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I Samuel 16:1-13

We Give

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I mentioned a couple weeks ago that one of the things I love about DCC is that we grow and learn together. For the last few weeks, some of us have been doing just that on Sunday evenings. With the help of my colleague, Rev. Kevin Howe, and Rev. Sr. Scott Taylor's technology prowess, we've been learning about the Enneagram. Enneagram may not be a familiar word to everyone, so let me try to give you an idea of what we are spending our time thinking and talking about each week. In her book, *The Honest Enneagram*, Sarajane Case, writes, "The enneagram is, in essence, a theory. It's a series of observations put together over time that make a whole lot of sense...It provides us with nine distinct profiles of people who have the same motivations and fears and, therefore, often have a lot of the same behavior patterns." In some ways, the Enneagram is a mirror that we hold up to ourselves as we ask, "Who am I really?"ⁱ

At a conference I attended yesterday, one presenter suggested that since each one of us is made in the image of God, each of the 9 Enneagram profiles represent one aspect of God. What this said to me was that, if we want to understand God, we must understand one another and ourselves. I've learned a lot about myself by studying the Enneagram. It has helped me discover who I am at my core, what motivates me, and how that affects my behavior and relationships. It has encouraged me to spend time at that metaphorical mirror and learn to love what I see, and it is not easy work.

In Psalm 51, the psalmist seems to be spending time in front of that mirror as well. He writes:

You desire truth in the inward being;

therefore teach me wisdom in my secret heart.

¹⁰ Create in me a clean heart, O God,

and put a new and right spirit within me.

This psalm has traditionally been attributed to King David, but most scholars think that attribution was added later. Whoever wrote it, must have known that there was something inside each one of us that is the essence of who we are. This

“inward being” the psalmist writes about, I believe, is the part of us that connects with the divine and that is the truest part of ourselves. That is the part of myself I have learned about as I’ve studied the Enneagram and in today’s story of the call of David, we will read that this is the part of David that God saw and that compelled God to call him as a king. The same is true, I believe, for us, God sees that truest part of ourselves and calls each one of us to use it to bring about the world God desires.

Before I read today’s text, I want to connect it to where we were last week.

Last week we heard God calling to the child Samuel. Samuel grew up to be a trustworthy prophet who revealed God’s word to the people. Remember this was sort of an in-between time for the Israelites. The Israelites had been guided by a series of judges, whose stories are told in the Book of Judges. The stories of the judges end with, “The people did what was right in their own eyes,” which was not a good thing. Anyway, the system of judgeships failed miserably. The people began to recognize that they needed a more formal leader. They asked for a king. Samuel reminded them that God was their king, so they didn’t need a human one. But they insisted and God acquiesced, appointing Saul as the first king of Israel.

According to I Samuel 9, Saul was head and shoulders taller than anyone else in the country, and he was handsome and charismatic. Unfortunately, he also chose political expediency over faithfulness to God’s way. When waiting for God and Samuel to give their blessing amid a military situation became too difficult, he took matters into his own hands. As a result, Samuel told him that God would choose another king to take his place. That brings us to today’s story in I Samuel 16 when Saul is still king but has just heard from God that his days as king are numbered.

This is I Samuel 16: 1-13.

16 The Lord said to Samuel, “How long will you grieve over Saul? I have rejected him from being king over Israel. Fill your horn with oil and set out; I will send you to Jesse the Bethlehemite, for I have provided for myself a king among his sons.” ² Samuel said, “How can I go? If Saul hears of it, he will kill me.” And 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 you shall do; and you shall anoint for me the one whom I name to you.” ⁴ Samuel did what the Lord commanded and came to Bethlehem. The elders of the city came to

