

FIVE FORKS BRETHREN IN CHRIST CHURCH
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SCRIPTURE: *1 Samuel 16:1-13*

DATE: *August 2nd, 2020*

LOCATION: *Auditorium (Bill)*

SERMON: *The Lord Looks At the Heart*

(Acknowledgement to Tim Keller for various sermons on the life of David.)

Good morning Five Forks Church, glad to be with those of you who have come out this morning, and glad to be joined by those who you who are tuning in to the live stream. You know, regardless of whether we are here or in our homes, what we all have in common is this desire to follow Jesus. It's what brings us together...the church here at Five Forks is made up of men, women and children who are serious about following Jesus no matter where we're at, and that's a good thing.

There is one thing though, that these two groups – in here, out there - don't have in common, and that is the amount of time we spent working on getting ready for the service this morning. I got up this morning and shaved, washed my hair and made sure it was all in place. I picked out a shirt and tie combination that I thought would look nice, and did a once over in the mirror before heading to the church.

I would have done *none* of those things if I had no responsibilities and just planned on watching from home, and I imagine there's a lot of you watching out there who look a bit different now that what you would look if you were – in person- this morning. So real quick...take a selfie and send us your pictures!

Where does this come from...this emphasis that we place on our outward appearance...as well as the outward appearance of others? This is some of what we'll be talking about this morning as we begin a new sermon series called **Make or Break**. We're taking the month of

August, asking God to teach us about the things that can either make us or break us as we look to follow Jesus.

Character – not our outward appearance, but what’s in our heart...is one of those things...and this is our topic for this morning. If we understand the importance of our character and look to God to work with us in this area, then it can make us...He can take us and make into a church of Jesus followers that can really impact our families, co-workers and this community that we live in.

If we focus on our appearance and overlook the importance of character...well, this can break us, because it ultimately leads us nowhere.

As we look to God to teach us, we’re going to be looking at a number of events that transpire in the life of David...so go ahead and open up your Bible, get out your device, or follow along on the screen as we head to **I Samuel chapter 16** where David’s story begins.

As you find your way there, let me explain how we’re going to work through this over the next five weeks...every week we’re going to be asking three questions: First, **What’s Happening?** As we read the Scripture text, we’re going to make sure we understand that background and all that is unfolding. Second question: **What’s Noteworthy?** What do we see in the Scripture text that catches our attention and calls for further exploration? And every week we’ll close with the third question: **What’s Your Next Step?** In light of whatever it is that God teaches us, what is the next step that He is asking you to take?

First question...

1. WHAT’S HAPPENING?

We’re in I Samuel, and for the previous 300 years the Israelites were led God as He worked through common, ordinary men and women who were called Judges. This title makes them sound important, highly educated....but they were just common, ordinary people.

Well, the Israelites have taken note of the fact that all the other nations around them were being led by actual kings, not commoners, and they said Samuel, “We’d like one of those.” Now Samuel is the intermediary between God and the people, and so he took their request to God. God said, “No, you don’t want a king, it won’t go well.” The people said, “We want one anyway.” “No, you don’t.” “Yes, we do.” And so God relented.

The first king of Israel was a man named Saul. Just what you would be looking for if appearances mattered. He stood a foot taller than other men and had a striking appearance. Unfortunately, Saul’s character didn’t measure up. It comes to the point where God rejects Saul as king, though he will remain on the throne a bit longer, and this brings us to our Scripture passage for this morning, I Samuel 16.

I Samuel 16:1 The LORD said to Samuel, “How long will you mourn for Saul since I have rejected him as king over Israel? Fill your horn with oil and be on your way. I am sending you to Jesse of Bethlehem. I have chosen one of his sons to be king.”

So Samuel sets off for Bethlehem, knowing that when he arrives, God will indicate which one of Jesse’s sons he is to anoint as the new king of Israel. So Samuel arrives in Bethlehem, and we arrive at the heart of the passage as Jesse’s firstborn son, Eliab, is brought before Samuel.

I Samuel 16:6-7 When they arrived, Samuel saw Eliab and thought, “Surely the LORD’s anointed stands here before the LORD.” But the LORD said to Samuel, “Do not consider his appearance or his height, for I have rejected him. The LORD does not look at the things man looks at. Man looks at the outward appearance, but the LORD looks at the heart.”

