

Another Point of View I Samuel 15: 34 to 16: 13 Mark 4: 26-34

I read and reread the scriptures and resources for this morning attempting to put into words the focus I was feeling. As I pondered these scriptures, a multitude of church related experiences kept coming back to me. Experiences of encouraging members to take on a long or even short responsibility in church only to be assured they were not the person to do it. One for instance where recently I get turned away- asking others of you to share messages during worship- could be a favorite scripture; an event in your lives when you felt God's leading; or you simply feel a message of faith you would like to share with your friends. It feels all of us, including the speakers, would be so blessed if such could happen. Stan Menning will be here next week, but then won't be back until the end of August. There are a lot of Sundays to fill and we could make use of the Presbytery pulpit supply list. However, I believe this Summer could be an opportune time to hear the faith stories of members of this congregation. I am grateful that Doug is working on making Sunday, July 4, a special time of worship- finding others to participate in bringing brief messages that day. By being so up front with you this morning, I am praying that some may feel called to share words of faith and experience the blessings that come with doing that. I can assure you that "another point of view" will be yours as a result.

It does strike me as interesting that the Scriptures for today speak directly to this issue. If God can use a young shepherd boy, fresh from the hills, or cause small seeds to grow into a full harvest or a large bush, why do we fail to consider that God may be or could use us, also? If we truly believe we are God's people, as we say we are- how can we not work toward "another point of view?" As we feel humanly inadequate, is it possible that discouragement comes from only looking at what we feel WE can do; how WE can do it? Is it possible, when relying only on our point of view, that we fail to recognize the possibility of "another point of view" – God's view?

The story of the shepherd boy, David, is a familiar one. We have heard and been taught over the years, the stories of the various stages of David's life. But I would like, just for a bit, to remember again how David received HIS call for service....a call he likely didn't even begin to comprehend to its full extent at the time.

In last week's message, Stan focused on the life of the children of Israel when they demanded a King like the nations around them. Interestingly enough, God gave in to the people and put Saul in position as king. Eventually, Saul proves to a very undesirable king and God regrets that action. That is where today's Scripture begins. God sends the prophet, Samuel, to Bethlehem specifically to invite the family of Jesse, to a sacrifice. God tells Samuel that one of Jesse's sons has been chosen to be king. At Samuel's request, Jesse introduces each of his seven sons to Samuel and Scripture records Samuel finds the very first one to be quite -1-

acceptable. But God is quick to tell Samuel not to base his judgment on appearance or height- God looks at the heart not outward appearance. In turn, God rejects all seven sons which causes Samuel to ask if Jesse has any more sons. One can almost hear the chuckles...yessss, there is one more but what would you want with him, he is young and only good enough to watch the sheep? You know big brothers!! But young David is sent for and when he arrives, likely smelling of sheep, God instructs Samuel to anoint David since he is the one chosen to be king. Samuel anoints David in the presence of his father and brothers and Scripture says, "the spirit of the Lord came mightily upon David from that day forward." Don't miss that- THE SPIRIT OF THE LORD CAME MIGHTILY UPON DAVID FROM THAT DAY FORWARD. God doesn't just call, God also provides spirit-filled power and strength. And as we often say, the rest is history!! God used a young boy, likely seen as the lowliest of his family to do great things for God's people. God used a young shepherd boy from whose lineage came Joseph, Jesus' earthly father. Joseph, in response to a governmental census decree brought his young pregnant wife to the small town of Bethlehem where Jesus was born- thus fulfilling prophesy. God's plan for eternity used a young, inexperienced shepherd boy. What is in God's plan for us... individually and as a congregation? Do we have the right to even consider that we are NOT in God's plan? Do we have the right to excuse ourselves because we feel our efforts and skills are inadequate?

Our Scripture from Mark 4 follows this theme through the use of two parables- the Parable of the Growing Seed (found only in the Gospel of Mark) and the Parable of the Mustard Seed.

First of all, both parables are about the Kingdom of God. Both talk about how God's Kingdom will develop and grow. This seems particularly important for the disciples to hear. Just think...if WE wonder about the growth of God's kingdom and how we can EVER see any progress- just think about the disciples. There were just eleven of them, with literally a whole world who needed to hear their message. And what's more, the crowds who were following Jesus seemed to be having trouble understanding that Jesus was not an earthly king as they hoped.

