

Sermon for Christ Church, Spotsylvania, VA  
Proper 6, Year B, June 17, 2018  
The Rev. Bill Queen, "Looking on the Heart"  
1st Samuel 15:34-16:13, 2nd Corinthians 5:6-17

think for a minute about how you go about picking your friends; about how you go about picking who will be a trusted colleague at work?; about how you go about choosing who you will let get close to you?; if you are like most people you probably form judgments about other people from how they look, how they dress, how they act, what they own, and where they live; we think we can usually scope people out fairly quickly this way; if you are like most people, once you've done that scoping out, you probably choose those people to be friends, colleagues, and the ones who are close to you by how similar they are to you

but we all know that looks can be deceiving; maybe you try something else to find out about them: Google their name, check their Facebook page or LinkedIn posts; but even with information from those social media outlets, or maybe because of them, we may let prejudices fill in for what we really don't have any way of knowing; neither judging by outward appearances nor by prejudices seem to be good ways to understand people

this kind of thing is exactly what happened in our Bible story today about Samuel; he was a prophet; a prophet is someone who listens carefully enough to hear what God is saying and who is brave enough to do what God tells them to do; God told Samuel to go to Jesse's house, and there God would reveal to Samuel which of Jesse's sons should become the new king of Israel; Samuel didn't know anything about the sons, but as Jesse paraded his sons past, tall, strong, and smart-looking, Samuel thought each one might be the one that God wanted to be the new king; they all looked the part and those were his prejudices; but seven of Jesse's sons passed before Samuel, and as each one walked past, God told Samuel, "no, not this one;" Samuel asked Jesse if this

was all of his sons, and he said, “no, I have one other, David, but he’s the youngest, and he’s out tending the sheep;” what’s not stated here is that David was too young and unimportant to be invited to this special gathering; so Samuel had them wait until David got there; as soon as Samuel saw David, God told him, “this is the one,” so Samuel made him king; none of the people thought David could be in the running for king; they all had an idea of what a king should look like and a prejudice against an unimportant boy; but God sees things differently than we do; God explained it this way to Samuel; he said, “do not look at the appearances [of people]” because that’s not how God looks at people; “God does not see as people see; they [we!] look on the outward appearance, but God looks on the heart;” God looks on, and sees, the heart within

how do you think that we might do what God told Samuel to do?; how might we not form judgments about what people look like on the outside, but instead from what people look like in their hearts?; recall the phrase “looking at the world through rose colored glasses;” that means choosing to look at things optimistically, even to the point of being unrealistically positive; I’m not suggesting that is a good practice, but what if we were to imagine some kind of metaphorical heart shaped glasses that would help us see into people’s hearts? not to see them unrealistically, but to see them more realistically than we ever have before? do you think it might work if we would just try to convince ourselves to look at everyone in a different kind of way? maybe, but probably not

but there might perhaps be another way of doing that; and our Epistle reading from 2<sup>nd</sup> Corinthians today might help us; in it Paul says, “we walk by faith, not by sight;” so first, in order to not walk “by sight,” that means we cannot judge people by how they look; that may be hard to do, because we’ve probably gotten used to doing that a lot; we’re probably used to letting our prejudices make up our minds for us

next, if we're going to walk "by faith," that means we've got to use the tools of our faith that God has given us; and what are some of these tools of our faith? 1st we can use prayer—by asking God to help us see into people's hearts; 2nd we can use reading the Bible—because it gives us so many examples of how to treat people, without prejudice, until we can begin to see into their hearts; finally, 3rd, we can use our hearts, since most prejudices live in our heads and not in our hearts—by using our hearts we're more inclined to understand other people and discover that most people can't be judged from outward appearances or prejudices; and we might discover that some unexpected people really are a lot like us, once we get to know them, even if they look or act different from us; and we certainly will discover that from God's perspective, from God's way of looking, all humans look a lot more alike than we think they do

just the desire to look at the world through heart shaped glasses won't do it for us, but maybe thinking about this image—imagine Elton John in a crazy pair of oversized heart shaped glasses—can help us remember what God wants us to do; God wants us to see others the way God sees them, not the way people see them; God wants us to see ourselves the way God sees us, not the way other people see us; God wants us to use the tools of our faith, especially our hearts to the best of our ability; God wants us to try, as best we can, to understand other people, not through the outside nor through prejudices, but through a realistic and faithful looking into people's hearts; my prayer today, using Paul's words, is that with God's help we will all be able to do this more and more; that we will see that when "anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation: everything old has passed away; see everything has become new!" when we look into the hearts of people, as God would have us do, the world becomes a new place, right before our eyes