Thus begins this parade of seven sons, Eliab followed by Abinidab, the second son. “No.” Followed by the third. “No.” Seven sons, seven times: “No, this is not the one.”

I Samuel 16:11 So he asked Jesse, “Are these all the sons you have?” “There is still the youngest,” Jesse answered, “but he is tending the sheep.”

So they sent for him and when he arrived, the LORD said to Samuel...

I Samuel 16:12b-13 “Rise and anoint him; he is the one.” So Samuel took the horn of oil and anointed him in the presence of his brothers, and from that day the Spirit of the Lord came upon David in power.

Now we know his name, and David’s story begins. We’ll pick up on his story next week as we read about his encounter with Goliath, but it’s time for our second question:

2. WHAT’S NOTEWORTHY?

What are some of the things that stand out about God and His relationship with us this passage? Well, for starters, let’s talk about...

A. Who’s Looking Where, and Why?

Our Scripture text tells us that...

I Samuel 16:7b The LORD does not look at the things man looks at. Man looks at the outward appearance, but the LORD looks at the heart.”

The Lord is saying, *“Samuel, you see Eliab and you notice his stature and you think he just has to be the one. You – and not just you, Samuel, but the whole world – you all are focused on things that in the end don’t matter as much as you think they do...and you’re overlooking what does matter, and that is character.”*

Back at the beginning of the message, I talked about the time we spend on our outward appearance...and the emphasis we place on the physical traits of others...and I asked, *“Why is this...where does this come from?”*

I think some of it comes from within us...most of us want to have a nice appearance and there’s nothing wrong with that. God created beauty and it’s one of His gifts to us. We should want to look nice for our spouse, for instance...we just shouldn’t turn it into something misguided.

Unfortunately, many of us struggle not to let our outward appearance to be the thing that defines us. And at times we find ourselves defining others by their outward appearance. And so this is a problem, but there's a second problem.

We are living in a world that just bombards us with messages that reinforce our misguided thinking...commercials, advertisements, businesses all trying to get us focused on our appearance...our hair, our abs, our teeth, our skin...you name it, if it's on the outside, someone is out there telling you it's not quite good enough, so send us your cash and we'll help you make it better.

I want to show you a video, and so those of you at home, if you're multi-tasking, pause whatever else you're doing and take a look at this with the rest of us: There are a handful of basketball players, some in dark jerseys, some in white jerseys. What I'm going to ask you to do is watch the players in white, and count how many times the ball is passed from one player to another.

VIDEO

So what did you see...how many passes? (13). Anybody see anything else? Did any of you catch the moonwalking bear? While all of us were focused on counting passes, someone dressed as a bear walks into the picture from the right side of the screen, stops briefly before moonwalking off screen to the left. Watch it again.

VIDEO

What just happened there is called **Misdirection**. I got you to focus on what I wanted you to focus on. This same thing is happening all around us, in this current culture. God is trying to teach us that character is what He's looking at and it's what really matters...but we are getting **misdirected** by a culture telling us that what really matters is our physical appearance as well as the appearance of others. It's a message that is easy to buy into, and so we end up believing that our appearance defines us and the appearance of others defines them.

Who's looking where, and why? We're looking at appearances, while...

“The Lord looks at the heart.” (I Samuel 16:7b)

Why? Because He knows that it's what's in our heart that will allow His work to be carried out...His work in us and the world around us. Our physical appearance has no bearing when it comes to carrying out His message, His plan and His purpose. This is the first thing that I believe God wants us to realize this morning.

The second thing that stands out is found in verse 13 where we read about...

B. The Spirit of the Lord

I Samuel 16:13 So Samuel took the horn of oil and anointed him in the presence of his brothers, and from that day the Spirit of the Lord came upon David in power.

Man, that is great, David is now ready to take off! The Spirit of the Lord has come upon Him.

But this is interesting....up until now, David's life basically consists of watching over his father's flock of sheep day after day. And that could be somewhat demanding; as we'll see next week, he's had encounters with both lions and bears while tending to the sheep. But at this point, one thing that David has not had to deal with are character issues, right?

