

8/7/18

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

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.” 1 Samuel 16:7

Samuel was sure that he had found the man who would be the next king of Israel. Before him stood Eliab, the oldest son of Jesse of Bethlehem. Eliab looked like someone who could be king. He was tall. He was good-looking. And he was the oldest of Jesse's sons. Surely, when God had told Samuel to anoint one of Jesse's sons as the next king of Israel, God intended that Samuel should anoint Eliab.

But Eliab wasn't the one whom God had chosen. Eliab's appearance and height, which to Samuel made Eliab look “kingly,” weren't what mattered to God. What mattered to God as he chose Israel's next king was something that only he could see. What mattered to God was what was in Eliab's heart. And as God looked at Eliab's heart, he did not see what he wanted in someone who would rule over his people.

To us sinful human beings, appearances matter. Like Samuel, we too often judge other people by their appearance. And we do all we can to make sure that we present our best appearance before others since we know that they too often will judge us by the same standard. Even when it comes to how we present ourselves before God, our preoccupation with appearances tends to hold sway. We think that if we at least appear to others as if we're obeying God's commands, if we at least have the appearance of being a Christian, maybe that will be good enough for God too.

But the Lord told Samuel that he does not look at the things that people look at. While people may be impressed by outward appearance, “the Lord looks at the heart.” What does he see when he looks at our hearts? If he looks at our hearts as they are by nature, he sees hearts that are filled with unbelief, hatred, and defiance toward him. He sees hearts that deserve only to be punished forever in hell.

Thankfully, that is not the only way in which God looks at our hearts. For us who by God’s grace believe in Jesus as our Savior, God sees our hearts, not as they are by nature, but as they are in Jesus. And when he does that, he sees something very different. Through Jesus, he sees in us hearts that have been cleansed of every sin by the blood of Jesus, poured out on the cross. Through Jesus, he sees in us hearts that are covered with Jesus’ perfection. Through Jesus, he sees in us the hearts of his dearly loved children, who will spend eternity with him in heaven. That ultimately is what matters most to God—and to us.

Prayer: *Heavenly Father, when you look at my heart, may you always see Jesus, and in him see me as your forgiven child. Amen.*

(WELS E-Devotion, adapted)

...See you in worship.

Keep looking up because the Lord is always looking down – Psalm 121

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