

The Lord Looks at the Heart (1 Sam 16 & Hebrews 4:12-13) 30-Jun-19¹

We're looking at 1 Samuel 16

There are **Bibles** in front of you and an **outline** in the bulletin if you like to take notes.

Just a reminder - that our Bible talks are on our **website** - in **audio** form and also available for **printing**. You can also get a **sermon printed** on the day, if you like - just let me know

Let's pray...

Recap

To a quick recap where we got up to last week

[PowerPoint 1-Recap]

- God rejected Saul as King for his continued disobedience towards God
- And so sadly after the Prophet Samuel told Saul he had been rejected as King - Samuel left Saul - never to interact with Saul again
- 3 times we mentioned last week - when Saul was talking to Samuel about God - Saul referred to God as '**your** God" - it was like God was a distant God to Saul and Saul did not have a personal relationship with God
- The bottom line was - Saul did not have a heart for God

Intro

- Coronary Heart Disease is the leading cause of death in Australia - 19,000 people each year, in Australia, die of heart disease

[PowerPoint 2-Heart Check]

- Our hearts need to be healthy to keep us alive

- Have you had your heart checked lately?

(pause)

- How's your heart towards God?
- Having a heart towards God is so important
- What does the expression - **heart towards God** mean, though?

[PowerPoint 3a-Heart definition]

- The Hebrew word used for heart [lavav] in this passage from 1 Samuel means: *the part of us inside which has our emotions, affections, conscience and moral character*
- Having a heart towards God is the difference between King Saul and his successor - God wants a King to succeed Saul - who is a man **after his own heart**
- A King after God's own heart - will be a King who **does what God would want him to do** and does what **pleases God** - rather than doing what the King wants and what pleases himself
- That's the difference between a **king like the other nations** and a **king that God wants**
- The Key verse in 1 Samuel 16 is the last part of verse 7 -

[PowerPoint 3b-Key Verse]

People look at the outward appearance, but the LORD looks at the heart."

So, if the Lord looks at the heart, we want to make sure our hearts are towards God.

What does having a heart towards God look like?

[PowerPoint 4-Heading]

First, having a heart towards God

Means letting go of the Past and obeying God (v1)

[PowerPoint 4a-v1]

Means letting go of the past and obeying God

See verse 1

The Lord asks Samuel how long he is going to keep mourning that fact that God has rejected Saul as King

Yes, there is a place for mourning and grieving a bad situation

But God's work still needs to be done

God has a new King in mind - and whilst Samuel's feeling sorry for himself - he's not getting on with his work for God

God tells Samuel - he has to go to the town of Bethlehem - to a man name Jesse - one of his sons will be the new King - a King with a heart for God

It's important in our times of grieving over a bad situation - that we all still obedient to God - and don't neglect our times with God - nor neglect the work of God

(pause)

Second, having a heart towards God

[PowerPoint 4b-vv2-5]

Means Letting go of Fear and Trusting God (vv2-5)

Means letting go of fear and trusting God

See verses 2 to 5

Samuel is worried that if he goes off to anoint a King to replace Saul, and Saul finds out he will be killed

Samuel knows enough about Saul's state of mind to know - that Saul is likely to flip when he finds out

But Samuel didn't need to fear

God had it covered

God tells Samuel to bring a heifer [a cow that has never born a calf] as sacrifice - when he goes to Bethlehem to meet Jesse

And God promises Samuel - He will show Samuel what to do and who to anoint as the new King

So, Samuel trusted God and obeyed

When Samuel arrived at Bethlehem

The elders at Bethlehem are afraid too - they're not sure if Samuel has come in peace - they've heard about the recent war with the Amalekites - and the last thing Samuel did - was to kill King Agag - so understandably they're nervous.

