

sermon preached June 23, 2024

In the name of the living God; Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Amen.

You may have noticed that our readings from the Hebrew Scripture the last few weeks have all been related, In our three-year lectionary, we will be doing what is called the Davidic cycle, following the people of Israel through their early Kings, especially King David, until we come to the end of the season.

From the outset, God tells the people of Israel that kings are a very bad idea, for Kings will take the sons and daughters of Israel for their own selfish wants. (1 Samuel 8) God reminds them that people were not created to have Kings and that they need to be responsible for themselves. Nevertheless, the people persist, for every other country has a King and they believe it is essential to identify them as a full-fledged nation. God reluctantly acquiesces. Saul is selected, not for his love of God or concern for others, but because of his military prowess. In short order, Saul behaves as God predicted, and puts himself ahead of the people and at times even outright disobeys God.

So, God tells the prophet Samuel that it is time for somebody else. Last week, we heard how he travels to the home of Jesse to anoint one of his sons. Now everyone, including Jesse and Samuel think it will be the oldest, or the wisest or the most attractive, but all of Jesse's sons pass by and Samuel discerns that it will not be any one of them. In desperation he turns to Jesse who reluctantly reveals that there is one more, the youngest, who is out tending the flock of sheep. Jesse fetches him and Samuel discerns that David is indeed the boy born to be King.

So, what is different about David? Why does God see him as a suitable King? The writer of the text seems obsessed with his good looks and mentions it repeatedly. But I am sure that is not what drove God to have him anointed as King. Again, the writer reminds us that God looks and sees differently than humans. Perhaps it is that David knows compassion and the importance of protecting others from his time as a shepherd? Or maybe it is the prayers and songs of praise he has strung on his harp as he tended the flock? I think it is as simple as the words we had in this morning's collect: that God "never fails to help and govern those whom God sets upon the sure foundation of God's loving kindness." In other words, because David loves God and is grounded in God's love, he is worthy to lead God's people. To be sure, like Saul, David will sin and make mistakes, but at his core, what makes David different, is strives to love God in all things and serve God as cares for Israel.

Being grounded in this way, David has the courage to face his adversities, to stand up when needed and protect God's people. In today's reading, he goes to the front lines to bring refreshment to his brothers serving in Saul's army as Jesse commanded him. When he arrives, he finds that each army has agreed to settle their dispute with a battle of champions, rather than the carnage of countless soldiers. Goliath has come forward to fight and intimidate the Israelites. Even Saul is reluctant to go into battle. But David is different. He is not in the least afraid. Saul gives him his armor which just does not fit the young lad. In the end, David goes forth with a slingshot and five smooth stones. Goliath is insulted to see a Israel send out a young boy. He underestimates him at his peril and with a single stone to the forehead, Goliath falls. David's faith in God and his grounding in God's lovingkindness sustains him and all the people of Israel. To be sure, David will have his problems and sins along the way. Yet his faith and lovingkindness will sustain him and his people all his days.

Fast forward to today's Gospel lesson. Now you would think that the disciples could remember this story and trust in the God who never lets God's people face their peril alone. Further, they have seen several instances of Jesus's healing and dispelling of demons. They have heard his teaching and seen his ability to move the hearts of many. Yet here they are in the middle of the storm, and they forget all about all of that. All they know is that the storm has scared the daylight out of them, and they have lost all hope. They wake Jesus up and he rebukes the wind and the waves and suddenly there is dead calm.

As amazing as this miracle is, perhaps what is even more amazing is the change in the disciples themselves. Suddenly they realize that Jesus is more than they thought and they find renewed hope in their teacher, although they will stay need to relearn this lesson a couple of more times before they really get it.

What the people of Israel, Saul and the Disciples all have in common is their lack of faith and willingness to take responsibility—they all want what they want, but when there is a problem, they also want someone to blame. They are looking for someone to solve their problems so that they can go on with what they want to do. David and Jesus remind us that God is always with us and will never leave us to face our perils alone. Nowhere in Scripture are we told that following God will prevent any hardships from coming into our life. Saint and sinners alike have all struggled from time with persecution, illness and strife. Yet through it all, they have remembered the most frequent commandment of Scripture: Be not afraid!

Right now, we are living through a difficult time both nationally and internationally. I would like to tell you how everything is going to sort itself out in November. But like you, I do not have the foggiest idea.

Yet, I remember the witness of David and Jesus; I remember the God who has always showed up for those who seek and love him, I hear the words: “Be not afraid” and recall who I am and whose I am. I have hope because I know that no leader, king or president can ever solve all our problems. We are not looking for a new Savior—we already have that in Jesus. We, you and me, are the leaders we are looking for!

Today we will baptize a new member of Christ’s church and it is well worth remembering that there is nothing that we will do at the font that in any way will cause God to love this child more. God has given him the gift of life and the blessings of a wonderful family. Rather, we are all coming to the font to remember that God loves each of us and is counting on us to use the gift of life to serve God and care for creation. All of us are commissioned ministers of the Church and it is our task to stand up to the giant that thwart the love of God. We are called to trust in the God who shows up and promises that we will always be more than enough to content with challenges of living.

There is a story about the Anglican priest, John Wesley, who became one of the founders of what is today the Methodist church. Driven by a desire to serve God’s people and to spread the Gospel, he crossed the Atlantic Ocean several times. On one such crossing, the ship he was sailing on encountered an overwhelming storm. He joined the crew in hunkering down in the bunks below fearing for their very lives. In the morning, a group of Moravians who were also traveling onboard got up, went out onto the deck and held their morning worship service. Undeterred by the wind and the waves, they prayed and sang praises to God. Watching them at worship, Wesley was awestruck. From that day forward, he prayed that God would give him the courage to live out a life of faith such as he had witnessed in the Moravians.

We are gathered today, here in this holy place, in what is commonly called the Nave of the church. The root of this word comes from the Latin word for “ship”; same as the word “Navy”. Frequently, as it is here at St. Peter’s the roof line of many churches mirrors the hull of a sailing vessel. It reminds us that we are all sailing through life together, onboard a ship of faith. Doubtless we will encounter numerous storms in life, but as the Baptized we have promised to show compassion to each other and to our

fellow human beings. We will stand up against the giants that vex us; of those evil things that work against the Kingdom of God and undermine compassion, justice and peace. We bear each other's burdens and celebrate each other's blessings. We encourage each other as we recall that in this life and in the life that is to come, we are the Lord's possession. We help each other stand up against the giants and storms that come our way. No matter what the year ahead may throw our way, like David we are not afraid to show our faith and stand up against those who act against the dignity of humanity and the unfolding of the Kingdom of God. And so, I say to you: Have courage, live out your faith, and trust God.

As Maya Angelou once said: Every storm runs out of rain!

Amen.