

God's Chosen

2. Samuel 5: 1-5, 9-10

5:1 Then all the tribes of Israel came to David at Hebron, and said, "Look, we are your bone and flesh.

5:2 For some time, while Saul was king over us, it was you who led out Israel and brought it in. The LORD said to you: It is you who shall be shepherd of my people Israel, you who shall be ruler over Israel."

5:3 So all the elders of Israel came to the king at Hebron; and King David made a covenant with them at Hebron before the LORD, and they anointed David king over Israel.

5:4 David was thirty years old when he began to reign, and he reigned forty years.

5:5 At Hebron he reigned over Judah seven years and six months; and at Jerusalem he reigned over all Israel and Judah thirty-three years.

5:9 David occupied the stronghold, and named it the city of David. David built the city all around from the Millo inward.

5:10 And David became greater and greater, for the LORD, the God of hosts, was with him.
(Text copied courtesy of the Vanderbilt Divinity Library)

I've gotten a few comments about the predominance of King David in my sermons lately. No one has come right out and said anything negative about it yet. There have been a few very positive comments and just one sort of wishy-washy one, but I thought the predominance of this repetitive theme from such a variety of corners might mean that I need to publically explain why I am preaching so much on King David lately.

One of my concerns in taking on the single pastorate was the fact that I have never had to preach every week before. In Germany, during the busiest period of my ministry in the congregation in Frankfurt (Oder), I would preach once a month. And that was quite a process. I'd write it in *my* German and, ideally, I'd have it finished by the Thursday before I was to preach. That was so that my very fluent and well taught husband could correct my German so that it not only turned into something that was clearly understood by the German congregation, but was almost a work of art!

In preparing myself for this new phase of ministry, I determined that part of my further education and for my personal spiritual discipline, I would be preaching the lectionary, and this year is the year we focus on the Old Testament, so we are hearing a lot about King David because I need the discipline of the lectionary, and because that is what is suggested in the Lectionary. And considering how much King David is in the news lately, I'm thinking it was providence!

Have you noticed, too? Mark Sanford based his rationale for why he wasn't going to step down as Governor of South Carolina, as a consequence of his adultery, on King David. And just recently I heard an interview on the radio about a "Church" in DC whose members are the rich and powerful and they call themselves *The Fellowship* or *The Family*. They, too, see *King David* as a role model for *them* - the rich and powerful.

A leader of *The Family* was quoted as asking a sort of study group why they thought King David was so great. A few people attempted a response, but the surprise answer was that it was not because he was such a moral, creative, compassionate, caring person, because David wasn't. David was a bit of a rascal - an adulterer and basically an accomplice to murder. "No", the leader of the Fellowship said, "David was great because he was *chosen* by God to be in the position of power, and, **that made him above morality.**" And on that they base their understanding of powerful people in the world, and their particular ministry to the rich and the powerful.

What is the relationship of power and morality? What does it mean to be chosen by God? Are only those few who are in powerful positions to be considered chosen by God? What do these scriptures for today tell us about the relationship of the holy to the powerful?

Here in the last verse of the sermon text it says, "And David became greater and greater, for the Lord, the God of hosts, was with him." Wouldn't it be nice if it could just end there? "And they all lived happily ever after, The End." But, it doesn't, and the Bathsheba story is the lesson for the 26th of July . . . so, stay tuned to this pulpit for the continuation of that story.

He may have had his weaknesses, but the reality is undeniable - David *was emphatically* a great King! He united the kingdoms; he brought the Ark of the Covenant to Jerusalem - otherwise known as the City of David - he *was* a great King, a great soldier, and a great poet - a lot of our psalms are credited to him. He seemed to be able to hold his reputation of greatness when Saul could not. Saul, too was chosen by God, why isn't he remembered in the same way?

