
May God Give You His Own Heart So That You May See Through It

A sermon by the Rev. Canon Salmoon Bashir
The Fourth Sunday in Lent – Year A

In the name of God – Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Amen!

“Create in me a pure heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me.”

Growing up, next to our home there lived an old man who was considered the elder and the most respected person on our street. When I think about him now, he sometimes reminds me of Samuel in the Scriptures — an old man whose heart burned for God.

Whenever something important was happening in the lives of my siblings or me — a competitive exam, the first day of a new job, or the beginning of some new chapter — my parents would first pray for us. But that was not all. After praying, they would often say, “Before you go, stop by and see him. Even if we were running late. Receive a blessing from him.” His name was Mr. Barkat and when you translate into English, his name literally meant Blessing.

So, we would walk to his house. He would place his hand on our heads and pray for us. One of his favorite blessings was always the same. He would say, “May God give you His own heart so that you may see through it.”

As a child, I did not fully understand what he meant. But he prayed that blessing for us again and again, every time we were about to begin something important.

And he continued to bless us with those same words until the day he died.

“May God give you His own heart so that you may see through it.”

Reading the lesson today from first Samuel, I think of that blessing. Because this story is really about learning to see through the heart of God.

Samuel himself is in a moment of grief. He is grieving over Saul, the king he had anointed. Samuel had invested hope in Saul, and now that hope has collapsed. Saul has failed, and Samuel is mourning the loss of what he thought would be Israel’s future.

Saul whom Samuel once anointed did what was good in his own eyes. He disobeyed God to the point, the LORD regretted that he had made Saul king over Israel.

But God speaks to Samuel and tells him, “Go to Bethlehem, to the house of Jesse. I have chosen a king for myself among his sons.”

Samuel now has the difficult task of discerning whom God has chosen. He must look not simply with human eyes, but with the heart of God.

When Samuel arrives at Jesse’s house, the sons begin to pass before him. The first son, Eliab, looks exactly like what you would expect from a king. He is tall, strong, and impressive. Everything about him says

leadership. Even Samuel, the prophet of God, is convinced this must be the one. But God immediately corrects him. "Do not look on his appearance or on the height of his stature... for the Lord does not see as mortals see. They look on the outward appearance, but the Lord looks on the heart."

One by one the sons pass before Samuel. Each one seems like a possibility. Each one appears strong and capable. But each time God says no. Seven sons pass by and Samuel sees seven possible destinies. And finally Samuel asks Jesse, "Are all your sons here?" Jesse replies that the youngest is still out in the field, keeping the sheep.

The youngest. The shepherd boy who was not even invited to the meeting. The forgotten one. God's chosen David.

From a human perspective David was the least likely candidate. He was young, unknown, a shepherd. Culturally, shepherding was not considered an honorable position. It was quiet, hidden work out in the wilderness. David was doing that. But this is the one God chooses.

Because God sees what we cannot see.

We see résumés. God sees character.

We see strength. God sees humility.

We see outward success. God sees a person's true self.

We see appearance. God sees the heart.

This is the one God chooses to be the king of Israel. The one who will unite the kingdom. The one who will be called a man after God's own heart.

In the language of Scripture, the heart is not simply emotion. It is the center of a person's life. It is the place where our desires live, where our trust is formed, where our decisions are shaped. When God looks at the heart, God sees the deepest truths that are buried in it.

We naturally see what is visible. We notice appearance, strength, reputation, success. We are drawn to what seems impressive or powerful. Even Samuel, the prophet, almost made that mistake again. He did with Saul because Saul was tall in stature and no man was handsome like him at that time. But God teaches Samuel to see differently. Through the heart of God. Not outward but look if the future king has the heart of God.

To see through the heart of God means learning to look beneath the surface of things. It means learning to notice what God notices.

As we pray, as we listen to Scripture, as we walk with God over time, our way of seeing begins to change. We begin to recognize that the kingdom of God often grows in hidden places. In the life of a shepherd boy in the field. In the good faith of ordinary people. Seeing through the heart of God changes how we look at others.

Instead of being quickly impressed by appearance, status, or success, we begin to look with patience and humility. We begin to remember that every person carries a story we cannot see and a dignity that comes from being created in the image of God. And perhaps it also changes how we see ourselves.

When we carry the fears that we are too small, too ordinary, too unnoticed to matter. Then God enters to begin his work precisely in those places. God sees what others overlook. God notices the heart that is faithful in small things.

And you see again and again in Scripture, God chose the unexpected: the younger brother, the overlooked child, the shepherd boy, the fisherman, the tax collector. The last, the lost, and the least. And eventually God chose to come into this world as a carpenter from Nazareth to change the world.

The greatest gift is a heart that begins to beat with God's own heart.

When we have a heart of God, comfort is flowing out of our heart.

When we have a heart of God, Compassion is flowing out of our heart.

When we have a heart of God, Mercy is flowing out of our heart.

And friends, the best treatment for our soul is to have the heart of God in our lives.

A heart that sees beyond appearances. To see beyond what looks impressive. Because when God gives us his heart, our vision begins to change. And we begin to recognize the saints around us. The ordinary people of good faith through whom God is shaping the future.

So perhaps that old man on our street understood something very important. When he placed his hand on our heads and prayed, "May God give you His own heart so that you may see through it," he was praying that we would learn to see the way God sees.

Like Mr. Barkat's blessing, my prayer for us today is "May God give us His own heart so that we may see through it." Amen!