

Set Apart: Consecrated

Exodus 30:22-25 & 31

²² Then the LORD said to Moses, ²³ “Take the following fine spices: 500 shekels of liquid myrrh, half as much of fragrant cinnamon, 250 shekels of fragrant calamus, ²⁴ 500 shekels of cassia—all according to the sanctuary shekel—and a hin of olive oil. ²⁵ **Make these into a sacred anointing oil, a fragrant blend, the work of a perfumer. It will be the sacred anointing oil.....** ³¹ Say to the Israelites, ‘This is to be my sacred anointing oil for the generations to come.’

1 Kings 1:33-35

³³ The king David said to the priest Zadok and the prophet Nathan, “Take with you, the servants of your lord, and have my son Solomon ride on my own mule, and bring him down to Gihon. ³⁴ There let the priest Zadok and the prophet Nathan **anoint Solomon king over Israel; then blow the trumpet, and say, ‘Long live King Solomon!’** ³⁵ You shall go up following Solomon. Let him enter and sit on my throne; **Solomon shall be king in my place; for I have appointed him to be ruler over Israel and over Judah.**”

INTRODUCTION

Today is the first Sat(Sun.) of Lent. Lent – as many of you know – is the season of 40 days (not counting Sundays) leading up to Easter. It’s a time when the Church calls on all Christians to engage in self-examination and spiritual renewal. It’s the season of preparation for the celebration of the resurrection.

During this season, it’s appropriate for Christians to engage in spiritual disciplines – such as a renewed focus/intensity with **Prayer** and **Bible Study** – which is why we have our All-Church Small Groups during this season.

Another spiritual discipline (that receives a lot of attention) during Lent is fasting. **Fasting** means refraining from certain unhealthy foods.. like red meat or coffee. It may also be abstaining from non-essential luxuries (like electronics and social media). This past week, I read an article about a Twitter survey which asked people what they would “give up” during Lent. One of the top responses on this Twitter survey was that people would “give up”.. Twitter or facebook for Lent.

Of course, fasting can also mean that we add something on. For example, if we chose to “fast” from our **indifference** (or **apathy**) to the **suffering of our neighbors**.. it might mean that we “add on” acts of kindness and compassion during this season. So, this might mean that we are more intentional about bringing in the requested items during our monthly food drives for Together We Cope.. that we make this a priority.

OR It might mean that we keep \$5 McDonald gift cards in our cars.. or our purses/wallets.. to offer people on the street corners holding up signs for help.

OR It might mean that we start reading/learning more about the suffering of others.. so that we can offer an informed/helpful response to the needs of

those who are hurting – here in Chicago or in another part of the world.

Whatever it is that you might be “**giving up**” or “**adding on**”, let me remind you that Lent is not about meaningless suffering. It’s about engaging in those spiritual disciplines/ practices that will help us deepen our faith and trust in JC.

Everyone clear on this?

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Today, we start our sermon series, **Set Apart**. Over the next 6 wks, we’ll learn about the “*holy habits of prophets, priests, and kings*” whose stories are told in the OT books of **1 & 2 Kings**. We’ll consider what can learn from them – from their faithfulness and sometimes unfaithfulness. And we will wrestle with what their stories teach us about God.. about humanity.. and about ourselves.

This afternoon(morning), we begin by focusing on the person of **Solomon**. We know Solomon for his dedication prayers for the first temple. We know that he lost his faithfulness to God in his later years by being distracted by 300 wives and 3,000 concubines and their idol worship. This afternoon (morning), we’ll focus on Solomon’s early years.. before he became king over Israel.. when he was just one of the many sons in King David’s family.

Text and Background

In our first text, Exodus 30, God instructed Moses how to make the holy anointing oil. The spices like myrrh, cinnamon, calamus and cassia are mixed with olive oil. These spices give admirable sweet smell to the oil. With this oil God’s tent, the tabernacle and all the furniture of it were to be anointed; it was to be used also in the consecration of the priests and it was to be continued throughout their generations. In our second scripture, 1 Kings chapter 1, we learn that King Solomon was anointed with this sacred oil. This anointing oil became the tool of God’s ordinances for Christian tradition to set apart people to serve God and to heal those who are ill. Those who are anointed by the sacred oil indicates that their lives are set apart for God’s peculiar purposes.

For our second scripture, let me read verse 1 of 1 Kings chapter 1.

“King David was old and advanced in years; and although they covered him with clothes, he could not get warm.” – 1 Kings 1:1

What we learn from the opening lines of ch 1 is that King David is near the end of his life. After a long and fruitful tenure as the greatest king in Israel’s history.. David’s reign is coming to a close.

