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St. Paul's Lutheran Church
2100 16th Street SW
Austin, MN 55912-1749
Pastor Ted Barthels
Sermon preached on
August 23, 2015
13th Sunday after Pentecost

Scripture Lessons: Acts 17:15-34, Matthew 16:13-20

Hymns: 39; 41; 307; 52

Grace be unto you and peace from God our Father and our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen.

Sermon Text: 1 Samuel 16:1-13

Now the LORD said to Samuel, "How long will you mourn for Saul, seeing I have rejected him from reigning over Israel? Fill your horn with oil, and go; I am sending you to Jesse the Bethlehemite. For I have provided Myself a king among his sons."

2 And Samuel said, "How can I go? If Saul hears it, he will kill me."

But the LORD said, "Take a heifer with you, and say, 'I have come to sacrifice to the LORD.' 3 Then invite Jesse to the sacrifice, and I will show you what you shall do; you shall anoint for Me the one I name to you."

4 So Samuel did what the LORD said, and went to Bethlehem. And the elders of the town trembled at his coming, and said, "Do you come peaceably?"

5 And he said, "Peaceably; I have come to sacrifice to the LORD. Sanctify yourselves, and come with me to the sacrifice." Then he consecrated Jesse and his sons, and invited them to the sacrifice.

6 So it was, when they came, that he looked at Eliab and said, "Surely the LORD's anointed is before Him!"

7 But the LORD said to Samuel, "Do not look at his appearance or at his physical stature, because I have refused him. For the LORD does not see as man sees; for man looks at the outward appearance, but the LORD looks at the heart."

8 So Jesse called Abinadab, and made him pass before Samuel. And 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 Thus Jesse made seven of his sons pass before Samuel. And Samuel said to Jesse, “The LORD has not chosen these.” 11 And Samuel said to Jesse, “Are all the young men here?” Then he said, “There remains yet the youngest, and there he is, keeping the sheep.”

And Samuel said to Jesse, “Send and bring him. For we will not sit down till he comes here.” 12 So he sent and brought him in. Now he was ruddy, with bright eyes, and good-looking. And the LORD said, “Arise, anoint him; for this is the one!” 13 Then Samuel took the horn of oil and anointed him in the midst of his brothers; and the Spirit of the LORD came upon David from that day forward. So Samuel arose and went to Ramah. (NKJV)

This is the Word of God.

Sanctify us, oh Lord, through Your truth. Your Word is truth. Amen.

In Christ Jesus, God my Savior, dear fellow Redeemed:

INTRO: If you are from Missouri you're from the “show me” state. Seeing is believing! We all buy into that kind of thinking to some extent. It is only natural that if we see something then that must be true. And if we haven't seen something, then there must be some measure of doubt or uncertainty involved.

But then we also say, “My eyes were playing tricks on me.” Scientists have confirmed that our brains actually take the information received from our eyes and fill in what's missing, or what our brains assume should be there. So it happens at times that we think we see something that didn't really happen. As a result we draw conclusions that aren't really accurate, even though we may be thoroughly convinced otherwise.

At times we allow ourselves to be misled in this way. When we see a magician it is all part of the fun. We “see” one thing while something else is really true.

The lesson that Samuel learned so long ago concerning the events and the people that surrounded him in life and what we need to

understand, **especially** in connection with the spiritual realm, is that

THEME: Appearances Can Be Deceiving.

The devil makes sure of that. The devil is the great deceiver. The devil is the father of lies. The devil is playing at a high stakes game, but with the souls of men. If he can mislead, use misdirection, cause us to be uncertain of the truth, or afraid of this world and the powers of this world, then he can make tremendous inroads into our spirituality. So it is that the first lesson we learn from Samuel is concerning –

I. The Appearance of Power vs the Reality of God's Power.

Samuel was given a task by the Lord that filled him with fear and trepidation.

1 Samuel 16:1-3 Now the Lord said to Samuel, “How long will you mourn for Saul, seeing I have rejected him from reigning over Israel? Fill your horn with oil, and go; I am sending you to Jesse the Bethlehemite. For I have provided Myself a king among his sons.”

