

## **Sermon Notes – May 16, 2021**

(Matthew 5:1-10)

I'm going to talk a little bit about Samuel today (and David), but, I am also going to tie it in to Matthew's gospel – Matthew 5:8, where Jesus says, "Blessed are the pure in heart for they shall see God."

Any of you ever see the movie called "Rudy"? It was a football movie that came out in 1993 and in it, the young man, Rudy, was from a steel mill town. His family had always worked in the steel mill and it was destined that he was to work there, too. But, Rudy had more dreams for himself – he wanted to get out of that town; he wanted to go to college (to Notre Dame), and he wanted to play football for them. But, Rudy had dyslexia (a learning disability) and he had to go through extra tutoring just to get into college. He finally got accepted at Notre Dame, but it was hard for him to play football because he was short. He was short and kind of blocky-built, like a football player, but he didn't have much stature to him. He was probably 5'5" - 5'6". Rudy was short, but he wanted to play on Notre Dame so badly. He worked in maintenance for the team; he worked as a water boy; he did all kinds of things for the football team. Finally, he tried out for the team and the coach chose him to be on the team. But, if you remember, he sat on the bench for two years. He finally got to play his senior year. At the last ball game that season, all the seniors on the team said, "Coach, we're going to quit if you don't let Rudy play this game." The coach didn't know what to do. All of the tough players came in and said, "We're going to quit if you don't let him play." So, the coach finally gave in and said, "Okay. He can play as long as we're winning and we're pretty sure that it's going to be our game." So, it got close to the end of the game and they were winning, and the team players put the pressure on the coach. Finally, he let Rudy go in to play. And, if you remember, I think Rudy scored. Anyway, he got to play. He'd already invited his dad, his brother, and all his family to come and watch that game. Somebody would say, and I would say, Rudy had "heart" – heart for the game. He was committed to it; he was devoted to it; he was devoted to that college; he wanted to play; he wanted to give it his best – his all and he did.

Coach "Bear" Bryant used to be at the University of Alabama for about 25 years as their head football coach. The story is told that he

went to an Alabama farm to recruit a young man to play for the college football team. He asked the mother where the son was and she said, "He's working out in the barn." He asked, "Would you call him in?" She said, "Well, sir, he's not very big." Coach Bryant looked at her and said, "Ma'am, I don't care how big he is. You've got to have heart to play on this team." What do we mean when somebody has to "have heart"? They're devoted; they're committed to it; they give it their best, their all. Well, I want you to think a little bit about that as we talk about the story of Samuel and David this morning.

King Saul was the king of Israel. He had been chosen by the people. He was tall, handsome, powerful, and smart; he was a good warrior and soldier; and the people chose him to be their king. He had power, prestige, and wealth, and he wanted to maintain it. God became unhappy with Saul, because Saul was all about himself, rather than the needs of the people and the things of God, and God rejected him. He sent Samuel (who was the top spiritual leader in the nation of Israel) to Bethlehem and to anoint the next King of Israel to replace King Saul. God told Samuel, "I want you to go to a little town of Bethlehem and see a man named Jesse. I want you to call his sons before you and I'm going to tell you which one to anoint as the next King of Israel." Samuel says, "I can't do that. I've got to go through the town where Saul lives. He's the king. If he has any idea that I'm going to anoint another king, he'll kill me." Samuel was called by God to trust him, even though he was fearful for his life and anxious, and challenged about what he was going to do. But, Samuel went to Bethlehem. He trusted God and was obedient.

God said, "Here's what I want you to do, Samuel. I want you to go and take a heifer with you - a sacrifice to offer in the temple. When Saul's people see you, you just say, 'I'm going to Bethlehem to offer a sacrifice,' because you are the spiritual leader of the nation. You can offer sacrifices and worship anywhere." So, God gave Samuel an alibi. And then Samuel says, "But, Lord, what about those elders in the little town of Bethlehem? What am I going to answer to them? They are going to say, 'Why in the world would the great spiritual leader of the nation come to the little town of Bethlehem?'" (It'd be like the President coming to Conover, right? Why would he come to that little small town?) But, God sent him to Bethlehem. He said, "Just tell them you are going to

worship there, offer a sacrifice, and invite them to join you.” So, that’s what he did. God gave him an alibi even though his main purpose for the trip that day was to anoint the next King of Israel.

Samuel calls forth Jesse and his sons. He said, “Parade your sons in front of me and God is going to let me know which one is going to be the king.” Well, he went through every son of Jesse. The oldest two were tall, handsome, smart, and mighty warriors. They were good with swords and weapons. But, God said, “No. They’re not the one either.” Samuel went through every son of Jesse, and God rejected them – all seven sons. Samuel looked at Jesse and said, “Don’t you have any more sons?” Jesse said, “I’ve got one more little one that is out in the fields, tending to the sheep.” (Now, tending sheep was one of the lowest jobs you could do. It was one of the lowest social-economic jobs you could have.) David is a young guy, probably about twelve years of age at the time, and he’s tending the sheep. But, he’s short. He’s not as tall as his other brothers. Samuel says, “Call him in.” And Jesse calls him in. God impresses upon Samuel, “This is the one. Rise and anoint him.”

