

YOU, TOO, ARE GOD'S ANOINTED

1 Samuel 16

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Our Scripture today is taken from 1 Samuel 16. Rather than read this today, I'll summarize it. Saul has been rejected as king by the Lord. Now the grieving Samuel is told by the Lord to take his horn—a horn of cattle, hollowed out and meant to be a container for liquid—fill it with oil and go find a new king and anoint him. Samuel goes to Bethlehem, and there he meets a man named Jesse. And he meets Jesse's sons. Seven of them parade before Samuel. All of them are good-looking young men, but none of them are God's choice. God is looking at the heart, not just the outward appearance. So Samuel asks Jesse, "Do you have another son?" And he says, "Yes, he's out tending sheep." It's that young man who is to be anointed king of Israel. Once David is anointed, the Spirit of God comes upon him with power. Then at verse 14 we switch back to Saul. The Spirit has left him. An evil spirit from the Lord has come to torment him. He seeks remedy. Someone in his court suggests a good musician would help. He gets his musician—David. David comes, and Saul's depression is helped by the playing of this sweet balladeer of Israel.

I call this message today "You Too Are God's Anointed." The text deals with the subject of anointing. I realize that "anointing" is not an everyday word. It's a word that is primarily restricted to religious use now. In biblical days, anointing was used both as a common, everyday occurrence, and it was also a very significant, symbolic religious event.

As an everyday occurrence, it takes the place of what would amount to our preparations of aftershave, cologne, perfume, and things like that. In fact, the word "anoint" means "to smear." It's what I do when I take sunblock and smear it on me. A person in biblical days—man or

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woman—took olive oil and that was their way to protect themselves against the burning sun or the cold wintry day. You had to have olive oil on you. The mark of a good host, when he had company, was to anoint them with oil. We see in the Gospel of Luke a man failed to do this for Jesus, and Jesus reminds him of the obligations of a good host. Psalm 23 says to us, “Thou anointest my head with oil.” We don’t like that because it sounds sticky, but in the biblical day it was something very special.

And it was common.

Also anointing—to smear oil upon—was a very significant religious event. There were two kinds of religious anointings—literal anointing and symbolic anointing. In the literal anointing, oil was placed upon a thing or a person. When that holy oil was placed upon that thing or person, it showed they were separated—removed from common usage and common life. Their activity was to be used or employed for God’s purposes only. The first thing we ever find anointed in Scripture was a rock. In Genesis 33:20, Jacob has this experience at Bethel where the heavens open. So overpowering is that experience that the next morning he builds an altar there to the Lord, and he anoints the rock saying that it now has a restricted use. It can no longer be a common rock. It was the place where God met Jacob. In Exodus 30, we find the furniture and the Old Testament tabernacle itself were all anointed with oil—showing those items were not for common usage. It’s restricted for God’s purposes.

People were also anointed. Three classes of people were anointed—the high priest and his sons, prophets, and kings. Saul was anointed. David was anointed. This anointing of persons marked them for a special purpose God had for them. The prophet was anointed that he might speak God’s Word faithfully. A priest was anointed that he might intercede for God’s people. A king was anointed that he might rule on God’s behalf. On both occasions, when the anointing came

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upon Saul and David as kings, the literal anointing was immediately accompanied by a spiritual anointing. It's said in the text of Scripture that the Spirit of God came upon them with power. So it was more than "a little dab will do you." It was a definite turning point in their life. The olive oil that was placed on their head was only an outward physical manifestation of a very true spiritual reality. Their life had taken a dramatic turn. They were different men prior to the anointing. Now the Spirit of God had set them apart on a special mission.

