

Last week in chapter 10 of *The Story* we heard about Hannah, a faithful woman who poured out her soul to the Lord. And we heard about Samuel, Hannah's son, who learned from Eli how to listen for God's call and served God faithfully with his whole heart.

Samuel served as a priest, and a prophet, and he led Israel's transition from the time of the judges to the time of kings. And as we heard, Samuel anointed Saul, as the first king of Israel.

Saul, started off well. But then his heart began to turn away from God. He began to take matters into his own hands. And instead of trusting God, he began to be consumed by his fears and anxieties, and his jealousy of David.

Through Samuel, God had warned the people of Israel. He warned them by saying:

If you fear the Lord and serve and obey Him and do not rebel against His commands, and if both you and the king who reigns over you follow the Lord your God – good! But if you do not obey the LORD, and if you rebel against His commands, His hand will be against you.

But once again the people of Israel did not listen to God or follow His commands. And Saul their king, also turned away from God. Unlike Hannah, Saul did not pour out his soul before the Lord. He didn't cast his anxieties upon the Lord, because he was turned in on himself. Unlike Samuel, he didn't have a heart for God. While he may have honored God with his lips, his heart was far from God.

But into story of Saul, the fallen king, comes another story of rescue, another story of redemption.

Have you noticed that's God's specialty?

Throughout the Old Testament, we hear time and time again how God is slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love.

Time and time again God enters our broken story, and intercedes to lift us up and restore us. Time and time again God sets his people back on a path that leads to life. Over and over, these stories in the Old Testament point to Jesus.

In the story of the Exodus, we see Jesus as the true Passover Lamb, who comes to take away the sin of the world.

In the story of Joshua leading the people into the Promised Land we see Jesus, because the name Joshua means "savior". And as Joshua crossed over the Jordan, we see a foreshadowing of Jesus our Savior, because in Christ, we cross over from death to life.

Then a couple of weeks ago we learned about Jesus as our Redeemer, in the story of Boaz and Ruth.

And now today, in chapter 11, we begin to see in David, what it means that Jesus is our coming King, the Messiah, the anointed One.

Chapter 11 begins this way:

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."

And when Samuel arrived in Bethlehem, and met Jesse and his sons, and he jumped to conclusions right? Samuel saw Eliab, the oldest, and tallest, and strongest son and he assumed that he was the one God had chosen.

But then comes this important passage:

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 people look at. People look at the outward appearance, but the LORD looks at the heart."

People look at the outward appearance, but God looks at the heart.

Isn't that true of human nature?

Unless we're guided by a higher vision of life, don't we, often look at a person and make a judgment one way or another?

Isn't that the lesson, students learn when they study the Kennedy-Nixon debate – that voters often vote for the most telegenic candidate?

But even on a personal level

– at school isn't the popular crowd the group that tends to be the star athletes and the most attractive students?

And at work, when it comes to hiring who often rises to the top?

Talent certainly matters, but so do outward appearances.

That's our human nature.

And it gets us into trouble sometimes.

What happens when people choose their friends that way?

What happens when people chose a spouse that way?

Outward beauty truly is skin deep.

But love that will last a lifetime, comes from the inner beauty that only God can give.

And we cultivate inner beauty, when our hearts are turned toward God.

Sadly for the people of Israel, Saul's kingship is now in ruins.

But look what happens as soon as God enters this story.
 Samuel, whose heart is tuned to hear God, keeps listening.
 As each of the sons of Jesse are brought forward,
 God told Samuel, "I have not chosen this one."

Until finally, Jesse sends out his youngest son, David.
 And the Lord says, "Rise and anoint him, this is the one."
 And when Samuel does, listen to what happens:
 "from that day on, the Spirit of the Lord came powerfully on David."

That sentence is absolutely key to this story.
 It sets up everything that follows.

Take for example David's battle with Goliath— it's probably one of the more familiar stories in the Bible, and in all of literature.

In fact there was a book out just last year, by Malcolm Gladwell,
 entitled: *David and Goliath: Underdogs, Misfits, and the Art of Battling Giants*

Gladwell, has quite a faith story, and I will share it with you on Wednesday this week, at our Advent service. But in the book on David and Goliath, he misses the point.

And we often miss the point too.
 We tend to see the David and Goliath, as an underdog story – a Horatio Alger story.
 The littlest brother beats the big, bad giant.
 because he's smarter or he has more courage.

But is that it? Is that why David defeats Goliath?

David beat Goliath, because "the Spirit of the Lord came powerfully on David."

When the rest of the Israelites saw Goliath they fled in fear, because their focus was on themselves. They told David, that the man who defeated Goliath, would be given great wealth, and the king's daughter in marriage, and get this – his family would be exempt from taxes!

Was that what motivated David?

Not at all!

Listen to David's focus. David asked the men standing near,
 "What will be done for the man who kills this Philistine and removes this disgrace from Israel? Who is this uncircumcised Philistine that he should defy the armies of the living God!"

Did you hear that?

His focus was on God's honor, and the disgrace to God and Israel if no one would stand up to this giant.

Later, when he challenges Goliath, he says:

"I come against you in the name of the Lord Almighty, the God of the armies of Israel, you have defied!" I will defeat the Philistines, so that: "the world may know that there is a God in Israel.

All those gathered here will know that it is not by sword or spear that the Lord saves, for the battle is the Lord's!"

A child was once asked why David wasn't afraid, when he faced Goliath. And the child said, "the giant was big, but God was bigger."

And that's our story too.

Our giants are big and sometimes we're afraid.

And sometimes we feel like nothing can stop them.

I've had experiences in my own life and I'm sure you have too when you feel defeated, when you are tempted to give up hope.

I think about the giants that are named when people send me a prayer request.

Cancer, is one of those giants. Troubles at work, losing employment, or facing financial pressures is another.

Car accidents, and serious injuries, and death are giants.

Families who are struggling to stay together and families who are separated, face a giant that is stealing peace in the home.

But I'm hear this morning to proclaim to you, that though our giants are big – our God is bigger.

Our God, is faithful and true!

And David poured out his heart, singing God's praises, singing,

"the Lord is my rock, my fortress and my deliverer...

He is my stronghold, my refuge, my savior –

I called to the Lord, who is worthy of praise,

and have been saved from my enemies.

The Lord lives! Praise be to my Rock!

You exalted me above my foes...

Therefore I will praise you, Lord, among the nations;

I will sing the praises of your name."

Indeed, "the Spirit of the Lord came powerfully upon David."
And may the Spirit of the Lord come powerfully upon you today. Amen