We know that David was known as much for his love for God as his effectiveness as a king. He was the great unifier of the nation. He was the one who conquered Israel's enemies. He was the one who brought peace and prosperity to the nation.

But now, as David neared the end of his life, the nation grew anxious about his successor. *As a pastor, I learned early on that you never want to be the one to follow a long-tenured and beloved pastor when you get a new appointment. This is true in other professions, too, right? Following a mediocre lead pastor is fine. But following a beloved one who established her and his relationship with one congregation is very very tough. It's really hard to get out from underneath their shadow. Some of you understand better if you have been Methodist church for a long time and know well about the itinerary system.*

In David's case, the situation was getting worse and worse. Not only was David "advanced" in his years, but his health was failing. His ability to rule was diminishing daily.

At one point, one of David's sons decides to take matters into his own hands. **A/don/i/jah** – who is described as a handsome man and the oldest of David's remaining sons – decides that he doesn't

need his father's blessing.. nor his passing.. to declare himself the next king of Israel. He's ready to be king NOW.

So, Adonijah gathers many of his father's top aides – all of his royal brothers (with the exception of Solomon) – and the royal officials of Judah. He invites them to a self-coronation party, by the stone of Zo'he-leth, which is outside Jerusalem.

Those loyal to David – including **Nathan** the prophet and **Zadok** the priest and **Be/naiah** (*think "Isaiah"*) the commander of the royal guards – refuse to support Adonijah. They want this transition of leadership to be determined by God's leading, not by one person's selfish ambition. So, Nathan (the prophet) talks to Bathsheba (Solomon's mother) and together they come up with a plan to inform David of Adonijah's premature claim to the throne. They also remind David of his promise to make Solomon the next king.

David responds by gathering together those who remained loyal to him (ie. those who did not join Adonijah). He tells them to escort Solomon on his trusty royal steed – the royal "mule" – and lead Solomon down (from Jerusalem, which is on a hill,) to the spring of Gi'hon (which is at the foot of the

city). Here, Solomon is to be anointed with oil (like the kings before him). Then, the trumpets are to be blown – signaling an official public proclamation – and everyone is to shout “**Long live King Solomon!**” while Solomon rides back up to Jerusalem and is seated on David’s throne.

We’re told (in the following verses) that David’s orders are carried out. Solomon is led on the royal “mule” down to the spring of Gi’hon. There, he’s anointed with oil by the prophet Nathan. Then, Solomon is led up to Jerusalem.. escorted by all the people.. who have heard the proclamation.. who cheer and sing as Solomon assumes his position as their new king.

This is how Solomon begins his reign. He is not only **coronated** – he is **consecrated** the next King of Israel.

Let me highlight 2 points about Solomon’s consecration.

First – Solomon was CHOSEN. (Repeat after me – chosen.)

While Adonijah sought to elevate himself, Solomon was elevated by others. While Adonijah campaigned

and cultivated political alliances to strengthen his claim to the throne.. Solomon did none of this.

Solomon was chosen by others, who saw in him – the qualities that would make him a great king. Those who were closest to Solomon – who saw him grow up and knew him best - saw in his humility, his intelligence, his work ethic, his faithfulness.. the hand of God at work in his life. They affirmed to Solomon and everyone else that God had a specific and unique purpose for Solomon’s life.

Before this point, Solomon was a royal nobody in David’s court. He was the “Prince Harry” of ancient Israel. Solomon was one among many royal sons. The Bible names at least 19 male descendants of David. Solomon was not the oldest or even next to the oldest. Nobody looking at the royal family (from the outside) would have guessed that Solomon would be David’s successor. However, those who loved God and were faithful to God, saw something in Solomon. They understood that God regularly chooses the least likely folks.. to carry out God’s extraordinary purposes. Similarly, saw God’s hand of blessing on Solomon’s life.

The result is that Solomon didn’t have to **bribe** or **barter** or **battle** his way to the throne. Solomon was **consecrated** for the throne. He was **chosen** and

anointed by God, through the faithful actions of others, the leaders and Solomon's father, King David.

Of course, Solomon is not the only one chosen by God. The Bible reminds us that you and I are likewise **chosen** by God to be members of Christ's church – God's holy people.

Let me read the words of **1 Peter 2:9-10** for us.

⁹ But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's special possession, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light. ¹⁰ Once you were not a people, but now you are the people of God; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy.

Put your hands upon your heart and say to yourself, – ***“You are a chosen people/, a royal priesthood/, a holy nation...”***

I know this is difficult to believe at times. Our lives are so messy and flawed. Many times we do not even feel like ok-normal person. The long-stretched pandemic, the isolation, loneliness, division, disagreement and tension made all of us more vulnerable and hurting. We are lost and strayed from the course of our own plans and identity. We make so many mistakes and fall short of our own

expectations. How could God choose (let alone use) someone like me?

