



One Page Sermon

By Pastor Robb McCoy

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1 Kings 5:1-5; 8:1-13 God calls David

Today we will give out Bibles to several young people. We will share a brief liturgy and pray for curiosity, questions, and a life of growth in Scripture.

I received a Bible in third grade at my church. It was brown with thin pages and tiny writing. It was confusing and strange and I put it on my bookshelf and left it there. I was not a very confident person when I was in junior high. I wasn't in trouble a lot—but I always felt like I was about to be in trouble. I spent most of my nights going to be worried about what I had forgotten to do that day that would get me in trouble.

Then I started to go to Confirmation class and attend the Methodist Youth Fellowship group at my church. We had confirmation for the first hour, and then had youth group where we played games, had a discussion, and grew together. My youth pastor, Stephen Arters, taught me about Jesus. He helped me realize that God loved me more than he disliked my mistakes.

I learned that I didn't have to measure up to expectations. I did not have to be like my exceptional classmates (I was in a special gifted program) or my achieving siblings (my sister was an excellent student at the University of Illinois and my brother was on his way to being a three-sport athlete and valedictorian of our high school). I learned that I was loved by God no matter what I did or achieved.

At the same time, I started to discover something that I was good at. I loved to write. I did well in Language Arts, getting A's from the most notoriously difficult teacher in our school. On one creative writing assignment, she told me that with some more work and time, it could be a published story. At about the same time in my life I discovered that I was worthy of being loved and that there was something in me that was good.

For eighth grade graduation my brother gave me a Bible. It was one in a simpler language than the dusty old thing on my bookshelf. I started reading it, underlining it, making notes in it. But the most important note in it was the inscription he wrote in it with a simple message of love and encouragement that included, "Remember who you are." By then I realized that a part of 'who you are' was "loved by God."

A couple of years later—when I was a sophomore in high school—my Grandpa was sick. On the night that he died, my Mom came into my room to tell me the news. None of us were surprised, but I was still wrecked with a lot of emotions. As I was getting ready to go to my Grandma's house to meet with family, I saw a notebook laying on my floor. In the moment I picked it up I felt an immediate wave of refreshing energy, and I knew something. I believe God revealed something to me: I was a writer. I knew that was what I would be "when I grew up." In the midst of my grief felt this exhilarating

wave of clarity brought me peace. In time I would write about the experiences of that night and the next day. The short story I wrote was published in our school's literary magazine and brought me a small amount of notoriety among teachers and even peers.

That night I wanted to tell my Mom of my new awareness. I told her, "Mom, I think I know what I want to be when I grow up."

"You're going to be a minister," she replied. I was dumbstruck. I didn't have a response. In a way though, every day of my life since has been my response. I didn't believe her at first, but I could never get that absurd idea out of my head. Over the years I shared this idea with a few people: a friend on a walk home my senior year in college, a pastor while in graduate school, a girl I was dating (and would end up marrying). They all agreed with my Mom.

I didn't become a minister right away. Before that, I read a lot more of my Bible. I studied it, discussed it, was encouraged and challenged by it. I could tell you stories of revelation that came to me both in private study and in a small group or classroom setting. The Bible's words and promise became a part of me. And my Mom's prophetic words never left my heart. She was with me when I was ordained as an Elder in the United Methodist Church.

The story we read today is about David—who was called by God when no one expected him to be. He wasn't even brought out as one of the contestants in the "King of Israel Pageant." He was forgotten and ignored, but God called him out from the field because God saw his heart. God didn't see a perfect heart. David made many mistakes as a King, but when he was at his best, it was because he was remembering who he was. He was at his best as a shepherd—one who cared for the weak and the lost. He was at his best as a poet—one who soothed anxieties through song and music. He was at his worst when he was paranoid, fearful, lustful, or driven by power. In that moment though, God loved David more than he disliked his mistakes.

David was called by God to do great things, and he did. He also made great mistakes. God doesn't call the perfect. God calls people to great things, loving things, and compassionate things. God calls people who make mistakes, seek forgiveness, and try to do better. God calls us all out of our insecurities and anxieties, and God might be calling you.

You were created for a purpose. You are called to a mission to love. This can come in many forms. The calling of God is not the unique privilege of the ordained. It is the shared ministry of the baptized. Rise up, take this Bible, heed its words. Read its stories. Discover the truth of God that is revealed: you are loved for who you are. Remember who you are: Loved by God.