

16. January 2024

## God sees the heart

1 Sam 16:1-13

*The Lord said to Samuel, "How long will you grieve over Saul, seeing 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." And 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.' And invite Jesse to the sacrifice, and I will show you what you shall do; and you shall anoint for me him whom I name to you." Samuel 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?" And 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. When they came, he looked on Eli'ab and thought, "Surely the Lord's anointed is before him." 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 man sees; man looks on the outward appearance, but the Lord looks on the heart." Then Jesse called Abin'adab, and made him pass before Samuel. And he said, "Neither has the Lord chosen this one." Then Jesse made Shammah pass by. And he said, "Neither has the Lord chosen this one." And Jesse made seven of his sons pass before Samuel. And Samuel said to Jesse, "The Lord has not chosen these." And 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 fetch him; for we will not sit down till he comes here." And 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." Then Samuel took the horn of oil, and anointed him in the midst of his brothers; and the Spirit of the Lord came mightily upon David from that day forward. And Samuel rose up, and went to Ramah.*

Blessed is the one who can apply these words of the Apostle Paul to his life!

God's ways and decisions... Sometimes they are very understandable to us, sometimes they are completely different from what we expect, but they are always full of wisdom. We will not always be able to understand them immediately. Sometimes their wisdom

is hidden from our eyes and it takes time before God gives us the light to understand His decisions. And we may have to wait until the next life! So it is important that we trust God, even in the dark hours when we do not understand.

But today's reading gives us a glimpse of the criteria by which God sees and chooses people: He sees people differently because He sees their hearts and knows their depths! God knows man better than he knows himself! Nothing is hidden from Him; everything is revealed to His eyes.

We, on the other hand, are in danger of judging by appearances. We are impressed by titles, intelligence, physical appearance and other privileges. We also tend to idealise people, especially when we are not at peace with ourselves and feel inferior to others. When this is the case, we tend to enhance and exalt those qualities in the other person that we believe we do not have. Or the opposite can happen: if the person does not correspond to our ideal, we tend to despise him or her.

God sees us differently; He sees people as they are. We too can learn to look at people as God does, because sometimes we find ourselves in a situation where we have to form an opinion about a particular person. Of course, we cannot immediately see everything that is in a person's heart and then decide how much trust to place in them.

But the Holy Spirit can help us not to be blind in our discernment. To do this, first of all, we must not use outward privileges - real or perceived - as a criterion for judging a person, although we will not fail to notice them. Not everyone who is physically beautiful has a good heart. And not everyone who is less beautiful has a worse heart.

If we make this distinction in all areas, including ourselves, we avoid the danger of being easily deceived and quick to judge.

If we look at people realistically, we will also find it easier to be realistic with ourselves, because we will be more aware of human weaknesses. Humans can easily fall and fail in their purpose because they are not always able to resist their own inclinations or the temptations that come from outside. It is a mistake to overestimate human nature and to believe that people always tend towards good. With such an estimate, we will have a false view of the human condition and fall into an optimism that can become blind.

But the opposite extreme is also wrong. If we see human beings only in terms of their tendency to evil, we shall also distort their true picture and have a tendency to pessimism. Both views, the optimistic and the pessimistic, are human, but they are not spiritual. Spiritual criteria are those that allow us to have a realistic view of man and his actions, looking at him from God's perspective.

For example, when we see a person falling in his weaknesses, it does not necessarily mean that the person has a bad heart. There may be circumstances of which we are unaware, and we do not know how much his own weakness makes him suffer. On the other hand, we cannot take self-control as an infallible sign that he is a pure-hearted person.

In this meditation we cannot cover all the criteria for a realistic view of human beings. But let us remember this: if we do not allow ourselves to be overly impressed by external privileges, if we are aware of people's weaknesses but do not judge them by them, if we ask God to grant us the ability to see people as He sees them, if we try to fight against the pride that gets in the way, then it will be easier for us to see people as they are and to discover their hearts more deeply.