Samuel couldn’t understand – “You passed up all these other sons? Why, God?” God says, “Samuel, I’ve got something to teach you” – God doesn’t look or judge people the way the world does – the world looks at appearance, personality, and outward actions, but, God looks at the heart. He wants to know what’s in your heart. Is it clean? Is it pure? Is it devoted and committed to him? God spotted right off that David was committed to him – that David knew God. God said to Samuel, “That’s the one.”

***God wants us to have a heart devoted and committed to his will and his ways. He wants us to have a pure heart.*** When Jesus said, “Blessed are the pure in heart for they shall see God,” what did he mean? I need you to know that “pure” came from a Greek word meaning “to cleanse,” “to purify,” “to purge.” It was originally used to talk about a pure army in Rome. When they said you had a “pure army,” it meant one that had been purged of all the cowardly, ineffective, and disgruntled soldiers – so you had a “pure army.” They were committed; they were not cowards; they were brave; they were willing to fight and they were committed to it. It meant to purge, to cleanse, to purify. ***To have a “pure heart” is for us to acknowledge that we are sinners and are only***

***cleansed and purified by God's grace, his forgiveness, and the blood of Christ. God cleanses us of sin and impurities - wrong thoughts, motives, etc. It means that we are devoted and committed to God and his will and way.***

David was a man that was committed to God. He was devoted to him. He wanted to do God's will and way. God is always looking at our hearts.

Do you know what the opposite of "pure heart" is? ... It's to have ulterior motives; to be deceitful and manipulative. You know in the world's ways, the ways we succeed many times is manipulation, deceit, ulterior motives, and selfishness. But, God calls us to be different from the world. He sent us into the world -- not of the world, but into the world - to be different and to live differently - to have different attitudes and motives. *"The heart" in the Greek understanding was "the center of your being" -- the center of your emotions, your attitude, your intentions, your feelings, your motives.*

In Proverbs 4:23, Solomon said, "Guard your hearts, for it's the wellspring of life." God knows what's in our hearts - he can read what nobody else can. How many of us can fool people by the way we act on the outside and the way we look? You can look at somebody and think, "Man, they're a great person," but, only God knows what's on the inside. And God says, "I don't judge like the world judges people - by their look, their personality, and their outer actions. I look at their heart."

So, today, if Christ were here, he would ask us, "How's your heart?" Is it devoted and committed to him? Is it cleansed, forgiven, and purged of selfishness, greed, prejudice, hatred, anger, revenge, bitterness, and all those other things? Is it a heart like God - like Jesus Christ? Is it a heart devoted and committed to living out God's will and way?

The late Dietrich Bonhoeffer wrote the book, "The Cost of Discipleship." In it, he says, "Who are the pure of heart? The pure of hearts are those who have hearts surrendered completely to the reign of Christ that he may reign alone there. Only those whose hearts are undefiled by the evil in their hearts and even their own virtues are pure in heart."

God calls us to look at our hearts and to know that he looks at that. The Pharisees and Sadducees continually made Judaism about the

outward actions, but God was concerned about what was in your heart and the inner relationship you have with God. How do we look at other people? Do we just judge them on outward appearance or do we look at their inner character and values – their heart?

I have a brother that died several years ago in a truck accident. He was tough, rough, and gruff on the outside. He had a terrible bark and a little bite, but he had a good heart. At his funeral service, I will never forget all the people that came up to my sister-in-law, my brothers, and I to tell us what a good heart my brother had. They said things like – “My husband was an alcoholic. Your brother used to come to my house and drop off one-hundred or two-hundred dollars and say, ‘Go buy your groceries this week.’ He’d say, ‘I know your kids need clothes and shoes – here’s \$200.’” You know, my sister-in-law was always wondering where the money was going... She paid the bills and would give him spending money. He’d ask for more and she didn’t have a clue where it was going. We found out later that it was because he was giving it to people in need. He had a heart like Christ, deep inside.

***God’s going to judge us by our hearts -- not our outward possessions, achievements, looks, appearance, or anything else.*** He’s going to judge us by our heart. How’s your heart? Is it devoted and committed to God’s will and way? Is it a heart that knows it’s sinful and can only be cleansed and forgiven by the grace and blood of Christ? Remember: God looks at our heart, not the outward appearance.

I want you to notice a couple other things in this story and this is especially for our graduates today: Samuel was asked to trust God when he was fearful and challenged. Some of you as high school and college students are going to be challenged in the next four years with difficult things – whether it be classes, professors, things on the campus, relationships, etc. You are going to have some challenges and decisions to make. **I want to encourage you to trust God and be obedient to him – even when it’s difficult and you are fearful and anxious. And then I want you to remain open – open hearts and open spirits – to what God wants to teach you and do in and through your lives.** Remember that God is looking at your heart. “Guard your heart for it is the wellspring of life.” May God bless each and every one of us and may we guard our hearts. Amen.