meet him trembling, and said, "Do you come peaceably?" ⁵ He said, "Peaceably; I have come to sacrifice to the Lord; sanctify yourselves and come with me to the sacrifice." And he sanctified Jesse and his sons and invited them to the sacrifice. ⁶ When they came, he looked on Eliab and thought, "Surely the Lord's anointed is now before the Lord." ⁷ But the Lord said to Samuel, "Do not look on his appearance or on the height of his stature, because I have rejected him; for the Lord does not see as mortals see; they look on the outward appearance, but the Lord looks on the heart." ⁸ Then Jesse called Abinadab, and made him pass before Samuel. He said, "Neither has the Lord chosen this one." ⁹ Then Jesse made Shammah (Sham **ah**) pass by. And he said, "Neither has the Lord chosen this one." ¹⁰ Jesse made seven of his sons pass before Samuel, and Samuel said to Jesse, "The Lord has not chosen any of these." ¹¹ Samuel said to Jesse, "Are all your sons here?" And he said, "There remains yet the youngest, but he is keeping the sheep." And Samuel said to Jesse, "Send and bring him; for we will not sit down until he comes here." ¹² He sent and brought him in. Now he was ruddy, and had beautiful eyes, and was handsome. The Lord said, "Rise and anoint him; for this is the one." ¹³ Then Samuel took the horn of oil and anointed him in the presence of his brothers; and the spirit of the Lord came mightily upon David from that day forward. Samuel then set out and went to Ramah (Rah mah).

This story is about David's initial selection as king, which may seem premature since Saul was still king. Samuel was still finding himself upset at Saul's failure as king, but God was ready to move on, so he dispatched Samuel to Bethlehem to anoint the next king, one of Jesse's sons. This created some anxiety for Samuel. You can imagine that choosing a new king while the old king was still king wouldn't sit well with the king who still wanted to be king. But Samuel did as he was instructed and went to Jesse's house in Bethlehem where he found some really fine king candidates. Based on the culture around him, Samuel assumed that God was after the oldest son, though we have seen in other stories that God is not confined by cultural norms. So, if not the oldest son, at least one who looked like a king, you know...large and in charge.

But God consistently chooses the one the world does not. The lesson here is the same as we see in the biblical texts over and over. The world has a pecking order: elder son over youngest, Pharaohs over slaves, the sons of priests over an outsider. Those pecking orders do not apply to God's kin-dom. David, the youngest, smallest, son of Jesse would be king, "for the Lord does not see as

mortals see; they look on the outward appearance, but the Lord looks on the heart.” And we can’t blame God for going a different direction at this point, Saul was a perfect physical specimen and he failed spectacularly. Maybe it was time for a change in tactic. Maybe what was inside David, at his core, was more important than the size of his stature. David was chosen because of who he was on the inside because he had a heart that was tuned to God.

We have the benefit of knowing David’s full story and we know that David, like Saul, was not perfect. We like to clean up his encounter with Bathsheba and call it an affair, but it wasn’t. David used his power to take what was not his. He raped another man’s wife and impregnated her. And then, to cover his tracks, he had her husband, a loyal soldier, killed in battle. Some people have suggested Psalm 51 was written by David as an act of repentance following the “Bathsheba incident.” I doubt it, but if it was, it falls way short, considering what he had done. If that was written by David, he should have at least said Bathsheba’s name.

Today’s text, though, tells us that God called David as king because he saw who David was at his core. As cruel and selfish as what he did to Bathsheba was, it was not all he was. In fact, in many ways, David’s reign was incredibly successful. Except for Jesus, the Bible has more David stories than any other biblical character. In the biblical narrative, we are told he was a skilled musician, called on, as a youngster, to soothe Saul’s troubled soul. He defeated Goliath with a sling shot, was a gifted military strategist, and in many ways was very faithful to his call to care for and protect the people of Israel. And even though Saul tried to have David killed, David refused to lay a hand on Saul or his family.

David was complicated, like most of us; a two-sided character whose life exemplifies the best and worst of what life looks like when a person follows God’s ways and when they do not. His life highlights the reason God and Samuel warned the people that having a human being as king is not ideal and it is messy. And we don’t have to look far in our world today to see how human beings can quickly cause things to go amuck (Amuck, amuck, amuck-reference to the movie *Hocus Pocus*).

