

Sermon for Sunday, October 19, 2025

1 Samuel 16:1-13

Psalms 51: 10-14

2 Corinthians 5:14-19

This fall the 7th & 8th grade Confirmation class is studying "Superheroes from the Old Testament." We are looking at many of the important people that have acted as foundations for both the Jewish and the Christian faith. They're not the only ones considering superheroes of the faith here at Vasa! During worship we too have been hearing/reading stories from the Old Testament about superheroes: people of faith. People like:

- Abraham—and the near sacrifice of his son Isaac
- Jacob and the manner in which he obtained his father's blessing
- Moses who didn't want to go back to Egypt and speak to Pharaoh so as to free God's people
- The people Israel who complained against God when they became hungry in the wilderness
- Samuel who was anointed as a prophet/priest.....but also about the priest Eli who failed to correct his sons.
- King Saul, chosen by God, but one who doesn't remain faithfully true to God; disobeying God's commands.
- David, the youngest of Jesse's sons; who from the world's eyes should not be considered worthy to be anointed as the next king.

Today's Scripture reading speaks of how Samuel anoints David to be the next king of Israel; doing so behind Saul's back. Samuel has good reason to be concerned about obeying God's directive: his actions are quite subversive. And it's going to be many years before David is in a position to take over the throne of Israel.

Today's reading occurs when David is quite young and unprepared to be a king, unprepared to be a leader of a country, unprepared to be a warrior and lead an army. One could say that at this moment David is still quite pure of heart; an innocent boy whose primary job was to care for his father's flock of sheep.

Even if you can't remember the details of David's life you are likely aware that David faced many challenges before becoming king. He doesn't necessarily stay "pure of heart." The opening words of our worship service were the words from Psalm 51; a psalm attributed to David and written late in his life. Clearly David recognizes how he has failed to live in a manner worthy of being a follower of YHWH. Nonetheless his faith and trust in God remain firm and he

writes one of the most highly regarded psalms of the entire psalter. With his words David shares his deep belief in the power of God to cleanse and change his heart and spirit.

One of our bedrock teachings as Lutherans is an emphasis on the "both and." What I mean is this. We recognize our sinfulness. We recognize our failure to love God and love our neighbor. We recognize our failure to trust God in all things. That's why we open our worship with a confession to God of our sinfulness. We are both sinners (like David) and saints trusting that God is able to create a clean heart in us.

At the end of our confession it is my task to declare to you that our sins are forgiven. We believe, like King David, that God has the power to create a clean heart in us. That God has the power to put a new and right spirit within each of us. We faithfully trust that, as beloved children of God, God is unwavering in God's commitment to continue in relationship with us.

Remember that list that I opened the sermon with? Abraham, Jacob, Moses, the people Israel, Eli, Samuel, King Saul, and David? The Bible is pretty clear that these men are not perfect. They fail—both in human relationships and in their relationship with God. Why didn't God make better choices? Why didn't God choose people who were able to live under the pressures of life and maintain a more upstanding life? That's the amazing thing about God. God wasn't worried about calling sin-free saints to be part of the long chain of humans that God was forming for the salvation of the world. God wasn't worried then and God isn't worried now. For the most part God chose regular people and God continues to choose regular people to perform God's work in the world. Remember that it is from this long genealogy that Jesus traces his roots.

Like those ancient "superheroes of the Old Testament" we are well aware of our sinful nature and our failure to live as God desires. The apostle Paul wrote words that continue to bring us hope and consolation. He said (to the church in Corinth,) "we are convinced that [Jesus] has died for all.... And he died for all, so that those who live might live no longer for themselves, but for him who died and was raised for them. From now on, therefore, we regard no one from a human point of view; [but rather we strive to look at the people around us from God's point of view.] Paul goes on, "So if anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation: everything old has passed away; see, everything has become new!" The superheroes we have been reading about were new creations through the power of God's Holy Spirit. In the same way we are new creations! Each

of us, through our baptisms becomes a new creation in Christ/God. In spite of our sinful nature God loves us, gifts us with the Holy Spirit, and in love maintains the expectation that we will do our best to follow the teachings of Jesus. We are given that Holy Spirit of God and it feeds and informs our lives and our actions. We are new creations!

During a recent confirmation class each student lit a candle and put it in a glass jar. Then they put a cover on the jar and screwed it down tight. What do you think happened? The candle used up the oxygen and the flame died. This little experiment allowed me to talk about how the flame of the Holy Spirit can go out in our lives. We need to feed the spirit—keep providing it with oxygen. The good news is that the wick still exists and God can relight that flame at a moment's notice. In fact, God is always ready and waiting to do just that. But it's most certainly a partnership between God and humans. We need to participate in the work of the Holy Spirit. How? There are a couple of good ways:

1. Pray—maintain a conversation with God.
2. Read the Bible—God speaks to us through the Scriptures
3. Gather with other believers in worship—spending time with Christians can encourage and strengthen us when our faith is faltering.

In conclusion: Our Scripture readings for today remind us of the contrast between the pure heart of David the shepherd boy and David the king who failed when he allowed his human passions to rule his decisions. We witness the humbled David asking God to create within him a clean heart. We witness the humbled David asking God to correct him and put a new and right spirit within him. We witness David asking (begging?) to remain close to God's presence, and daring to ask God to keep the holy spirit within him. As David trusts that God will act he promises that he will teach others by using the failures of his life to demonstrate how God can and will act in their lives. Trusting that God will act David promises to sing God's praises—David the musician and poet will sing of God's ability to bring about reconciliation.

Let us pray: Good and gracious God, we humbly ask you to create clean hearts within us. We humbly ask you to renew our spirits and maintain your Holy Spirit within us. When we have need please restore our joyfulness as we remember the work of Jesus to bring salvation to us all. In your holy name we pray, "Amen."