

THE EIGHTH ONE

Speaker: Rev. Pastor Cecil Clements

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Scripture: 1 Samuel 16: 1-13

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"16 Now the Lord said to Samuel, "How long will you grieve over Saul, since I have rejected him from being king over Israel? Fill your horn with oil and go; I will send you to Jesse the Bethlehemite, for I have selected a king for Myself among his sons." 2 But Samuel said, "How can I go? When 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.' 3 You shall invite Jesse to the sacrifice, and I will show you what you shall do; and you shall anoint for Me the one whom I designate to you." 4 So Samuel did what the Lord said, and came to Bethlehem. And the elders of the city came trembling to meet him and said, "Do you come in peace?" 5 He said, "In peace; I have come to sacrifice to the Lord. Consecrate yourselves and come with me to the sacrifice." He also consecrated Jesse and his sons and invited them to the sacrifice.

6 When they entered, he looked at Eliab and thought, "Surely the Lord's anointed is before Him." 7 But the Lord said to Samuel, "Do not look at his appearance or at the height of his stature, because I have rejected him; for God sees not as man sees, for man looks at the outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart." 8 Then Jesse called Aminadab and made him pass before Samuel. And he said, "The Lord has not chosen this one either." 9 Next Jesse made Shammah pass by. And he said, "The Lord has not chosen this one either." 10 Thus Jesse made seven of his sons pass before Samuel. But Samuel said to Jesse, "The Lord has not chosen these." 11 And Samuel said to Jesse, "Are these all the children?" And he said, "There remains yet the youngest, and behold, he is tending the sheep." Then Samuel said to Jesse, "Send and bring him; for we will not sit down until he comes here."

12 So he sent and brought him in. Now he was ruddy, with beautiful eyes and a handsome appearance. And the Lord said, "Arise, anoint him; for this is he." 13 Then Samuel took the horn of oil and anointed him in the midst of his brothers; and the Spirit of the Lord came mightily upon David from that day forward. And Samuel arose and went to Ramah."

When we look at these verses, we see the prophet Samuel is told by God to stop mourning over Saul because God has rejected Saul as king and is ready to move on. Samuel is then instructed to go to Bethlehem, to the house of Jesse, because among his sons, God has chosen the next king of Israel.

That is the setting for our meditation this morning. And as Samuel watches Jesse's sons pass by one by one, he assumes that surely one of these impressive young men must be God's choice. But each time Samuel thinks he has found the right one, God quietly says, "Um, no!"

Then we come to the moment where God teaches Samuel, and I think all of us, an important lesson about how He evaluates people. In v.7, it says: "Do not look at his appearance or at the height of his stature, because I have rejected him." For the Lord sees not as man sees, for man looks at the outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart. Just imagine a group of people being interviewed for an important leadership position, and each candidate walks into the room, the committee looks at their resumes, their appearance, their confidence, their achievements, and within minutes opinions begin forming about who seems to be the most qualified. That is how humans evaluate people.

We look at what is visible, what is tangible. But God evaluates differently. When the prophet Samuel went to the house of Jesse to anoint the next king of Israel, he also began forming impressions as each son passed by. One looked strong, another impressive, another capable; and yet, each time, God said no.

And then God gave Samuel a principle that still governs how He sees people today. Man looks at the outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart. And if we look right through scripture, we can see the same contrast between how people judge and how God evaluates.

Take Jesus' parable of the Pharisee and the tax collector. The Pharisee appeared outwardly righteous and religious. He fasted, tithed, and publicly thanked God that he was not like other sinners. The tax collector stood at a distance, would not even lift his eyes to heaven, and simply prayed, "God, be merciful to me, a sinner." Outwardly, the Pharisee seemed far more spiritual, but Jesus said it was the tax collector who went home justified before God, because while human eyes admired the religious performance, God saw humility in the human heart.

A similar moment occurs when Jesus was invited to the house of Simon the Pharisee. A woman known in the town as a sinner entered and wept at Jesus' feet, anointing Him with perfume. Simon judged her by her reputation, but Jesus saw something that was much deeper and said, "Her many sins have been forgiven, for she loved much." Simon saw a sinful woman; Jesus saw a repentant heart.

The same principle appears when Jesus called Matthew. To the crowd, he was a mere tax collector associated with corruption and compromise, but Jesus saw beyond the reputation and called him to be a disciple, and eventually to write a gospel.

Nathanael, when he approached Jesus – others would have seen only an ordinary man from Galilee. And yet, Jesus immediately recognized the sincerity of his heart and said, "Here is truly and Israelite in whom there is no deceit, no guile."

So these examples reinforce for us the principle of 1 Samuel 16:7. People admire or may admire religious appearance. God sees humility. People may judge reputation, God sees potential. People may measure amounts, God sees sacrifice. People may notice status, God sees potential.

I believe that that raises a deeply personal question for all of us. And the question is this: When God looks at me and you, what does He see?

Imagine two books or two documents representing a person's life.

