



## God's Goose

### 1 Samuel 15:34-16:13 The Message

by Rev. M. Ashley Grant

16:12-13 Jesse sent for his youngest son. He was brought in, the very picture of health—red cheeks, bright-eyed, good-looking.

God said, “Up on your feet, Samuel! Anoint him! This is the one.” Samuel took his flask of oil and anointed him, with his brothers standing around watching. The Spirit of God entered David like a rush of wind, empowering him for the rest of his life.

**Prayer:** Create in us clean hearts and renew right spirits within us by the sharing of your Holy and Possibly Playful Word. Amen.

I will start with--I am the wrong person to preach about games and play. Silly Adam for suggesting such a daunting task for a summer sermon series as “Playing Games.”

Who had time for games in Old Testament Days? Do you see God being playful?

Recreation might be fun. But, Creation was work; it wore God out, so much that Parent God needed a day of rest.

Eden was short-lived. God said to that rule-breaker Adam, choose your tool for toil, not pick your piece-- “aw, you wanna be the shoe; I'll be the top hat.”

People worked to survive. They were on the move. There was boat building--an ark, not a pleasure craft. Then imagine that flood clean up (for all you mission trip-bound folks).um’.

**I. God was choosing:** Abraham & Sarah--with “here’s the start line, and I’ll show you the finish line.” God chose Isaac--whose attempted-sacrifice by his own dad was no laughing matter. God chose

Joseph--whose brothers would have picked him last if they were dividing teams for a game; but they were not playing and didn’t like his dream trash talk, so they sold him as a slave.

Captivity was no game. Escape with Moses, definitely not. Wilderness provisions were blessings, though forced choices.

Even when the Israelites got to the promised land, it wasn’t Toy Land or NinetendoLand...There were already folks living there! Joshua and the others would have to forcefully remove the inhabitants.

Games, indeed!

No SPOONS or Sardines or Hearts; Rather, there was fighting out-the-wazoo in the Old Testament. And choices presented dilemmas, so God gave the Israelites-- prophets like Samuel--to speak for God, and judges--like Deborah to settle disputes, not an 8 Ball that you shake to reveal: “As I see it, Yes” or “Don’t Count on It.”

The tribes of Israel fought with others and each other.

And the Israelites said, “We’re not playin,’ Samuel; Tell God we want a King to govern us, like other nations have.”

Prophet Samuel warned them, “Stick with God as the Leader--kings are bad ideas! Turn your ‘Enny, Meeny, Miny Moes’ over to a King and you will be stuck in a war that lasts longer than the game of Risk, or you’ll end up as a farm hands for the King’s Army.”

Nonetheless, each one said, “King Me!”

God acquiesced to their plea.

**II. Israel chose** this “tall drink of water” to be their first king--Quite the gander!

Saul was the son of a wealthy man whose assets were donkeys. There was not a handsomer or taller or stronger man in all the land. And Saul is sent on a donkey hunt when the assets get lost (you can't make this stuff up). Saul ends up meeting Samuel, who already knew Saul was coming.

Long story short: Donkeys are found. Samuel anoints Saul King, in other words, "Saul is the first Donkey King, or as the Danish might say, Donkey Kong." Lots of signs confirm the Prophet's claims because who would believe this without proof.

The text says, "God gives Saul another heart," and God's spirit lands on Saul.

Saul never asked to be king. He discovers it is harder than he imagined to Link Power, Wisdom and Courage in a way that please God--it aint no game.

Samuel instructs Saul: "Listen to God. Do what God says. You'll be fine; we'll be fine."

It wasn't fine. Saul couldn't go through with what God commanded; he breaks the rules. King Saul's goose is cooked.

And God says to Samuel, "I regret that I made Saul king."

If this was a game, people wouldn't be upset--or disappointed! Right? That doesn't happen when we are just playing.... But now, Saul is sad, God is regretful, and Samuel is grieving.

### **Which brings us--finally--to our scripture**

**reading:** Better to see this than just hear it... (I'll take 7 guys up here and a Samuel) and eventually a David on the side pew....

God addressed Samuel: "So, how long are you going to mope over Saul? You know I've rejected him as king over Israel. Get your head in the game. Fill your flask with anointing oil and get going. I'm sending you to Jesse of Bethlehem. I've spotted the very king I want among his sons."

2-3 "I can't do that," said Samuel. "Saul will hear about it and kill me." (Treason.)  
God said, "Take a heifer with you and announce, 'I've come to lead you in worship of God, with this heifer as a sacrifice.' Make sure Jesse gets invited. I'll let you know what to do next. I'll point out the one you are to anoint."

4 Samuel did what God told him. When he arrived at Bethlehem, the town fathers greeted him, but apprehensively. "Is there something wrong?"

5 "Nothing's wrong. I've come to sacrifice this heifer and lead you in the worship of God. Prepare yourselves, be consecrated, and join me in worship." Samuel made sure Jesse and his sons were also consecrated and called to worship.

6 When they arrived, Samuel took one look at Eliab and thought, "Here he is! God's anointed!"

7 But God told Samuel, "Looks aren't everything. Don't be impressed with his looks and stature. I've already rejected him. God judges persons differently than humans do. Men and women look at the face; God looks into the heart."

