



It's All in the Mystery

The lesson of this passage is that we're a whole lot more enamored with impressive strangers than we are with the people we already know all too well.

When the prophet Samuel was looking for the right man to anoint king over Israel, God sent him to the house of Jesse. Jesse's great-grandma was the infamous woman of Jericho, Rahab. An unlikely family background in which to find the most famous king of Israel. But if that were not enough, when Jesse brought out his eldest and most accomplished son to meet Samuel, God said, "No, Sam, that's not him." Samuel went through seven of Jesse's boys, and God turned thumbs down on every one. Perplexed, Samuel asked Jesse, "Are you sure that's all your kids?"

"Yeah," Jesse said. "That's it. Well, except for David, of course, but there's no way he's the one you're looking for. He's nothing but a sheep kid. He's out there with the sheep now—definitely not king material." All Jesse's boys nodded, and a couple snickered. "Definitely not king material."

"Listen," Jesse said. "These are all fine boys here. Ask the Lord again, because you can bet your sandals that if one of my boys is going to be king, it'll be one of these. David's nothing special, and frankly, things are better around here when he's off with the sheep." Samuel shook his head, eyeing the imposing lineup of Jesse's boys. Tall, good looking and probably good warriors, he figured. He himself was a bit of an unlikely choice too, come to think of it. If it hadn't been for his mom's crazy vow, he might have been a normal kid instead of growing up in the tabernacle cleaning linen and hauling water for old Eli.

"No, the Lord says it's none of this bunch. You'd better go fetch this David," he shrugged. "With the Lord, you never know. I had to pull Saul out from behind a pile of grain sacks, you know. The kid was shaking like a leaf." With a laugh, the prophet added: "The Lord doesn't see people the way we do. He's not into looks and all that folderol."

You know what happened. David's brothers must have been angry that little brother David was anointed king instead of one of

them. Maybe they felt a little like the sons of Jacob, who resented the way their dad made over spoiled little Joseph as if the older kids were little more than glorified ranch hands.

It was no different with Jesus. How can somebody you grew up with, somebody you might have watched grow up, somebody whose habits and idiosyncrasies often got on your nerves, suddenly start acting as though he thought he was somebody?

Woody Allen once said, "I wouldn't want to belong to any club that would have me as a member." Or maybe it was Mark Twain. Or Groucho Marx. Or all of them. Anyway, the people of Nazareth must have had a similar policy: "Anybody from around here has got to be a loser; just look at us. We don't care if he can do miracles—this guy has to be a fraud."

So Jesus said his famous line: "Only in his hometown, among his relatives and in his own house is a prophet without honor" (Mark 6:4). The lesson of this passage is that we're a whole lot more enamored with impressive strangers than we are with the people we already know all too well. That helps account for sexual affairs, you know. It's all in the mystery. If you really knew the goofball you were shacking up with for the night the way his or her relatives and friends do, you'd stay a million miles away. But alas, we have more respect for people we don't even know than for those we do.

It was in Nazareth, where Jesus grew up, that he could heal only a few people. Why? Because they didn't believe he could possibly be a healer. They could not accept one of their own as being somehow greater than they were, even if it meant foregoing the healing he could have brought them. Faith and humility don't travel without each other. Trusting Jesus means seeing yourself in need of him. Knowing your need for him generates trust in him. He's in town, your town, right now. Trust him with your burdens. Let him give you rest. It's you he's come to see. □

—J. Michael Feazell