****Parable of the Growing Seed**

The primary point in this parable is that God's kingdom grows by God's effort, not by the person planting a seed. Once you sow a seed, you don't see anything happening for a while and you have next to no control over what is going on underground. Yet growth is taking place.

So, too, with God's word being proclaimed. Jesus, in referring to a man scattering seed on the ground, indicates that once the word is proclaimed, growth starts- possibly hidden at first- but

growth slow and definite. And it is important to remember- growth does not depend on the messenger!! Verse 27- the person sows the seed- "night and day, whether he sleeps or gets up, the seed sprouts and grows, though he does not know how."

You see, it is God who causes the kingdom to grow, as God works in hearts and lives. Often growth will be invisible to us and may be growth we never see. But it is God who produces the results, not those who proclaim the word.

What does that mean for us? If we faithfully share God's word in whatever way possible, can we be confident that God is using our efforts? If the results do not seem to be what we prayerfully expected, the method may be questioned, but never that God is using even stumbling efforts. We just need to be faithful in continuing to sow the seed. Remember the Banana Room? For several years, this church opened our basement for youth of the community to gather after evening sports events. Little did we know that 35-40 years later there would be a group of adults with fond memories of the Banana Room. Seed for God is sown in ways we don't even imagine!

As we are called to share Jesus and his gospel with others, it also means WE should truly hear God's word. We should talk about it together and encourage one another. God is then at work in us and is able to take those words and actions and produce a harvest.

Verse 29 talks about the sower of the seed going out when the grain is ripe, harvesting it. That seems to be a bit of a warning- a warning that as God makes the kingdom grow, that work will one day be over. We cannot leave things until too late...not putting it off for another day or week.

**The Parable of the Mustard Seed

The mustard seed is not the smallest of seeds, but they are small in comparison to the large bush into which they can grow.

The primary point of the parable seems to be that God's kingdom has a small beginning with the disciples, but a huge, unfathomable ending. We have the advantage of a historical perspective of the church built on these few disciples. As we read the Book of Acts, we find the account of the growth of the church....3,000 people were converted with one sermon! Worldwide millions continue to be turning to Christ today. God chooses to use human, seemingly insignificant efforts to do God's work. By the use of these humble efforts- another point of view is highlighted- God's point of view.

Another part of this parable points out that from the small beginning, a large bush is grown, with large branches so that the birds of the air can make nests in its shade. The tree is God's great kingdom and birds/people from all nations are drawn to the tree and receive a blessing

there. Since the disciples and others felt the Jews were God's special people, this was a new thought- another point of view for them. The kingdom is for all nations and all types of people- including people like you and me. So perhaps we should take from this an additional challenge- to make certain anyone and everyone feels welcome here within our church family. Far too often, I fear, our point of view is that the kingdom of God is made up only of those like us- those we feel comfortable having as part of our "family." If we take the Parable of the Mustard Seed seriously- with the small seed growing into a large bush where the birds of the air make their homes- it speaks quite clearly that WE are not allowed to choose who can or cannot be part of it. Our point of view must be that all are welcome and all bring with them God given skills.

The accent in these lessons for today is on the work of God. We so easily get caught up in OUR role, OUR calling, OUR task. Yes, God uses people. But the initiative is with God and whatever fruit comes of the effort is to the credit and glory of God. God has chosen each one of us for a very good purpose in the world. We do not need to be what we consider unusually talented. The only requirement is to be open to what God can do- with and through us. The statement at the top of the bulletin reads, "There are no lesser members in the body of Christ- only less obvious members. In God's eyes, all members are needed and all ministries are important."

Think about all the people found in the Bible- just think about them. Jesus being the exception, I cannot think of a one of them who we could consider extraordinary at the beginning of their call by God. I would guess, David- a young shepherd boy, had no clue what was ahead of his life when he was anointed by Samuel. But remember- THE SPIRIT OF THE LORD CAME MIGHTILY UPON DAVID FROM THAT DAY FORWARD. We put tiny seeds in the ground and have faith they will produce a harvest. In the same way down through the ages, God has used ordinary people to accomplish extraordinary ministry. Do we dare even consider that God no longer does the same? If we consider ourselves lacking in abilities that God can use, I suggest our point of view must change!! The kingdom of God grows in spite of our efforts because it is God who produces the abundant harvest.

I will continue to pray that some of you will step forward in faith and be willing to share God's word with all of us. Our point of view needs to be open, not to our own sense of inadequacy- but faithfully open to God's point of view. Amen

Karen Houtman 6/13/2021