Truthfully, we are all a bit two-sided, aren’t we?

Sometimes we do the right thing and sometimes we do the wrong thing. David’s story reminds us that God sees beyond what we do to what’s at our core, the *why*

behind what we do. One of the things learning about the Enneagram theory has taught me is that our actions, the things other people can see, don't always tell the whole story. Two people can do the same thing, but for different reasons.

Here is an easy example:

Let's imagine that you observe someone in the grocery store who drops their bag of groceries on the way out the door. Quickly, two people swoop in to help. On the outside, the two people who stop to help seem alike, right? They see someone in need, and they help. Both have done a very kind thing.

But the two people aren't necessarily doing it for the same reason.

One person is helping because it is the right thing to do. And the most important thing to that person is to be seen as right.

The other person, though, helps because they have learned that if they help people, then people will love them. And being seen as lovable is the most important thing.

Two different motives for the same action.

Human beings see the action. God sees the motivation.

Big companies spend millions of dollars every year to figure out what motivates people to buy what they are selling, and they try to tap into that motivation.

I mean...what motivates people to buy a stuffed flamingo toy that you feed and then goes potty in its own potty?

Or finger covers to protect your fingers from cheese dust when you eat Cheetos?

Or Band aids that look like bacon strips? Why???

And it isn't just corporations that try to figure us out. Non-profits do the same thing. They try to figure out what will motivate their donors to give to their organization so they can continue to do the work they are doing. Some even use beer! And the same is true of churches. Church leaders spend hours trying to figure out how to get people to give more to the church in a world in which people have a lot of choices about how to spend their money. Most churches have a yearly stewardship campaign like the one we are in the middle of right now. Some preachers give fiery sermons to motivate their congregations to give. Some use fear: If you want your heavenly reward, you better give, or you will spend eternity in a very warm environment. Some use guilt: God has given us so much; the least, the very least, you can do is give back to the church. In a surprise to no one, I am not a fan of either of those tactics. I'm a huge fan of loving God, so it would be expedient for me to take the easy way out and just say, "Your giving

should be motivated by your love for God.” But I think there is more to it than that. In fact, when asked, not one person said to me, “I give to DCC because I love God,” though I do not doubt anyone’s devotion to our Creator.

I believe we are all motivated to give for different reasons because we are all connected to this church and connected to God in different ways. I have become even more convinced of this since I’ve actually asked people why they give to DCC.

It turns out, some of us give because we believe the work we do together brings the world closer to being made right, the way that God dreams the world will be. Some of us give because we recognize that this is a safe place for all people and safety is important to us. Others give because at DCC we don’t have to check our brains at the door. We affirm that the head, heart, and body are all equal parts of our faith and our life together. We give because we care about our neighbors who are vulnerable, and the money we give helps ease their suffering. Some of us give because the math is pretty simple, if we don’t give, some of what we love about DCC won’t happen.

We give because, with all of our differences, we can do more together than we can on our own. We are better together. And the community of Bartlesville is better because we are together. I am out in the community, on your behalf, all the time and people tell me regularly how much they appreciate what we do. To be clear, some people call me a heretic, but most people thank me. What we do matters. Please consider what you will give to our shared ministry in 2022 and fill out an estimate of giving form today. The forms are available online through a button on our homepage and on the coffee table in the fellowship hall.

Next week, we will wrap up our emphasis on stewardship and generosity with Celebration Sunday. We will celebrate what we have done in 2021, dedicate our 2022 estimates of giving, and following worship, we will eat lunch together and play a bit of Halloween BINGO for prizes. And everyone is invited to play! There will be good grown-up prizes as well! I hope you will be here for it. Whether we are working or playing, we need who you are in order to be the church we were created to be.

Amen.

ⁱ The metaphor of the Enneagram as a mirror is taken from the book, *Forty Days on Being a Five*, written by Morgan Harper Nichols (Intervarsity Press, 2021).