

THE CUTE BOY WITH BEAUTIFUL EYES

1 SAMUEL 16:6-13

⁶*When they arrived, Samuel took one look at Eliab and thought, “Here he is! the LORD’s anointed!”*

⁷*But the LORD told Samuel, “Looks aren’t everything. Don’t be impressed with his looks and stature. I’ve already eliminated him. THE LORD judges persons differently than humans do. Men and women look at the face; the LORD looks into the heart.”*

⁸*Jesse then called up Abinadab and presented him to Samuel. Samuel said, “This man isn’t the LORD’s choice either.”*

⁹*Next Jesse presented Shammah. Samuel said, “No, this man isn’t either.”*

¹⁰*Jesse presented his seven sons to Samuel. Samuel was blunt with Jesse, “The LORD hasn’t chosen any of these.”*

¹¹*Then he asked Jesse, “Is this it? Are there no more sons?”*

“Well, yes, there’s the runt. But he’s out tending the sheep.”

Samuel ordered Jesse, “Go get him. We’re not moving from this spot until he’s here.”

¹²*Jesse sent for him. He was brought in, the very picture of health—bright-eyed, good-looking.*

The LORD said, “Up on your feet! Anoint him! This is the one.”

¹³*Samuel took his flask of oil and anointed him, with his brothers standing around watching. The Spirit of the LORD entered David like a rush of wind, the Lord vitally empowering him for the rest of his life.*

Samuel left and went home to Ramah. [The Message]

David sat on a rock watching the flock of thirty sheep and lambs. It was a fairly boring task. “Watch the sheep, make sure they have plenty of water and move them around to greener pastures. And watch out for foxes!”

His father said that every morning! Once or twice there were worse things than foxes: a lion or a bear. But his father had trained him well. If you can’t run, stand your ground and fight. But usually it was boring work. So David would while away the hours making up little tunes on his harp.

But this day was different. A servant had come for him.

“What’s going on?” David asked.

“I don’t know,” the servant replied. “All I know is that the prophet Samuel is here, and he wants to see you.”

All his brothers were lined up outside as David went in, from Eliab the oldest on down through all seven. They looked as puzzled as David.

David went into the altar.

Samuel was feeling very tired. He was an old man, almost ninety. King Saul wanted him dead. But the Lord still called him to be prophet of Israel. And now Samuel had the dangerous task of anointing a new king for Israel. Someone who would unite the twelve tribes. Surely such a person would have to be an imposing and powerful man. But one by one the Lord had rejected all Jesse's sons. And the Lord alone knows why Jesse was chosen anyway! And now the youngest was left. And he was ... well, 'cute' is what the girls would call him. Probably still a teenager. Fair complexion. 'Dreamy' eyes. Not someone used to the rough and tumble of military training and warfare.

Yet the Lord had said: "Do not consider his appearance or his height, for I have rejected him. The LORD does not look at the things man looks at. Man looks at the outward appearance, but the LORD looks at the heart."

Would a good heart be enough to rule a nation? What about wealth and power? And, as many politicians show, what about guile and hyperbole? But no! The Lord says a good heart is enough.

And so the prophet Samuel was directed to anoint David.

But it was all done in such secrecy no-one really understood what had happened until much later – when David began to show his true ability to be king. Until then, only the Lord and Samuel knew what had happened in that dimly lit sanctuary.

So the cute boy with beautiful eyes, to quote verse 12 more accurately, would become king of Israel.

But we must not think God chose David to be king because of any special qualities about David; except for one: his 'good heart'. His 'good heart' is not a kingly quality. At its most basic, it simply means someone who trusts in God. That's what God was looking for. And that's what David was like. We learn of David's heart from the songs he wrote while tending sheep, or during the quiet moments he had as king of Israel. Like Psalm 23:

*God is the station owner,
And I am just one of the sheep.
He musters me down to the Lucerne flats,
And feeds me there all week.*

*When I'm feeling poorly,
And at something less than my peak,
He leads me to the restfulness,
Of a coolabah shaded creek.*

*He teaches me not to break away,
Not to be a loner;
He teaches me to stick with his mob,*

And acknowledge him as my owner.

*Even when the droughts are bad,
And I cross the Desert of Death,
God is close beside me,
So close I can feel his breath.*

*God is the one who holds the map,
That gives me my direction,
And God is the one who guarantees,
Provision for my protection.*

*Although there are dingos in the hills,
And the paddocks are full of snakes,
God serves up a barbecue,
Of beautiful T-bone steaks!*

*His patience and compassion,
And forgiveness fail me never;
And I'll live with him in the homestead,
Beyond the end of forever.*

The Aussie Bible. Re-told by Kel Richards. Bible Society N.S.W., 2003, page 78

But David's 'good heart' is not what made David a great king. What did it be: *the Spirit of the LORD came upon David in power*. His 'good heart' is what made room for the Holy Spirit.

The Holy Spirit enabled this young man, who was hardly kingly material, to be a true king, for David must be God's representative, and must rule with God's rules. And for that to happen the king needs the Holy Spirit and a good heart. Far more so than big pecs and biceps, and thick long beard and a big heavy sword.

Now the point of all this is that we not only learn what King David was like, but we also learn about his descendant, the Messiah, Jesus of Nazareth. And we learn about ourselves.

Like his ancestor, Jesus has a good heart and rules by the power of the Holy Spirit. On the face it Jesus would seem too weak and ineffectual to be king. Hardly a great statesman, or a striking figure with a gravelly voice like the US General Patton from WWII had. Throughout his life, and especially in his death, Christ showed that his kingdom, like his heart, reaches out to the lost and ill and despised of the world.

It may sound like he is the king of the losers. And maybe he is! For before God, all people are losers – lost to God in sin. But Christ claims us for himself. His good heart calls out to us. And how hard-hearted or thick-headed we would have to be to not heed his call to come to him and enter his kingdom.

But this anointing of David is also true for us. There is nothing special about any of us that God should set his eyes on us and say: “That’s just the right sort of person for my kingdom!”

Rather, seemingly at random – although it is really the mystery of his love – we are anointed to be princesses and princes in his kingdom. And by his Holy Spirit he creates a new, ‘good’ heart in us.

What does all this mean? It means that Christ, like David, was a servant of God. And we are too. Though our honour is the glory of the Kingdom, our task in this life is to be servants.

King David served God by uniting the twelve tribes, and establishing a royal family out of whom would come the perfect King, namely Jesus himself. This is all God’s plan. So what this servanthood is about is playing one’s part in God carrying out his plan to save the world.

For Christ that meant being obedient, even to death on a cross.

For us, it means doing as the King has commanded us: to go into the world and make disciples for him, from every nation and culture, baptising and teaching. And that is our task until the king returns.

And that task can be from something as mundane as making a slab of concrete at a church, or drilling holes in a bit of wood at a manse, to standing in the pulpit preaching a sermon, or defending the truth as the man born blind did in the Gospel reading for today. For whether behind-the-scenes or up-front, all these things are about supporting the Kingdom of Christ and doing our part, as we are able, in being obedient servants, with a good heart and by the power of the Holy Spirit.

Which brings me to a bit of Christian legalism to end with: To be in the kingdom of Christ means to work for the kingdom. There are no free rides. There are no ‘pew-warmers only’ seats in church. There are no ‘so long as I get something out of it’ only places (Have a look at Matthew 25:14-30). Christianity is not what we make of it or get from it, but what Christ makes of us and can do through us. There is room only for servants who serve, and know they now have a good heart in Christ and by his Spirit.

Which means, I suppose, that in God’s judgement we all have ‘beautiful eyes’!

Amen.