

The Lord said to Samuel, “How long will you mourn for Saul, since I have rejected him as king over Israel? Fill your horn with oil and be on your way; I am sending you to Jesse of Bethlehem. I have chosen one of his sons to be king.”

2 But Samuel said, “How can I go? If Saul hears about it, he will kill me.”

The Lord said, “Take a heifer with you and say, ‘I have come to sacrifice to the Lord.’ **3** Invite Jesse to the sacrifice, and I will show you what to do. You are to anoint for me the one I indicate.”

4 Samuel did what the Lord said. When he arrived at Bethlehem, the elders of the town trembled when they met him. They asked, “Do you come in peace?”

5 Samuel replied, “Yes, in peace; I have come to sacrifice to the Lord. Consecrate yourselves and come to the sacrifice with me.” Then he consecrated Jesse and his sons and invited them to the sacrifice.

6 When they arrived, Samuel saw Eliab and thought, “Surely the Lord’s anointed stands here before the Lord.”

7 But the Lord said to Samuel, “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.”

8 Then Jesse called Abinadab and had him pass in front of Samuel. But Samuel said, “The Lord has not chosen this one either.” **9** Jesse then had Shammah pass by, but Samuel said, “Nor has the Lord chosen this one.” **10** Jesse had seven of his sons pass before Samuel, but Samuel said to him, “The Lord has not chosen these.” **11** So he asked Jesse, “Are these all the sons you have?”

“There is still the youngest,” Jesse answered. “He is tending the sheep.”

Samuel said, “Send for him; we will not sit down until he arrives.”

12 So he sent for him and had him brought in. He was glowing with health and had a fine appearance and handsome features.

Then the Lord said, “Rise and anoint him; this is the one.”

13 So Samuel took the horn of oil and anointed him in the presence of his brothers, and from that day on the Spirit of the Lord came powerfully upon David. Samuel then went to Ramah.

Appearances

Image is everything. You'll never have a 2nd chance to make a 1st impression. The suit makes the man. These are all truisms. They are generally true statements that tend to work in real life but to be honest I've never been very concerned about appearance because the deciding factor for me has always been comfort and price, think white t-shirts and blue jeans, sweatpants and crocs. In fact it was so bad that I didn't own a suit until I was informed at seminary, "We wear suits." My next trait quickly showed up in that I was cheap, headed to the thrift store and bought me some suits. At which point I felt like a comedian was telling me, "It's better to look good than to feel good." While many have said, "You look great," I certainly didn't feel great.

Instead of an "image is everything" mantra I lived by, "You can't judge a book by its cover," even ogres have layers like a cake or an onion. We should be careful when it comes to prejudice towards people and lumping them into certain stereotypes. We look at appearances which give us clues as to personality but image doesn't always match up with reality. 1st impressions can be a façade and appearances can be deceiving.

We look at what we can see but God looks at something entirely different. He looks at the heart. It doesn't matter what you look like on the outside you can't hide who you are from him. That's what we see in our lesson. Saul the golden boy has failed and new king is chosen from an unlikely source. Though he seems insignificant he will lead Israel into its golden age. Appearances can be deceiving.

Up to this point Samuel seems to be deceived. He is still mourning and hoping that appearances will change when the reality is Saul has turned from the Lord. The Lord informs Samuel, *"I've rejected Saul as king. Get up, get back to work. Israel needs a king."* *"Fill your horn with oil, and go. I will send you to Jesse the Bethlehemite, for I have provided for myself a king among his sons."* But how will that appear to Saul? Saul is still king. Saul is on edge because he has been informed of his rejection by God. Samuel is terrified and so is all of Bethlehem. All appearances say, "This is a bad idea. Saul's going to be upset. He's going to kill me. This is treason." Saul is tall, strong, and powerful. He won the people's choice award standing head and shoulders above everyone else. But he turned away from God and now viciously defends his authority even to the point of trying to kill his son for disobeying orders.

The elders ask, *"Do you come in peace?"* They don't want any trouble. Samuel gives them a vague answer. He's not lying but he is withholding information from

them. Just as God doesn't tell Samuel everything – like who to anoint, Samuel doesn't tell them everything nor does he have to. Samuel has come to sacrifice and as the people gather, he is making decisions on what he sees. He's judging by appearance. Eliab looks like a king, *“Surely the Lord's anointed stands here before the Lord.”* But the Lord said to Samuel, *“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 wasn't this one. Four more of Jesse's sons are paraded before him, *“Neither has the Lord chosen this one.”* Samuel is stumped until he asks, *“Are all your sons here?”*

There was one more. The youngest, of such little account he's out with sheep in the field. David isn't even referred to by name as if his father has forgotten. He is the insignificant son, of the smallest clan, of the smallest tribe. He is the runt of the litter stinking up the field with the sheep out there. I imagine it would have felt awkward for Samuel and even more so for David but this one the Lord's anointed. Appearances are deceiving but this is the King and without saying anything Samuel anoints on David's in the midst of his brothers and leaves. That was awkward.

