

Commentary on the Gospel for Tue, Jan 19th 2016

“Not as man sees does God see,

because he sees the appearance

but the LORD looks into the heart.”

The Lord can see what people cannot. The Lord can see the heart and the soul. When the choice was being made for the king of Israel, the choice was not what people would have thought. Samuel thought the choice would be Saul, but it was not. When he was told to go to Bethlehem for Jesse’s sons, he might have thought the eldest son would be the choice. The eldest son is the heir. The older son would have more experience. But it was not. He thought perhaps the handsome son, thinking that an outward appearance would indicate the choice, but it was not. “Do not judge from his appearance or from his lofty stature.” You can’t always judge a book by the cover. When seven sons were presented, handsome sons, none was the choice. He asked after another son, but was told there was no one but the youngest – a boy really, who was tending the sheep while the older brothers came to the sacrifice. That little boy was sent for, and was the choice. The Lord sees beyond appearance or experience into the heart and knew that young David had the heart of a ruler despite his current youth and inexperience.

In the Gospel, Jesus and the disciples are walking through a field, and some of the guys pick some grain. The Pharisees complain that they are breaking the Sabbath laws by working – harvesting grain. Jesus says that even David, when he and his companions were hungry, ate the offering bread. That was bread that was sacred and to be eaten only by the priests, but David as king used it when they were starving. Their need superseded the law. Jesus says that he supersedes the law. The starving can do what they must to feed themselves, even on the Sabbath. The Lord sees into the hearts of the people and knows their intent. And the intent of the law is different from the letter of the law. Yes, people should give the Sabbath day to the Lord, but should still be able to feed themselves when necessary. There is a difference between abusing the law and acting out of necessity. And the Lord who can look into people’s hearts can tell that difference. “The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath.” The Sabbath allows people a day of rest and the opportunity to praise the Lord. It is for the people’s benefit.

The Lord looks into our hearts and sees what we truly are. He sees the king in the shepherd boy. He sees the hunger in the grain-pickers. He sees our abilities when we cannot and knows our hopes and fears. Appearances can be deceiving. But the Lord sees what is true.