

“A Man (Person!) After God’s Own Heart!”

June 6, 2010

1 Samuel 16:1-13

Acts 13:16-23

**A Sermon preached by
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Now, on the surface of things, there didn’t seem to be ANYTHING about David that would have impressed God. Nothing caused God to sit up and say, *“Wow! What a man! I think I’ll choose HIM to be the king!”* As a matter of fact, David didn’t look much different than any other Jewish boy his age. Oh, he was handsome...don’t get me wrong there. The Bible tells us that he was attractive, with a healthy-looking complexion and beautiful eyes. But though he was obviously a nice looking young man, David’s outward appearance didn’t seem to be the thing that set him apart in God’s eyes.

After all, he was nothing more than a shepherd boy...and God was looking for a KING...a king to replace King Saul...who had displeased God greatly and was on his way OFF the throne...although for the LIFE of him, Saul didn’t even know it yet! In other words, God was looking for “a man after God’s own heart,” for clearly Saul was NOT that man! And that’s when the young David appeared on the scene.

God sent his prophet Samuel to the little town of Bethlehem...to the house of Jesse...telling Samuel to *“take some olive oil because I have chosen one of Jesse’s sons to be the new king of Israel!”* One by one, each of Jesse’s sons are paraded before Samuel, beginning with the oldest, Eliab. *“Surely THIS is the one God has chosen!”* Samuel said to himself, for Eliab was tall and handsome. But God said to Samuel, *“No! This is not the one! Pay no attention to how tall and handsome Eliab is. I do not judge a person by their outward appearance, but by what is in their heart.”* (1Sam.16:6-7)

Then Jesse brought forward his next son and his next and his next. But each and every time, God told Samuel *“No, he is not the one!”*

“Are these ALL of your sons?” Samuel asked Jesse. Then Jesse rubbed his beard and thought for a minute, and almost as an after thought, said, *“Oh! Well, there is one more But he’s the youngest and is out taking care of the sheep!”*

“Go get him!” Samuel said.

And when David arrived, God immediately said to Samuel, *“This is the one I want! Anoint him with oil for he is a man after my own heart!”* (1 Sam. 16:12/ Acts 13:22) And from that moment on, the Scripture tells us, *“the Spirit of the Lord took control of David and was with him from that day on!”*

Now, did you get what the story said there? God called David *“a man after my own heart!”* ...a title that’s not used for ANYONE ELSE in all of the Bible. Of all the people God called and chose and worked throughout the entire span of the scriptures...both the Old and the New Testament...only David was said to be *“a man after God’s own heart.”* Which, of course, PUZZLED me...puzzled me greatly...and got me to wondering why in the world God chose David, for one things...but perhaps MORE importantly, why God, in reality, chooses ANY of us to do God’s work and work God’s will in the world. After all, as Christians, we believe God calls us ALL to be followers of his son, Christ Jesus, our Lord...and CHOOSES us to help spread Christ’s love in all that we do. There are even some who believe that God has a particular PURPOSE of our lives and that our lives are not truly complete and whole until we DISCOVER God’s purpose.

So my question is why DOES God choose certain people? Or perhaps the better question would be: What kind of people does God CHOOSE? Why did God choose a person like David? And even MORE importantly, why does God choose US?

Well, unlike most of US, who look only at the surface impressions, God looks at what's INSIDE a person. When WE choose people to admire...when we choose our ROLE MODELS...our HEROES...we often choose the BEAUTIFUL people...the BRILLIANT people...the SUCCESSFUL people. We're terribly enamored with what's on the SURFACE. Some people even decide who they will vote for President because he or she LOOKS GOOD on television!

But God simply doesn't DO it that way. Instead of looking at what's on the OUTSIDE of a person's life...God's looking at what's on the INSIDE...in a person's HEART...in their SOUL...in their INNER MOST BEING where God knows us better than we even know ourselves. And it's from looking at what's on the INSIDE that God knows...KNOWS beyond a shadow of a doubt...whether or not we are "people after God's own heart." Which was PRECISELY why God chose a little nobody of shepherd boy like David to be the next king of His people, Israel...because God KNEW what was in David's heart and knew that it he was a man after God's own heart.

Now, if you listen to nothing else I say this morning, I would encourage you to listen RIGHT NOW...ESPECIALLY you honored graduates who are about to move out into the world beyond the protected and sheltered environment of the families, the homes, the church and the schools you've known growing up here in Bellefontaine and Logan County. You may not believe me now as you sit there all proud of your accomplishments, thinking you've got the world by the tail and the future at your feet. But there may just come a time when you're going to need some words of wisdom to hang on to when the going gets tough and life throws you one of its proverbial curve balls. So LISTEN WELL, my friends...LISTEN WELL.

When God scans the earth for "people after God's own heart," God isn't on a search for "angels in the flesh." And God CERTAINLY isn't looking for PERFECT PEOPLE...since none of us are. But God IS searching for PEOPLE...flesh and blood men and women like you and me...who have some of those same QUALITIES as God found in David...QUALITIES that can make US "people after God's own heart," even as David was long ago.

And what ARE those qualities? What does it MEAN to be "a person after God's own heart"? Well, I can't say for sure, of course, but it seems to me that being "a person after God's own heart" means that you LOVE GOD first and foremost in your life...and that you want to do what is RIGHT in the eyes of the Lord...in other words, that you TRY to live your life the way God wants you to live. None of us are ever going to do it perfectly, of course. David certainly didn't. His later life will show that he was anything BUT perfect. But God didn't reject him because he wasn't perfect. In fact, God loved him all the more, because though David WASN'T perfect, he REALIZED the error of his ways...asked for God's forgiveness...and tried even HARDER to live his life the way God wanted him to live. (But more about that in the weeks ahead!)

