

SEQUOYAH HILLS PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

“Heart to Heart”

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Samuel 16:1-13

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Before we get to the text, let's have a heart to heart. When you first saw what I was wearing this morning, and that I wasn't in a suit and tie... what did you think? Something had to have crossed your mind. Let's hear it. (Ask for people to share their thoughts). So, why am I dressed this way? Every new school year, year after year, we commit to eat healthier and exercise more and become stronger; to look our best because we have created a culture that values what we can see on the outside, and whether we are aware of it or not we uphold and sustain this culture every time we see someone and think that he or she doesn't look the way they ought to. They don't fit the bill. "He's not dressed like a pastor." Name anything and we, as humans, will happily tell you our opinion of it won't we? The problem is that we live in a world where physical and material beauty outranks spiritual depth. We care more about the color of your skin and hair and eyes, your muscle tone and skeletal structure, body size, height to weight ratio; and it doesn't stop there. We care about the clothing we wear, the name of the college you attend, the cars we drive, even what our houses look like. All this leads me to wonder...

How can we shift the paradigm where the spectrum of human attributes and all that is outwardly different from person to person to person may be **valued** in light of our Creator rather than shunned for being different? Is it possible for us to look beyond the surface of human skin and muscle and bone structure to look beneath, to look inward at a person's nature, at their values, at their character, and their heart? What will it take for us to finally overcome all the isms of our world? Will the day ever come when, as Martin Luther King Jr. dreamed, humanity no longer judges one another on outward appearance but rather on a person's character?

(Read 1 Samuel 16 vv1-13.) **16 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.'** ² **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."** ³ **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.'** ⁴ **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?'** ⁵ **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.**

⁶ **When they came, he looked on Eliab and thought, 'Surely the LORD's anointed is now before the LORD.'** ⁷ **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.’⁸ Then Jesse called Abinadab, and made him pass before Samuel. He said, ‘Neither has the LORD chosen this one.’⁹ Then Jesse made Shammah pass by. And he said, ‘Neither has the LORD chosen this one.’¹⁰ Jesse made seven of his sons pass before Samuel, and Samuel said to Jesse, ‘The LORD has not chosen any of these.’¹¹ 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.’¹² 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.’¹³ 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.

Samuel was looking for the next King to follow after Saul, and because Saul was a tall well-built man, Samuel was looking at each of Jesse’s sons through the same lens, looking to see who might share the most qualities that Saul had. We read something of a Cinderella story unfolding before us don’t we as son after son passes before Samuel looking to see who was the right fit to be the next King, but one after another God looked at Jesse’s sons and did not see the qualities He was looking for. Samuel’s immediate impression was that the oldest son would be king, but even Samuel, a man serving God, did not look at people the way God does. Friends, **the challenge to us is obvious:** God wants us to look at the heart. God looks at our heart. God considers our character. We must learn to see people from heart to heart. I wonder when you first saw me this morning; did any of you consider my character and what you know about my personality or my character traits? Or, were you just too caught up with what you could see on the outside? Let me say regarding David’s description that scripture isn’t telling us that David is a handsome strong young adult of a man, its actually saying that David is more like a precious little boy with beaming eyes. In other words, David is only a child, and therefore based on his outer appearance, David has the least qualities of a King than all of his brothers, but again the outside is not what God was looking at! God was looking at the heart!

Have you ever wondered why scripture doesn’t tell us really anything about what Jesus looked like? He Himself had no beauty or majesty to attract us to him Isaiah 53:2-3. We don’t get details of His skin pigment or hair color or His height and weight, so we craft pictures and paintings of Jesus ourselves, and perhaps if we’re honest, we prefer pictures where Jesus is made to look like each one of us don’t we? In reality he looked nothing like most Presbyterians, Baptist, or Methodists I know. But the outside is not what God looks at. Listen, **He is the Creator;** He values everything and everyone He creates, just as any artist uses different colors or materials for each individual work, however God is more concerned with the condition of our heart!

When Jesus interacted with others, He demonstrated that He looks where? At the heart! Whenever you read scripture pay close attention to how Jesus addresses people. For instance, in Matthew he scolded the Pharisees for being so prideful about their outer appearance and neglecting who they were inside. They had become like whitewashed tombs! He called them hypocrites, snakes, and blind guides. He said of Nathaniel,

“Here is truly an Israelite in whom there is no deceit!” He said of the Centurion “I have not found such great faith even in Israel.” He said of Judas, “you are the devil.” He said of Peter “get behind me Satan!” and at another time “Upon this rock I shall build my church.” He said to Thomas “Stop doubting and believe!” Did you hear any words about a person’s hair, their skin color, their bone structure, or their weight? No! Deceitful, faithful, adversary, accuser, immovable, committed, determined, doubtful... all are words that describe conditions of the heart...not how you look on the outside. Hear me, I don’t believe scripture is telling us to stop using our eyes, rather, I believe God is challenging us to use our eyes to their full potential by looking deeper than just surface level.

You: So, how do you look at yourself? How do you see others? Do you look at what is evident on the outside: the person you see in the mirror, the clothes you wear, the achievements you have earned, the talents you have, or do you look deeper for love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control? If you took a picture of your own heart, what would you see? What condition is it in? What would Jesus say about your heart? Would he like what he finds? **The reality for many of us is that our hearts are worse on the inside than how we portray ourselves on the outside, so we too are whitewashed tombs! BUT the good news for those in Christ is that He creates within us a new heart, a clean heart, and He renews a steadfast spirit within us. It is only with the new heart that Christ gives us that we can truly see people as he did.** How might you start to view yourself differently? What qualities and characteristics do you have that are noteworthy? Are there ones you need to change in light of your new life in Christ? The question becomes “will you look for in all people, the qualities that God values, rather than what this world values?”

We: Friends, I am convinced that the human race would look completely different if we spent even a tenth of the time that we spend on outward appearances and focused that energy on our inner nature and our character instead. For physical training is of some value, but godliness has value for all things, holding promise for both the present life and the life to come. 1 Timothy 4:8.

(Read quotes about Character) Calvin Coolidge said, “We do not need more knowledge, we need more character!” D.L. Moody said, “Character is what you are in the dark.” The late Chuck Swindoll says in his work *“Living Above the Level of Mediocrity”*

“THE WORLD NEEDS people...

who cannot be bought; whose word is their bond; who put character above wealth; who possess opinions and a will; who are larger than their vocations; who do not hesitate to take chances; who will not lose their individuality in a crowd; who will be as honest in small things as in great things; who will make no compromise with wrong; whose ambitions are not confined to their own selfish desires; who will not say they do it" because everybody else does it"; who are true to their friends through good report and evil report, in adversity as well as in prosperity;

who do **not** believe that shrewdness, cunning, and hardheadedness are the best qualities for winning success; who are not ashamed or afraid to stand for the truth when it is unpopular; who can say "no" with emphasis, although all the rest of the world says "yes.""

Is it possible to shift the paradigm, to change the world in which we live, absolutely, how? By learning to see and be seen as Christ saw people: heart to heart. Disciples of Christ must learn to see people as He did while, at the same time, letting Christ renew our hearts to be like His. If we don't learn this, then this school year will look like every other year. If we don't learn this then a great deal of people, (and young people especially who are expressing their personalities in rather unique ways) will never feel welcomed into the church let alone the kingdom of God. Jesus said, "I have sheep that are not of this sheepfold, and I must bring them too."

Will we help bring them into the kingdom? Or will we pass by them because we failed to look at them as God does? As Jesus said in Revelation: He who has ears, let him hear what the spirit is saying to the church." In the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. **Amen.**