Samuel reassures them he has come in peace

And he invites Jesse and his sons to the sacrifice - and consecrates them by making sure they are washed and have clean clothes and that they're not in contact with anything unclean - because they are to approach a Holy God

Samuel overcame the fear he had - by trusting God had everything under control

It's the same for us - being afraid is the opposite of trusting that God has all our life under control

(pause)

Third, having a heart towards God

[PowerPoint 4c-vv6-13]

Is Understanding God's Selection Criteria is looking at our hearts (vv6-13)

Is understanding that God's selection criteria for selecting people to serve Him is not what their outward appearance is like but what their heart is like [heart being our definition of: emotions, affections, conscience and moral character]

In verses 6 to 13

We basically have a beauty pageant for men

It's the Mr. Bethlehem Beauty Pageant

One by one all of Jesse's sons are paraded before Samuel

When Samuel sees the first son, Eliab - he makes the wrong assumption - that he is God's choice as the new King

But as God says to Samuel in verse 7 [key verse]

Do not consider his appearance or his height, for I have rejected him. The LORD does not look at the things people look at. People look at the outward appearance, but the LORD looks at the heart."

It's easy for us to judge a book by its cover - and judge outwardly.

As it turns out, none of Jesse's seven sons in the Pageant are selected

Samuel's a bit flummoxed

So, he asks Jesse if he has any other sons

Jesse replies there is one more - David - he's the youngest and a little shepherd boy

He's young, healthy, handsome - but most importantly he has **a heart for God**

And God selects David to be anointed as the next King

What we have to understand is that God doesn't select people to serve Him - the same way we human beings do

Here's some examples of God's choices

- Ruth - not even a Jew but a Moabitess - yet she had a wonderful heart and was so devoted to Naomi and her God
- Rahab - not a Jew - and a prostitute - but she helped God's people
- Moses - he killed an Egyptian and had a speech impediment - yet God chose Moses to lead His people
- Shepherds - stinky shepherds were chosen to witness Jesus' birth - not kings or queens or rich people or religious people
- Matthew - a tax collector - everyone hated tax collectors - but Jesus called Matthew to be one of his followers
- Peter - a fisherman - not a Levite priest, or a Pharisee or teacher of the Law - or well educated - yet Jesus chose Peter to build his church upon - not the religious folk
- The Apostle Paul - a persecutor of Christians - basically a terrorist - yet Jesus called Paul to become a Christian and chose Paul to write half the NT and bring the message of Jesus to the Gentiles (non-Jews)

Would we have chosen any of those people?

(pause)

Fourth, having a heart towards God

[PowerPoint 4d-vv14-23]

Affects God's Presence (vv14-23)

Affects God's presence

That's in verses 14 to 23

In v14 - we see that the Spirit of God left Saul

Why?

Well - Saul had repeatedly disobeyed God - and he had been proven - not to have a heart for God - but a heart for himself

This shouldn't be a surprise

The people asked for a King like the other nations

Kings in the other nations - were ruthless, selfish and worshipped false gods and did not worship the one true God

God told Samuel to warn the people what a King like the other nations would be like

So, God rejected Saul as King

And now, God will select a King He wants - not one - the people want

V14 - is also a tricky verse

In that it says - [an evil spirit from the Lord tormented Saul](#)

That's tricky

Because God is described in many places - in the Bible - as a Holy God

So how can a Holy God - send an evil spirit?

Well, some footnotes in our Bibles may say things like "harmful" or "injurious" or "distressing" - which may sound better than evil - yet the word [**rah**] in

Hebrew is often translated as evil - but also can be unhappy, miserable - and be associated with evil or bad thoughts.

I think the best way to explain this is to say

That as God's Spirit left Saul

The absence of God in Saul's life

Allowed troublesome, bad, upsetting, distressing, evil thoughts to plague Saul - as we'll see in the coming weeks

So, God allowed Saul to be troubled with an evil spirit rather than being the author of it.

