

St. John's UCC, Fredericksburg
June 17, 2012

**“A Different Perspective”
(I Samuel 15:34-16:13; 2 Corinthians 5:6-10, 14-17; Mark 4:26-34)**

There once was an examining committee for seminarians that met at the seminary in order to recommend students for ordination. No one ever heard of a student who was turned down for ordination after studying in college and seminary. However, this was an important part of the process and therefore it wasn't taken lightly. The committee was made up of high-profiled pastors who have been in ministry for decades. These pastors did their very best to impress upon the students a sense of the respect that was due to them. They would ask a practical question like, “What kind of ministry have you prepared yourself for during seminary?” only to follow it up with a question about a prominent theologian. These were always a difficult session. Students would come wearing their best suits and many of them wore a clerical collar for the first time.

At the end of the day they still had one interview to finish. The committee had to meet with Bill, a married student who also served as a janitor at the seminary. Bill scheduled his interview at the end of the day so that it was after he finished his janitorial duties. He walked from the building where he was polishing floors to the building next door where the committee was meeting. Since he just came from work, he was wearing jeans and a t-shirt. He knocked on the door and was welcomed by the committee. In the midst of the discussion, one of the ministers remarked about Bill's attire and wondered why he had not taken the time to prepare properly for this significant meeting.

Bill was deeply hurt. He began to talk about how he prepared himself for more than just six years to be a pastor. He talked about the cost of going to school and raising

a family of four. Then it came to him the words that he had been looking for. They started softly under his breath: “For the Lord does not see as mortals see; they look on the outward appearance, but the Lord looks on the heart.”

This is a very different perspective than we experience today. Samuel learned about the Lord’s perspective, which Terry read for us. The passage for today provides us with an intriguing episode in Israel’s history. King Saul is rejected as king and there is a need for a new leader. Prior to this section of the 15th chapter, Saul is confessing his transgressions and the Lord is very sorry that Saul was even made king. God doesn’t want to hang on to the shame and sorrow of Saul’s leadership. God realizes that there is a need for a new leader and so Samuel is sent to Bethlehem to anoint one of the sons of Jesse to be Saul’s successor.

Samuel went with some trepidation. The elders of Bethlehem met him with trepidation. Their fear and trembling may have been due to the fact that Samuel was well known man of God and a true spiritual giant at that time. But shouldn’t they still welcome this powerful man of God?

Samuel looks at Eliab, Jesse’s oldest son, and is sure that the Lord has anointed this man to be the king. But God told Samuel not to look at Eliab’s appearance or stature because the Lord does not see as mortals see...they look at the outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the inward.

Jesse sends seven of his sons before Samuel and they are all rejected by the Lord. Then Jesse brought the youngest son, who was out tending to the sheep. David was reddish, had beautiful eyes, and was very handsome. The Lord instructed Samuel to

anoint David as the new king. The Lord looked in the heart of David and knew that he was the one who should lead.

God sure looks at things differently than we do. As the saying goes, we often judge books by their covers. Do we see what God sees? I think these words from God to Samuel serve as a reminder to us that the church needs to focus on what the Lord focuses on. God sees into our hearts and calls us to ministry based on that perspective. As a church we are to look into the hearts of our leaders and not just look at their outward appearance.

The Apostle Paul speaks to this new perspective. Paul tells the Corinthian Church that his motivation is the love of Christ. We are not to live for ourselves, but rather for Christ who lived, died, and rose for us. Paul urges this Christian community to no longer regard others, including Christ, from a human point of view. Paul says that anyone who is in Christ is a new creation. All things that are old have passed away and everything has become new. Paul is urging us to be open to the ways that Christ will transform our lives. He reminds us that we must refrain from looking at things from a worldly perspective and allow Christ to open our minds and break down the limitations. Charles Wesley talks about our longing for this new and fresh thing in the last verse of *Love Divine, All Loves Excelling*: **Finish then thy new creation, pure and spotless let us be; Let us see thy great salvation perfectly restored in Thee. Changed from glory into glory, 'til in heaven we take our place, 'til we cast our crowns before thee, lost in wonder, love and praise.**

When Christ is in our hearts, the possibilities are endless. Jesus is providing a parable that relates the kingdom of God to a mustard seed. Jesus makes the point that this

seed is small, but will eventually grow into something bigger. The kingdom of God is not static, but rather it is in a process of growth. As people of God through Christ, we are in that process of growth. We are seen by God based on what is in our hearts and the way we allow Christ to transform us and help us to grow in our walk.

Just imagine if we looked at things from this new perspective. What if we looked at what is in the heart of our fellow disciples? What if we allowed the old things to pass away and through Christ allow the new and fresh things to enter our hearts? People of God, let us change the way we look at things! God looks into our hearts! Let us look into the hearts of others! As we call leaders to serve our congregation, let us always look into their hearts. God sees us as seeds of potential. Anyone in Christ is a new person because the past is gone and everything is new! What a great perspective for the church! Amen.