

SERIES: 'CONNECT WITH GOD' (#1)- -3/30/25

PASTOR LEE

- Pastor Lee: Something deep inside of us wants a 'connection with God' (new Series!)..... He 'wires' us this way. Images like:..... magnificent sunsets, powerful ocean waves flapping the shore, beautiful motion of waterfalls, etc....give us that momentary inner feeling that our smallish 'selves' pale in comparison *but* are part of something much larger....something transcendent and magnetic....these feelings cross with and stimulate our deep desire to connect with our Creator...God.
- Consider the *real* presence of God....He is not just over the sunset, the ocean, the waterfall....He is *here* with us...right now! And He longs for us to have a connection with Him! With a focus on 'CONNECTING WITH GOD', we will, in this Series, be highlighting King David and his relationship with Him. This is a unique person in history whom Scripture describes as "a man after God's own Heart".
- That's NOT to say that David was perfect....he had his highs and lows in life....many of both....but...'in the lows', was quickly and very genuinely repentive to God....and turned his ways back toward obedience to God. **DAVID CONNECTED WITH GOD.**
- Inspired by God and as the son of David, Solomon wrote these enlightening words:

Prov 3:5-6 - Trust in the LORD with all your heart and do not lean on your own understanding. (6) In all your ways acknowledge Him, and He will make straight your paths.

- This is why we are "CHRIST FIRST' Church-connect with Him and HE will direct your path!
- Background on David's story: God chose Israel as the people through whom He would work. He led and provided for them.... including the empowering of Judges. After a number of years and inspired by the leadership structure in neighboring nations, Israel implored God to give them a King. Notwithstanding negative implications (God was their King...no other was needed....kings inherently are flawed and typically abuse power, etc.) God allowed them to make this choice even while it was, effectively, a rejection of Him.
- First king: Saul....started well but became prideful, disobedient to God who, in turn, withdrew His blessings. In fact, Saul...in the act of disconnecting with God and relying upon himself and ritual sacrifices, is described in Samuel 15:22-23 as rebellious against God in a way tantamount to the sin of "divination" (*demonic*). The passage says, further, "..... Because you have rejected the word of the LORD, He has also rejected you from being king."
- Saul thought that the sacrifices would suffice and cancel any repercussions for his disobedience.....just like we rationalize that our own religious activity (eg. showing up at church on Sunday) might be at least adequately pleasing to God. But- -HE was (and is today) looking for obedience- -not 'half-in' gestures' or self-reliance in which Saul was, effectively, disconnecting from God.

***** WHEN YOU DISCONNECT FROM GOD, YOU ARE
DISCONNECTING FROM THE VERY THING YOU LONG FOR! *****

- This is where our Reading begins today— So God rejects Saul and enlists Israel's prophet, Samuel who, in obedience to God, does exactly what God tells him to do.

1 Samuel 16:1-13 - The 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 amongst his sons." (2) 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.' (3) And invite Jesse to the sacrifice, and I will show you what you shall do. And you shall anoint for me whom I declare to you." (4) 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?" (5) 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. (6) When they came, he looked on Eliab and thought, "Surely the LORD's anointed is before him." (7) but the LORD said to Samuel, "do not look on his appearance 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." (8) Then Jesse called Abinadab and made him pass before Samuel. And he said, "Neither has the LORD chosen this one." (9) Then Jesse made Shuman pass by. And he said, "Neither has the LORD chosen this one." (10) And Jesse made seven of his sons pass before Samuel. And Samuel said to Jesse, "The LORD has not chosen these." (11) Then 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." (12) And he sent and bought him in. Now he was ruddy and had beautiful eyes and was handsome. And the LORD said, "Arise, anoint him, for this is he." (13) Then 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.

*****. CONNECTING WITH GOD IS NOT ABOUT WHAT PEOPLE SEE,
FOR GOD LOOKS AT THE HEART *****

- In our routine lives, we say or do one thing- -whatever is our earthly focus of the day....but God's interest is: what's *in* your heart?! And He was drawn, in this passage, not to the obvious human-like choices ...rather, God based His choice upon reading each heart and, here, connecting (only) with the obscure and most unlikely of Jesse's sons ... David...a lowly shepherd.

*** CONNECTING WITH GOD STARTS WITH GOD ***

- God *first* saw David (no action on David's part).....He read David's heart....just like He reads all of our hearts.
- In this same vein, recall how God comes to Abraham.....chose him to be the 'father of the faith'...and executes His plan through this chosen person. Abraham was a man of faith....God knew his heart.
- Note: whether speaking of Abraham, David or any other person with a God-chosen heart, as the flawed humans that we all are, we can be subject to occurrences where our actions/ thoughts don't measure up. Eg. Abraham's and Sarai's (Sarah) attempt to control/ accelerate God's promise of a child by his union with Hagar .
- Yet...then...God shows up in the wilderness to the outcasted, desperate and hurt woman, Hagar, and does so as 'an Angel of the Lord' (a pre-incarnate Jesus!). He bestows blessings on her....HE SEES HER and instructs her to name her soon-to-be born son "Ishmael" and informs her of the multitude that will descend from himand the Angel tells her, further, to return to her mistress, Sarai. Hearing all this, Hager says, " I have now seen the One who sees me." (El Roi..."The God That Sees") ((Genesis 16:13))
- *And God sees us (!) and is calling our name-* -just as He did Abraham, again with Hagar- -and just as He did with David.....re-confirming the notion that connecting with God starts with God!
- Think about how, over time, the 'switch gets flipped'...in the Old Testament, God appointed or anointed specific people to accomplish His Will...giving His Spirit.... whether for a short period or longer....thats how David went from lowly, forgotten shepherd to King of Israel with the empowerment to do God's work.

However- - today- -through Jesus Christ, His crucifixion, His absorption of our sins (redemption!), His victory over death (Resurrection!) - – we are offered His forgiveness. AND, if we (any of us!!!) receive that by putting our faith and trust in Him, then His Holy Spirit is immediately given to us.....empowering, strengthening and providing that our lives be reborn!

Now, that's a blessed, transformative switch!!!!

- The Spirit of God....the presence of God in your life...He sustains you....connects you.....He empowers you- -this is everything!!! Don't be like Saul....listen to His Voice! Don't rely on church routines, 'one liner' momentary/superficial thoughts.....rather, answer His call with trust and devotion.....AND BE COMFORTED- -BE EMPOWERED!
- In this vein, answer this question: *HOW REAL HAS GOD BEEN IN YOUR LIFE THIS WEEK?*
- *Read and contemplate Psalm 23-DAVID.*

CONNECT WITH GOD!