In the New Testament, the anointing is mostly non-literal and symbolic. For example, the term "Messiah" in the Hebrew means "the anointed one." And the Greek word "Cristos" from which we derive "Christ" also means in the Greek language "the anointed one." So when we refer to Jesus as Christ or Messiah, we're referring to Jesus as the anointed one—the one smeared with oil. His anointing was never literal oil poured on Him, but it was direct. The Spirit himself came upon Him at His baptism. Jesus, after His baptism, says at Nazareth, "The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me because He has anointed Me" (Luke 4). In being anointed, Jesus was set aside to fulfill a special mission which is defined fivefold. First, to preach the good news to the poor. Any one of us is poor if we cannot get eternal life on our own power. We're all beggars in God's presence. He came to preach good news to the poor. Second, to proclaim freedom to the prisoners. Third, to proclaim recovery of sight to the blind. Fourth, to release the oppressed. And fifth, proclaim the year of God's favor. Peter, in Acts 10, tells us that God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power. He's the one set aside by the Spirit to be God's priest to us, our intercessor; God's prophet for us, the one who authentically speaks God's word into our lives; and to be God's king to rule over us.

We, as believers, also have an anointing. We're anointed to be equipped for service, Acts 2. The Spirit of God was poured out—not a literal oil on the Day of Pentecost—but a pouring out of the

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Holy Spirit. The anointing was for God's people to do the work of the Lord with His special presence. God's work can never be done simply by human ingenuity or human life. Anointing also is ours simply by virtue of the fact that we are Christians. First John 2:20 and verse 27 remind us that we are the anointed of the Lord if we have Christ in our life.

In the New Testament, physical anointing with oil occurs only once and that's for the sick. It shows the sick are being set apart for the special activity of God's intervention in their life.

Anointing is important. It's a word I grew up with. The assessment of preaching was either "It was anointed" or "It wasn't." The preaching and the singing were anointed if they produced change—if the preacher's notes got off his Bible and into the human heart; and if the singing got off the notes and into the consciousness and reality, then it was anointed singing. We never want to be part of a service where God is not anointing what is happening in people's lives. The anointing doesn't always have to be loud. It doesn't always have to have a fantastic display of emotion. But there must be an overlaying of God's presence on what is happening. There must be power and effectiveness. We not only need anointed preachers and singers, but we need anointed husbands and anointed wives, anointed singles, anointed children, anointed grandparents, anointed brothers and sisters, anointed Sunday School teachers, anointed lay workers, and anointed church workers. All of us have roles, functions, and titles we wear. We can function in that title far below what is available. But God's Spirit fills us up and causes us to be at our best for His honor and His glory. It is that anointing we seek.

That's a little background on anointing. Let's apply it to 1 Samuel 16. There are three lessons on anointing. The first is not all that cheerful a lesson. It's kind of gloomy and negative.

I. First, you can lose the anointing.

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I'm not saying anything about salvation. I'm talking about anointing—empowerment to do God's work God's way. Saul had lost the anointing. He was still king. He still had the title. He still had the office. He would have it for decades to come. But the ability to function to the capability that God had called him was taken from him. He had lost the anointing. The Spirit was departing, and he lost the anointing through disobedience. Anointing can be lost any number of ways. It can be lost through disobedience. It can be lost through disuse. It can be lost through lack of hunger for God's work in our lives. It can be lost through carelessness. Anointing is not something guaranteed to us. It must be kept by continual dependence and humility before God. Without God's gracing of His Holy Spirit on our lives, it's all dead works. We need God to make us live.

Over the years as a pastor and a leader, I've prayed, "Let us as a congregation not get to a place where we can do things or think we can do things without God's anointing on our lives." We must be people of the Spirit. We can appreciate what education, methodology, and goals can do for us. But the church of Jesus Christ is always built by people who have an absolute reliance upon God's Spirit and very little trust in themselves. God's anointing—it can leave a place and it can leave an individual. But the other part of this text contains the good news.

II. God is determined to discover persons He can anoint, and He will anoint.

Although Saul will no longer be anointed, that doesn't mean God is done looking for a king. God is going to have a king. If one individual fails or one minister fails or one ministry fails or one church fails, God is going to move on. He's going to find ministers and ministries and churches who will not fail Him.