The bottom line is - not feeling the presence of God in our lives - will leave us empty and cause us to be distressed and unhappy and perhaps even lead us to think bad and wicked thoughts - even depressed

As the Apostle James says - draw near to God and he will draw near to you

Saul had moved further and further away from God

And so, God had withdrawn from Saul

In contrast, as we saw in v13 - the Spirit of the Lord was powerfully upon David

- because his heart is towards God - whereas the Spirit of the Lord has left

Saul - because his heart is not towards God

Saul's attendants make a useful suggestion - in v15

They suggest music might help Saul with the evil spirit he has [Even today this helps]

One of Saul's servants suggests David - who is not only a shepherd boy but he plays the lyre (small harp)

We see here how God is in control of the situation

- Despite God rejecting Saul - God is still compassionate in sending David to play
- David's playing is not only soothing to Saul and gave him relief
- But David's time in the palace prepares him for when he will become king
- And it shows us how David comes to write so many psalms

We should also see some links between David and Jesus here:

- David is a shepherd - Jesus is the Good Shepherd
- David is from Bethlehem - Jesus is born in Bethlehem
- David is God's anointed - Jesus is God's Messiah - which means Anointed One
- David's family line - contains people who are not Jews like - Ruth and Rahab - that same family line leads to Jesus - who is often referred to in the NT as the Son of David

As we compare Saul & David, what a difference it makes having a heart towards God...it affects the presence of God in their lives

Applications

[PowerPoint 5-Heading]

As always though we need to apply - this passage to our lives in 2019

It's not just a great story

So, **three** take home applications today:

[PowerPoint 5a-App1]

1. As we began? How's our heart? Not our ticker? But our heart towards God. We need to examine our hearts - we need to confess anything that is not towards God and repent. [If you've never done that - today is a good day to do it]

[PowerPoint 5b-App2]

2. We need to foster our hearts towards God. We need quiet times to pray and read and meditate on God's word. Having a heart towards God is being obedient to God. That's where our NT passage from Hebrews 4:12-13 comes in. [Please turn there now].

Verse 12 says God's Word is **alive and active**. The Bible is not dead words from a history book - just nice stories. Every time we read God's Word it comes alive and shows us how to live for God - it shows us how to be obedient, shows us where we've gone wrong, shows us what we need to do etc. V12 goes on to say that God's Word is like a doubled-edged sword - it penetrates our hearts - it not only shows us where we've gone wrong but it reveals our attitude towards God - and also shows us how to be saved and how to tell others about having a heart for God. As V13 says - nothing we think, or say or do can be hidden from God. He knows all about us.

So, spending time in God's active and alive Word - will help foster a heart for God. But we should not just be fostering our own heart towards God - we have children and grandchildren - who need their hearts towards God. There's nothing better than sharing God's active and alive Word with our

young people. In fact, there's nothing better than sharing God's active and alive Word with everybody and anybody

[PowerPoint 5c-App3]

3. We said our key verse today was 1 Samuel 16:7 - that God looks at the heart not at outward appearances. We must do the same - we mustn't write people off. Yet we often do:
 - a. By their appearance - Jesus wouldn't love someone who looked like that - Yes, He would
 - b. By age - Oh, they're too old to be of any use to God - ask Judy Finlay's family about that?
 - c. By youth - Oh, they're too young to teach us anything about God - yet Jesus told his disciples to let the children come to Him. And, just about every children's talk we have here - whether on Sunday or at Jaffa - the children blow me away with how they think about Jesus - and how their hearts are towards God
 - d. By disability - oh, they're disabled - what would they know - how could they possibly teach us anything - [Jason, Cheryle]
 - e. By intellect - oh, they have an intellectual disability - they couldn't possibly understand the Bible and why Jesus came. Well, the Gospel of Jesus is not rocket science - it's simple - Jesus loves me - this I know. We just make it complicated
 - f. By finances - oh, they don't have much money - they're obviously got nothing to give - but they have their time and their love - that's all they need to give

- g. By Health - oh, they're too sick all the time - how could they help
- well, they can pray and they can phone and they can share their
faith

The Lord looks at the heart, let us do the same

Let's pray...