by the power of God’s grace. Like the people who came and saw the Gadarene demoniac clothed and in his right mind sitting at Jesus’ feet, you can taste the powers of the age to come, and yet like them you can ask Jesus to leave. Beware what you do with what you see and hear of God’s word and Spirit. Nothing saves but faith alone in Christ alone that repents toward God alone.

Jesus was nothing to look at (Isa 52:14; 53:2). God told Samuel “do not look at his appearance or the height of his stature.” And we are remind of what Isaiah told us to look for in the Suffering Servant that was to come. *“His appearance was so marred, beyond human semblance, and his form beyond that of the children of mankind...He had no form or majesty that we should look at him, and no beauty that we should desire him. He was despised and rejected by men.”* Jesus was nothing to looking at. You couldn’t have picked him out of a crowd. Even his name was so common that you had to add a specifier to it to clarify which Jesus you meant—Jesus of Nazareth, Jesus Christ. How often today do we look at men as potential elders and we look at what we can see of them naturally—their business acumen, their wealth, their power, their charisma, even how tall they are, whether their appearance will be attractional. Some churches are apt to look at potential leaders as if even their conversion and spiritual maturity were optional for leadership in the church, as long as they had the right talent, training, and personality. Do not look at his appearance or the height of his stature, otherwise you would never even believe in Jesus.

¹¹ So also Baldwin, TOTC 130, who notes 2Cor 12.

God has chosen Jesus to save and rule us in righteousness. Even if Eliab wanted to be king, or volunteered himself, God had rejected him and the rest of David's brothers. Jesse did not suggest any of his sons for the role. Nor did David put himself forward as a candidate for the kingship. God freely, sovereignly chose David, appointed him, anointed him, commissioned him. And this was true even of Jesus as our Priestly King in Heb 5:4-5 *No one takes this honor for himself, but only when called by God, just as Aaron was. So also Christ did not exalt himself to be made a high priest, but was appointed by him who said to him, 'You are my Son, today I have begotten you...'* And that relationship of sonship was prefigured in David's relationship with God as king of Israel in 2Sam 7:14 "I will be to him a father, and he shall be to me a son." We don't choose who should be king of God's kingdom. We certainly don't but ourselves forward. God has chosen the best king for the kingdom, and He chose His own son, Jesus. And Jesus had the humility to wait for His father to appoint him, and to obey His father's appointment, even to the death.

Jesus has the spirit without measure (John 3:34¹²). In 16:12, *"The Lord said, 'Arise, anoint him, for this is he.' So Samuel took the flask of oil and anointed him in the presence of his brothers, and the Spirit of the Lord came powerfully on David from that day forward."* David's anointing prefigures the anointing of his greater Son, the shoot from the stump of Jesse in **Isa 11:1**, *"the Spirit of the Lord will rest on him, the Spirit of wisdom and understanding, counsel, might, knowledge. Seven hundred years later, Jesus of Nazareth would open the Scroll of Isaiah in the synagogue in Luke 4 and to read "the Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because the Lord has anointed me to bring good news to the poor,"* and when he read it he sat down and said *"today this Scripture is fulfilled in your hearing."*¹³ And Great David's greater son retraces his father's steps. God told John the Baptist "He on whom you see the Spirit descend and remain, he it is who baptizes with the Holy Spirit. At Jesus' baptism, the Father said of Him in Mt 3:17 *"This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased."* The Spirit descends on Jesus there like a dove to equip and empower him for ministry. In fact, Jesus said of himself in **John 3:34** *"The one whom God has sent speaks the words of God, for God gives him the Spirit without measure."* As powerfully as the Spirit came on David, Jesus had the Spirit without limit. It was in the power of that Spirit that he obeyed, lived, and died. And so at his ascension and session back to God's right hand, we read in Heb 1:9 *"You have loved righteousness and hated wickedness; therefore God, your God, has anointed you with the oil of gladness beyond your [heavenly] companions [whether human or angelic]."*

Risk for Christ is often right (16:2). Samuel risked his life to anoint God's chosen king. He feared God more than he feared Saul. We will all die, honorably or otherwise. As Christians, we should not object to risking our lives if we're doing so in obedience to the commands of Christ. This is not to commend recklessness or foolishness. But not all risk is reckless. And not all security is godly. And in fact, some safety is really more dangerous to our souls than the risk we are trying to avoid. Many Christians in the global east and Middle East have risked far more for their faith than we have ever considered risking for ours. And even when they have died for their allegiance to Christ, they have found Christ faithful to save. Christian parents, what is your example teaching your children? There is a wrong kind of Christian conservatism that only seeks to conserve your own life. But remember what Jesus said. Whoever seeks to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake and for the gospel will save it to eternal

¹² "Leviticus Rabbah 15:2 states 'the Spirit rested on the prophets by measure.' Jesus is contrasted to this. The Spirit rested on him without measure" (NET Bible, John 3:34 text note 67, Accordance). So also NJB "for God gives him the Spirit without reserve"; BBE "God does not give him the Spirit by measure;" Geneva (1599) "...for God giueth him not the Spirit by measure." CSB 2017 has a text note ref. to John 1:33.

¹³ Tsumura (NICOT 423) directed me to Isa 11 and 61, but he did not trace the latter to Luke 4.
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life. Christian parent, are your children seeing you try to save your life, or are they seeing you give it away for the gospel?

Christians can patiently trust God's methodical providence to bring down bad leaders we thought we wanted. In one sense, Saul's reign was over before it started. He was never God's choice, he was never the man after God's own heart. In another sense, though, we might say that chapter 16 marks the beginning of the end for Saul. God's Spirit departs from Saul, and rushes on David from that day on. Saul's decline is a slow, steady, painful descent into darkness. And as much suffering as it will cause David, God is sovereign over both the decline and its timeline. Sometimes churches endure years under bad leaders, and church members feel trapped. That's bad. But there's a good God who is sovereign over that bad circumstance, and he can bring good from it, maybe even through your own prayers.

Even prophetic Christians cannot intuit God's intent from appearances. Samuel looked at Eliab, he drew a conclusion from what he saw, and he was confident. Surely this is God's man. And Samuel was totally wrong. Samuel—a prophet—drew a wrong conclusion from Eliab's appearance. What Samuel needed was not his own intuition or assumption. It was God's word. That's what we need too. We need God's word to teach us God's criteria for recognizing godly leaders. This is why we do not look to natural ability or temperament, popularity or personality, to recognize leaders in the church. We look to 1Tim 3 and Titus 1 for the character qualifications of elders and deacons. We look to Gal 5 for the fruit of the Spirit, and 2Pet 1 for the marks of spiritual maturity. And we should beware of Christian leaders who act as if they know God's will for your life apart from the biblical criteria and priorities for Christian decision-making.

CONCLUSION

Who does God choose to use? Not who we might think. Ultimately, God has chosen Jesus to save and rule us. Yet you couldn't have picked him out of a crowd. He didn't look the part. And among sinners, he often chooses those who are lowly, despised, insignificant among their peers, rejected by people. He loves using the small and unassuming, the overlooked, the underdog. If you are tall like Eliab—talented, attractational, impressive to the world—it doesn't necessarily mean God rejects you. But what is in your heart? Are you poor in spirit, or are you puffed up with pride? Do you trust in God's sovereignty even over bad people and events? Or do you try to manipulate your own outcomes? We will see in the coming weeks that God chose David, not because David's heart was sinless, but because David's heart was soft to God's word, and humble to trust in the power, presence, and promises of God. If your heart trusts in God's power, presence, and promises in the person of Jesus, then no matter how small and insignificant you are, God might choose to use even you.