

NOTHING BUT TATTOOS

One day as I was heading to my local Walmart to grocery shop, I saw a man holding a sign on the side of the road. The thing that stood out about him was that he was wearing long sleeves and a high collar on one of the hottest days of summer. I pulled over, introduced myself, and asked him how he was doing.

He told me that he had been searching for work for quite some time, but no one would hire him. I asked him why. He rolled up his sleeves and showed me his arms - no unmarked skin in sight, just tattoos. Then he moved the top of his shirt to expose his neck and upper chest. Again - nothing but tattoos.

He said no one would hire him because of the way he looked. Suddenly he burst into tears. He told me how he absolutely hated his tattoos. He said that he got them when he was very young and now he regretted it so much. He had even looked into having them removed, but it was just too expensive. And he was getting desperate because he had a wife and 10 year old daughter to support. Then he started telling me about how much he loved his little girl and how she was the joy of his life.

Now I have to tell you, I almost lost it right then and there. It took all my self-control to not burst into tears myself. I asked myself, how can I possibly help this guy? I couldn't offer him a job and I didn't know anyone who could offer him work since I was new to the area. But there he was, standing in front of me with tears in his eyes, looking miserable and dejected.

Finally I said to him "You know, God doesn't judge you the way the world judges you. This world is very superficial and only focuses on outward appearances – like how you look and what you wear and what kind of car you drive and what kind of house you live in and how much money you have. Those things are meaningless in the grand scheme of things. God is concerned about your heart and your character. He looks at the things that really matter."

Then I went on to say that the proof of this was in the Bible, in the story of how God selected David to be the next king after Saul. I described how the 8 sons of Jesse were paraded before God as potential candidates, in order from oldest to youngest. The oldest brother, Eliab, was quite impressive to look at by the world's standards - handsome and tall. But the Lord rejected him as king because his heart was not in the right place. (1 Samuel 17:28-30 gives a clue as to what was wrong with Eliab's heart). Then God rejected the next oldest brother, and the next one, and so on, right on down the line until He got to David. David was the youngest and the least of all his brothers, at least by the world's standards - but not by God's standards. God saw that David's heart was pure and he was chosen to be the next king.

I never saw that man again, which I took as a good sign. Typically "flying a sign" is a last resort, when they can't find other work. So I think his disappearance meant that he probably found a job.

I often think how wonderful it is that God doesn't judge us as the world judges. If He did, most of us would be in big trouble. I know I would. I am not popular or rich or pretty or young. I drive a 10 year old car with a hole in the bumper. And I'm a renter. But isn't it amazing that we serve a God who looks at the things that matter most - our heart and our character.

SCRIPTURES

1 Samuel 16:

1The LORD said to Samuel, "How long will you grieve over Saul, since I have rejected him from being king over Israel? Fill your horn with oil, and go. I will send you to Jesse, the Bethlehemite, for I have provided for myself a king among his sons." 2And Samuel said, "How can I go? If Saul hears it, he will kill me." And the LORD said, "Take a heifer with you and say, 'I have come to sacrifice to the LORD.' 3And invite Jesse to the sacrifice, and I will show you what you shall do. And you shall anoint for me him whom I declare to you." 4Samuel 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?" 5And he said, "Peaceably; I have come to sacrifice to the LORD. Consecrate yourselves, and come with me to the sacrifice." And he consecrated Jesse and his sons and invited them to the sacrifice.

6When they came, he looked on Eliab and thought, "Surely the LORD's anointed is before him." 7But 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 man sees: man looks on the outward appearance, but the LORD looks on the heart." 8Then Jesse called Abinadab and made him pass before Samuel. And he said, "Neither has the LORD chosen this one." 9Then Jesse made Shammah pass by. And he said, "Neither has the LORD chosen this one." 10And Jesse made seven of his sons pass before Samuel. And Samuel said to Jesse, "The LORD has not chosen these." 11Then Samuel said to Jesse, "Are all your sons here?" And he said, "There remains yet the youngest, but behold, he is keeping the sheep." And Samuel said to Jesse, "Send and get him, for we will not sit down till he comes here." 12And he sent and brought him in. Now he was ruddy and had beautiful eyes and was handsome. And the LORD said, "Arise, anoint him, for this is he." 13Then Samuel took the horn of oil and anointed him in the midst of his brothers. And the Spirit of the LORD rushed upon David from that day forward. And Samuel rose up and went to Ramah.

1 Samuel 17:

28Now Eliab his eldest brother heard when he spoke to the men. **And Eliab's anger was kindled against David, and he said, "Why have you come down? And with whom have you left those few sheep in the wilderness? I know your presumption and the evil of your heart, for you have come down to see the battle."** 29And David said, "What have I done now? Was it not but a word?" 30And he turned away from him toward another, and spoke in the same way, and the people answered him again as before.

Mark 10:31 But many who are first will be last, and the last first.

Luke 13:30 And behold, some are last who will be first, and some are first who will be last.