



The Trinity Pulpit



Graduation Recognition Sunday **The Problem with Being Nearsighted** **I Samuel 15:34—16:13**

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There is a problem with being nearsighted. What I mean by that is that there is a problem with not seeing past that which is right in front of you. There is a problem when we remain defined by our past or even by our present situation and circumstance. When we find ourselves in moments of difficulty, it is easy to become depressed when we are nearsighted. When we find ourselves in moments of celebration, we can fail to be prepared for more challenging moments when we are nearsighted. We can judge others unfairly when we are nearsighted. We can fail to realize all that God has for our lives when we are nearsighted.

Samuel experienced the problem of being nearsighted when he went that day to anoint the new King of Israel. The people had clamored and demanded that God would give them a king so they would be like all the other nations around them. So, God chose Saul. However, Saul had been a disappointment to God and to the prophet and priest Samuel. Saul's continual failure to do what God commanded him to do, led God to make a new choice. God would choose another king. Now, this new king would not be enthroned for years, but God was not being nearsighted. He was seeing the need for a new king for his people in their future. God knew that

Saul could not lead God's people; therefore, a new king had to be chosen.

So Samuel was sent to Jesse's home in Bethlehem because one of Jesse's sons would be the next king. Samuel prepared himself for this important moment by consecrating himself. That is, he cleansed himself physically and in some way mentally, and he prepared for this task. When he arrived in Bethlehem we are told that the elders trembled. They trembled because of Samuel's reputation. They trembled because they knew that if God's priest and prophet had arrived in their town, then something significant was going to occur. When he arrived at Jesse's home, he made the assumption that we would have all made. He had come looking for a king to anoint. Now we know that King Saul was of physical distinction; we are told earlier that he was taller than everyone; he stood out physically. However, we have already learned that physical superiority did not make a king godly or worthy.

Yet when Samuel saw Eliab, his first response was "this must be the one." First, he was the eldest of the boys; he was also the tallest and must have had a pleasing appearance. Yet, God told Samuel that Eliab was not the one. "Do not consider



his height or his appearance,” Samuel was told. Why? God does not look at the outward appearance but at the heart. So Eliab was rejected. Then came the next son, Abinadab, but he too was rejected. Then Shammah, but it was not Shammah. Then we are told that Jesse paraded all seven sons before Samuel, but none of them was the one whom God had chosen. At this point, Samuel must have been confused. He was confident that God had sent him to Jesse’s home to anoint the next king; however, he had now seen all seven of Jesse’s sons and God had rejected all of them. Then Samuel looked at Jesse and simply said “Who else do you have? Are there any other sons?” Jesse then remembered “Yes, the youngest, the smallest, David, is in the field tending the sheep.” Notice that even David’s father, Jesse, never thought it would be David. He too, like Samuel, was nearsighted. He had not even sent for the youngest son. David was the least considered in the story, even by his own father and brothers. Yet, when David returned from the field he was noticed. The writer tells us that David was the smallest, or ruddy, which might mean redheaded or red in complexion and that he was handsome and with a fine appearance. Why we are told this is uncertain since we already have been told that this is not what God looks at, for God looks at the heart.

Let me suggest that this is the way of being reminded that God is not nearsighted. We have already been told that God does not look at appearance. If that be the case, then David would not have been the one since appearance was not what God wanted. Maybe it was the writer’s way of saying “I see in David something beyond his appearance; I can see his heart.” Samuel was told by God to anoint David. Then we are told that from that mo-

ment forward the Spirit of God came upon David with power. That is the Bible’s way of telling us that from that day forward David would never be the same. David’s story had begun. God’s activity in David’s life began in a moment when everyone else was overlooking him. David would become the great King David, a man after God’s own heart. He would have his own struggle with sin and forgiveness; nevertheless, that day in Bethlehem when everyone else overlooked David, God saw in David all that David could be.

Today on this Graduation Recognition Sunday, I want to encourage you to know that there is a problem with being nearsighted. There is a problem by being defined by only this moment in time and missing what God has planned for your life.

Today is the beginning of what God wants to do in your life.

Graduation is an important transition moment in your life. We celebrate your achievement and we celebrate with you in this moment of transition from adolescence into adulthood. Over the next few years you will continue to grow mentally, physically and spiritually. Although this is an important moment in your life, it really is a beginning more than an ending.

For David, the moment that the great priest Samuel came to town was a big moment. In front of the elders and his family David had been chosen and anointed to be the next king. What a moment! But what if David had just gone back to the field and spent his life just cherishing that moment? What if at an old age they would tell the story of the day that Samuel came to town and anointed David, and yet David had failed to be faithful to the future God had for him? That moment was not the

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end for David; it was the beginning of an incredible journey.

