

20/20 Vision 3-22-20

Few of us can boast that we have 20/20 vision. In fact, even with corrective lenses, contacts, or implants many still at least need the cheaters. We need help to see because as time goes on, even those with the 20/20 vision begin to notice the need for just a little bit more in order to read the fine print. In our youth, many never needed glasses or lenses but as time goes on, we lose a little bit of our vision for distance or nearness every few years. Along with the loss of vision, we also recognize things appearing differently to us than they did years ago. It isn't because things have changed in appearance, rather we look at things in a different manner. What seemed beautiful to us at age 20 now seems more regular and not as special in our views. The world although ever changing takes on new characteristics and even the colors seem to blend differently as we age.

Samuel the prophet, whose mother took him to the temple to be raised by Eli the prophet, was no longer a boy. Samuel was not even a young man any longer, and most looked upon him as an elder citizen. Samuel listened to the Lord all his life, right after God first called to him in the middle of the night and he drove poor old Eli a bit crazy as he kept awakening him from a sound sleep because he heard voices. It didn't even occur to Eli at the time that young Samuel was hearing the voice of God. However, after about the third time little Samuel came to his bedside insisting Eli had called him, Eli knew it was the Lord. Samuel followed the Lord his entire life and even at times when God requested some strange things for Samuel to do, he did them, willingly and obediently. It was Samuel who followed the will of the people to get a king over Israel. It had been Saul whom he had given the Lord's blessing to when he was crowned and anointed the first king of Israel. However, it would not go down in history that Saul was the greatest king. Instead, another would come along who would take that honor. It would be someone young and unexpected to take the throne. It would not be an overnight occurrence and Saul was not being hastily asked to leave his throne. It would

take a few years for the next king to be fully prepared for the position. Saul, after all was the first with no one to train him how to be a good king. He was very good at first, but after some time he strayed from the Lord.

When everything is going well, and I mean great, we don't always recognize that. In fact, we pump ourselves up a bit taking all the credit for a job well done. We may even win trophies and awards for our mighty deeds, great business ideas and plans well executed. We may at these times of good fortune fail to recall that God was with us when it all was building to this perfect crescendo of time. Saul did that. He forgot a little about who put him in the kingdom to reign, but Samuel the prophet did not. In fact, Samuel stood mostly silently by in the background as Saul began to make mistakes.

We all make mistakes. We all wish there were things we could take back. We refer to much of this as hindsight, but we can also look at it as a loss of that 20/20 clear vision we once were so fortunate to possess. We had the world in our hands and were doing so well, but slowly we forgot about God. The attendance today in churches is proof that Sunday mornings hold time we cannot return to God, because life is presenting so much fun, things to be done, places to see and people to spend time with. God knows our hearts, and he allows us the occasional time away from his house, but he also expects us to return. We can blame ourselves for the absences. We can blame the pastors, surely that has been done often enough. Yet at the end of the day, isn't it also loss of 20/20 vision on our parts? All of us, the pastors, the congregants, those who are not members, those constituents of the church as they are labeled for statistical reports, and the actual members are a little bit to blame. So, what do we do?

Samuel knew Israel needed a change and so did God. Samuel felt responsible for his mistake of making Saul king, but it did not appear God looked at Saul as a mistake. Instead, it was Saul who made his own mistakes. God asks Samuel at the beginning of the text today, "how long will it take you to get over this?". How long will it take us to get past the facts that in 2020, we can read the sermon online, listen to a pastor on the

radio or TV, and we can have our church in the comfort of our own homes sipping our morning coffee, in our pajamas, eating a leisurely breakfast. Samuel the prophet did not get time off from God, he was the prophet of Israel and it was a big job.

One day there may not be buildings to worship in, but that day has not come. Samuel knew there was a future for Israel, but first God had to direct him to find the next king. He would be younger, better, more understanding, but most important, he would listen to God. Samuel is directed to the house of Jesse. Jesse was the son of a woman named Ruth and man of great distinction and wealth named Boaz. Jesse had a wife, never named in the Bible, some say by Jewish legend that her name was Nitzevah, but there is no Biblical or historical proof for that name. We do know Jesse was of the lineage of Judah, fourth son of Jacob and Leah. Jesse and his unnamed wife had many children, ten in fact which actually are mentioned as being two girls and the remainder boys. David was the youngest male child.

If any of you are the youngest child, you know that every brother or sister before you hold something they have done or represent for you to look up to and either meet or excel past their conquests. Now, Jesse had a lot of handsome, well built sons, and when the meeting in this text took place, we know they were all hard at work in the fields. When we see the oldest of a family and look to the youngest, appearances may change a bit. One son may be tall and lean, yet another shorter and stout. Even though Jesse had ten children, we are to assume they were not all the same in appearance. We look at outward appearance and make many judgements in life. We see someone muscular and assume they can lift a fifty-pound bag without hesitation. We see people who don't have 20/20 vision and need eyeglasses, and somehow society sees them as intelligent due to their eyewear. Those lenses could be clear glass, but we have formed that opinion at some point in time. We see a small, fair colored child and find them fragile and want to take care of them. Yet, we are mistaken on so many accounts. Our

vision has not seen the true person behind the glasses, under the muscles or that which is to emerge from the weak and frail appearing child.

Samuel was ordered to anoint the next king of Israel from one of Jesse's sons. He gets to see them all, looks them over and after seven sons have presented themselves to Samuel, he has not had the nod from God to go ahead and anoint. He cannot understand why not, because so many looked strong and virile and appeared to have the ability to fight the battles to keep the kingdom safe. Saul was crowned king just for those reasons. Finally, Samuel is frustrated. When we don't get what we expect to see in people we get a bit annoyed. Blind dates are full of disappointment for the most part, and this was a blind date with the destiny of Israel. Yet, there was one son not seen yet by Samuel. Jesse didn't feel he was of the right stuff to present. He had him out shepherding the flocks and that was his purpose. Samuel knew he had to see them all in order to please God, whom he still knew had to know more than he. Finally, David is presented.

20/20 vision is not always perfect. Those who boast they have it can miss some very obvious things. The guy who sits in the park with a book, not to read the book, but to people watch may see someone very attractive yet he is only seeing the beauty of the exterior person and not what lies within. It was David's still growing heart that attracted God. David would prove to be courageous. David would grow to be handsome. David would learn from Saul how to be a good king and learn how to be a bad king. Sometimes we need both lessons to realize the vision we strive to achieve. Samuel anointed a young boy to be the next king of Israel, but that boy would not take the throne for several years. In that time, God would mold him. Saul would teach him. He would find friendship in the king's son Jonathan who would never be king although next in line. David would take the crown and follow the Lord.

Do you think you have poor vision? Do you find because you need reading glasses even over corrective lenses that you are not seeing well enough? Samuel saw

eight young men on a visit to the home of Jesse. Seven were not in God's vision to take over the land of Israel, but the eighth one, the unexpected one, he was the next king of Israel and would go down in history as the greatest. 20/20 Vision is great, but in this year of 2020, maybe we can find a new vision for the church. The people here now can help us see that vision. It takes all of us, even those who sit confined in a small space with only a few possessions. We all need to rally together for God. God is the only true being with perfect vision, so let us try and see our world and our church through the eyes of God and not the eye of humankind who need an eye test to determine their vision. Amen.