Well, the Spirit of the Lord comes upon Him, and suddenly his life becomes extremely chaotic. He's about to enter into a battle to the death with Goliath...and soon he'll be dodging spears hurled at him by Saul. He'll get another man's wife pregnant, sees that this man dies...his infant son passes away...he will experience treachery and betrayal within his family. And along the way, he's going to find himself dealing with all kinds of character issues.

Before the Spirit of God, “this” ...after the Spirit of God, “that.”

Do you know this is not unlike what happens when we make a decision to follow Jesus? I remember hearing someone say that “When the Spirit comes, the trouble begins.” And it comes in the area of our character, which is what the Spirit is after.

And if we're honest about our character, there's a lot of work to be done, and it's not likely to be easy, in fact it can be quite painful as we come face to face with some of the things that lie within our hearts.

Before Jesus and the coming of God's Spirit, I didn't have to deal with any character issues. I could pass judgment on others, lie to others, envy others, feel contempt for others, lust after others and not think anything about it.

After making the decision to follow Jesus and the coming of His Spirit...for the first time in my life I come face to face with so many character issues that reside within my heart. You see, when anyone makes that life-changing decision to follow Jesus, that is exactly what is to happen. We invite Him to change us, not outwardly, but inwardly.

When Jesus confronted some of the religious leaders in His day, at one point He told them,

Matthew 23:26b "First clean the inside of the cup and dish, and then the outside will also be clean."

Jesus was telling the Pharisees and He's telling us, that we have to deal with heart, with character...and this is not easy. Even those of us who say we want to follow Jesus, we find it easier to just gloss over and not really consider the character issues that Jesus clearly sees and wants to address.

Right now in our current culture, there is a lot of talk about racism, and it's off-putting to some. While there may be those who say "Enough already"...for me, I could look on what's happening elsewhere, the protests and all that...but where I really need to start is with me.

You see, it would be easy for to wave all this off and quickly dismiss any notion that Jesus and I might have some work to do. "Racist? Not me, I've never cared where anybody came from or the color of their skin."

Another option, as a follower of Jesus would be to step back and invite God's Spirit to search me, and bring to light anything that needs addressed. What if I discover that my next door

neighbors are moving out? Means someone else will be moving in, right? What would be the thoughts that might come to mind? “Hope they’re nice...friendly...quiet, perhaps.”

How about this: “Does their ethnicity or race even enter my mind...and if it did, why would it?” And perhaps the wrestling would begin, as God’s Spirit brings me face to face with some things that He has seen but I have not.

Of course the work of God’s Spirit goes beyond just racism and looks to address anything and everything in my character that need dealt with...pride, envy, lust...you name it.

The decision to follow Jesus introduces an element into our lives that was not there before – namely, the Holy Spirit, and coming face to face with what lies within can be painful...but it’s necessary because of the importance of character.

A lack of character, it can break you. But to invite God’s Spirit to do the work of changing what’s inside you...changing your character...it can make you. Make you into a follower that lives like Jesus...with a humble confidence and true integrity...that impacts your family, friends, church, community.

Third thing that stands out in this passage...

C. The Youngest Son

Jesse has eight sons, and he parades seven of them in front of Samuel. And once they’ve all gone by Samuel is perplexed...because God hasn’t indicated to him – as he said he would – which son Samuel was to be anoint.

And so he turns to Jesse and says, “Jesse...is this it?”

I Samuel 16:11b “Are these all the sons you have?”

And Jesse says, “Well, no...”

I Samuel 16:11 “There is still the youngest.”

In Hebrew it's “Qa-tan” (hock-a-tawn) And in the original language it's not just talking about youth, the term also implies that this person is inconsequential. And so to say that David is the youngest doesn't give the true picture.

It's like Samuel saying to Jesse, “Is this all?” and Jesse saying, “Well, no...there's the runt. One so inconsequential, so far from being the king that I won't even bother bringing him out.”

Samuel says, “I want to see him.”

David is brought in and God tells Samuel that “This is the one.”

What this is, it's one more reminder that the way God works is often the opposite of how the world works. (Man looks at the outside, God looks at the inside). In this case, it's important to know that in ancient times, the oldest son gets all the power...but so often what we see in the Bible is God working in a way the reverses the world's values, and so it's:

Able, not Cain

Isaac, not Ishmael

Jacob, not Esau

Moses, not Aaron

Sometimes it's the barren woman or the unwanted woman, and so it's:

Sarah, not Hagar

Leah, not Rachel

It's Hannah and it's Tamar.

