

I had been hearing radio advertisements for cardioscans when I came upon this morning’s Scripture lesson. Cardioscan is kind of like the verse, 16:7 on the cover of the church bulletin: “for the Lord does not see as mortals see; they look on the outward appearance, but the Lord looks on the heart.”

A cardioscan, is a modern invention, a medical procedure, to give a diagnostic look at a human heart. They’ve been invented since I left hospital work in the ‘80’s so I looked up “cardioscan” on the computer. It’s kind of interesting, a real inside look.

However, God doesn’t need any device or procedure to look at our hearts.

God can look inside our very souls. God knows our thoughts, our attitudes, our loves, our hates, our hurts, our joys, everything. God knows everything about us.

In the story in the Bible, this ability God has was very important, because it was time for a new king. King Saul had not been a good king. Saul had been disobedient to God. And, as it said in verse 35: “But God was sorry he had ever made Saul king in the first place.” (Message)

That’s pretty bad, making God have regrets.

Because of all of this, it was time for a new king. God was very specific in telling Samuel, the prophet, what to do to find a king.

“Go to Bethlehem to see Jesse, and look over his sons. Take a ewe so it will look like a sacrificial, religious ceremony, so King Saul won’t get all mad and jealous and kill you.” That was another good reason to have Saul step down from being king—he had a murderous temper!

Samuel did exactly as he was told, and started looking over the sons Jesse had brought. He really liked the first one, Eliab.

“Hmmm, tall, nice looking. Good king material, right, God?”

“No, no, no. That’s not how I choose a king—by looks, or by height. I choose a king by looking on his heart.”

I don’t know about you, but I just love this about God. I love it that God is so wise, so perfectly wise that God looks at our hearts and judges accordingly.

We, as human beings, aren’t always like that, are we? We look at outward appearances quite a lot, don’t we? We have expectations about how people are supposed to look, and dress, and all. We have TV shows devoted to this idea: “What Not to Wear,” “How Do I Look?,” “Ten Years Younger.” And I have to admit it, I watch them a lot.

Before that there was “Dress for Success,” by John T. Malloy, I think. And apparently this attitude goes all the way back to the Bible. Because here was Samuel, a man of God, a prophet

who served God, judging by outward appearances who should be the king of Israel, the king of God's Chosen People.

Anyway, after God tells Samuel "no" on Eliab, 6 other sons parade by, but God keeps saying no, not this one.

"None of these will do. You got any other sons, Jesse?"

"Well, I've got just one more, David, the youngest. He's out, looking after the sheep." What do you know, that's the one that God wants to be king, David.

David was ruddy, and handsome, and had beautiful eyes. But David was the youngest. Are any of you the youngest in your family? That doesn't always mean the most important. Sometimes it means you look after the sheep, or do whatever job no one else wants to do.

So, Samuel anoints David with oil. That was the custom then, the prophet anointed with oil the person that God had chosen for some special task. And after several other adventures (like killing Goliath the giant, for example), David does become king.

In the history of Israel, David was considered the most wonderful king ever. He was a fine warrior. He ruled well. But we also know that he was not perfect. He fell into terrible sin. He took another man's wife and had that man killed. For this, God punished him, good and proper.

Still, that is the one God chose to be king, because of his heart. It also says that on the day David was anointed to become king "The Spirit of God entered David like a rush of wind, God vitally empowering him for the rest of his life."

But David, with everything about him—good, bad, and indifferent—isn't really the focus of this sermon.

God is. God, who can look on our hearts, and know us through and through, and love us to pieces . . . that's who we worship. That's who we believe in and serve.

God can and does look at the heart of every single person here. Isn't that an amazing thought!

Think about it. Think about your own heart. What does God see there?

Does God see years of hurt and troubles that are weighing your heart down? If so, God has a healing, freeing love for you.

Does God see a joyful, loving heart? If so, God celebrates with you, because that is what God has always intended.

Does God see a heart that is yearning for love and peace and direction? If so, God is ready to give you all of these.

Does God see sins that are eating you alive? If so, God has better things ahead for you—repentance and forgiveness and freedom.

Just think, God looks on our hearts and wants to help us with any “heart conditions,” so to speak, that we might have.

Now, I’m going to switch Scriptures, and talk a little about the Psalm we read together, Psalm 51.

It is believed that King David wrote this Psalm when he was first punished by God, for all he had done with Bathsheba, Uriah’s wife.

Well, David was one good writer! And so this Psalm still speaks to us. Its’ a Psalm which asks for forgiveness, which David needed. We all need forgiveness, all the time.

It’s also a heart Psalm. Verses 10, 11, and 12 have always been my favorites, especially in the King James version:

Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me.
Cast me not away from thy presence; and take not thy holy spirit from me.
Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation; and uphold me with thy free spirit.

Isn’t that what we all need, clean hearts which God has created?

Clean of sin—great big bad ones, and little bitty ones, and everything in between.

Clean of sorrows and anguish and hurts.

Clean of weariness and boredom and bad habits.

Clean of everything that keeps our hearts from being the joyful, loving, good Christian hearts which God has always meant them to be.

Let’s ask our loving God to start doing some of God’s wondrous work upon our hearts!

Amen.

By Reverend Sally J. DeMasters