

“The Lord Sees”

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Continuing a series *A King for God's People*

1st Samuel 15:35-16:13

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The Lord regretted making Saul king over Israel. The Lord said to Samuel, “How long are you going to grieve over Saul? I have rejected him as king over Israel. Fill your horn with oil and get going. I’m sending you to Jesse of Bethlehem because I have found my next king among his sons.” “How can I do that?” Samuel asked. “When Saul hears of it he’ll kill me!” “Take a heifer with you,” the Lord replied, “and say, ‘I have come to make a sacrifice to the Lord.’ Invite Jesse to the sacrifice, and I will make clear to you what you should do. You will anoint for me the person I point out to you.”

Samuel did what the Lord instructed. When he came to Bethlehem, the city elders came to meet him. They were shaking with fear. “Do you come in peace?” they asked. “Yes,” Samuel answered. “I’ve come to make a sacrifice to the Lord. Now make yourselves holy, then come with me to the sacrifice.” Samuel made Jesse and his sons holy and invited them to the sacrifice as well.

When they arrived, Samuel looked at Eliab and thought, That must be the Lord’s anointed right in front. But the Lord said to Samuel, “Have no regard for his appearance or stature, because I haven’t selected him. God doesn’t look at things like humans do. Humans see only what is visible to the eyes, but the Lord sees into the heart.”

Next Jesse called for Abinadab, who presented himself to Samuel, but he said, “The Lord hasn’t chosen this one either.” So Jesse presented Shammah, but Samuel said, “No, the Lord hasn’t chosen this one.” Jesse presented seven of his sons to Samuel, but Samuel said to Jesse, “The Lord hasn’t picked any of these.” Then Samuel asked Jesse, “Is that all of your boys?”

“There is still the youngest one,” Jesse answered, “but he’s out keeping the sheep.” “Send for him,” Samuel told Jesse, “because we can’t proceed until he gets here.”

So Jesse sent and brought him in. He was reddish brown, had beautiful eyes, and was good-looking. The Lord said, “That’s the one. Go anoint him.” So Samuel took the horn of oil and anointed him right there in front of his brothers. The Lord’s spirit came over David from that point forward.

1st Samuel 15.35-16.13
Common English Bible

*He's sees you when you're sleeping.
He knows when you're awake.
He knows if you've been bad or good,
so be good, for goodness sake!*

No, I'm not even close to being in the Christmas spirit. Besides, except for the swinging rhythm and catchy rhyming, that is a creepy song. Santa Claus, watching all the time, grading what good girls and boys we've been.

Santa has lots of helpers. Elves call at supertime, saying "our conversation is being recorded for quality assurance purposes." That's pressure! Elves keep track of what I buy, and send carefully-selected advertisements to my Facebook page.

Jeremy Bentham was an English philosopher in the 18th century. He designed a prison, where a few guards could see all the inmates, but the inmates could not see the guards. The idea is if you don't know when you're being watched, you'll behave, just in case.¹ Of course, that's for criminals. They'd never do such a thing to us.

*He's sees you when you're sleeping.
He knows when you're awake.*

II

Samuel was hoping no one was watching. All the long trip down, from Ramah to Bethlehem, he tried to be unnoticed.²

Samuel had been a Saul-man. Sure, the old prophet had been very cool to the idea of having a king at all. God's People, Israel, was supposed to be different from the ways of the world. But when God decided to let it happen anyway, and picked Saul, Samuel had high hopes. Now, he was painfully disappointed.

So God sent Samuel to find a new king. The mission was secret. It had to be. Saul was still on the throne. Finding a new king when there is no vacancy for the position is treason! That's why the cover-story of the cow. "Say you're going to sacrifice it in Bethlehem," God advised.

Samuel makes it and gathers the people of Bethlehem together. He makes sure the farmer Jesse and his sons are there. Seven sons. Seven is a complete set.

Samuel studies the first, who looks every bit like a king should. But God says no. Samuel

¹ <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Panopticon>

² The southward trip between the towns was about 10 miles, straight. But Samuel had to skirt around Saul's base at Gibeah, then around Jerusalem, which was an enemy city in those days. The path was hilly, he was elderly, and he was leading a cow. All of which would have made for a long, slow journey.

studies at the second. God says no. The same with the third, and so on. They have no idea why Samuel is scouting them. No reason to think it is about a new king. All they know is that, whatever Samuel is looking for, none of them has it. The thing is, Samuel does not know what he is looking for either.

