

Introduction: Pg. \_\_\_\_

For years, the I-35 Westbound Bridge (**Pic 1 of the Bridge**) carried almost 140,000 vehicles across its road on a daily basis. But in 2007, tragedy struck. The bridge that stretched across the Mississippi River collapsed. (**Pic 2 of the Bridge**) With its fall the lives of 13 people were taken and 145 others were injured. (**Pic 3 of the Bridge**) Though the bridge looked fine on the outside, there were structural problems not readily apparent *below the surface*. It is believed the metal supports lying below the concrete slowly became fatigued. After decades of heavy use, the bridge could no longer stand.

In a tragic way, the people of MN learned a tragic lesson that we all must learn at some point in our lives: What looks really good on the outside may be deeply flawed on the inside.

*FCF*: And so it is with our lives. There are many times in our lives where it *appears* that everything is going really well on the outside, but we have deep, unseen flaws *below the surface* on the inside.

This morning I want us to take a serious look at what is going on inside of us, the place the Bible often refers to as “the heart.” To help us accomplish this, we are going to turn to one of the most notable stories in the OT found in 1 Samuel 16:1-13. Turn to 1 Samuel. It is the ninth book of the Bible. You can find it on page 238 of the Bibles we’ve provided for you. If you do not have a Bible, that’s your Bible!

Context:

- Abraham . . . People of God. . . Slavery, Exodus, Promised Land, Joshua, Judges, Ruth, . . .
- Israel was not doing well because of how they continually turned away from God, and matters went from bad to worse when they decided that they wanted to be like the other nations and have a king rule over them, rather than God rule over them as their benevolent leader. In short, they rejected God as their king.
- A man named Saul was chosen to be King, but in a few short chapters it is clear that Saul was a man prone to taking matters into his own hands rather than trusting in what God had instructed him.
- In 1 Samuel 15, we see that God clearly rejects Saul for his sinful actions and failed leadership, and he promised to hand his throne over to someone who will seek him with all of their heart.

*T*: Now that Saul has been disqualified as King, what will Israel do? We are introduced to his unlikely successor in Chapter 16. **Read 1 Samuel 16:1-13**

Now, we are about to break this down, but here is the story in short order.

- God commissioned his prophet Samuel to anoint a new king. We see him speak directly to him in verse 1: “1)How long? 2) Fill you horn and go! 3) I have provided for myself a king among his sons.”
- Not only did Samuel care about Saul, but he knew this would have an ill-effect on everyone in Israel. That is why he is stricken, almost paralyzed by grief.
- But the purposes of God will not be thwarted by our unfaithfulness. God called Samuel to action.
- And he went to anoint one of Jesse’s Sons...don’t miss that phrase at the end of verse 1: “for I have provided for myself a king among his sons.”
- The people clamoring for a king, and they didn’t get a very good one, but God will choose this king!

- Samuel went to Bethlehem on a stealth mission, knowing that Saul would not be excited if he heard a new king was being anointed. Samuel even feared for his life.
- So he arrived and performed an act of sincere worship by offering a sacrifice. In doing so, he invited Jesse and his sons to the sacrifice.
- 7 of his 8 sons are there.
- But one by one, Jesse's sons passed before the prophet. And one by one, God says, "not him, not him, not him, not him, not him, not him, not him."
- Puzzled, Samuel asks in verse 11: "Are all your sons here?" The youngest. He is in the field keeping the sheep.
- David was not even invited! He's the youngest; you go do the work. We'll let you know how everything goes!
- And David passes by and God says, "He's the one."
- The last one to be picked for the team was the one who was chosen by God.

One sentence summarizes this story . . . **"For the Lord sees not as man sees: man looks on the outward appearance, but the Lord looks on the heart."**

You see: before God uses us in his work, he first wants our hearts. It is . . .

**"Intimacy Before Ministry"  
1 Samuel 16:1-13**

This story screams to us that we must . . .

