

Today we continue reading about the early kings of Israel. We here at Allison Creek have been reading about King Saul and King David who were leaders in Israel about 1000 years before the birth of Christ. We read their stories from the Old Testament books of 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> Samuel.

Today we close those two books and now open up the book of 1<sup>st</sup> Kings, the next book in the Bible. The book of 1<sup>st</sup> Kings is a story. The main character, believe it or not, is God. Although in the section we are reading today God does not appear to be the main character.

The story told in 1<sup>st</sup> Kings is the story of a group of people trying to live as the people of God in the Promised Land. But as we will see in today's story, this group doesn't do this very well. Even though this group is supposed to be the people of God living in the land God promised to them, this group will be just like any group of assembled people. There will be manipulation and greed and struggles for power and control. Their story is our story. And so let's enter into this story.

I am going to invite you to find a pew Bible or your own Bible and open up to 1<sup>st</sup> Kings. It is found on p. 347 in the pew Bibles. Feel free to pull it up on the Bible App if that is where you are most comfortable. As I tell this story from the first chapter you are free to do your own reading as I speak. I have come to realize that our culture has changed and it is normal to do your own research as I am talking. I certainly do it. You are welcome to as well. That may offend some folks but I am not one of those folks.

The story which we will share in today is one which covers the entire first chapter of 1<sup>st</sup> Kings. Therefore, I am going to walk us through this fascinating story of manipulation and family squabbles rather than reading a particular selection.

The book of 1<sup>st</sup> Kings begins by telling us that King David is old and cold. Ever heard an old person complain about being cold all of the time? Well that is how David is described. Maybe some of us are this category of being old and cold. That is the way David is described.

There are different ways to get warm and the servants of David try to put a bunch of clothes on David but he still feels cold. So then his servants decide that what David needs is a young woman beside him. And that is what happens. And that is how 1<sup>st</sup> Kings begins.

When a king gets old, the big question that arises concerns succession of power. Who is going to take over as king since the current king is no longer fit to be king. In verse 5 we read that David's son Adonijah announces that "I, I will be king." Adonijah then sets out to make himself king.

Adonijah seems to be the most proper person to be the next king. He is the next oldest son after David's other sons have died. Adonijah is described in verse 6 as a very handsome man. He has the support of prominent military leaders and religious leaders. But there are other military leaders and religious leaders who do not think Adonijah is the best one to be the next king. So the struggle for power begins.

Adonijah organizes a ceremony in which he invites all of his supporters for king to attend. He does not invite those who oppose him. But his opponents hear about what Adonijah is doing and they set out to lift their own person into the position of king. Does this kind of remind you of the very rich and powerful people in our country today who are dropping big money into Super PACs to elect our next US president? Same kind of stuff here.

The prophet Nathan approaches Bathsheba and tells her what is going on. A few weeks ago we read the story of David seducing Bathsheba even though she was married to someone else. David had Bathsheba's husband killed and then David married Bathsheba. Bathsheba became one of David's many wives.

Nathan approaches Bathsheba and lets her know about Adonijah's plot to become king. Bathsheba is the mother of Solomon. Bathsheba and Nathan want Solomon to be anointed as the next king of Israel. So Nathan and Bathsheba come up with a plot to be sure that their man becomes the next king of Israel.

While David is old and feeble and not all that clear in his thinking, Bathsheba approaches David and says in verse 17, "Did you not, my lord the king, swear to your servant saying that your son Solomon would be the next king? Why has your son Adonijah become king?"

Nathan then comes in to see King David right after Bathsheba and he says the same thing. After listening to both of them, King David announces that Solomon will be the next king. Beginning in verse 38 we see the public ceremony to place Solomon as king. Solomon rides on King David's mule and the priest anoints Solomon as the next king of the united Israel. Solomon will be the last king of the united Israel before they split into the two countries of Israel and Judah.

Adonijah is informed about Solomon becoming the next king. At this point we might expect that there would be some type of physical battle for the throne. But that does not happen. Adonijah submits to Solomon's power. Adonijah is brought before Solomon and Solomon responds by telling Adonijah to return home. That is not the last time we hear of Adonijah. Later in chapter two of 1<sup>st</sup> Kings Adonijah devises a scheme to regain control. Solomon sees through his plot and has Adonijah killed.

We read this story and the first question we may ask ourselves is this, "Where is God in this story?" There are several different ways that we can read this story. We can read this story simply as a history story. An attempt to explain the history of Israel so that they understand their past.

A second way to read this story is that it is a political document. It was written to authenticate the kingship of Solomon over against his brother. A type of political propaganda.

Another way to read this story is that it is strictly entertainment. It was an early example of reality TV in which people can read about the sordid lives of the rich and powerful. There are good arguments for each of these ways of reading this story.

What is harder to understand in reading this story is God. Where is God involved in this story of political maneuvering? God is not mentioned a whole lot in this text. The plot seems more focused on human scheming than on the ways of God.

And maybe that is where God is involved in this story. In the midst of this very entertaining story is the story of a God who is able to carry out God's will. God does not need perfect and pious people to carry out God's will. God can choose to use the most manipulative and conniving people to carry out God's will. God's will is carried out even in the midst of human scandals.

This is also a story when the unexpected becomes the one that God chooses for a purpose. Adonijah should be the one chosen as king. He is the oldest male and he is the best looking of the bunch. Solomon, however, is born to the woman that David met through a scandalous affair. But it is a child from the scandalous affair that becomes the next king that God chooses.

Many times we think that God chooses the best and the brightest to be the ones that God chooses to carry out God's will. But as we read the Scriptures we find out it is quite the opposite. Over and over God chooses the least likely ones to carry out God's will and do incredible things on earth.

Maybe you have come into worship today feeling as though you are one of those that is the least likely to be chosen by God to do anything of significance. Maybe you are the one born out of a scandalous affair. Maybe you are the child that is not as good looking or fit as your brother or sister. Maybe you are the one that tends to be overlooked for whatever reason. Or maybe you are wondering why God is using THAT person when you know what THAT person is like?

But the story of the Bible is the story of a God who chooses the most unusual and imperfect people to carry out God's will. The story that we read today is the story of a God who actually uses human greed and manipulation to carry out God's will.

So don't think that you have to be someone else or look like someone else to be used by God to do important ministry. Don't think that God cannot use people that you think are greedy or manipulative to carry out God's will. Because God does.

God chooses the most unlikely ones to carry out God's will. AMEN.

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-Text: I Kings 1

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