

Oct 22nd 2017 Pastor Jordan Gades, 1 Samuel 16: 1-13,
Psalm 51: 10-14

Samuel has had a tough time in life. Last week we heard his call. About how he was dedicated to the service of the lord before he was even born. About the Lord calling to him out of the darkness and giving him some good news and some really bad news. That was last week, and then some other big things happen to Samuel between then and today's lesson. He gets to crown the first King of Israel. And just to make this clear God is totally against the very idea of a king for Israel. But the people complain enough that God finally says yes. Which was exactly the opposite of what God wanted for God's people, but let them have it anyway. And, of course, surprise surprise a mere human being ends up doing what human beings do and screws up. Saul doesn't listen to God. King Saul puts himself first because he is the king and that's what kings do.

And now we get to today's reading. Samuel gets the word from God that Saul is out as king and that Samuel has to anoint someone else. Someone else from this podunk town called Bethlehem. And Samuel's just thinking great, how am I going to manage that. Saul will kill me, literally kill me, if he knows that I'm going to go name another king. But God has a plan, God has Sam's back. He says "grab a cow and go make a sacrifice. You don't have to tell anyone what you are doing."

Samuel gets to Jesse's house and Jesse lines up his son's. Samuel sees this line up of fine strapping young men and can't help but keep saying, this guy looks perfect for the job; God, he's gotta be the one! But again, and again God says no, that aint him, look to the next. And the next, and the next. Until finally they gotta pull little Davy in from the pasture where he is keeping watch of the sheep. Then, finally then, God says, yes, here is the future king. Anoint him! Good work Samuel. Well I added that last part but I'm sure God meant to say it at the time. Though there sure are a few reasons for not saying thank you to Sam at the end of this reading.

The whole thing starts out with Samuel bemoaning that Saul didn't turn out to be the best king ever. Sam had even anointed him. Sam had a huge stake in how well he did as the first king of Israel. Saul was God working through Samuel. You ever have something like that happen? Maybe stand up for someone and then they let you down? I know I have.

Then When God finally tells him, get up, it's time for a new king, Samuel gets scared. He's going to kill me if I do that God. I don't want to do it God. Then God tells him to take the cow and get going.

You ever have that same feeling. Don't want to do something so you come up with an excuse? I know I have.

Then, after he finally gets to Bethlehem, which is a good 5-mile hike, he decides that he wants to start making the choices instead God. This Son of Jesse looks like a great choice for king. Big, Strong, courageous and noble look about him, let's do it! But God says no. That ever happen to you. Something looks good and that's how you end up making your decision? Ever had your eyes lead you to a bad decision? I know I have.

Looks like God had a few things to not be thankful for in Samuel. Looks like Samuel just wasn't living up to being God's messenger to the world. Even we can see and hear that in the text. But here is where God shows Up and God does what God always does.

When Samuel is sad that Saul is a bust, its God saying, of course he was a bust, I told you all kings were going to be a bust. **You know every human being is a bust.** But God Says "I'm still here, I will always be here."

When Samuel gets scared to do the thing that needs to be done, God gives him courage and guidance to do the right thing anyway.

When Samuel thinks he knows better than God, God says to him, "yeah, that guy is great, but I don't look at the outward

appearance of people, I look at their hearts." I see how they are on the inside.

Now that is some gospel right there. All too often we are only looking at the outward appearance. But God, God doesn't need us to be the strongest, God doesn't need us to be the fastest, God doesn't need us to be the most beautiful.

God doesn't need us to be wearing the best clothes or have the best hair. God doesn't need us to have right amount of money or know the right people. God sees who we really are.

Who we really are. So few people see that from us these days. Maybe our closest friends, our kids, parents, siblings, and spouses. But who else? Who else do we let see us. That takes courage. That takes vulnerability. That takes a strength that you can't look at a person and see. But I can guarantee that you will know it when you hear them talk.

And, even harder, when do we look for the real person in our neighbor. When do we go beyond what our eyes are just showing just and listen to what God is telling us every day. How do we accept more than what we see? How do we push past that instinct to define others by what we see initially?

I wish that there was some easy answer. But at least God gives us some help with figuring it out.

The first thing that I heard just from today's text, is that we are going to need to be courageous in looking at our neighbors and strangers. Courageous to stand up when what we first see knocks us back. Courageous to keep looking when our first thoughts cause us fear and doubt.

The next thing that I see God saying to us out of this text, out of this little piece of the bible alone, Look again. Look again until you see their joy. Look again until you see their pain. Look again and again until you see their inward appearance. Look again until you see their hearts. Look again like God has looked upon you. Look again and never be satisfied that you know it all.

I find it absolutely frightening that God Looks at me and knows it all. It's takes us months, or years or sometimes decades to see just small parts of people, both good and bad. And yet God knows us completely. And God loves us completely. In Spite of knowing us completely, in spite of seeing our hearts, God Loves us completely. And even beyond loving us God calls us into the world so that our neighbors will know that very love. That is our God. That is our God doing what our God does.

And what is our response? What is our response to God looking at us, seeing not our outward appearance, for then seeing who we want to be and all the screw ups that we make on our own journey, what do we do? We respond with the very words of David.

10 Create in me a clean heart, O God,
and put a new and right spirit within me
12 Restore to me the joy of your salvation,
and sustain in me a willing spirit.
13 Then I will teach transgressors your ways,
and sinners will return to you.

Our response is make me Holy Lord. Make me somehow worthy of the gift of grace that you give me every day. Help me to fully know you and help me to help others know you. That is the response that we live to the God who looks into our heart, calls us, and loves us. Amen.