Here's the good news – Solomon was far from perfect. When you read 1 Kings, it's clear (very quickly) that Solomon had LOTS of flaws and failures. Yet, God chose him.. and blessed him.. and consecrated him to serve God's purposes. God set apart Solomon, anoint him, mark him and declare that Solomon belongs to God.

This is also true for us. Regardless of our faults, if we're open to God, God can use us – even us – to serve God's purposes.

The first lesson about being “consecrated” and “set apart” for God – is embracing the truth that God knows us, loves us, and **CHOSE** us.

Second – Solomon is CLAIMED

Solomon is **CLAIMED** by God for God's unique purposes in the world.

Jessica LaGrone offers a great story about going away to summer camp for the first time when she was 9 years old. Her memory of this experience centers on her mother's insistence that everything she owned needed to be marked with a permanent

black marker. (*Can anyone else relate with this story? Feel her pain?*)

At first – this seemed ridiculous and totally over the top. Jessica’s mother wrote her name on anything and everything – not only her shirts and shoes, not only her sandals and sunscreen.. but even her underwear! (Mom was out of control! I can totally relate to her because I am just like Jessica’s mom)

And then, Jessica got to camp.. and she recognized her mother’s wisdom. Because on that very first day, everything in her suitcase was mixed up with everyone else’s stuff – in the middle of the cabin. Jessica writes.. that if it wasn’t for her name being clearly written on everything she owned – in permanent black marker – her things would have been hopelessly lost.

To be **consecrated** is to be “marked” – not with a permanent black marker, but with the Holy Spirit. Being **consecrated** is being “set apart” and ”claimed” by God for God’s holy, sacred purpose. When we are consecrated, we are called to be distinct from others.. to be different even from our own lives before God we committed ourselves to God’s purposes.

When we are consecrated, our life is no longer our own.

Our mission is no longer our own.

Jessica LaGrone puts it this way..

“We are a people who are set apart, called to be different than the world around us, marked for a purpose greater than we could dream of.”

She puts it even more simply in this next statement.

“Being set apart is something that happens in us for others.”

In other words, being “set apart” is something that happens “in us”.. but NOT “for us.” Being consecrated is accepting God’s invitation to be like Christ – to have our lives “set apart” for the sake, the benefit, the welfare of others.

I’ll close with this.

Several years ago, Steven Spielberg directed and produced a movie about Abraham Lincoln – starring Daniel Day Lewis. It was a movie covering the final months of Lincoln’s life and his efforts to 13th Amendment to the US Constitution.

At the heart of the movie was the struggle of Abraham Lincoln.. who realized that he used his

expansive wartime powers to set slaves free. He knew that (unless an amendment was passed to the Constitution,) states would be able to vote on whether or not to reinstate slavery.. once the Civil War ended.

Well, Lincoln was bound to not allow this to happen. He was not not going to allow human beings to be enslaved any longer in the United States. So, while others pressured him to quickly end the war, Lincoln insisted on FIRST passing the 13th Amendment.

At one point in the movie – members of Lincoln’s Cabinet are debating the timing of the 13th Amendment. They argue that the issue of slavery can be worked out AFTER peace is established in the Union. Lincoln responds by insisting that peace CANNOT precede the 13th Amendment. The possibility of slavery MUST BE eradicated BEFORE the union is restored. The Civil War CANNOT come to a close without the constitutional guarantee that slavery will no longer be allowed in our nation. The entire movie is based on Lincoln’s struggle to convince others to agree with him and vote accordingly.. which they do, barely.

At the end of the movie – after the movie closes with the news of Lincoln’s death – it’s clear to everyone

(who’s watched this movie) that they’ve just witnessed the life of a man who gave his life.. for a mission greater than himself – whose life was consecrated for a purpose larger than his own.

And, of course, this points us to the example of Jesus Christ – who laid down his life so that we might live – whose life (from birth) was “set apart” for God’s holy and sacred purposes to save this world, the redeem all sin-sick souls including you and me.

Friends, as we journey together through this season of Lent, I invite us to renew our commitment to live the consecrated life. Let’s live a holy life.. following in the footsteps of Jesus Christ.. obeying his teachings/commandments.

Because we are no longer our own.

When we are baptized, we do not exist merely for ourselves.

God has chosen us and claimed us.

Jesus died on the cross and consecrated us.

So – let us gratefully and faithfully respond to Christ’s invitation.. to live a holy life.. as part of His holy church. Amen.