The Lord said to Samuel, "How long will you mourn for Saul?" (1 Samuel 16:1, NIV). It's kind of tough when you care about someone who has had the anointing leave. I think of a particular

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situation where the anointing of God was removed from the ministry. There were great waves of regret and sadness. You can spend your life crying over spilt milk, but what the Lord says to Samuel is, "It's time to get up, Samuel, and quit looking at the past—at the glory days. Get on with it. I've got work to do in this generation, and I'm not going to let you sit idly by, living in the past—thinking about how things used to be with Saul. Get up, and find someone to anoint." It's a sad thing to see a person or ministry as only a shell of what it used to be. God is not obligated to one brand name. He's not obligated to the Methodist name. He's not obligated to the Baptist name. Nor the Assemblies of God name or the Foursquare name or the Christian Center name or the Calvary Chapel name or the Vineyard name. He's going to work with people who are hungry for Him regardless of the label they wear. While I personally happen to be an Assemblies of God minister, I don't think the name means anything to God unless the people in that name are anointed of God. Organizations throughout the history of the Christian church have risen and died. After a while, they quit depending upon God's Spirit to energize them and make them effective for Him.

I know that you join me in wanting to be part of what God is anointing in our day. Who is God looking for? Who does He want to anoint? Three chapters ago we found the key phrase in 1 Samuel 13:14 "The Lord has sought out a man after his own heart." God is looking for internal qualities in people—not simply external qualities. Man is only looking at the outward. That's why Jesse had seven good-looking sons, but none of them were chosen. They looked great, but God was looking for something deeper than the external appearance. It wasn't that David was an ugly kid either. The text nowhere mentions that he was ugly. He was "ruddy"—that wonderful, old English word. Ruddy—well complexioned, handsome features, and fine appearance. It's not

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that God says, "I can't use good-looking people. I'm going to find Me somebody ugly!" David was a good-looking kid. But he had something in addition to that—he had something in him. If you look carefully at the text, you see the qualities he had in him. The qualities God knew were there. There are six. First, obedience without passivity. The trouble with people who get a track record of obedience is sometimes they can become passively obedient. David was an obedient person. But we know he was not a passive milquetoast. We know he was faithful to responsibility. Give him a job to do, and he'd do it. He started out tending the sheep, and he did it well. We know that inwardly he had a quest for excellence. The trademark of David was excellence. Two things we know he was excellent at. He was excellent at throwing rocks. And that didn't happen overnight. He could have sat out there just watching the sheep. It's not idyllic. It's boring. There were no books to read, and there were no soap operas to watch. He was out there day after day in the hot sun trying to find a little tree to sit under for some shade. What's he doing in his spare time? Throwing stones, and becoming a master at it. When he's not throwing stones, he's got his harp and learning to play. He learns to play it so well he becomes a master musician. He wins the talent contest of the nation. Excellence was a hallmark of his life. Another quality in him was resiliency. His father said, "You're not significant on this big day, go tend the sheep." His brothers will later put him down too, but he doesn't let the negative input of people in his life crowd out his own personality and diminish him. He is a person of valor. He's not afraid. He'll later write, "Though a host encamp about me, I will not fear." He's also a man after God's own heart. David has a wonderful ability to be intimate with God. His songs reflect that. I'm convinced that a great many of those songs were written in his teenager years of being a shepherd—when he had time on his hands to compose music to God. Those songs later became popularized when he was king.

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Among the very last words of the Bible is this phrase out of the mouth of the Lord, "I am the root and the offspring of David" (Revelation 22:16). Jesus is saying that the earthy David got his character traits from Him. Jesus of Nazareth, being the offspring of David, developed those same character traits of obedience without passivity, faithfulness to responsibility, excellence, resiliency, valor, and intimacy. But as wonderful as these qualities are in the human life, they're still not enough. Even David will become a different person when the Spirit of God comes upon him as he is anointed. In the anointing, the Spirit will come upon him in power. God is looking for someone to anoint. He's looking for people who have a hunger for Him and a desire to make their life count for Him.

