

“The Lord Looks On the Heart”

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I Samuel 16:1-13*

A middle-aged woman has a heart attack. While on the operating table she has a near death experience. She sees God, and asks if this is it. God says, “No, you have another 30-40 years to live.”

She recovers and decides to stay in the hospital and have a facelift, liposuction, breast augmentation, tummy tuck, hair dyed, etc. She figures since she’s got another 30 or 40 years, she might as well make the most of it. She walks out of the hospital after the last operation and immediately, walking down the street gets hit by a falling grand piano and dies. She arrives in front of God and asks, “I thought you said I had another 30 or 40 years?” God replies, “Sorry, I didn’t recognize you!”

How many of you have watched “American Idol”? How many of you have watched “Britain’s Got Talent”? Probably not too many since it’s on British T.V. It’s the British equivalent to “American Idol.”

- They both have amateurs compete on stage; singing, dancing.
- They both have 3 (stooges) judges who vote on the weekly (whiners) winners.
- And Simon Cowell – the universally hated judge whose calling is to belittle and put down the untalented, semi-talented and talented alike – entertains all.

Probably most all of you viewers and non viewers alike heard about the shock and surprise several months ago when a middle aged Scottish woman (47 yrs old) stepped out onto the British stage, and set the world listening – via You Tube.

Simon originally (perhaps staged) smirked seeing this not what you would call glamorous, a bit overweight, un-styled 47 yr old spinster “grace” the stage. For those first few moments – those millions watching – had made their judgment – “loser” – perhaps a bit uneasy – feeling sorry, embarrassed for her and then, she opened her mouth - and all was changed!

If you haven’t heard her – go to You Tube and be inspired. Her name – Susan Boyle. She sang “I Dreamed a Dream.” Beyond outward appearances. To the heart. To the soul.

The Lord looks on the Heart. Let’s take a lesson from our Lord. Let’s take hope from our Lord!

It’s not just appearances.
It’s not just what you, we see.
Don’t deceive yourself.

There's so much more!!

The Lord looks on the heart!

Much deeper!

We must go much, much deeper!

The Bible has consistently called us to look deeper than the surface. It has scolded and chided many of its human characters for failing to go beyond the "supposed given," the "accepted situation," the "apparent choice." God, (in the Bible) continuously throws a wrench into the presuppositions of humankind. (I love it!)

"Oh, yes, of course, this is the way it should be. Well, just look there, why any one can see that he's the one to chose and he's the one to ignore!" Oops! God chooses someone else.

From Genesis to Revelation, God stirs the human situation up.

Let's go back to Samuel, the prophet of Israel. Now here is a powerful man. Samuel is a King maker, and a King breaker.

Remember Samuel anointed Saul, the first King of Israel. But Saul failed, and God said, "Enough, I don't care if his four years aren't up, he's through!" (I'm not looking for any partisan political comments!)

In today's lesson, we find Samuel grieving over God's removal of Saul's anointing as King. Saul is still King, he's blissfully ignorant that the sword of Damocles is hanging over him. But Samuel, the King maker, knows, and he is upset.

Well, God decides that Samuel has grieved enough over Saul's rejection by God.

"Enough already," says God. "Get hold of yourself. Fill your horn with oil and go! Pack your anointing stuff, and go anoint me a new King."

"Go down to the southern state, I've got a King down there."

The courageous Samuel cries, "But God what if King Saul finds out what I'm doing?" (A reasonable concern). And here's another wonderful glimpse into the Bible's earthiness. God understands Samuel's concern. So what does the Unmoved Mover, the Omnipotent, the Omniscient, Ground of Being say?

"Samuel, ah... take a cow with you and pretend you're going to go and sacrifice. Yes, that will do. Do that." Wonderful! A little Divine deception? Hmmm . . .

Samuel goes down to Bethlehem, and he meets the leaders of the area, and are they in a state! They are terrified! "Here's Samuel, the power broker from the King!" "No matter why he's here, it can't be anything good!" No town meeting is a good meeting – for them.

Samuel assures them he has come in peace (if they only knew). What if, Saul gets wind of this? How do you think it would bode for this little town of Bethlehem? Not well, I'm sure!

Samuel invites Jesse and his sons to the “sacrifice”. “Come on, you'll have a great time. It'll be like the Shrine Circus. Really!”

The parade begins. Jesse's sons parade by Samuel. The first-born is of course first. It's Eliab. Right away Samuel thinks. “This is the one!” He's tall, dark, and handsome. In fact, he reminds Samuel of Saul. “Saul was a great looker, so this must be the one!” But God says to Samuel, “Don't look on his appearance... for I see not as humans see; the mortal sees with the eyes, God sees with the heart!” “The Lord looks on the heart!” Let that sink in. Receive this wonderful and challenging truth into your personal perception. So often we see only with our eyes. We are three dimensionally impaired. The Lord looks on the heart. There is more to life than the surface! The real question “What’s in his heart?” “What’s in your heart?”

More sons pass by, and are passed up. Seven sons go by. Each time Samuel is hoping, but God says, “Nope, Nope, Nope . . .” Saul's been rejected, now all seven have been rejected. Where will it all end?

“Is that it, no more sons?” inquires Samuel. Jesse says, “Well, I have one more, kind of the runt of the litter, he's out in the field tending the sheep.” Samuel says, “Go get him!”

And the youngest, puniest, son arrives. He's red faced, with great eyes and good looking, but remember, not even considered worth bringing to the festivities. As this young man approaches, God tells Samuel “this is the one!” His name is “David.” The one that to this very day is held in great esteem and loved among the Jews. David, a poor shepherd boy, became the greatest King of Israel!

“Mortals see with the eyes, and God looks on the heart.” Do you get what that is telling us? The Bible is filled with turn-arounds, surprises! Look beyond the obvious! Look deeper, much deeper!

The Lord looks on the heart! Thank God!

How upsetting! No primogeniture for God! So what if that's the way we've always done it. God was forever upsetting the apple cart.

- ❖ An old man and a wife past menopause, will father and mother a great nation (Abraham and Sarah).
- ❖ The older brother will serve the younger brother (Jacob and Esau)
- ❖ The youngster will save his older brothers, his whole family from starvation and oblivion! (Joseph)
- ❖ An outcast who can't speak very well, will lead God's people out of slavery (Moses).

Maybe God needs glasses. God must not see very well. All of these second raters, and yet they become God's and Humanity's instruments of peace, justice and love.

The Lord looks on the heart!

Dr. Katrina Firlik, neurosurgeon and author of *Another Day in the Frontal Lobe*, wrote in her book of an incident that occurred in her final year of residency. She wrote of how her years of training had left her a bit jaded to the neurological tragedies she saw day after day. She said she walked into an examination room and noted the patient: skinny, special wheel chair, arms contracted, head support, and mouth hung open. It was clear that she was not going to get any information from him so she turned to speak with his parents.

As she began to write down the history her senior mentor entered, introduced himself, and surveyed the room before taking a seat on the exam table. He sat quietly for several very uncomfortable seconds and then he looked the young patient in the eye and asked, “So, when did you graduate from high school?” She said the young man’s face lit up like she had no idea it could.

Her mentor had taken the time to notice that the patient was wearing a large high-school class ring, so large it looked silly on his bony finger. His body far more than his mind, had borne the brunt of his cerebral palsy. He was a proud, beaming high-school graduate, who used a special computer to help him communicate. (Katrina Firlik, *Another Day in the Frontal Lobe*, Random House, 2007, pp138-139; submitted by Hugh Poland, Preaching Today.com)

The Doctor had looked on the heart.

The Lord looks on the heart.

Amen.