**The Point: Prioritize intimacy with God as we engage in ministry for God.**

*T: I want to frame our thoughts around two encouragements. . . #1)*

**I. Think deeply about how God looks at your heart.**

Verse 7 could be translated: *"My way of seeing is not like man's way of seeing."*

God looks for devoted hearts. He had already said in **1 Samuel 13:14**: **"The Lord has sought out a man after his own heart."** That's David. (cf. 15:28)

- **"For the eyes of the Lord run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to give strong support to those whose heart is blameless toward him." (2 Chronicles 16:9)**

So what exactly does the Bible mean when it says "the Lord looks on the heart?"

**What is the Heart?**

- The heart in Scripture refers to the comprehensive scope of **our inner life**. Our **affections** (what we love), **desires** (what we want), **will** (what we choose), **reason** (what we think), **emotions** (what we feel) are all encapsulated when we talk about the heart.
- The heart leads us to say what we say and do what we do.

Have you ever looked really nice on the outside, but on the inside you were a wreck?

We so easily deceive others, oftentimes because we are so easily deceived ourselves. Here are a few warnings for you this morning about looking like you have it together.

- Your knowledge about God is not enough.
  - You can know and understand the Bible from cover-to-cover and not be a Christian.
  - Yes, God wants us to know the truth, but he wants us to live the truth in our experience.
- Your apparent actions for God are not enough.
  - There are times when God says, "I don't want your acts of worship." Why? Because they are not driven by love for him.
  - Just look back at 1 Samuel 15:22: "To obey is better than sacrifice."
  - We can do a lot of "spiritual stuff." Come to church, pray, help those in need, and all the while simply be attending the masquerade.
  - Do not be a Poser; God sees past that. Give him everything.
  - Here's another one
- Your words about God are not enough.
  - Anyone can talk a good game.
  - Isaiah 29:13: These people "honor me with their lips, while their hearts are far from me."
  - A lot of people profess to be Christian, but they don't possess a real relationship with Christ.
  - Anyone can say, "I'm a Xn." Anyone can say, "I like Jesus. I'm in on his team." BUT is there a real commitment to follow him no matter the cost?

We can fool everyone around us, but we can never fool God because he sees the heart. A devoted heart is hard to find. When you look at your life, the parts that no one else can see, do you see someone that has a real relationship with God. If not, I have some really good news for you: God wants your heart. That is another way of saying God wants you. He wanted you in the very beginning and he wants you today, and he even wants to take your unclean heart and make it clean.

This is why he sent Jesus. . . Paul Tripp says: "The Bible is an exposition of the heart and the story of God's zeal to reclaim our heart."

*T:* So if our hearts can be deceived into thinking we have the real thing, what does the real thing look like? What does the man and woman who is after God's heart look like? Let me give you three thoughts

### **What does a devoted heart look like?**

#### **The devoted heart dwells with God.**

- Psalm 90 says: "Lord, you have been our dwelling place in all generations."
- We see this in the Psalms of David: Psalm 27:4 - "One thing I ask. . ." ; 63:1 "O God you are my God, earnestly I seek you. My soul thirsts.."
- Our hearts were made to be captivated by him. We are going to cover this in-depth over the next 4 weeks with our Look Up! Series in the Psalms, so get ready.
- App: What does this look like in your life? How much time do you spend with God? If God made you to dwell with him, how does that change your game plan tomorrow? Retreat??

#### **The devoted heart delights in God.**

- What is the natural result of dwelling? Delight!
- We should really enjoy God! David wanted God and MORE of God....

- The more I am with God, the more I enjoy God.
- And here's the icing on the cake: The more I enjoy God; the more I enjoy others!

### **The devoted heart delights to do God's will.**

- In Psalm 40:7-8, which is quoted by Jesus in the NT, the true and better king, David says, "Behold, . . . I delight do your will, O my God."
- Clean hearts lead to clean hands. Our hands are a metaphor for what we do for God, because we work with our hands.
- God wants action.
- I love the quote many attribute to John Wesley, the founder of the Methodist movement: *"Do all the good you can, by all the means you can, in all the ways you can, in all the places you can, at all the times you can, to all the people you can, as long as ever you can."*

Comprehensive Devotion - The Total Man: thoughts, desires, affections, will/resolve, deeds

Let me give you three ways to apply this in your life.