All seven. . . . Nothing! “Got any more?” “Yep. *The little one. The runt. Didn’t bother getting him an invitation. Someone’s gotta look after the sheep.*” “Get him!” orders Samuel. They all wait. Jesse, his sons, the elders, and the holy prophet of God wait, while someone finds the boy, brings him in, cleans him up, and shows him to Samuel.

God gives Samuel a nudge (so to speak). This is the one. Number eight. So Samuel anoints little Dave the new king for God’s People. I’m guessing Davey has no idea what it is all about. No one sees it, except Samuel, and he has God’s help.

III

This year, we’re going to keep dropping in on Davey, and see how he does. He must be important. No one comes up more in the Bible than David.³ He’s not always the hero. Sometimes, he is nasty. What did God see in him?

His heart!

*The Lord sees, not as people see.
We look on the outward appearance,
but the Lord looks on the heart.*

As well as we can know each other, we can only know each other so well. We can only know ourselves so well. Only God can see a person’s heart.

Of course, “heart” is a metaphor. We use “heart” to describe emotions, passions, especially love. My daughter, Rachel, is playing Miranda in Shakespeare’s *The Tempest*. She has a scene in which she gets engaged to Ferdinand, after a relationship of a few hours. He says to her, “*Here’s my hand.*” And she gushes, “*And mine, with my heart in’t.*”⁴

The Hebrew word for heart is *lêb*.⁵ *Leb* has a different sense. In Jewish thought, your *lêb* is the centre of your intellect, your morality, your consciousness of God. Your *lêb* is your will, your intentions.⁶

God sees our *lêb*: what we are all about, what makes us tick, what moves us. God sees

³ In the English Standard Version, David is spoken of 1141 times, Jesus 966, Moses 852, and Abraham 250.

⁴ Act III, Scene 1.

⁵ Or *lêbâb*.

⁶ V. Philips Long, “1 Samuel” in John H. Walton (ed), Zondervan Illustrated Bible Backgrounds Commentary Volume 2 (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2009), 342.

fully what we can only catch hints of.

God saw David's *lêb*. Elsewhere, it says that God saw in David someone who was "after God's own *lêb*."⁷ That sounds like God loved David more, but that's our meaning of "heart." What it's really saying is that David's desires fit with God's. David and God share a loyalty. David lives God's purposes.⁸

David will not be perfect. As a husband, he will be a disaster. As a father, he will fail. And, he will kill a lot of people. And his own People will suffer for generations. Often, he will be a role model of what *not* to do. Yet, in the unfolding story of God's salvation—God's salvation of God's People, and God's salvation of the whole world—David will do what God needs to be done.

He's just a kid. He's number eight. He showed up late. But God sees his *lêb*. God sees what we can't see. Even in ourselves.

IV

God sees your heart, your *lêb*. Does that worry you? God knows what you are about, what makes you tick, what moves you. God knows you better than you know you. Does that frighten you?

Think of this. If you are going in for open heart surgery, do you want the surgeon to be able to see your heart?

Listen to this. It's from Paul's 2nd letter to the Corinthians:

The love of Christ controls us, because we have concluded this: one died for the sake of all; therefore, all died. He died for the sake of all so that those who are alive should live not for themselves but for the one who died for them and was raised.

So then, from this point on we won't recognize people by human standards. Even though we used to know Christ by human standards, that isn't how we know him now. So then, if anyone is in Christ, that person is part of the newcreation. The old things have gone away, and look, newthings have arrived!⁹

Because of Jesus . . . because of his love . . . because of his love in his dying for us . . . our heart, our *lêb*, is changed. The Spirit turns my *lêb* from being Greg-focused, to being focused on Christ. I no longer live for myself, but for the one who died and was raised.

⁷ 1st Samuel 13:14, quoted in Acts 13:22.

⁸ "The phrase 'a man after my own heart' does not mean (as it may sound in English) a special favorite of God. Rather since the heart is the seat of the will and intentions in Hebrew, the phrase simply means that David will be the one who will carry out the purposes of God." Christopher J. H. Wright, [The Mission of God: Unlocking the Bible's Grand Narrative](#) (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2006), 344.

⁹ 2nd Corinthians 5:14-17 (Common English Bible)

And so I start to see others differently. I'll never see them as God sees them. But I'll realize that the same dying-and-rising for me Jesus is working on their hearts too. They are part of God's new-creation-work too. I might not be able to see that. I too often don't see it in myself. But it's the truth that God sees. The truth of the *lêb*, the heart.

God sees you. God sees you through Jesus. God sees you through new creation lenses. And God, your Surgeon, delights in His handiwork!

Amen.