God often works through the son that is easily overlooked...and the daughter that nobody wants.

And if you don't know these names and how God has worked in their lives, then let me encourage you to get into God's word and become familiar with the incredible ways that God works. Throughout the Scriptures we see God working in a way that reverses the world's values, and we see it here in the life of David.

So what have we seen as noteworthy in today's passage? God looks at the heart...the impact of the Holy Spirit...God works through the overlooked and the unwanted.

3. WHAT'S YOUR NEXT STEP?

We know that Jesus never calls us to remain right where we're at. He's been changing us and He's looking to continue that work. So...a number of suggestions:

For some of you, your next step is to **become a follower of Jesus**. He's looking at your heart and sees that you're not with Him. And so He's inviting you to follow Him.

It's interesting, I don't know if you're aware of this, but the Scriptures, in describing the physical appearance of Jesus, put it this way...

Isaiah 53:2b He had no beauty or majesty to attract us to him, nothing in his appearance that we should desire him.

Don't you find that interesting? Jesus could have made His physical appearance something that would just capture people's attention, but He wants you to know your outward appearance will ultimately count for nothing. But your character will. And so what He's offering you this morning is a new heart...and He does this by offering His life for yours.

Jesus – God in the flesh – went to the Cross and died to make it possible for you to live. This morning, He's asking you to trust Him, to follow Him, and if you do, He'll begin teaching you how to live.

You see, those of us who follow Jesus don't just look at the death that He died, but the life that He lived. And we'd love to have you join us as we continue to listen to Him, learn from Him, and live like Him. Please let me know if you make that decision this morning, would you?

Now, speaking of those of us who are already following Jesus, maybe the next step for some of you is to **Ask yourself, "What am I looking at, and why?"**

Which gets more of your time and attention, your outward appearance or your character? Are you getting misdirected by all these messages coming at you, looking to convince you that if you want to be accepted and approved by others, you'd better look good.

Are you placing undo emphasis on the outward appearance of others? Someone said it's how we date and how we choose our mate...and so young people, if you are out there and listening, if you make your decisions based on something as superficial as outward appearance, you may end up losing out on the prince or princess that you would have loved spending the rest of your life with.

This week, some of us need to pick up on thoughts that come from within or messages that come from without that are misguided and misdirected. You see a commercial this week – and I imagine you'll see many – that look to convince you that you don't measure up and it must be dealt with, you just call it for what it is: "Misdirection!" ...and show Jesus that you're learning.

I think for all of us, one of our next steps is to **invite God's Spirit to work with us on our character.** As followers of Jesus, we can't simply wave off or deny that there is work to be done in each of our hearts. If you, along with God's Spirit are not wrestling with something...pride, harsh words, envy, lust, coveting...man, that sounds really dangerous to me.

It was Tim Keller, one of my favorite pastors who said that **"It is a sign of a profound lack of character, to be oblivious to the importance of character."**

Followers of Jesus, we *all* have work to do, and God's Spirit is ready to help you with the hard stuff and walk you through it. So before this day is over invite the Holy Spirit to reveal to you what lies within your heart that needs to be addressed, and get to work. It won't be easy, it

might be painful at times, but to not do this will eventually break you...to do the hard work that it takes will eventually make you. God will be transforming you, making you into something beautiful on the inside, that will work its way to the outside. And Jesus will use you to impact the world around you.

Finally, for some of you, your next step is to **realize that Jesus can and will work through you, as unlikely as it may seem.** This morning God has looked to reveal to you that He often works through the overlooked and the unwanted.

It would be great if this opened the eyes of some of you out there who know what it's like to feel like the runt...to feel inconsequential...overlooked and unwanted. You're the kind that God loves to work through. Will you tell yourself that, will you believe that...to the extent that you will invite Him to work through you. And then listen to Him, learn from Him, live like Him, and watch what happens.

Character. It's what God is looking for as He looks into your heart and mine. What you truly think about all this can either make you or break you. Five Forks Church, let's get to work, let's allow God to work, and make us into something beautiful, starting with our hearts.