- The first is a résumé. It lists achievements and positions held, accomplishments, awards, education, successes. It is the version of our life that we present to others. When people look at us, this is what they often see – our résumé.
- But imagine there's another book, and this one is a personal diary. And the diary contains things that never appear on the résumé. It holds our private thoughts, our hidden motives, secret struggles, moments of doubt, moments of prayer, moments of temptation, moments of repentance. It records who we really are when no one else is watching.

Most people see only the résumé, but God sees the diary.

So, when Samuel stood before Jesse's sons, he was essentially looking at their résumés. He saw strength, he saw stature, he saw appearance and leadership potential. And from a human perspective, they looked like potential kings. But God was reading the diary of their hearts.

And when David walked in from the fields, his resumé may not have looked impressive. He was just a shepherd boy. But when God looked at the diary of his heart, he saw something that Samuel didn't see – a heart that sought Him, trusted Him, repented when he needed to, and a deep desire to obey God. That's why God said, "Man looks at the outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart."

When we think of that, we cannot really see our own hearts the way God sees them. We don't like the way God sees. So if we want to really understand how God evaluates people, we must look to scripture for the markers of a heart that God values. And that brings us to a deeply personal question.

What does God see when He looks at my heart? But before we even attempt to answer that question, perhaps we need to ask another one first. Does it really matter? Do I really care what God thinks about my heart or what He sees in my heart? Sometimes we shrug our shoulders and say: I'm living the way I want to live. Why should it matter what God sees in my heart? That question deserves an honest response.

If it truly does not matter how God sees us, then we are free to live however we choose, guided by our own preferences and our own choices. But if there are reasons why God's evaluation matters, if His view of our hearts has significance for our lives and our future, then this is not a casual question that we can ignore. It becomes a question that we must take very seriously because it touches the very center of who we are and the kind of people that we are becoming before God.

Scripture gives us several places where we can see how to understand God's evaluation. Let me give them to you.

- 1) It matters because God's evaluation is the one that ultimately matters. Human opinions change constantly. People evaluate us based on what they can see and their judgments are often mistaken or incomplete.

But scripture reminds us that ultimately it is God's assessment that counts.

In 1 Corinthians 4:3-4, Paul says he's not overly concerned about human judgment. Why? Because it is the Lord who judges me. I really don't care what other people think about me because it is the Lord who judges me. At the end of life, it will not matter how impressive we appear to others. What will matter is how God sees us.

- 2) It matters because God sees the real person, not just the outward life. People tend to see only fragments of our lives. They see our appearance. They see our reputation. They see our accomplishments. But God sees deeper. He sees our motives. He sees our desires. He sees our sincerity. He sees our hidden struggles. So asking how God sees us brings us into honesty before God.
- 3) It matters because God entrusts His work to people whose hearts are right. In the story of David, God was not merely evaluating character. He was looking for someone to whom He could entrust leadership. God rejected the impressive candidates and chose David because of his heart. Even today, God entrusts influence and responsibility and spiritual impact to people whose hearts belong to Him.

So, if God looks at the heart and His evaluation matters, then the next question becomes very, very crucial. *What kind of heart is God looking for? What are the characteristics of that kind of heart that will be pleasing to God?* When God looked at David, what did He see that others did not see?

When scripture says that God looks at the heart, it does not mean that God is merely observing our emotions or our feelings. In the Bible, the heart refers to the center of a person's inner life. It is a place where our motives are formed, the why we do things in our lives, where our decisions are made, and where our loyalties are ultimately tested. The heart is the control center of the human life. That is why the Bible says in Proverbs 4:23, "Above all else, guard your heart, for everything you do flows from it."

In other words, the direction of our lives is shaped by the condition of our hearts. If the heart is proud, life will move in the direction of pride. If the heart is bitter, life will move in the direction of bitterness. But if the heart is surrendered to God, life begins to move in the direction of obedience and faithfulness.

So, when God was looking among Jesse's sons that day, He was not merely evaluating their physical strength, their leadership potential, or their outward abilities. God was looking deeper. He was looking at inner posture of each person. He was looking for a heart that was oriented toward Him, a heart that desired Him, trusted Him, responded to Him, and was willing to walk in His ways. The remarkable thing is that God often finds such hearts in places where others would never think to look. On that day in Bethlehem, everybody saw people who were good-looking, handsome, strong, possible material for kingship. God didn't see that. He looked at a shepherd boy and knew that he had the potential to be king.

The Kind of Heart that God looks at and delights in.

If God is still looking at hearts today, and scripture tells us that He is, then what kind of heart draws God's attention? What kind of heart does God value? What kind of heart does God strengthen, use, and entrust with His purposes? Scripture gives us several markers that help us to recognize the kind of delights in, and we see this from David's life.

i. A heart that seeks God.

David's deepest desire was God Himself.

Psalm 27:4 "One thing I ask of the Lord, to dwell in the house of the Lord forever." Just one thing. David was not primarily chasing position or power. Seeking God means that God Himself becomes our greatest desire, not just His blessings, not just His help, but His presence.