To be "a person after God's own heart," I think ALSO means that there is a certain level of HUMILITY in our lives...the humility of realizing that though we AREN'T going to be perfect, we never stop TRYING to live the way God wants us to live. And again, think about David here. When Samuel came looking for the next King of Israel, David wasn't up there with all his other brothers, chest puffed out, saying "Hey, look at me! I'm the best! I'm the greatest! Choose me!" When Jesse gathered his sons for Samuel to choose from, David wasn't even considered worthy enough to BE there. He was out humbly doing what he was supposed to be doing...taking care of his father's sheep. It wasn't the kind of grand and glorious job that that would win him fame or recognition. In fact, even his own father didn't even think to call him in until Samuel asked if Jesse had any other sons. David was, in effect, the nobody that NOBODY noticed.

Oh, but GOD noticed! God looked at David, out in the fields around Bethlehem...humbly keeping his father's sheep...dutifully doing his father's bidding...and God put his stamp of approval upon him. All of which says to me that "a person after God's own heart," doesn't CARE who gets the glory. He or she simply DOES what God wants 'em to do. And God notices!

So while David's brothers were all jockeying for the best place in line...while they were all stretching to stand their tallest in Samuel's eyes...while they are all smiling their best smiles and flexing their strongest muscles...David was out there all alone, watching his father's sheep - faithfully and humbly. Which was obviously a quality that went a long way in the eyes of the Lord!

Which ultimately also made David a person of INTEGRITY! Now, I want you to remember that word INTEGRITY! It is SO SIGNIFICANT to God. God isn't looking for the most magnificent specimens of humanity...at least not in the way we HUMANS judge each other. God's is looking for what's in a person's HEART! And INTEGRITY is one of the BEST things God's can see when he checks us out! God saw it in David...and he's looking for it in US as well.

Listen to some of the synonyms for word INTEGRITY: Being WHOLE...COMPLETE...REAL...HONEST...TRUE...GENUINE. Integrity is what you are when nobody's looking but God. It means being honest and genuine down to the very CORE of your being.

Now, it's sad to have to say it, of course, but the truth of the matter is that we live in a world today that says, in many ways, "*If you just make a good IMPRESSION on people, that's all that really matters.*" But here's the thing! You'll never be "a person after God's own heart" if that's your philosophy. NEVER! You simply can't FAKE IT with God. As God told Samuel when Samuel was impressed with how tall and handsome one of Jesse's sons was, "*I do not judge as humans judge. Humans look at a person's outward appearance. But I look at a person's HEART!*" (1 Sam. 16:7)

The INTEGRITY of David's heart is what made David God's choice for King. And it is what will make God sit up and take notice of US as well – being REAL...GENUINE people who are TRUE to ourselves...TRUE toward others...and MOST of all, TRUE to God. Not that we'll ever do it perfectly, mind you. We won't! Even the BEST of us will stumble and fall every now and then. But it's not PERFECTION that God's after. God's taken care of the perfection in Jesus Christ. It's the ATTEMPT! It's our TRYING! It's the EFFORT we put forth in being "people after God's own heart." And THAT is what INTEGRITY is all about!

Now, to be sure, David may have lived many centuries ago and his story may be as old as the ancient pages of scripture. But don't you doubt for a moment that the lessons we can learn from him are as current and true to life as this morning's sunrise. Two in particular stand out in my mind as we close our time together today.

First, it is in the LITTLE THINGS in life...done in the quiet, lonely places...that we PROVE ourselves capable of doing BIG things. David's faithfulness in tending his father's sheep prepared him for FAITHFULNESS when God called him to be the next king of Israel. All of which says to me that if you want to be a person with a large vision, you first need to cultivate the habit of doing the little things well! That's when God sits up and takes notice! The way you show KINDNESS when no one is looking...the way you TREAT other people – ESPECIALLY the little guy...the one nobody else takes notice of...the person everybody else just wants to kick aside or ignore – the way you SHARE LOVE for other people in your everyday life...THAT'S what matters most in life and MAKES you "a person after God's own heart." The test for MY life...and I think YOUR'S as well...is NOT just what we do when everybody else is watching...but how well we "do kindness, show love and live humbly with God" (Micah 6:8) when only GOD is watching.

And secondly, when God is molding us into the people God would have us be, God is NEVER in a hurry. It took a LIFETIME for David to become the man God intended for him to be. As far as God is concerned, we are ALWAYS a work in progress...a masterpiece in the making. Which says to me that we should NEVER give up on ourselves...or on anyone ELSE for that matter. God is NEVER in a hurry when molding us into "people after God's own heart!"

To be sure, it is in the classroom of FAITHFULNESS and DEVOTION toward God that we learn to become the PEOPLE of God. It is from the teachers of HUMILITY and GRACIOUSNESS that we develop into men and women God CHOOSES for God's work in the world. And it is on the playing field of INTEGRITY and GENUINENESS that we...like David...BECOME "people after God's own heart."

So may God, through the power of the Holy Spirit within EACH of us, make us people whom God would choose to do His work and work His will, each and every day of our lives, from this day forward, and forever more!

Amen...and AMEN!

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