### **If God looks to the heart, we should too! (Our Own)**

- *"Keep your heart with all vigilance, for from it flow the springs of life."* (Proverbs 4:23)
- God sees it all. On the one hand, this should comfort us. On the other hand this should convict us.

### **If God looks to the heart, we should too! (Our Family)**

- *"Keep your heart with all vigilance, for from it flow the springs of life."* (Proverbs 4:23)
- Church Life: Let's care for one another's hearts. This is a community project.
- We are all prone to caring about the surface.
  - Why?
    - It's hard work...
    - It takes time.
    - It's messy.
    - Fear being exposed.

### **If God looks to the heart, we should too! (Everyone)**

- Let's stop judging and showing preferential treatment based on external appearances. We are all tempted to do this! Everyone!
  - Beauty (15.6 million cosmetic procedures in 2014), Rich (Generation Debt), Pleasure (toys, possessions, stuff - more televisions than people in the average American home).
  - None of that is going to matter in the end, so why are we so preoccupied with it today?
- Here's an idea:
  - Since God loves to choose unlikely people, why don't we look for people that are different than us?
  - We're all unlikely people!
- Here's a great prayer: "God, help me see as you see."
  -

T: We must think deeply about God's concern for our heart. As we cultivate a heart for God, then we move to step 2 . . .

## **II. Live for God with a heart full of God.**

- Our lives are to be a continual flow of action, one good work after another. This is not just walking old ladies across the street, though I would commend that to you this week. This is everything. As we saw in Ephesians (2:10), we are created new in Christ *for good works*.
- God is a working God. As those made in the image of God, we are made to work. Christianity infuses meaning into your work life unlike any other philosophy or religion. Just as David was assigned a great responsibility, we too are handed great opportunities to serve the common good each day.
- Deep down, we all want to be useful, we all want to make our lives count... At the end of our life, we want to have invested in some with eternal weight to it.
- But in everything we do (That is NOT an overstatement), in everything, God wants us to serve out of heart of love for him. It is intimacy before ministry. Ministry is built on intimacy. That's the pattern!
- God wants your heart more than your hands.
- If he has our heart, our hands will follow, but if he has our hands, he may not have your heart.
- **The Heidelberg Catechism (1563)** captures this brilliantly when it asks: **"What is the coming-to-life of the new man?"** Answer: **"It is wholehearted joy in God through Christ and a delight to do every kind of good as God wants us to."**
- We can do a lot of stuff for God... but we should look at consistently examine the motives of our hearts.
  - Prayed
  - Read my Bible
  - Went to Worship
  - Worked Hard
  - Served Others
  - Gave Financially
  - Didn't give into temptation??

God loves these things... BUT we face a constant danger to turn these acts of devotion into a CHECKLIST. We do them merely out of routine, just to say we did them, just to look better in the sight of others, just to feel better about ourselves. All of the sudden we look back and see that it was not our love for God that moved us in those moments.

- The problem is not the list. The problem is our hearts!
- Let me offer two encouragements to two different kinds of people.
- Those who are hesitant to serve: And let me address a possible objection at this point. Some of you are thinking: "I'm not there yet." Shouldn't I sit on the sidelines until I *really* become devoted to God? NO! That is how devotion is cultivated. Keep on growing but keep serving as you grow.
- Those who love to serve: Don't find your identity in serving. Jesus told his disciples this in Luke 10:20. "My serving you replaced me knowing you."
- Just as the Spirit empowered David for service, so he empowers us for everything he places before us. God was *with David* in a special way by his Spirit, and now his Spirit dwells in us.

*Conclusion:*

- As a church, we have a lot of great opportunities before us. We desire to be a group of people committed to action. We are an active church. We have some great opportunities on the horizon.
  - Serving our city through Soccer Nights! One of my favorite weeks of the year. Serving others is a good work.
  - We have a major transition coming up to the Chevalier Theatre in hopes of serving our city even more effectively on Sundays. Reaching out to others is a good work.
  - For the first time ever, we are collecting a special offering today for that Big Move to the Chevalier. Giving is a good work.
  - In each of these instances, God wants us to live for him out of a heart full of him. It will infuse joy and excitement into each good work.
- What is God calling you to in your life?

Could we end with prayer this morning?