

# **"God Looks at the Heart"**

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**March 27, 2011**

**I Samuel 16:1-13**

Ancient Israel had 3 kings during the period of the United Kingdom. - Saul, David and Solomon. David & Solomon are fairly well known. Saul is not as well known. He was a troubled person and fell out of favor with God and the people. In this passage a prophet named Samuel was given the task of finding the next king. Let's see what happens. I Samuel 16:1-13:

*The Lord said to Samuel, "How long will you grieve over Saul? I have rejected him from being king over Israel. Fill your horn with oil and set out; I will send you to Jesse the Bethlehemite, for I have provided for myself a king among his sons." Samuel said, "How can I go? If Saul hears of it, he will kill me." And the Lord said, "Take a heifer with you, and say, 'I have come to sacrifice to the Lord.' Invite Jesse to the sacrifice, and I will show you what you shall do; and you shall anoint for me the one whom I name to you."*

*Samuel did what the Lord commanded, and came to Bethlehem. The elders of the city came to meet him trembling, and said, "Do you come peaceably?" He said, "Peaceably; I have come to sacrifice to the Lord; sanctify yourselves and come with me to the sacrifice." And he sanctified Jesse and his sons and invited them to the sacrifice.*

*When they came, he looked on Eliab and thought, "Surely the Lord's anointed is now before the Lord." But the Lord said to Samuel, "Do not look on his appearance or on the height of his stature, because I have rejected him; for the Lord does not see as mortals see; they look on the outward appearance, but the Lord looks on the heart." Then Jesse called Abinadab, and made him pass before Samuel. He said, "Neither has the Lord chosen this one." Then Jesse made Shammah pass by. And he said, "Neither has the Lord chosen this one." Jesse made seven of his sons pass before Samuel, and Samuel said to Jesse, "The Lord has not chosen any of these." Samuel said to Jesse, "Are all your sons here?" And he said, "There remains yet the youngest, but he is keeping the sheep." And Samuel said to Jesse, "Send and bring him; for we will not sit down until he comes here." He sent and brought him in. Now he was ruddy, and had beautiful eyes, and was handsome. The Lord said, "Rise and anoint him; for this is the one." Then Samuel took the horn of oil, and anointed him in the presence of his brothers; and the spirit of the Lord came mightily upon David from that day forward. Samuel then set out and went to Ramah.*

Our theme verse this morning is vs. 7: *For the Lord does not see as mortals see; they look on the outward appearance, but the Lord looks on the heart.*

Illustration. I owned a classic Jeep Cherokee for over 10 years. I never loved any vehicle the way I loved that Jeep. It was white, bright white, with big tires and rugged look that made it more at home off road than on road. In fact, she was never happier than when the boys & I went on these old

logging roads up in the north country, looking for moose. I loved that Jeep. But I had taken her for granted for a time and she needed more from me. There were strange noises coming from the engine and down the middle of the car. And there were scratches & dents that needed fixing. This is where I made a crucial mistake - I had the scratches and dents fixed first. I don't remember exactly what it cost. (I probably wouldn't tell you if I did, because the dents and scratches were purely cosmetic.) Once I had those done I took it to the garage to ask about those funny noises, not unusual I thought for a vehicle with over 150,000 miles on it. Unfortunately, it was serious. The Jeep needed over \$1,500 worth of work, and even though it looked like a million bucks in my eyes, it wasn't even worth the \$1,500 worth of repairs it needed. I didn't have the engine and transmission work done. I couldn't afford it, because of the money I spent on the outward appearance. When I took it to the Jeep dealer to see what I could get for it for a trade-in, the guy said, "Boy, it sure does look good." After the mechanics checked it out, his words were far less positive: "I'll give you \$1,000 on the trade-in, but that's a stretch." I had made a colossal blunder. I tended to the outward appearance before checking out what really mattered - what's inside, what's under the hood.

*"For the Lord does not see as mortals see; they look on the outward appearance, but the Lord looks on the heart."*

I'm comforted somewhat by the fact that the great Prophet Samuel made the same mistake. Samuel is a towering figure in the Old Testament. He's the last of the "Judges" who ruled Israel and the first of the great

Prophets, who heard from God and announced God's will to the people. In I Samuel 7, Samuel challenged the people to put away their foreign gods and worship only the God of Israel. In that same chapter, Israel's arch-enemy the Philistines were threatening. Samuel interceded with God on behalf of the people and the Lord answered with thunder from heaven confusing the Philistines, who were then routed by the Israelites.

So, Samuel and God were close. Samuel was the spiritual leader of Israel. He's God's personal spokesman. But here he is in chapter 16 trying to figure out who's going to be the next king and all he seems to notice is the outward appearance of the candidates. He sets his eyes on Eli-ab and says, *"Hey, he looks like a king. He's got that royal vibe going!" He's Presidential material!"* Samuel comes off looking like political handler, a professional politician operative, who insists on having a good-looking candidate to sell to the people. *"For the Lord does not see as mortals see; they look on the outward appearance, but the Lord looks on the heart."*

David is the youngest of all the brothers. He's so young that his father doesn't even send him out to meet Samuel. Samuel has to ask if Jesse has any more sons. "Yes, I have one more. He's out tending the sheep." David is then chosen to be the next king, not because of his looks, although the text does say he was handsome. (The Bible says David was, *"ruddy,"* which meant fair skinned. The commentaries say this meant David was probably a red head. It's not often we know the hair color of biblical characters!)

