

Sermon Text for April 3, 2022

By Rev. Robert K. Bronkema

Psalm 57:1-3, I Samuel 16:6-13 ***“Being a person after God’s own heart”***

Something interesting and which directly affects us took place this week that I wanted to share with you. In the midst of all that is happening in the world and especially in Ukraine and the border regions and the millions that are fleeing war torn areas, this church agreed to send a donation of \$5000 for the relief work that is being done through the Presbyterian Disaster Assistance and that was matched by our Synod, our regional governing body. It is hard to decide and discern how you want to help and once you make that decision rarely do you get to see the results in a person that you know and that you trust. Most of what we do is blind faith that the resources that we donate are going to be used for the purposes that we hope.

Parallel to this funding that we provided, we were hard at work applying for a grant for Vladimir and his work along the border of Belarus and Poland with Syrian refugees that have now been completely abandoned because of the crisis in Ukraine and so the Red Cross and Caritas and all of the relief organizations have left that border area to go to the place that is in the news now. Vladimir has remained and they are even experiencing and working with Ukrainian refugees that are fleeing as well. We just found out on Friday that Vladimir and his work along the border just received a grant from the Presbyterian Disaster Assistance, and guess how much it was for? That’s right, \$10,000.

Here is a case where we don’t have to guess what is happening with the funds that we send to the Presbyterian Disaster Assistance, we know the people personally, many of you met Vladimir when he was here, you spoke to him, you heard him talk about what it is like living in Belarus. Often when we have to decide and discern how to help or what to fund or how to be involved in the life of the church or in the life of the world, our emotions, our passions and the familiarity of the situation tugs at our heart strings and that is what wins the day.

But I know, we as a congregation know the heart of Vladimir and as we were applying for the grant and in correspondence with people that I had worked with for decades, it was hard to get across how important the work that he was doing was, and he was a bit of a nonentity, so how do you reveal to someone the sincerity and the genuineness and the heart of someone they don’t know.

Our Scriptures today speak of God knowing our hearts and that is how God chooses and how God engages us in his kingdom work, it is all based upon our hearts and how devoted and faithful and loyal we are to his work. Let's read today how we are called to be a person who is after God's own heart.

READ

I hope you are still reading through the Bible. We are in the good parts of the Old Testament now where we are seeing the story of King Saul and King David. Today we have a bit of a double dip in David where we see not only a psalm that he wrote but also a defining story of his young life where he is chosen from among his brothers and then right in front of them anointed king. Let's turn to Psalm 57 and you will find there a description of the Psalm that is fairly common in psalms, where there is a description of what time and what event of David's life elicited the writing of this psalm.

This one has a very clear description of a time in the life of David that we should all know if we have been reading along. It states: When he fled from Saul, in the cave. We know this time in David's life when he is fleeing from Saul, goes into a cave, Saul by chance chooses that cave to relieve himself and David holds his hand from killing Saul, and so endears himself to Saul once again. It is short lived, but we remember exactly what happens and we remember this exact story.

When you look at this Psalm it is clearly a psalm of desperation, of someone crying out to God because they find themselves on the run, without refuge, not knowing how God had promised to make him king, and here he is hiding in a cave with no future in sight. When you are in despair, to whom do you cry out? If you have the heart that God wants you to have, you will cry out to God, you seek refuge and deliverance from God first and foremost. This reflects your heart and your relationship with God.

When you are striving after God's own heart you call out to God for deliverance. God does not promise to eliminate the destroying winds as they pass by, see that in vs.1, but he does promise to send his steadfast love and his faithfulness as you hunker down in those winds. We have the example of Jesus, our Savior, as he was hanging on the cross did not ask to be taken down from the cross, but rather called out to God and demonstrated his heart with the words, eloi, eloi, lama sabachthani, my God, my God, why have you forsaken me?

The heart is the seat of our relationship with God. We see other Scriptures that point to this, even Jesus himself tells the Pharisees in Luke 16:15 – God knows your hearts, for what is

prized by human beings is an abomination in the sight of God. God knows our hearts. In Deuteronomy 6:5 we read you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart. We read in Jeremiah 31:33 where God tells the people I will put my law within them, and I will write it on their hearts.

No matter how we come across to each other either here in church on Sunday morning, or outside of these walls during the week, God knows our heart and it is in our heart that we have to work to develop and strengthen our relationship with our creator.

When we go to I Samuel and we see the story of David being anointed King over Israel there is an emphasis on how God discerns who He has chosen to lead the people. I see this Scripture as being one of the most powerful and most true Scriptures that we have. Look at vs.7 where God reiterates basically what Jesus says in Luke and that is that the Lord does not see as mortals see, they look on the outward appearance, but the Lord looks on the heart. Interestingly enough, however, David seemed to have the whole package. David is described as someone who was good looking, had amazing eyes.

This is not unusual that while Scripture says that God decides based upon the heart, nevertheless those whom God chooses tend to be on the studly side. Look at I Samuel 9:1 where God chooses Saul and read the description of Saul when he is chosen. Look what happens right after he is chosen in 10:9, God gives him a new heart, just like David's heart is what is most important, right after David is anointed we read that Holy Spirit descended powerfully upon David.

It is natural for us feel sympathy for those to whom we can relate, or at least those whom we think look presentable, or look kingly or presidential, or, to some degree, worthy of our attention and our care. We feel more connected to people who look like us. We feel more connected to people like this, rather than people like this. In the Tigray region millions of people are fleeing, a genocide is taking place. But they look like this, instead of this, and so our hearts are torn and broken more for those who look like us, people who we could almost see ourselves in their place.

But we need to be reminded today that God looks upon the heart. Our task as disciples of Jesus Christ is to not be an abomination because we only have our hearts stirred by that which the world is going after or by that which we can relate. Our task as disciples of Jesus Christ is to notice the children that no one else notices, is to notice the Samaritan woman at the well that no one else notices, is to notice the Syrophenician woman that no one else notices.

Our task is to see the world we live in daily from the inside out, rather than the outside in.
Looks can be deceiving, but the heart of God is not.