

## LOOKING AT THE HEART

Rev. Patrick A. Rose

*Lessons: 1 Samuel 16:1-13; Conjugal Love 302*

Suppose you were in a bookstore, looking around to find a book—perhaps a book to give as a present to someone. And as you look around, you come across a couple of books on a table. One has a fairly nice cover, so you reach down and pick it up. It's a nice new-looking book with a dark green cover. And then you see another book on the table. It is tiny, and the cover is a dark brown. It is falling apart and really doesn't look that nice at all. And so you decide to take the green book home as a present, thinking it is probably a much nicer book.

And yet, if you did this, you would have made a mistake. The green book might look nice on the front, but inside, it is a book written by a person who really didn't believe in the need for religion. In many ways, it is a terrible book. But the little worn book is very, very valuable. This book is actually part of the Word itself. It is the New Testament. And not only is it the New Testament, but it is the New Testament written in Greek, the way it was first written down. This book might not look like much on the outside, but inside it is part of the Lord's Word itself. And nothing is more valuable than the Word.

And so, you really cannot tell what a book is like just by looking at its cover, just by looking at the outside. You have to look on the inside.

And this is the same with a lot of things. What is on the inside is far more important than what it looks like on the outside. Suppose, for example, you picked up an apple...an apple that looks really nice on the outside. But on the inside it was filled with maggots! You wouldn't want that apple, would you? But, on the other hand, if an apple is good on the inside, then, even if the skin is scraped and bruised, it doesn't matter. You can just peel off the skin and eat the apple.

Now this is the way it is with people as well. Sometimes people get very concerned with what they are like on the outside: what they look like, how they are dressed, what kind of impression they give other people. And these things can sometimes be important. But what a person is like on the outside is nowhere near as important as what he or she is like inside.

So, in the story that we just read from the first book of Samuel, Samuel was sent by the Lord to Bethlehem to choose and anoint a new king of Israel. And the Lord told Samuel to anoint David. Now, David had seven older brothers. He was the youngest in his family and not even fully grown up yet. But even though he was small, the Lord chose David, because of what he was like inside. The Lord looked

inside of David, and saw that David had the heart, the love of a king. The Lord saw that David could love and govern his people well. And that is why David was chosen to be king.

Now a similar thing happens, or should happen, when a young man and a young woman fall in love and decide to get married. Why do they choose each other? How *should* they choose each other? A man shouldn't choose to marry a woman because of what she looks like on the outside, no matter how pretty she might be. And a woman shouldn't agree to marry a man because of what he looks like, no matter how handsome he might be. What is important is what is on the inside. What kinds of things does the person love on the inside? Does he love the Lord? Does she love the Lord? Do they love the Word? Do they love to do what is right and good? And the man and the woman should try to figure out whether they love the same kinds of things deep down, and also whether they truly love one another. Do they have the right kind of heart, the right kind of love, to marry each other? (You all know, don't you, that a heart stands for love?)

Remember this! If you are still young, it might be many years before you are old enough to get married. But when you *are* old enough, remember that when you are thinking of getting married, you should do your best to find out what the other person is like on the inside. You should take the time to get to know what that other person is really like deep down inside. And if you are older, if, say, you are already married, then you should still look at the heart, at the heart of the person you are married to. It is the things inside your married partner, the things inside his or her heart, that are especially to be loved, and cherished, and nurtured. For the things that are inside the heart are the real person, and these are the things which will last forever.

*Amen.*