III. Thirdly, God will use anointed people to minister to those who have lost the anointing.

That's where our text comes to a finish today. The last few verses talk about these terrible episodes in Saul's personality where he is so consumed with depression and melancholy that he needs a musician to come and cheer him up. God allows this, and David comes and lifts his weary heart.

A difficulty that often confronts modern people reading the text is the phrase, "an evil spirit was sent from the Lord" (1 Samuel 16:14). What's this? I thought evil spirits came from the devil.

What's an evil spirit doing coming from the Lord? The reason why the text is that way is because Hebrews looked at things differently than people living in western civilization. We understand the significance of independent, intervening things that happen between an initial cause and a final result. A classic example is displacement of anger.

Here's an illustration of displacement anger: The boss chews out Mr. Jones at work. Mr. Jones doesn't dare talk back to the boss, but he's angry. He carries his anger home. His wife looks at him, and he proceeds to chew her out for doing the most menial thing. He says a very mean thing

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to her. She, in turn, doesn't feel she can buck him. But the next time the teenage boy walks through the kitchen, she scolds him for something he's done. He doesn't dare sass mom, so he goes and finds his nine-year-old sister and yanks her hair. She is all upset and knows she can't attack her brother, so she finds her four-year-old brother and pinches him real good. He gets all bent out of shape and knows he can't strike back at his sister, so he goes out and finds the cat and twists its tail. Then the cat goes out and scratches the baby, and the baby cries. That's how we would look at it. The Hebrew would say that the boss caused the baby to be scratched—wiping out all the intervening things.

We have a more sophisticated way of looking at evil spirits. We start with God created everything good. The devil was created good by God. But by personal choice, he fell from goodness. Other good spirits also fell and joined in the devil's rebellion. These spirits were confined to earth. When a person refuses the Lord, they become subject to the influence of the spirits. Saul was a person so influenced. The Hebrew mind just skips all the intervening causes and simply says, "Since God created all things, ultimately everything comes from Him.

Therefore, the evil spirit was from the Lord—end of discussion!"

This text, however, is telling us a very profound, contemporary truth. That is—we live with our decisions. We live with the consequences of the decisions we make. Saul disobeyed, and his spirit becomes melancholy, gloomy, irritable, suspicious, envious, and distracted. There is no privilege which you cannot turn into a curse. With this spirit of depression, David is sent by God into the court of Saul to console his heart. If you've gotten away from the Lord, God is not done sending people to you either. Relief would come to Saul. He would feel better, and the evil spirit would leave him. David watched all this unfold before his eyes—Saul slouching in his chair or angrily pacing back and forth, beating the air with his fists, and cursing. He was a misshapen,

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misspent man. David would sit there, play his harp, and softly sing. And a gentler spirit would come back to Saul.

I think David filed these moments away in his mind. There would come a time, decades down the road, when David would have a breach in his duty as king that was as severe as Saul's—maybe even more so. David would have a clear disobedience—a disobedience in regard to Bathsheba. He would, as a result of that disobedience, face the removal of the anointing. It was the same kind of situation Saul faced. David knew what had happened to Saul when he was in court. He could see it. David, in those moments of his later sin, took a different path than Saul did. It's like he learned from Saul's mistakes.

Psalms 51 shows us why God did not yank the kingdom from David when he sinned. When Saul sinned, his repentance was only lip service. It was never backed up by anything deep. When he really got into depression, irritability, and dryness of soul, he never sought to do anything personally. He just said, "Give me a stereo or an FM radio to lift my spirits." As if music would calm his heart. David knew that it took something more than the external to address an internal problem. He states it in Psalm 51. I have a hunch that decades earlier he had picked it out on the strings of his guitar and sung the melody to Saul. "Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me. Take not Your Holy Spirit from me. Restore unto me the joy of Your salvation. And renew a right spirit within me."

