

“What Spills Out”

Good morning. Happy Monday to everyone. This week and next I am going to take a closer look at the relationship of Character and Integrity. Martin Luther King’s “I Have a Dream” speech has a famous line. “I have a dream that my four little children will one day live in a nation where they will not be judged by the color of their skin but by the content of their character.” MLK is aiming at the right place. It is the content of one’s character that means so much more to our Lord than our outward appearance.

Let’s consider the 1 Samuel 16:6-13 where the prophet Samuel meets with Jesse to anoint one of his sons. Especially notice what the Lord says to Samuel in verse 7.

⁶When they arrived, Samuel saw Eliab and thought, “Surely the Lord’s anointed stands here before the Lord.”

⁷But the Lord said to Samuel, “Do not consider his appearance or his height, for I have rejected him. The Lord does not look at the things people look at. People look at the outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart.”

⁸Then Jesse called Abinadab and had him pass in front of Samuel. But Samuel said, “The Lord has not chosen this one either.” ⁹Jesse then had Shammah pass by, but Samuel said, “Nor has the Lord chosen this one.” ¹⁰Jesse had seven of his sons pass before Samuel, but Samuel said to him, “The Lord has not chosen these.” ¹¹So he asked Jesse, “Are these all the sons you have?”

“There is still the youngest,” Jesse answered. “He is tending the sheep.” Samuel said, “Send for him; we will not sit down until he arrives.”

¹²So he sent for him and had him brought in. He was glowing with health and had a fine appearance and handsome features.

Then the Lord said, “Rise and anoint him; this is the one.”

¹³So Samuel took the horn of oil and anointed him in the presence of his brothers, and from that day on the Spirit of the Lord came powerfully upon David. Samuel then went to Ramah.

The content of David’s heart is what the Lord looks at. The character of one’s heart is what matters most to Jesus as well. In Matthew 15:17-19 Jesus makes it clear that what comes out of a man’s heart is reflective of his true character. Out of the heart come things that make him unclean—things that reveal whether the love of Jesus is where it should be.

Consider an illustration that I think does a nice job of highlighting Jesus’ point. It says, Imagine you’re holding a cup of coffee when someone bumps into you, causing you to spill what’s in your cup. You didn’t spill tea. You didn’t spill grape juice or soda. You spilled coffee because coffee is what was in your cup. If you’d had tea in your cup, it would have been tea that spilled out. The point is, whatever is inside your cup is what will spill out of your cup if bumped or shaken.

We are each a vessel, not unlike a cup. Looking from the outside, no one can know what we “contain.” But when events of life bump up against us or shake us up, whatever is inside will likely come spilling out.

So we must ask ourselves, “What’s in my cup?” Is it love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control? Or is it anger, bitterness, anxiety, impatience, mean-spiritedness, ill will, faithlessness, harshness, and lack of discipline?

We might present to the world that we are full of one thing when really we are full of another. It’s easy to fake it when nothing is bumping into us or shaking us up. But bring on a little trial, a little temptation, irritation, conflict, inconvenience, etc., and what’s inside our heart of hearts will come spilling out.

Nice illustration right? It gives us a picture of what Jesus is saying about what comes from the heart. This is called character.

Our English word, character actually has its roots in a Greek word... *χαρακτήρ* (character). Take a look at Hebrews 1:3. “The Son is the radiance of God’s glory and the exact representation of his being, sustaining all things by his powerful word. After he had provided purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty in heaven.” The word as it is used in Hebrews 1:3 according to studylight.org has the notion of an engraving of an exact copy. It is like a stamped impression like pressing an image onto a coin. Hebrew 1:3 is

saying the character of Jesus is the exact picture of who God is. The divine is completely present in Jesus who sustains all things by the power of His Word. <https://www.studylight.org/language-studies/greek-thoughts.html?article=34>

The goal of God's grace is to imprint the image of Jesus into His people. 1 John 3:2
“Dear friends, now we are children of God, and what we will be has not yet been made known. But we know that when Christ appears, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is.” “We shall be like him...” does not mean we become gods. It means that we are remade in His righteousness. We will live forever with him. Sin will no longer be a part of us. Death will no longer be a part of us. Jesus' image is imprinted upon us in faith; when the things of Jesus are imprinted into our hearts they are then expressed outwardly. God willing our fruits reflect a godly character from within the heart—and in truth, who we will be in eternal life.

What set David apart from his brothers was what was going on in his heart. We see in His actions how he would spare Saul's life twice and become a man after God's own heart. David was a man of high character. He was loyal to His Lord. He was humble before God. However, this does not mean that David was perfect or without sin.

Oh yes, he struggled with his demons. David was a ladies' man. We all know about Bathsheba but I've often thought she was not the first. We all know about how David took down Goliath. But we also know who pride sometimes got the best of David when he decided to take a census that God didn't ask for. We also see how David failed to be a good father to a very diverse family with many issues. However, no matter how much David wandered from the Lord, David would always return in repentance and remember his place before the Lord. David's cup was full of His Lord. It would be in the line of David that the Lord would choose to establish His throne forever (2 Samuel 7). David was flawed like us but always came to appreciate his place before God even as a king. What's more he sincerely appreciated calling the Lord his shepherd and trusted in His God even above himself as king.

So, what kind of impression does our character make upon others? A character is descriptive of what a person is like. Is it a godly character or an ungodly one? That only reveals itself by what spills out. Lord willing our character spills out with those things that identify us with Jesus.

Character is fluid. It can change. And this is good news for all of us. For example, the Apostle Paul's character changed from one who hated Christians to one that loved the Lord and His church, willing to give his life for both. Once Paul was willing to do anything to destroy the church but would eventually do anything to advance it. That's the power of God's grace for all of us. He changes us to become more like Him. And some day we will be like Him and see Him as He really is. What a future that will be! I hope that today's devotion has left some kind of impression upon you and blessed you.

Next week we will be adding in the element of integrity. What impact does integrity have upon character? Next week we will dive into that question.

And now the Lord bless you and keep you. The Lord make His face to shine on you and be gracious to you. The Lord look on you with His favor and give you His peace in Jesus. Amen.

Pastor Matt Woods
John 3:30