So the question for me would be: Do I seek God only when I need something or because I truly want Him, I truly desire Him every moment of every day?

ii. A heart that trusts God.

David faced Goliath with confidence, not in weapons but in God, faith in God.

1 Samuel 17:47 says, "The battle is the Lord's." God looks for people who rely on Him rather than themselves. Hear this beloved, trusting God means refusing to believe that our situation is bigger than God. Trusting God means that we believe that the situation that seems to overwhelm us is not bigger than our God. That can never be.

So, when fear says, I can't handle this, faith says, the battle belongs to the Lord.

iii. A heart that can be repentant in times of sinfulness.

David sinned deeply. Yet, when confronted by Nathan, he did not defend himself.

Psalm 51:10 says, "Create in me a clean heart, O God." This psalm was written soon after the time that the prophet Nathan confronted him and said, "You are that man," and he

responded by saying, "Against You," speaking to God, "You only, have I sinned. Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me."

What distinguished David was not perfection, but repentance. What made David different was not that he never sinned. What made David different was that when he sinned, he returned quickly to God. Sometimes we try to defend our sin. We justify it. Sometimes we try to hide the sin in our lives, and sometimes we blame other people for the sins that we are doing. But David confessed it, and that kind of heart always will find grace with God.

iv. A heart that desires to obey God.

David genuinely wanted to follow God. Psalm 40:8 says, "I delight to do Your will." I'm always captured by this sentence. Every time I read it, I have to stop and think. Delight. What a word to use for God's will. Not I'll just do it, not just I'll comply, not just grudgingly – okay Lord, I know this is what I have to do. But no! I delight to do it. Joyfully I'll do it. I always look at these words and pray – Lord, that's where I too want to be. I want to delight in the things that you want for me.

The direction of David's life was toward obedience. And obedience is where love becomes visible. Anyone can say that they love God, but obedience alone shows it. Obedience alone makes it visible. Jesus said: If you love Me, you will keep My commandments.

So, when God looks at my heart, what does He see? Does He see a heart that seeks Him? Does HE see a heart that trusts Him? Does He see a heart that repents before Him? Does He see a heart that desires to obey Him? Those are the kinds of hearts that God entrusts with His work.

That day in Bethlehem, while everybody saw a shepherd boy, God saw a pliable, moldable, sincere heart, one that was deeply committed to Him. And I believe that same God still looks at our hearts today. He's not searching for the most impressive people. He's not searching for the most talented people, not is He searching for the most visible people. He's searching for hearts that belong to Him.

The world asks: how do people see you? Social media asks: how many people follow you? Success asks: how much have you achieved? But heaven asks only one question: What kind of a heart do you have? And that is the question that matters the most.

2 Chronicles 16:9 tells us, "The eyes of the Lord move to-and-fro across the earth, looking to strengthen those whose hearts belong to Him." Hearts that are fully committed to Him. God is looking for hearts like that. God is searching the earth, not for perfect people, not for famous people, not for impressive people. He's searching for hearts fully committed to Him.

Here's another beautiful principle at work. When we see the things that please God, it does not work against us. It works in our favor. How? Whenever we desire to do the will of God, blessings follow. This verse reminds us that God is not scanning the earth to condemn people, but to strengthen those whose hearts are fully committed to Him.

So, as we wrestle with the question today, does it really matter how I live my life? Does it matter whether God is pleased with the condition of my heart? And we saw that the answer to that through scripture, is a resounding YES.

Because when God sees a heart that is aligned to His, His response is not distance. His response is strength. And perhaps, maybe that is what you came in here looking for? Maybe that's how came – weakness, saying "Lord, I need a touch from You today. I'm out of ideas. I don't know what to do. The situation that I'm in seems to be overwhelming. Lord, I need Your strength to go through this phase."

So, in closing, I would say to you, beloved, reach out to Him. Lean into His presence. Receive the strength that only He can give. Let His grace steady you and His Spirit sustain you. And know this, when God sees a heart that longs to please Him, He comes alongside of you with strength, and that strength may be exactly what you need today.

Shall we pray?

Heavenly Father, You know the condition of our hearts. Lord, You know exactly what kind of hearts we have. And Lord, maybe today, You've spoken to some of us here saying, "There are things in your heart that I want to deal with." And I pray Lord, that even as we just spend a moment in quietness that You would hear the prayers that are coming to you, responding to you.

And Lord, maybe there are some who have come in here in weakness, not even ready to take the next step, finding it so hard, Lord, to move forward. But again, Lord, Your word reminds us that in our weakness, Your strength is made perfect. So I pray Lord for all those who are reaching out to You and saying, Lord I am in that state, weak. Lord I pray that as they lift their eyes to You, that Your strength would come into them, renew, refresh, invigorate them, and let them know Lord that You have come alongside them in strength. In Jesus' name we pray.

Amen.
