

“Choice” Sermon for June 17, 2018

Lectionary: 1 Samuel 16:6-15, 2 Corinthians 5:14-17

Sermon Text-Mark 4:30-32

30 Again he said, “What shall we say the kingdom of God is like, or what parable shall we use to describe it? 31 It is like a mustard seed, which is the smallest of all seeds on earth. 32 Yet when planted, it grows and becomes the largest of all garden plants, with such big branches that the birds can perch in its shade.”

+++++

In the 8th Chapter of the book of 1st Samuel, the elders came to him and demanded a king. Samuel had at one time been a judge, but this office was not a permanent one. As he aged the elders had chosen his sons to judge. The elders of the Hebrew people consisted of the clan leaders of each tribe. The Book of Judges gives us the details of this democratic confederation of the Tribes of Yahweh and how it functioned. But now the elders said in 1 Samuel 8:5c, “Give us a king ... like the other nations around us.” This didn’t sound like God’s perfect plan, so he prayed and God said to Samuel, “Listen to the voice

of the people, for they have not rejected you, they have rejected me.”

We can make our own decisions that seem right. They may be reasonable, logical, practical, but the question for us, if we would live with God’s love, God’s joy, God’s peace, God’s blessing, is the choice we are making God’s choice for us? God’s choice for us is always for our best, always for our good, always for our success. So was it God’s choice? God clarified for Samuel, “Give them what they want, because they clearly are rejecting my choice for them, and they will have to live with that.”

Samuel did warn them of what they faced by choosing a hierarchical form of government. Your choosing a king instead of letting God be king over you, by being institutionally directed instead of spiritually directed, this is what will happen to you:

1. He will take your sons away from your farms and vineyards and force them to serve in his army. 2. He will make some of them serve as slave labor on his own land. 3. He will take your daughters for perfumers and cooks and bakers. 4. He will take your best fields, vineyards, seeds and even servants for himself. 5. You will cry out because of the autocratic behavior of the king you have chosen, but the Lord will not hear nor answer.

They responded, “No, but we will have a king rule over us, like all the nations to administer justice and lead us into battle.” Why did they choose Saul, the son of Kish? Chapter 9 tells us why,

He was choice and handsome, there was not a more handsome man than he among all the sons of Israel. From his shoulders and up he was taller than any of the people.

Dr. Bell Hooks (Gloria Jean Watkins) in her study,

“Feminist Theory: From Margin to Center,” writes

Power, cannot simply be understood as domination over others, but rather as a hierarchical system of oppression, that places human beings in subordinate positions to others and insures the perpetuation of systems of oppression by creating a theoretical, even theological rational to justify its continued existence.

Not much has changed in terms of what informs human choices. God had chosen (God's perfect plan, a democratic republic, an innovative system of having temporary "judges." They would, with the approval of the elders, arise to solve problems and lead the people. But in their "choice" they rejected God's innovative republic.

God, nevertheless, honors our choices, even when they are not God's perfect choice for us. Because of our covenant with God through the Christ, even the disobedient churches of America have not been left without the witness of God's Spirit, but why settle for less than the best? When we surrender to God's choice, we win and lose nothing. When we don't, the world is left without God's answers and solutions for the present conflict and chaos. As long as we choose Saul, the hierarchy of our oppressive power

choices over God's, the kingdom is not materialized in our midst.

This is how David came to be anointed, even while Samuel was unclear and unable to see what God saw, and King Saul was still a force to be reckoned with. The main point of the passage is that God does not see as we see: God sees the heart, not just outward appearance, and this is why we must seek God's choice, in the Spirit. God chose as ruler for the fledgling Hebrew nation, what we are not prone to choose, the 8th and last son, a short, dark, motley and least impressive youth from an obscure family. God's choice. Amen.