2 And Samuel said, “How can I go? If Saul hears it, he will kill me.”

But the Lord said, “Take a heifer with you, and say, ‘I have come to sacrifice to the Lord.’ 3 Then invite Jesse to the sacrifice, and I will show you what you shall do; you shall anoint for Me the one I name to you.”

The last dealing that Samuel had with King Saul had not gone well. Saul had disobeyed the LORD. Samuel had to deliver a hard message from the LORD.

1 Samuel 15:22-23 “Has the LORD as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, As in obeying the voice of the LORD? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice,
And to heed than the fat of rams.

23 For rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft,
And stubbornness is as iniquity and idolatry.
Because you have rejected the word of the LORD,

He also has rejected you from being king.”

Saul tried to say to what needed to be said to get this decision reversed, but it was too late. As Samuel started to turn and walk away Saul grabbed hold of Samuel’s cloak, and it tore. Samuel told Saul that the LORD had also torn the kingdom from Saul and given it to his neighbor. That was the very last time that Samuel would see or speak with Saul. Samuel knew what kind of man Saul had become. He possessed the power to kill, and Saul was not afraid to use it.

Now the LORD directed Samuel to go to Bethlehem to anoint the next king of Israel. Samuel’s action was certain to be seen as an act of treason. It would outrage a violent man with a fierce temper. Even though Samuel was God’s prophet and judge, Saul’s power was very real to Samuel. He both grieved over how things had turned out with Saul, and feared that Saul would kill him if Samuel dared to do what the LORD had instructed.

The LORD reassured Samuel, directing him to proceed in a proper spiritual manner, to present a sacrifice to the LORD in Bethlehem, and that the LORD would direct what took place, after all, these events were in the LORD’s hands. Samuel was reassured. The power that seemed so real with Saul was not the real power of heaven and earth. That power remained with the LORD.

Appearances can be deceiving. We also may perceive the powers of this world to be so great and fearsome that we may be intimidated by them. We also may hesitate to do as the Lord instructs us. Often it is not some great king or even a terrorist organization that sets fear in our hearts, but just another ordinary person much like ourselves who might react harshly to what we do or say in obedience to the Lord. We fear what men might think of us. We fear how our short mortal lives might be even temporarily impacted. It is not even death that hangs over our heads. What power do these forces of the world have over us? Jesus said:

Matthew 10:27-28 “Whatever I tell you in the dark, speak in the light; and what you hear in the ear, preach on the housetops. 28 **And do not fear** those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul.

But rather fear Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell.

Later Jesus reminded Pontius Pilate that even governors and kings have no power at all unless it is given them from above, and they are answerable to God in the end every bit as much as King Saul was. Appearances can be deceiving, so don't be deceived. The Lord our God, He is almighty. He is powerful to save. He has all might and dominion and has entrusted all power to His Son, our Savior who rules over all things for the good of His Church. Jesus loves us and promises to be with us to the end of the age. He keeps us in His care. This is the reality that is **not** seen! This is the truth that **ought** to govern and direct our lives even as it lives in our hearts.

Let us then consider:

II. The Appearance of Character vs What God Sees in the Heart.

We all know about first impressions. We know that they can be very deep and lasting, and we also know that they can be very wrong. We are much more familiar with this part of Bible history and what happened when Samuel reviewed the sons of Jesse looking for the individual whom he was to anoint as the next king of Israel.

1 Samuel 16:6-7 So it was, when they came, that *Samuel* looked at Eliab and said, "Surely the LORD's anointed is before Him!"

7 But the LORD said to Samuel, "Do not look at his appearance or at his physical stature, because I have refused him. For the LORD does not see as man sees; for man looks at the outward appearance, but the LORD looks at the heart."

And so it went as the next son of Jesse, Abinadab was presented before Samuel, and the next, and the next after that until seven sons of Jesse had passed before Samuel, and each of these men the Lord rejected. Each of these young men were fine looking men, and by all accounts good men, but the Lord looks deep within the heart, while we look skin deep. **Appearances can be deceiving.**

Even as it appeared that all the sons of Jesse had passed before Samuel, he had to ask, are there any more? Well only the youngest who was out watching the sheep, but he was no more than a boy. But the Lord knew David's heart.

