

Reflection on today's Old Testament by Rev'd Canon Michael Last – 22/3/2020

As today's Old Testament reading begins a new era was dawning for the Israelite nation. In anointing the young David to be king, Samuel was signaling the rise of a man who would ultimately in the nation's history stand head and shoulders above most of those who would follow. David would establish a single unified kingdom, with Jerusalem as its capital, and lay the foundations upon which Solomon would build in the next generation.

But reflect for a moment not on what he would achieve but on David, as a person, his character and the journey he would walk with God.

The first thing to say is David does not volunteer to be king, he is chosen by God. He is not even present at the beginning of the selection procedure. Long before David hears or responds he is selected by God yet, at the point of being called, he would not appear to be a natural choice— a young boy looking after the family's sheep.

“Go to Bethlehem,” says God to Samuel “to a man named Jesse, because I have chosen one of his sons to be king.” When they came, he looked on Eliab and thought, ‘Surely the Lord’s anointed is now before the Lord.’ But the Lord said to Samuel, ‘Do not look on his appearance or on the height of his stature, because I have rejected him; for the Lord does not see as mortals see; they look on the outward appearance, but the Lord looks on the heart.’

God sees, knows and starts to mold us as individuals well before we are aware of a calling or prepared to accept it. God looks at the potential, but not in terms of the physical rather in terms of the spiritual. In terms of what we can be with God's hand guiding us. Why? So that ultimately it cannot be seen as you or me at work but rather God at work in us and through us.

Secondly, when David is chosen he is still raw, young - a rough stone with much to learn. He will make many mistakes and face many challenges, but he can grow, learn and be nurtured, with God's spirit at work within him.

The same should be true within our church life. God seeks us out and, having done so, nurtures in ways that will help us grow, in love, inability, strength, and understanding of the faith.

For David, his time as king was not to commence for many years - a time during which he had much to learn. Look at his list of jobs; the diversity is fascinating: Shepherd, Musician, Courtier, Soldier, and Outlaw. Each taught him lessons that would prove invaluable when king.

If the story of David teaches us anything it is that God walks with us through our lives, he is there in many ways before we are - shaping, directing, setting the way ahead, providing the very strength we need to take the next step, especially in times of struggle. The path he sets may not always be easy, or the one we would choose, yet it is a road that can build us into more effective people and communities.

As a world, nation and as a community, we are facing one of the most challenging health crises in modern history - a crisis that has turned our lives upside down. In a short space of time, our whole way of life seems to have changed, with the idea of social distancing having stopped many of the things we would normally do and how we interact with others. The story of David is a reminder to us of “God with us” in and through life's challenges and struggles, as dark as they may seem at times.