

St. David's Presbyterian Church  
St. John's, NL  
"X-Ray Vision"  
Dr. J. Dent

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Proper 12

Many diagnostic instruments are used in the medical system to be able to see into your body without cutting you open. This is a good thing.

X-rays were used since the early part of the twentieth century to show the denser parts of your body on a film. During the time of WWII, the technology behind sonar was adapted to the human body in what was ultrasound, or high frequency sound echoing back to a machine that would make a black and white image of the structures inside you. Nuclear medicine began in the 1950s with gamma rays used to create images. This was refined in the '70s with computers to begin giving three dimensional images, computed tomography, or CT scans used, sometimes called CAT scans for computed axial tomography. Magnetic resonance imaging or MRI was developed in the 1950s and brought to mass market around 1984 in the U.S. using a different technique for looking inside the body without having to cut anyone open.

You may already have known these things, but it is good to be reminded of how much technology has changed in the last hundred years or so. I suspect it will change again a great deal in the next hundred years, if the Lord doesn't return before then. Meanwhile, a great truth is revealed to us once again in the Scriptures this week. One you probably already know. Not only does the Lord have a great number of resources that he puts at our disposal, as we remembered again last week, but he also can tell us a lot about what we are like on the inside.

God does not look at the outward appearance, although he certainly can see it. He looks at the heart. The heart in the OT Scripture is a picture not of a pump or circulatory center, but the core of who you are. It is argued today that physiologically the core of who you are is stored in the brain. But certainly in ancient times, the heart was a symbol of that part of you which is highly protected and desperately needed. So when someone says they have given their heart to the Lord, it means that they have given the core of who they are, their identity, their meaning and fulfillment in life to God. We also say that we give hearts to one another in marriage in a special way, and that is true as well.

In the Scripture reading today, you noted that God saw right through what David had done, even though only a very few people had seen pieces of what David did to cover up his sin. Some of David's servants knew that he had had sex with Bathsheba. Uriah may or may not have figured out what David had been up to, since he was a righteous man and only did what was right. General Joab knew of and was complicit in the murder of Uriah. Some of those same servants might have put together David's time with Bathsheba and his later marriage to her and figured out the whole story, but that was unlikely. Generally speaking, nobody knew what David had done. He was involved in secret sin.

This, of course, is not uncommon. All of us today have secret sins. Some of them are formidable, some may not even bother us. But all of us have secret sins. The question is what do we do with them? Do we bring them to the Lord, during the time of confession of sins here on Sunday morning? Do we tell our spouses or our friends or family members? Do we live in the shame of them and try to bear the burden of them alone?

David as king was confronted with his sin. Nathan had no other way except by prayer to know all the details that he knew. He had received from God exactly the way to tell David.

Most of us don't have people who we would trust to tell us our sins, with our best in their minds. Do we? Do you have a person you would trust with your deepest, darkest sinful secrets? Would you trust that person to expose your sin to the appropriate authorities, so that you would own the consequences of that sin? David had Nathan. Who do we have?

I would suggest that we need someone to bear the load of our sins. We need a human companion, besides the Lord who already knows our sins, and already is waiting and willing to forgive us, if we simply confess the existence of such. Who is that person in your life? Who can you tell all to, with freedom, knowing that you will be met with grace and truth?

All of us need such a person, and more than one, if possible. We don't have the science fiction ability to see into each other with x-ray vision. We don't have the ability to read each other's minds, although some of us have been with our spouses for a few decades and we might be able to predict many

behaviors. Nevertheless, we cannot see into their thinking processes. And as I've said before, I believe this is a great gift from the Lord. This means that we need to invite others into our interior life, into our thinking, into the parts of our lives that they cannot simply see from the outside.

When we do this with safe people, we develop friendships. And when we develop friendships, we have something more valuable than any precious metal or stone or any amount of money. I believe it is only through honest and caring others that we have any sense of reality.

Have you ever thought about how tenuous your sense of reality actually is? What I mean by this, is that we are greatly dependent on other human beings for having any objective sense of our reality beyond our subjective imaginations. To put it less philosophically, I may think I am a certain way, but it takes others to tell me who I really am.

This is true with human beings. This is also fundamentally true in our relationship with the Lord. Only God can tell us who we truly are. But ironically, how God informs us is almost always mediated through human beings. So our identity, our perspective, our very sense of reality comes through our relationships. And yet we seem to believe often that we don't really need anybody else. How wrong we can be!

David needed Nathan. We need our friends and confidantes. The disciples needed the Lord, like water and food. We need the Lord for our living water. Not only do our plants desperately need water, we too desperately need the living water of the Lord. It is a primary need of every human being. And as much as we need food to survive, we need Jesus for our basic spiritual nutrition. He calls himself the bread of life in John 6, because he wants people to know that he is our daily spiritual staple. Relationship with him gives us our sense of identity and reality, combined with our relationships with others.

So when someone comes up with an idea like building a ten story office tower on the properties here on Elizabeth Avenue, others can bring that idea into line with reality. But then again, if we agree together and we know the resources and care of our Lord, we can do much more than we could ever ask or imagine. We need to continue what we are doing, but also expand into areas we never before thought we could or even should.

Each of us are in a specific place of growth in our lives. Each of us know what might destroy us if we let it out. We each know what details about our history might cause others to think of us very differently. We all have dark secrets and sins.

God wants to minister to us in those dark places. God does not want us to be weighed down with the shame and guilt of those sins. God wants us to experience the freedom of first of all knowing God's love and grace, and then secondly allowing other human beings into that heart space that only a very few know, if any.

The challenge is mustering the courage to open up to others. I think men particularly find it difficult to do so, if I can be so bold as to say so. Perhaps we need a men's group starting in the Fall, where some might have a forum to open themselves to others for healing and for care. If you think we do as well, please talk to me or email me. We all need grace and love. I know I do.

David learned of his need on that day of being confronted by Nathan. It wasn't a happy day, but it was a day of growth in grace and truth. What areas is God speaking to you about right now?

Where does the Lord want you to experience more freedom in your life? If nothing comes to mind, reach out to your spouse or your friend and ask them what they think you need to be working on, or opening up about.

In so doing, we go forward in building the community of faith, in building the work of God. Sometimes that work is reaching out, sometimes it is reaching in. Every time we need the Lord to help us overcome our comfort zones, and move us in the direction of growth.