What was David doing all those years? He was singing that song in preparation for the time he would need it—when his real need was not someone to come in and play for him, but his real need was to get heart to heart with God on his own. He didn't look for a musician to solve his problems and to temporarily drive his gloom away. But he looked for the solution from within his heart—a heart rending, a heart searching, heart honesty with God. God let David have a

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different end than Saul because David was willing to do something about his sin on the inside.

His willingness to do something about it kept the anointing from leaving his life.

Apply this to your life. Have you accepted God's anointed one for your life? God has anointed Jesus of Nazareth to be your prophet and priest and king. He is the one who authentically has been set aside by God to speak God's word to you, to intercede for you, and to bear your guilt and sin—to authentically rule over you. The anointing begins when you receive God's anointed one. When God calls you to a task as a Christian, He calls you to responsibility—in family roles, within the body of Christ, and within the world. He calls us to do things in His name. He doesn't expect us to do that in our own power. But He expects us to rely upon Him in humility and prayer and to ask Him to do something special in our lives beyond our ordinary power—asking Him to give us an extraordinary infusion of His ability which is different from our native or natural ability or talent.

There is a P.S. I want to add to this text. It's found in the first chapter of 2 Samuel. Saul is dead, and David is sharing a lament for Saul. Saul is slain on Mount Gilboa. In that eulogy, David eloquently speaks of Saul and the beauty of his life. He speaks of Saul with such grace and forgiveness. Can you imagine him saying of Saul, "How lovely and pleasant he was in his life"? That takes forgiveness to overlook all the mean things Saul did to him. "How lovely and pleasant he was." In his eulogy in verse 21, he says a phrase about the shield of Saul. Saul had carried a shield as a defensive weapon in battle—a shield normally made of wood or metal which was covered with leather. He says, "The shield of Saul—the shield which now lies out on Mount Gilboa unused—a wreck of war. The shield of Saul—no longer rubbed with oil. The shield no longer anointed." Saul left his shield lying out there under the hot sun. Without it being smeared with oil, it was going to become dried, cracked, brittle, and useless.

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The unanointed life is like the unanointed shield. It becomes dry, cracked, brittle, inflexible, and unusable with no resilience. How easily our lives can be that way—dry, brittle, and inflexible.

The slightest thing happens to us, and we just break and disintegrate. What we need from God is an anointing—a lubrication of the heart and soul so that we remain God's people. We need His power and strength and stability.

Closing Prayer

Our Lord, we come to You. We realize that within a congregation this large, there are all kinds of different levels of need for Your presence. Your Spirit gives us love and joy and peace and patience. Today, if we put the dipstick into our life which measures those things, some of us would come up with a dry stick because love and joy and peace have receded. We're in danger of blowing up the motor of our life because we're out of oil or low on oil. Your presence is the oil of our life, Lord. We pray that You would anoint our hearts and our lives. In our personal life and personal devotion, we have put our spiritual life on automatic pilot and neglected it and neglected You. We find ourselves weary and dry of heart and personality. We pray that we will follow David's example and not look to an external solution—a musician to cheer us up. But instead, we will get heart-to-heart with You. For it is in that heart-to-heart exchange with You that the real issues of life are shaped. We pray, Lord, to abide and remain as anointed people. Anoint this church to be a church of prayer. Anoint this church to be a church of obedience. Anoint this church to be a church of worship. Anoint this church to be a church of evangelism. Anoint this church, God, to be a healing people. It is when the anointing is gone, Lord, that we break out into arguments and division and a "me first" mentality. It is when the anointing is present that we are all together in one place with one accord. Grant that to this body of people, Lord—individually and collectively. Help us to function with power in the assignments of life

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You've given to us—whether our assignment is being a student, a child, a carpenter, a businessman, a Sunday School teacher, an usher, a greeter, an evangelist, a husband, a wife, or a single person. Give us Your anointing, that our lives might be set apart for You and lived with an uncommon sense of Your presence. We ask these things Lord Jesus, in Your name. Thank You that You will do for us more than we can ask or think. Thank You, Lord, for answering this prayer in Jesus' name. Amen.