1 Samuel 16:12-13 So he sent and brought him in. Now he was ruddy, with bright eyes, and good-looking. And the LORD said, "Arise, anoint him; for this is the one!" 13 Then Samuel took the horn of oil and anointed him in the midst of his brothers; and the Spirit of the LORD came upon David from that day forward.

David was the last one, the youngest one, the one not even considered by others. Oh, he was also a fine looking boy, but he was just a boy! It was **not** his appearance as a fine looking young man that impressed the Lord. The Lord knew David's heart. So according to the Lord's direction, Samuel anointed David as the next king of Israel.

What happened next is of course of great importance. The Spirit of the Lord came upon David from that day forward. When it comes to possessing the Lord's own heart, well that cannot be without the gracious working of the Holy Spirit. This is a great truth that is not understood by the world, or by natural man. David himself was led to appreciate this truth and express it in the psalms. After his great fall into sin, a fall that came because even David had become too impressed with his own power and greatness, David prayed for a clean spirit and a restoration of the Lord's Spirit (Psalm 51). We can't attain that inner quality which pleases the Lord without the Lord Himself blessing us with His Spirit.

That blessing has been poured out upon us also as the Spirit washed us clean of sin in "**the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit**" (Titus 3:5) in the sacrament of Holy Baptism. When the Lord looks upon you He sees what is really in your heart. But that should not frighten you! He does not see the corrupt sinful heart that was yours by nature. He sees the new heart that He has given you. He sees the righteousness which He has credited to you through faith in Christ Jesus. Your heart has been purified as a proper and fitting abode for the Lord Himself. When the Lord looks at your heart He sees the gifts of the Spirit, the spirit of love and forgiveness and hope and faith, all those precious

qualities which have been imbedded within you through the power of the Spirit working within you by Word and sacrament.

When we look in the mirror we don't see this powerful presence. We see a rather ordinary individual who really doesn't matter that much in the world. **Ah, but appearances can be deceiving!** Even when we look in the mirror of the God's law we are led to see our sinfulness, and we confess our unworthiness before the Lord, but with the coming of the Spirit through the gospel this also has been changed, and changed forevermore! Don't be deceived. You are now special new creature. You are now God's child with a heart like unto the Lord's.

None of us would dare claim to possess the same gift which David was given in preparation of his calling to be king of Israel, however we must not denigrate the gift that has been given us. It is not righteous humility for us to think of ourselves as being less than capable of serving the Lord, and of sharing His truth with others. The Lord has called us to this, and the Lord has given us a measure of His Spirit to prepare us for the task that He has given us. It is important that –

III. God's Direction for Life be by Faith, not by Sight.

Our text concludes with a rather simple statement.

1 Samuel 16:13 So Samuel arose and went to Ramah.

Samuel went home. God had protected him on his mission, and he returned to his normal daily activities serving the Lord in his old age. It was much the same at first for young David also. He went back to tending the sheep, at least until the he was called to the king's court to play music for the king in the times of Saul's spiritual anguish.

So today we go back home, we go on about our lives, lives that may appear rather mundane and insignificant, lives that don't appear to be any different from the rest of the working world. Get up, go to work, pass pleasantries with others, struggle with the challenges of life, go home, go to bed. It starts all over again the next day. But our lives **are not** as they might appear!

God has His purpose for our lives and it has to do with salvation. It has to do with the salvation of our souls, as well as the salvation of the souls of others, starting with our families, and extending to our friends and neighbors and then beyond that to the world. God's direction **to** life doesn't end in the grave; it leads to heaven! This we **don't see**. This we know **by faith**. And so we go on with our lives according to faith, faith in God and in His truth. It is as the Apostle Paul wrote to the Corinthians

2 Corinthians 5:7 For we walk by faith, not by sight.

Let us no longer be deceived by appearances. Let us know the truth of God that lives in our hearts and let us also possess the confidence of faith that the power is the Lord's and salvation is the Lord's, and we shall serve Him now, and live with Him forever in heaven.

AMEN.

And the peace of God which passes all understanding shall keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Amen.