I contest that David was greater because he was a more balanced individual. He nurtured his artistic, more feminine side, and yet he was strong in his masculine, military, quick-thinking and independent side. He allowed both sides of his god-likeness to balance. We were made in God's image and so God has feminine and masculine sides. David maintained his greatness because he allowed himself to show what some consider to be weak, his compassionate side.

And perhaps an even greater reason why he was such a great King was that he seemed to be a playful soul. From what little we have of his personality traits, filtered through thousands of years of history, we still have this image of a joyful, playful, happy soul. He knew how to enjoy the life God gave him. And if it happened to take him to become the most powerful person in Israel and Judea, then so be it.

David was busy just *being what God called him to be*. He wasn't obsessed, as Saul was, with trying to hold onto power. David's rise

to power and fortune all seemed to be happenstance, and he seemed game to go along with it.

David seemed to be in the present moment whenever something was happening. You know what I mean? He wasn't sitting around thinking about how scary it was when that Lion attacked him when he said he could handle Goliath. He remembered the skills he had learned, but he appraised the situation at hand and dealt with it in the present. You also don't get the impression that David was so overly concerned about who was going to take his place as Saul was. So David wasn't worried about the future. David was centered in the present, and he had a playful soul. He was responsible, and serious, but he appeared to love life.

I think that is what Samuel saw and God shared with him when this ruddy wild shepherd boy came bounding in the room - a love and zest for life, and the wisdom to assess what is going on in the room. That is why God chose him, that is why David was great. Yes he was

chosen and became great, but not for power as *The Fellowship* seems to think, but for joy and fulfillment of life.

And to that I say we are each called to be what God calls us to be.

We don't have to be a world leader to be called by God, to be chosen by God. We follow the teachings of God's son, and we are God's chosen children. We are brothers and sister of Jesus Christ. If we are trying hard to get or to hang onto power, out of fear, greed or lust, then we haven't realized the truth yet – that we are free to be happy and fulfilled just as we are.

Because we are, as retired folks, as students, as working folks, as mourning folks and searching folks – we are all chosen and special and **Beloved** – the Hebrew word for Beloved is David. David was a great King, not only because he was chosen, but because he knew he was loved, and he lived a life of obedience, but a life of loving and compassion.

That is what Jesus was trying to tell his family and neighbors when he returned to his hometown to preach, as we heard in the Gospel. But they were looking for the power that one sees in the rich and worldly. Jesus wasn't recognized as being a great man in his home community because he didn't put on the peacock suit and strut around trying to show how great he was. So they saw only the neighborhood boy getting' uppity.

No, I think the greatest clue we have today to answer the questions asked earlier about the relationship between power and morality is found in the Epistle. Paul was often struggling with the powerful and the powerless. And in his many experiences, which have been recorded in our scriptures, he came to the awareness that there is strength in weakness. "My grace is sufficient for you, for power is made perfect in weakness."

In the sixties there was a popular saying about love being like a butterfly, if you chase out after it, it will run away, but if you sit quietly in a field it will come up to you and rest on your shoulder.

Anyone here remember it? That is a lovely image of the ultimate power – the power of love.

We may try to force ourselves to achieve power with might and money, and we may succeed for a little while. We may accomplish great things and build great empires, but if they aren't founded on a compassion, morality and justice for all people, that empire will fall, just as Saul's did. Just as so many others in contemporary society today, whose 'empires' have crumbled because they were build on the foundation of greed and self aggrandizement. They too, thought they were above morality.

No one is above morality, David wasn't, and neither were so many others throughout history. But we could all be chosen to be great in what we do – loving and caring for those we have been called to care for. I know some *great* Grandparents here in this church. I know some *great* spouses and parents. I know some great musicians, and police, and teachers . . . and liturgists and deacons and Elders.

I can say this because David showed us that we don't have to be perfect to be great,
and Paul shared with us that we don't have to be world leaders to be powerful
and Jesus shows us that regardless of where we came from, or where we are, we are always beloved in God's eyes.