Graduates, our moments of transition are not only the end to one moment in our lives, but they really are the beginning of what God wants to do in our lives. You are going from this place and from your schools where you have developed a reputation, a persona that might be who you are or it might not be who you really are. You might have found yourself going along with a crowd of friends that molded you into something that you are not. You might have made some bad decisions that hurt your relationships with friends, parents and even God. This moment is a new moment. This moment is a beginning moment for you. You can choose today to live a life that is going to be pleasing to God. You can see this moment as a moment that God is going to do something new and wonderful in your life. You don't have to be nearsighted. In this moment of transition, you can get a glimpse of all that God has for you.

I also want you to remember today that God has a plan for your life that is beyond your imagination. David was anointed as a young boy to be a king. Yet, the person David would become and the journey of his life was yet to be revealed. All he knew was that God's spirit was upon him and that plain fact released him to live a life beyond imagination. David's courage would be established as a shepherd boy in the field when he would kill the bear and the lion. David's artistic gifts would be developed in those same pastures as he would pass the time playing the harp and writing songs. David's courage and faith would become evident to everyone when he would slay the giant Goliath. David's reliance on the Lord would become evident when he was on the run from jealous King Saul: it would be God who would deliver him. David's kingdom would come with greatness and would also require him to rediscover the depths of God's forgiveness after he sinned.

David began a journey with God that no one could have written or imagined except God.

Just how far is it from the pastures of Bethlehem to the king's palace? How far is it from being the smallest and youngest to being the most powerful man in Israel? How far is it from being overlooked to being praised by a nation? How far is it from this sanctuary and the pew you are sitting in to all that God has for your life? It is about a foot. That is the distance from your head to your heart. That one foot journey is the journey we all need to make. It is that journey to the heart everyday that prepares us for all that God has for our lives. This day is the beginning of a marvelous journey with God. God has a plan for your life and you can discover it one foot at a time, one day at a time.

The last thing I want you to know from our text is that God knows your heart. We are told that God does not look at appearance, but God looks at the heart. I think that means that God knows us even better than we know ourselves. In fact, David would one day write these words:

O LORD, you have searched me
and you know me.
You know when I sit and when I rise;
you perceive my thoughts from afar.
You discern my going out and my lying
down;
you are familiar with all my ways.
Before a word is on my tongue
you know it completely, O LORD.
You hem me in—behind and before;
you have laid your hand upon me.
Such knowledge is too wonderful for me,
too lofty for me to attain.
Where can I go from your Spirit?
Where can I flee from your presence?
If I go up to the heavens, you are there;
if I make my bed in the depths, you are
there.
If I rise on the wings of the dawn,

if I settle on the far side of the sea,
even there your hand will guide me,
your right hand will hold me fast.
If I say, "Surely the darkness will hide me
and the light become night around me,"
even the darkness will not be dark to you;
the night will shine like the day,
for darkness is as light to you.

For you created my inmost being;
you knit me together in my mother's
womb.

I praise you because I am fearfully and won-
derfully made;
your works are wonderful,
I know that full well.

My frame was not hidden from you
when I was made in the secret place.

When I was woven together in the
depths of the earth,

your eyes saw my unformed body.

All the days ordained for me
were written in your book
before one of them came to be.

(Psalm 139:1-16)

God knows us better than we know ourselves. So, this is what I want you to know: God sees us as we really are. I want to encourage you to not be defined by others' opinions or one situation or one moment in life. All of us are more complex than we appear to others, but God knows us fully. When God saw David, he did not see the youngest; he saw the complexity of who David was. God saw a shepherd, a poet, a musician, a warrior, a soldier, a


general and a king. Most importantly, God saw a man after his own heart.

Graduates, you are more than your SAT score. You are more than the college you will or will not attend. You are more than your appearance. You are more than even this accomplishment of graduation.

That goes for all of us. We are all more complex than the labels we wear. We are more than our 401Ks. We are more than our vocation designations. We are more than our address or our clothing or our achievements. The God who knows us and searches our heart sees us for all we are and all we can be.

There is a problem with being nearsighted: we fail to remember that today is a beginning to all God wants for our lives; we fail to remember that God has a plan for our lives beyond what we can imagine; and we fail to realize that God knows the complexity of our personality.

My life verse is Philippians 1:6 where Paul writes "being confident of this, that he who began a good work in you will bring it to completion until the day of the Lord Jesus."

That is my prayer for you. You will know that the same God you met as a part of Trinity Baptist Church will continue to work in your life and complete his purpose for your life, if you will just follow him. God will be faithful. God is never nearsighted. 



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