God doesn't always give us the full picture. God tells us what we need to know, what he expects of us, and yet like Samuel we often have doubts as we forget God is in control. But unlike Samuel there is no Saul threatening to kill anyone who challenges his authority and yet we are afraid. We are more worried about our image, our appearances and what others may think of us.

So we keep up appearances and pretend everything is okay. And as long as everything appears okay, we're fine with it. We make decisions based on what we see and as long as nothing changes - we're fine. Rather than look at the content we are often more concerned with the outward form. This can happen in the church and in even worship. It doesn't matter if guitars, worship monitors, or flying monkeys if God's Word is preached in all of its truth and purity. If all you're doing is looking for an outward form you may very well end up in a church that rotting inside.

But you can hide that and clean up your past so it isn't apparent. We may even be like Jesse willing to write off the insignificant of society and think they aren't worthy to hear the forgiveness won for them. Rather than getting to know them judgements are based on appearances. If they are poor they are foolish with money, lazy, immoral, unworthy, or sinful.

Appearances can be deceiving and that's the way the devil wants it. He is the great deceiver and father of lies. In our superficial culture appearances are everything. God is more interested in the heart. We like to believe that we look great but God looks at the hearts. He sees our inner thoughts. What we try to hide from everyone. The guilt we wish we could forget is right there for God to see. Jesse's sons aren't paraded before us but often our past is and you may even question, "Am I a Christian? Did God make a mistake?"

David must have thought the same thing. Chapter 17 rolls around and nothing has changed. Was he even anointed with oil? Was this all a joke put on by his brother? They still don't respect him. They even accuse him of coming out to gawk at the battle before them. Eliab accuses, *'Why have you come here? With whom have you left those few sheep in the wilderness? I know how conceited you are and how wicked your heart is...'* David then stands before Goliath and slays a giant but then later he is slain by a bathing beauty. Nathan pointed out his rotten heart David sees his sin. God sees it as well but he still says of David, *"I have found David son of Jesse, a man after my own heart..." (Acts 13:22)*. God looks at the heart and it's not because he looks at hearts that he is able to know which one is good and which ones are bad. They are all bad. Paul reminds us, *"All have sinned and fallen away."* *There is no one good, not even one.* God saves the wicked and rebellious heart.

He does that by sending another king, another leader. There is only one heart that is free from sin. This King came from Nazareth. Jesus doesn't look like much. He's a poor carpenter. He wasn't born in a palace. Social elites didn't form his inner circle instead he surrounds himself with fishermen and farmers. He then gets down and washes his disciples feet. Jesus wasn't the king they expected but appearances can be deceiving. The Father calls down from heaven, *"This is my Son. Listen to him."* Jesus didn't come to lead a rebellion, create a nation on earth, or give us everything we want or need. He came to give his life as a ransom for many.

David understands that only God can give what he needs. David wrote about in Psalm 51:10-17: *Create in me a pure heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me. Do not cast me from your presence or take your Holy Spirit from me. Restore to me the joy of your salvation and grant me a willing spirit, to sustain me.* David realized that only God can fix what we have broken. Only God can create a clean heart. The Lord made him king. The Lord provided a king not only for Israel

but for the world when he sent his Son.

When the Lord looks on you he sees what is really in your heart. This is the heart that he has given us by something so insignificant. We aren't anointed with oil. We are washed with water, not just any water but water connected to his word and promise. Listen to him. You won't see much. Baptism is, "*The washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit, whom he poured out on us generously through Jesus Christ our Savior.*" Titus 3:5,6. What do you think David felt like when he was filled with the Holy Spirit? Probably like you at your baptism or even right now. Baptism doesn't look like much but God's promise says, "this is what I've done for you." A new heart, a new life, a new start, forgiveness, life, salvation, new image, new creation.

God provides his people with leaders who come from insignificant backgrounds just like David. You come from all walks of life and if God is able to use David, then he is able to use you too. You're not insignificant. Jesus took the time to get to know you. Jesus didn't assume, "This one's not worth my time." Instead he forgives you for judging books by their cover, people by their social status, their clothes, and their scars both visible and mental. It doesn't matter where you come from you are forgiven.

If you question your Christianity when you sin remember God's forgiveness. You don't look like much and neither did David. But we both have his promise which cannot fail. Hold on to that hope. Share that certainty with others.

Image isn't everything but it can't hurt. We also learn that David *was glowing with health and had a fine appearance and handsome features*. Keep up appearances. That means comfort and price will not dictate what I can or can't wear - I also will try my best not to embarrass you or my wife. You can judge a book by its cover but thankfully God doesn't choose us based on our appearance. Instead his decision is based on the heart that he has given us through his Son. You can look good and feel good because God has made you marvelous. Amen.