

## Lent IV

*“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 sees not as mortals sees; they look on the outward appearance, but the Lord looks on the heart’.”*

Samuel has been sent on a mission by God to find a successor to King Saul, who while still living, has lost favor with God. Samuel is to go and visit with Jesse’s sons and Samuel immediately becomes enamored with their good looks and sturdy physiques. God says, “Samuel, none of these are the ones; you are looking at traits that impress you, not me. Find another”. And the youngest son David is called in from the fields and when he appears, God says to Samuel, “this is the one; I have looked at his heart, anoint him” and Samuel does. “Mortals look on the outward appearance, but the Lord looks on the heart”.

The Dutch priest, Henri Nouwen, commenting on this biblical passage in his book Show Me The Way, wrote” *Our heart is at the center of our human being....the mystery of the spiritual life is that Jesus desires to meet us in the seclusion of our own heart, to make his love known to us there, to free us from our fears and to make our own deepest self known to us. In the privacy of our heart, therefore, we can learn not only to know Jesus, but through Jesus, ourselves as well*”. To know Jesus in our hearts and ourselves as well. Coming to know Jesus can be both a frightening experience and an enlightening experience. When I speak of knowing Jesus I am not referring to an intellectual assent. We can know all about Jesus, his birth, his death, his resurrection, his teachings and we can gain a semblance of spiritual health yet not know Jesus in our heart.

The Danish existentialist Soren Kiergaard used the phrase “leap of faith”, in essence saying, for Jesus to be real in our hearts and not just in our minds we have to make a leap of faith, we have to say, I believe in Jesus rather than believing about Jesus. We have to decide, do we want to know Jesus and then do we really want to know, through our relationship with him, ourselves, who we really are, how we really believe.

I mentioned earlier that to know Jesus is both a frightening experience and an enlightening one. Most of us probably would not want all our inner-most thoughts brought under a microscope to be observed by our peers. To have someone, another human being, know us in depth can be a frightening experience. I want to tell you a love story and it requires a leap of faith. I believe Jesus knows you and knows me with an intimacy that we cannot imagine nor define; it is visceral in its intensity. And I believe, when Jesus looks at us with that intensity, what he sees in His heart, is a beloved child of God. What he sees in us is a magnificent creature waiting to be embraced by God's love.

Do you believe that about yourself or do I believe it fervently; would we allow God to touch us with such intensity? It is frightening but in my healthier moments, I believe it is the very thing God wants to do for us, to let us know that we are His beloved and to embrace us with an intensity that will soothe and heal our souls, that will cause our hearts to flutter with excitement and enchantment and allow our lives to be enthralled by knowing and being known by God.

Amen