

Season after Pentecost - God Calls David

October 22, 2017

Haven Lutheran Church, Hagerstown, MD

Readings: John 7:24; Psalm 51: 10-14; 1 Samuel 16: 1-13

Grace to you and peace to from God - Father, Son, Holy Spirit – Amen

A four-year-old girl was at the pediatrician's office for a check-up. As the doctor looked into her ears with an otoscope, he asked, "Do you think I'll find Big Bird in here?" The little girl stayed silent.

Next, the doctor took a tongue depressor and looked down her throat. He asked, "Do you think I'll find the Cookie Monster down there?" Again, the little girl was silent.

Then the doctor put a stethoscope to her chest. As he listened to her heartbeat, he asked, "Do you think I'll hear Dora the Explorer in here?"

"Oh, no!" the little girl replied, "Jesus is in my heart. Dora the Explorer is on my underpants!"¹

"For the Lord does not see as mortals see; they look on the outward appearance, but the Lord looks on the heart." I don't think the Lord was seeing Big Bird, Cookie Monster, Dora the Explorer or any famous super heroes in David's heart. What God was seeking was someone "following the LORD's own heart." (1 Samuel 13:14) To Samuel (and most others) any of Jesse's elder sons looked like perfectly good leadership material — they had the stature, appearance, maturity of a king-to-be. The Lord chose none of the seven sons Jesse made pass before Samuel. Instead the Lord chose the absent, youngest son who was watching the sheep. "Rise and anoint him; for this is the one." Somehow, somehow God saw qualities in David that would make him a good king for Israel — even with his particular mixture of gifts and flaws.

At this point in the biblical text, we should be use to God consistently choosing the "one the world does not...The world has a pecking order: elder son over younger son, Pharaohs over slaves, the sons of priest over an outsider. God pays no attention to that order."² We see it clearly again in Jesus' life and those with whom he chose to associate –

those whom others rejected or thought had little value. Heck! Just look over the sampling of God's sons and daughters in this room who have been called to serve the Lord and neighbor. Young, old and older. Republicans and Democrats. Men and women. Those who are comfortable and those who are struggling financially. Life long-Lutherans and others who never belonged to a church before. Those steady on their feet and others who are not. Those who sing like angels and those who croak like frogs. "God loves you for your whole being, not as you outwardly appear." The challenge, as one of God's children, is to try to value ourselves as God does and to view others as God views them."³ What clouds our vision so that we discount or dismiss the value of ourselves or others?

Pastor Kace Leetch wrote this telling account. "Before I lost 120 pounds, I was one of the invisible people. Other people quite literally did not see me. People would give up their spots in line, hold doors open, and speak in elevators with the thinner, younger, more beautiful women. But I was invisible. People didn't acknowledge me. People didn't talk to me in the line at the grocery store. Nobody wanted to help me when I was shopping. But then I lost the weight. Now people open doors for me. Employees seek me out to ask if I need help. I am no longer invisible. But I still feel the pain of those who are judged for their weight, their color, their gender, or their sexual preference."⁴ Who is invisible to us? To see as God sees.

"Jill Briscoe speaks at Christian women's conferences. She recalls, "One day I had a speaking engagement in Florida and I shared a table with three elegant young women. I felt fat, forty, and somewhat futile. Suddenly and unexpectedly, God inquired of me, "Why do you think everyone is so tense?" "Competition," I replied with sudden understanding. I distinctly heard his next words: "Jill, you don't need to compete." For the first time I thanked God for my ordinary looks. I could be a big sister to women, a friendly mother, an aunt. I could relax, knowing I would never threaten anyone. God had made me just right for my ministry of teaching women, and that was all that mattered."⁵

When does competition blind us to our own value in God's eye? Or block us from seeing others as God sees them.

Pastor Leetch again: "At my local Home Depot recently, I nearly tripped over an employee in a wheelchair who was approaching me to see if I needed help. He was unable to speak, but held a tablet in his lap. At a tap of the screen, the tablet voiced, "May I help you find something?" Taken aback at the newness of it all, I muttered what I always do, "No, I'm just browsing, thanks." But then I realized I did, indeed, need help finding something. So, I turned and said, "Yes, actually, where can I find these things?"

The young man beamed, tapped his screen again, and it voiced, "Please follow me." He took me to the aisle I needed and showed me what I was looking for. I thanked him, another tap, and the screen voiced, "Is there anything else I can help you find?" "No thank you very much!" I responded. Tap. Voice. "You're welcome."

Now when I shop there I seek out Dylan, and he beams every time I ask him for help. He is not invisible to me." ⁶ To see others as God sees them.

God said to Samuel, "You shall anoint for me the one whom I name to you." Samuel was not to anoint based on his own human vision or judgement. He was to listen to God who loves and judges with grace beyond human understanding. There are many things that can cloud our eyes and close our ears to God: A tattoo, a brusque manner or thumping music; Or the accent in one's speech, the color of one's skin, one's sexual orientation, the religious clothing one wears, the political candidate one supports. We live in a time when we seem so hyper-awareness of differences that divide rather than our common humanity and shared vulnerabilities and needs. Rick Barger, former President of Trinity Seminary wrote: "Our world is self-destructing from participating in the age-old

narrative of division, conflict, scarcity, and fear. For this world, God has a mission that brings joy, hope, and life for all people. For this mission God has a church....”⁷ God has us.

Samuel anointed the young David as Israel’s next king. The world needs us to be very clear on “Who is your King? [Who is my King?] [It will show in all we say and do.] Will we follow the kingdom of outward appearances? Will we follow the kingdom of shallow fads and temporary trends? Will we follow the kingdom of ego and pride? Will we follow the kingdom of lust and excess? Will we follow the kingdom of envy and greed? Will we follow the kingdom of injustice, racism and prejudice? Or will we surrender and follow King Jesus? Will we place our hearts in His hands” so that our heart can come to look like His heart? ⁸ Will we place our vision at his call so that our eyes can see with the courage and grace of God? Holy Spirit, descend upon our hearts. Open our ears to hear you and our eyes to see with your eyes, that the world may know the power of your ways and healing of your love. Amen

Linda M Alessandri 10/21/17

ENDNOTE

1. Unknown

2. Beth Tanner, “Commentary on 1 Samuel 16:1-3; Psalm 51:10-14” as posted on www.workingpreacher.org

3. David G. Garber, Jr., “Commentary on 1 Samuel 16: 1-13” as posted on www.workingpreacher.org

4. Kace Leetch, “Preaching Theme” Narrative Lectionary Worship Resources Program 1 2017-2018 September 10- December 31, 2017 p. 61 Copyright 2017 © Clergy Stuff

5. Jill Briscoe, The Greatest Lesson I've Ever Learned. Today's Christian Woman, "Heart to Heart."

6. Kace Leetch, "Preaching Theme" Narrative Lectionary Worship Resources Program 1 2017-2018 September 10- December 31, 2017 p. 61 Copyright 2017 © Clergy Stuff

7. "Rick Barger, former President of Trinity Seminary, Columbus OH. Quotation is from his article "Gratitude, Humility, and Hope" *Trinity Midweek Blast!* August 16, 2017

8. Douglas C. Hoglund "Tired of Keeping Up Appearances?" preached on March 29, 2015 at Woodside Church. (*Changed "you' s" to "ours"*)