8 Jesse then called up Abinadab and presented him to Samuel. Samuel said, "This man isn't God's choice either."

9 Next Jesse presented Shammah. Samuel said, "No, he's not it."

10 Jesse presented his seven sons to Samuel. Samuel was blunt with Jesse, "God hasn't chosen any of these."

11 Then he asked Jesse, "Is this it? Are there no more sons?"

"Well, yes, there's the runt. But he's out tending the sheep."

Samuel ordered Jesse, "Go get him. Time out. We're not moving from this spot until he's here."

12 Jesse sent for him. He was brought in, the very picture of health—bright-eyed, good-looking. God said, "Up on your feet! Anoint him! This is the one."

13 Samuel took his flask of oil and anointed him, with his brothers standing around watching. The Spirit of God entered David like a rush of wind, empowering him for the rest of his life.

--Well, maybe there are some games in the Bible because this playful choosing of David reminds me of **Duck, Duck, Goose**.

At Orange Avenue Elementary Spirit Day last week, a fifth grade class got bored with the cone flipping game station Adam and I hosted. One kid said, "Duck, Duck, Goose?" and a small gaggle of kids circled up. The suggester patted heads, "Duck, Duck, Duck...Duck...Then "Goose" and he took off, but the girl continued talking with the ducks. Within a quarter revolution, he noticed her non-compliance, and turned, "But, I goosed you!"

The girl took chase. The "gooser" got back to the empty spot without being tagged and a new round ensued. More ducks squeezed in the circle.

Grandparents.com gives the objectives of Duck, Duck, Goose:

"Have fun, get some exercise, and make sure everyone gets a turn being a goose and being *It*."

Well the next goose had obviously never played. Everyone was a duck. Duck, duck.....Then he started throwing in things that he knew about them-like "celtics fan" "Mr. Jamaica." Nothing mean, just things based on what he saw on their hat logos or t-shirts.

The ducks quacked frustration, "choose a goose!"

Now, those kids were great. They were having fun. They were rollin' with this in-decisive gooser, twisting their bodies to be ready if chosen.

"Duck, Duck,...." What was he looking for? Finally, "Goose." But almost immediately, he was tagged, which was such a let down for the ducks-- "I haven't been picked yet," one said. "me either," another.

This proved a serendipitous moment for me because I knew this sermon was coming up. So, I asked the pitiful ducks, "How does it make you feel not being chosen?"

"Sad." "Frustrated."

**IV. Not being chosen** leaves lasting impressions. It's a serious matter in the Bible. In life. Who knows how it feels to be a perpetual duck, or one of those brothers?

A PE teacher did a study and learned that within a couple weeks, kids might not remember who won the game, but they do remember who wasn't chosen to play, especially if they were the last picked or forced choice. We learn to recognize potential pretty early--Tall, quick, strong identify characteristics of someone we assume to be a good choice. And we learn to disqualify pretty early too, based on size and appearance. The PE teacher called not being picked a "Confidence Crusher," which, if I was playing, would totally be my wrestler name.

Samuel shows up and says: Duck, Duck Goose? Abinidab, Shammah, and four other sons of father Jesse were probably shocked when Eliab--the handsome, tall, oldest son gets "ducked." The Prophet Samuel's surprise shows too; but he is just God's gooser waiting for that divine nudge to choose. The seven sons could have been sad and frustrated, crushed, but they don't speak in the story, and the cool part--neither, do they quit play. Duck, Duck, Duck, not you,... God says, "It's not about appearance; i'm looking for something in their hearts."

Has that been God's strategy all along?

God is seeing something that we do not in this game-changing choice--David. David wasn't the first pick or the second or the 7th. He was last. God sees something in his heart.

- Was it the heart-condition that shaped David in the fields, watching over the sheep, tending, herding them to green pastures and cool water when they needed, fending off danger, spending countless solitary nights under the Light Bright canopy of stars, all of which David would sing about in his Psalms?
- Was David's heart different because he knew what it felt like to not be chosen to play; underestimated and overlooked by father Jesse--as a contender in the first place. Did that impact his empathy and move his heart to inclusion? Though young and without stats, a true underdog,

Cinderella story at its best....David is God's goose. And the brothers watch as he is anointed.

The airhorn signaled to the fifth grade class that it was time to move on to the next station. I think they would have kept playing, if they stayed. They had been so patient. They had some idea that eventually their turn would come. I was glad for that.

I was glad that one kid had the playful gumption to suggest the game in the first place. I was tickled pink, when his dad who wore a cap with "Duck" across the bill, (You can't make this stuff up) came over. He was volunteering that morning, and came over and reached down to his duck son for a hug, right in the middle of the game. Talk about chosen!

With more rounds, we see that more are chosen--in the unfolding Biblical story and in a 5th grade pick up game. With more rounds, it is hard not to see the play laced with purpose. Every position deserving a closer look--God the Chooser, Samuel the gooser, all those mighty ducks, and David the goose. With more rounds, we can let more ducks squeeze in and as a church, we can even go on a duck hunt to make sure all are invited to join this game of chance and choice--no matter age or feather type or the way they waddle. With more rounds, we can celebrate the geese and keep playing, keep training our hearts for service and love and compassion.

**Most of us are never going to be a King David, but what I have seen is that when our hearts are right with God, we end up in the right places at the right times, and we are just what God is looking for.**

May God grant you patience as ducks, and may you be goosed when the time is right.  
Amen.