

1 Sam 15 First Impressions

Hope Community 6/14/09

Texts:

1 Samuel 15:34 - 16:13

2 Corinthians 5:6-17

Mark 4:26-34

SERMON

(going forward..) A person is a person, no matter how small...

(move podium out, step up...)

This podium was obviously NOT made for a small person.

Lots of things are not made for short people.

And I think I qualify as someone who with first-hand experience.

I always dreamed of being 5'9". As you can guess – and see – I never quite made it.

Us short folks have our own heros, though.

People like Dustin Hoffman. Napoleon – but without the world domination thing

How about Spud Webb – pro basketball player back in the 80's and 90's. 5'7"

AND HE COULD DUNK THE BALL. I can't even touch the rim. THIS close, but never got it...

I even had a great English teacher in HS – Dr Assuma. 5'4". Great teacher.

Mildly self-conscious about his height. He told his favorite song was "Short People"

maybe you remember?

Short people got no reason.. To live

But you need to remember the refrain as well..

Short people are just the same

As you and I

All men are brothers

Until the day they die

Unfortunately, the world doesn't always value and respect short folks.

All things equal, people like tall folks make better. Just because they are tall.

Studies show they make better 1st impressions, folks think they are more intelligent.

They are more likely to be hired. They get higher salaries.

Ever since TV we don't elect short presidents anymore.

It's hard to get over those expectations and first impressions.

Even wise old Samuel got zapped by it.

Look back at our OT scripture for a moment – End of Sam 15, beginning of ch 16.

God is done with King Saul. He sends Samuel out to anoint a new king – one of the sons of Jesse. And the first one he sees, the oldest, Eliab – oh what a kingly candidate!

Take a look at v6 –

“he looked on Eliab and thought, surely the Lord’s anointed is now before the Lord.”

Yeah, tall, handsome, impressive. THAT’s just what we need in a king!

Well, looks can be deceiving. Nothing against Eliab, but it isn’t who God had in mind. Look at v7: 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.”

God picked David – the smaller, youngest son, instead.

Just goes to show that “A person is a person, no matter how small” just like Dr Seuss said.

I guess we should have some sympathy with Samuel. He got caught by preconceptions, faulty first impressions and didn’t see what was REALLY important.

But so do we.

Think we don’t? Of course we do.

We get caught up in height, weight, clothes, hair color, skin color, gender and lots of other things. We just all ***think*** we don’t do it.

One sad but enlightening study, not too long ago, compared folks reactions to photos of Caucasian Americans and African Americans doing the same things.

When they monitored folks reactions to what they saw, 80% of the responses showed a less positive reaction to the African Americans. Think that is surprising? Get this: 60% of the African Americans looking at the pictures ended up having a less positive reaction to the African American’s they saw.

Racism. Gender bias. Age discrimination. They are real, and they are all around us. They may be better than they used to be, and we may try harder not to get caught by them, but they are real. Not all that long ago they were perfectly legal and often encouraged.

In Samuel, we are reminded why we ended up declaring these things illegal.

Basing our decisions, and reactions, on those “outward appearances” is not only cruel but foolish.

A guy should be king just because he is tall and handsome? Doesn’t that just sound silly when we say it out loud? Everyone and anyone can have talents and gifts, amazing ideas. God calls us to judge folks based on their heart – their attitude and actions.

But oh, it is so hard. It’s just natural. Even when we KNOW we shouldn’t do it, we do it. We get these pre-conceived ideas of what folks are like and what they can do. Or can’t.

I’m reminded of being back in college, late on Friday nights – staying up til 1am to watch “Kung Fu Theater” with friends. There would often be some scene showing a beautiful young lady, walking on a path in the forest with a grandpa like guy

Some thugs emerge from the bushes... and, in badly dubbed English, say

“we come to kidnap the girl – and you, old man, will not stop us!”

old man: “Leave her be and go. The path of violence always ends in pain”

Well, they don’t take his advice and rush in. A typical wild fight scene follows with people flying through the air, great acrobatics and really bad sound effects.

When it finishes all the thugs are lying on the ground and groaning.

The old man shakes his head. The young lady brushes the dust off her kimono, turns to the old man, bows, and says:

I am sorry grandfather. *I did not mean to hurt them too badly.*

(laughter?)

Well, what were you expecting? You thought maybe it was going to be the old man....

See what power the unexpected can have?

That’s what we see so often in Jesus & his parables – The unexpected. Often absurdities.

leave 99 sheep to go find one... Samaritan helping out a JEW... REALLY!

The parables are full mis-directions, unexpected, riddles,

that make us ask “could THAT be true?” That’s what made them powerful!

In our gospel reading from Mark, we can first ask ourselves – what would we expect from the lowly SMALL mustard seed? From appearances, not much. It isn’t really the smallest, but it is really small, and it does grow, and it is prolific! The Kingdom of God started small, but grew uncontrollably.

Not what folks were expecting.

Started with an unpretentious beginning – a “savior” who died on a cross.

Apostles afraid, hiding in an upper room. No one expecting much. THEY didn’t expect much. Then they changed the world. They lived beyond themselves. Beyond their own expectations.

Think back and think about some of your “first impression” experiences.

What you had heard about someone. Maybe what you had seen. If you are married – think about how you met your spouse.... What was your FIRST reaction?

Maybe it was a blind date with someone that had a “great personality”?

Any chance that it might not have been absolute love at first sight?

Well, for me, I’m glad Kim got past her first impression!

I’ve got a video clip I’d like to show you – and at the end I’ll ask you your impression.

If you happen to have already seen it, I’ll just ask that you contain yourselves for a few minutes.

Let me ask – how many of you are familiar with Susan Boyle? Have you seen the video clip?

(play youtube clip – 5:49)

Susan Boyle. That wasn't scripture, but it IS a great lesson about pre-conceived, mis-judged first impressions.

God dreamed a dream FOR US. And it isn't about what we were, or what we look like. It isn't even about what we did in the past. That's not the issue to God. Our 2 COR reading reminds us that in God we are a NEW creation, and God looks at different things.

Where is our *heart*. Do we have a *heart for God*?

The same goes for everyone else that we meet, that we judge.

What someone did – good and bad - makes them what they are now,
what they have learned, their experiences, their pains, their mistakes.

If we never make mistakes, we haven't tried much and haven't tried very hard.

Our mistakes – including our sins – become part of our witness. Sometimes they help us have care and sympathy for others. Sometimes they help us reach out and communicate with others.

We are not perfect. We are REAL PEOPLE, living REAL LIVES.

If we ever think we are more than that, then be ready for God to knock us down a peg or two.

We have REAL FAITH in a REAL GOD who judges on a different scale, using a different criteria.

So what did Samuel expect from David? Not much.

What might someone else expect from you?

Ever done something totally amazing and unexpected.

Succeeded where others thought you would fail? Ever surprised even *yourself*?

Well, our God is a God of surprises.

God says:

Don't sell ME short! The Kingdom of God WILL grow!

Don't sell OTHERS short. Judge them on their heart, on what's inside.

And don't sell YOURSELVES short. God created you, and just asks that you step out and surprise yourself.

Because God created us – all of us. And people are people, no matter how small.