David was chosen for what's under the hood. David was chosen because of what God saw on the inside. David was chosen because of his heart. So, the natural question is: what kind of heart did David have? What were David's inner attributes that so impressed God? What did God see in David's heart?

And of course, these are not just academic questions. Our quest to understand the heart of David is not just so we can understand the text and learn the qualifications for kingship in ancient Israel. Why do we want to know about David's heart? So we can have one just like it! This is so important! This is why we read the Bible. We don't read it so we can understand ancient Judaism. We're not historians in search of the historical David. We're people of faith in search for God and in search of God's will for our lives. So the issue is not just - what kind of heart did David have? The question to text really has for us is - what kind of heart does God want us to have?

I always teach the confirmation class kids that the answer is found in the text. You always want to look in the passage and you'll generally find the answer there. What kind of heart did David have? There must be a description in there somewhere. But you know what? There isn't. The passage doesn't tell us what makes David heart so great. It doesn't. It just says, "Humans look at the outward appearance. God looks at the heart. And God chose David." So we have to do a little research into the life of David. Sometimes the Bible makes us work a little bit, doesn't it? That's the Bible's way of leaving the ball in our court, so to speak

- not giving us all the answers but rather sending us on a spiritual quest so that we can discover the answers ourselves, right?

### **So what kind of heart did David have?**

#### **1. Brave - David certainly had a brave heart.**

The David & Goliath story proves that. As David a teenager refuses to listen to the taunts of Goliath the Philistine. Goliath mocked the Israelite army for 40 days, and no one would go out to fight him, until David said, "This has to stop. He has defied the armies of the Living God." And David went and got his slingshot, and the rest is history, as they say. David had a brave heart.

#### **2. David also had a praying heart.**

The psalms prove that. David prayer life was an ongoing conversation with God. He prayed very honest-to-God prayers, like this one from Psalm 13:

*How long, O Lord? Will you forget me forever? How long will you hide your face from me? How long must I bear pain in my soul, and have sorrow in my heart all day long? How long shall my enemy be exalted over me? Consider and answer me, O Lord my God! Give light to my eyes, or I will sleep the sleep of death, and my enemy will say, "I have prevailed"; my foes will rejoice because I am shaken. But I trusted in your steadfast love; my heart shall rejoice in your salvation.*

David was far from perfect, as you know. Some of his most beautiful prayers were prayers of confession, such as Psalm 32:

*Happy are those whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered . . . While I kept silence, my body wasted away through my groaning all day long. For day and night your hand was heavy upon me; my strength was dried up as by the heat of summer. Then I acknowledged my sin to you, and I did not hide my iniquity; I said, "I will confess my transgressions to the Lord," and you forgave the guilt of my sin.*

David had a praying heart.

### **3. David also had a worshipping heart.**

David knew how to worship. No time was this more evident than the day David danced before the Lord. They had just defeated the Philistines (again!) and the Arc of the Covenant (the holy box that contained the tablets of the 10 Commandments) was being returned to Jerusalem. Frederick Buechner says David led the parade into town like the Mayor of Dublin on St. Patrick's Day. The Bible says David and all the house of Israel were dancing before the Lord with all their might, with songs and lyres and harps and tambourines and castanets and cymbals. (II Samuel 6:5)

3 months later there was another parade into town and David danced before the Lord once again with all his might. He even took off his outer garment and danced before God in his under garments. When his wife mentioned this was undignified, he said, *"I did it for God. It was unto the Lord."* David delighted in God. David had, *"The joy of the Lord."* As

the old hymn put it, he could get lost in, *"wonder, love and praise."* I would never suggest that we all dance before God in our underwear. The thought of it makes me giggle. But we all need to learn to delight in God, to rejoice in God's presence, to express our love to the God who is passionately in love with us.

I had a friend in college named Jim. We were in a Christian fellowship group together. Jim eventually became a pastor. I've been with Jim countless times when he's prayed out loud. Every single time he begins his prayer with this sentence, *"Dear Lord, we love you so much."* I didn't exactly know what to think of it until one day I remembered the passage where Jesus is asked, *"Of all the commandments of God, which is most important?"* And he said, *"Love God, with all your heart, soul, mind and strength."* And so saying *"I love you"* to God seems like a pretty good way to start.

Years ago this church had an Associate Pastor named Kim. Kim's Father was a professor at Princeton Theological Seminary, Dr. Ted Loeder. Alisa & I both took classes with him. He was a brilliant man, a wonderful teacher. Dr. Loeder was known as "The Crying Professor." He began every class with prayer, and every time he prayed, he would get choked up and cry. His sense of God's presence and his gratitude and love for God would become overwhelming for him. Some of you remember the baptism of Kim's child, when Dr. Loeder cried through the whole thing. David had a heart like that, a heart for God.

The book of Acts God pays tribute to David with these words, *'I have*



*found David, son of Jesse, to be a man after my heart, who will carry out all my wishes.'* (Acts 13:22) That passage sums it up the best.

What kind of heart did David have? More importantly, what kind of hearts does God want us to have?

God wants us to have the heart of our Creator.

- to love what God loves
- to have joy over the things that give God joy
- to have your heart broken over the things that break the heart of God

God wants to give us divinity in our hearts. Ezekiel wrote, *"A new heart I will give you. A new spirit I will put within you . . . I will write my laws upon your heart."* (Ezekiel 36:26-27)

My old Jeep looked great on the outside, but under the hood it was a different story. It's what's on the inside that really counts.

Think about it.