

1 Samuel 16:1-13January 27, 2013 – 3rd SUNDAY AFTER THE EPIPHANY**Power Trip**✠ **Human limitations (vv.1-10)**✠ **Divine reservations (vv.11-13)**

In the name of Jesus, great David's greater Son, dearly redeemed family of God:

It's not usually a compliment if someone says, "He's on a power trip," but an important business trip could also be called a "power trip." For instance my reservations for the China Partners meeting in Texas last week. We can only get together in the same place on the planet about once every few years. It might have been a good "power trip" except for airline problems. My race to the airport right after church met with airline delays all afternoon...until my flight was cancelled. So much for my "power trip."

I'm just so glad that God is in charge. We only get to do as much as He allows to keep us humbly dependent on His power and blessing. Sometimes God puts us in opportunities that look lost from every angle – except straight up. God looked down on Samuel then sent him on a real **Power Trip** in spite of...

✠ **Human limitations (vv.1-10)**

We all have **Human limitations**, but most people don't have to suffer theirs as publicly as pastors. For example, last Sunday's sermon. I was trying to illustrate the spiritual nature of marriage as I have in many weddings and classes. But I confused the terms "isosceles" and "equilateral."¹ Afterwards I found out even some of our older elementary students knew the difference. Did I check that beforehand? No, because I was sure. Thankfully, God and His people are very patient with pastors. But my mistake illustrates one of our most dangerous **Human limitations** We don't know what we don't know.

Samuel the prophet could relate. *"The LORD said to Samuel..."* This name describes God as absolutely independent. "He is the great I AM. You and I exist because God has given us life; God exists because he's God. His existence is absolutely independent of anyone or anything else. Similarly, his grace is not dependent on your or my reaction to it; his grace is its own reason for being. The name LORD describes the covenant God also as the God of absolute constancy, absolute reliability."² The unchanging Savior God sent Samuel on this **Power Trip**, knowing his **Human limitations**, but still in charge.

First, the LORD kindly withheld the details. If Samuel was questioned, he knew no more than what the LORD told him. Samuel was to say, *"I have come to sacrifice to the LORD."* Nothing out of the ordinary in that. The LORD promised to reveal the right son to anoint when Samuel reached Bethlehem.

Can you imagine the town elders trembling to see Samuel? Apparently, the old prophet had a reputation. Powerful in word and deed, in his younger years as Israel's judge Samuel faced off against the Philistines. The LORD gave a great victory (7:10f). And when Saul failed to kill an enemy king, *"Samuel put Agag to death before the LORD..."* (15:33) The trembling elders felt their **Human limitations**. They needed reassurance of the LORD's peace. Samuel was happy to do that for them.

Maybe you've seen family pictures of the boys back on the farm, standing shoulder to shoulder with chiseled jaw. Their sisters look stout enough to do some farm work themselves. That's what Samuel saw on Jesse's ranch near Bethlehem. The oldest stepped up and Samuel's mind flashed, *"This must be the one. LORD, look at him!"* What shock to hear in your head, *"Do not consider his appearance or his height, for I have rejected him. The LORD does not look at the things man looks at. Man looks at the outward appearance, but the LORD looks at the heart."* Can you see our **Human limitations**?

¹ "...isosceles triangles have at least two congruent sides, and an equilateral triangle has three." (<http://wiki.answers.com>)

² Jeske, John C. *Job 1:6 – 2:10 - The Enemy at Work*. MN District Pastoral Conference, Rochester, MN – 5/02/2000, p. 5.

What blind eyes we have! Judging by outward appearance is not like Christ, the Anointed Son of David and Son of God. Isaiah prophesied: *“The Spirit of the LORD will rest on him – the Spirit of wisdom and of understanding, the Spirit of counsel and of power, the Spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the LORD – and he will delight in the fear of the LORD. He will not judge by what he sees with his eyes, or decide by what he hears with his ears; but with righteousness he will judge the needy, with justice he will give decisions for the poor of the earth....”* (Isaiah 11:2-4) The Holy Spirit wrote through John: *“Jesus would not entrust himself to them [the Jews at the temple], for he knew all men. He did not need man’s testimony about man, for he knew what was in a man.”* (2:24f) God knows our **Human limitations** too. But there are no cancellations on God’s **Power Trip**. His purpose is guaranteed by....

✠ **Divine reservations (vv.11-13)**

It almost makes you laugh out loud after Samuel rejects seven sons and then asks, “Don’t you have any more?” But I don’t see Jesse laughing. Put yourself in his boots. None of us like it when our kids are rejected. But seven sons? I could easily imagine Jesse coming back with, “What do you mean, another son! You can leave the way you came. And don’t let the gate hit you on the way out.” But Samuel knew the LORD sent him to anoint one of Jesse’s sons. There had to be another!

How skillfully the Almighty God hides His glory! He chose the most *insignificant* son of Jesse to be the next king of Israel and the ancestor of God’s own Son. Samuel sent for Jesse’s youngest son out in the field watching sheep, maybe only 12-14 years old. *“He was ruddy,”* with *“beautiful eyes and a healthy, handsome appearance.”*³ *“The last will be first, and the first will be last.”* (Matthew 20:16)

David foreshadows the LORD’s Christ who would be rejected by religious authorities and human reason too. The last choice for a king from Jesse’s family was the pre-teen who smelled like sheep. Could Jesus win an election in America today? What happens to politicians and public figures who confess their faith in Jesus as Lord and Savior? Yet the LORD in His absolute independence purposely chose the Messiah and David to be His ancestor in order to humble human pride. He lifts up the lowly and brings down the high and mighty. With oil He put **Divine reservations** on David. *“From that day on the Spirit of the LORD came upon David in power.”*

There were physical victories the young shepherd carried into his life. A few years later David explained to King Saul how he could fight the giant Goliath. David said to Saul, *“Your servant has been keeping his father’s sheep. When a lion or a bear came and carried off a sheep from the flock, I went after it, struck it and rescued the sheep from its mouth. When it turned on me, I seized it by its hair, struck it and killed it. Your servant has killed both the lion and the bear; this uncircumcised Philistine will be like one of them, because he has defied the armies of the living God.”* (17:34-36) The Holy Spirit also inspired David to write most of the Psalms to give you **Power** for your **Trip** to heaven. You just need to look them up, mark them in your Bible and tuck them away in your heart.

Are you feeling poor inside? Brokenhearted? Lost in darkness, not knowing what to do? Could you use a friend to care about you in spite of all your **Human Limitations**? Has someone wronged you or distressed you in any way? Are you grieving the loss of loved ones or opportunities? Do you just feel blue in the bleak midwinter? Look at great David’s greater Son. As we heard in today’s Old Testament Lesson, Jesus says: *“The Spirit of the Sovereign LORD is on me, because the LORD has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim freedom for the captives and release from darkness for the prisoners, to proclaim the year of the LORD’s favor and the day of vengeance of our God, to comfort all who mourn, and provide for those who grieve in Zion—to bestow on them a crown of beauty instead of ashes, the oil of gladness instead of mourning, and a garment of praise instead of a spirit of despair.”* (Isaiah 61:1-3 NIV84) His full and free forgiveness gives you power to thrive as you live in His presence. Beyond David’s shadow, we see Christ! Amen.

³ *The Holy Bible: Holman Christian standard version.* 2009 (1 Sa 16:12). Nashville: Holman Bible Publishers.

For the study behind this sermon or for copies email m.cordes@comast.net .
You can also call: 651-484-1169. Hear the sermon at www.wels.us/newlife .

New Life Evangelical Lutheran Church
180 County Rd F - Shoreview, MN 55126