

# “When Drudgery Becomes Joy”

The Rev. S. Shane Nanney – March 19, 2023

1 Samuel 16:1-13

When I was 12 years old, I got a special present from my father. It was a brand new, red lawn mower and a one-gallon gas can filled with gas. He had just set me up in the business world. I was a lad who could now set his own destiny. Let me tell you, after the first few days of cutting grass, I started to harbor feelings against that lawn mower. And after a few weeks, it turned to disgust. And by the end of the summer, I just hated that mower outright.

Isn't it true that sometimes when we do things daily, we just get tired of doing them? They are not as much fun or rewarding as they once were, and we wish sometimes that we could just quit doing the wash, cooking the meals, or shoveling the sidewalks. Somehow, at times things become a drudgery rather than a privilege, and we grudgingly accept our responsibility, rather than remembering our call.

Perhaps that is the way it was for Saul. God had chosen him to be the first king and he really had accomplished a lot. He had defeated the Amalekites. He had engaged the fearsome Philistines in at least three military battles, yet he was not really doing what God had called him to do.

In other words, his kingship became something that he had done rather than a privilege given to him by God, and he either begrudgingly did the things he had to do, or just plain didn't do them at all, rather than remembering his call.

Well, of course, that did not please God very much, and so he decided to replace Saul with a new king. God told Samuel to find a new king. And here it is that Samuel begins to wonder about the work that God has given him to do, and he says, *“HOW CAN I GO DO THAT? SAUL WILL KILL ME!”*

It is a scary thing to be God's elect, do you think? But God chooses us more than we choose him. And just like Saul and just like Samuel, we too have our excuses, *“Thanks God, I'm touched by this honor, but no thanks.”*

- After all, “I don’t speak very well. How can I be the one that God has chosen to talk to my neighbor about God?”
- Or “Why would you want to choose me, God? Don’t you know how many sins I have committed? Surely, I’m not good enough. How could I ever be an example of Christian living?”
- “But you know, God, I am just a kid, and I really don’t know Scripture very well. What if they ask me a question that I can’t answer?”

God has heard all those excuses before.

But the secret of election as God’s servants is that **God chooses us**. God chooses us, not because of what we can do for him, **but because of what he can do with us and in us and through us**. And then the secret of our selection is in our willingness to stay open and willingness to listen to his commands.

Let’s look back again at our text for this morning. Saul somehow forgot that he was holding a sacred office, that he was God’s servant and needed to do what God commanded. It did not take long before God replaced him with a new king.

And then, let’s look at what happened with Samuel. After he questioned God, saying, “*HOW CAN I GO AND DO THAT? SAUL WILL KILL ME!*” Samuel stayed around to listen to God, and God told him the way. God said, “*TAKE A HEIFER WITH YOU AND TELL JESSE THAT YOU HAVE COME TO MAKE A SACRIFICE TO THE LORD.*” And Samuel did what God had instructed. However, he arrived in Bethlehem trembling with fear for what might happen. When he did just as God commanded, he was invited in by Jesse and was allowed to do God’s work, to anoint a new king, David.

When we make these two comparisons, it does make us wonder, doesn’t it? We might even ask, “Does God really just allow some people, like Saul, to fall out of his grace?” Or we might even say, “Is God vindictive, in that he chose to stop supporting Saul and changed his allegiance to a new king?” If we are looking at Saul from the perspective of his enemies, we might say, “Saul is simply getting what he deserves.” Others might say, “Well, he brought it all on himself!” The perspective of a friend might be, “How could we help Saul to find his way back?”

You see, as the Lord tells Samuel, *“PEOPLE LOOK AT OTHERS AND SEE ONLY THEIR OUTWARD APPEARANCE, THE LORD LOOKS ON THE THINGS OF THE HEART.”* And it is what is in our hearts that makes all the difference. Jesus reminded us later in one of the parables that the absence of one spirit eventually brings on the presence of another, and if the things of God are not the things of our hearts, then what spirit will have its power in us?

When we look at the gospel, we can find that very same comparison: we see two kinds of people, the people who are searching for a way to condemn Christ, and who couldn't see the good that was done in the healing of the man who had been blind since birth; and of course, the blind man himself who, even after being subjected to the questioning and insults, still believed in Jesus Christ and fell down and worshipped him.

Perhaps the New Testament sums it all up best: *“LIVE AS CHILDREN OF LIGHT AND FIND OUT WHAT PLEASES THE LORD. HAVE NOTHING TO DO WITH THE FRUITLESS DEEDS OF DARKNESS. WAKE UP, O SLEEPER, RISE FROM THE DEAD AND CHRIST WILL SHINE ON YOU.”*

You have heard before, that God doesn't choose us for **our ability**, but rather for **our availability**. Even then, he doesn't ask us to do anything other than to be the best that we can be. When we have faith and trust in God, he will empower us to become his servants doing the work that he would have us do. Amen.