

Minister's Message – October 2012

Look On the Heart

In the small country town where we lived I played cricket on Saturdays and joined the tennis club. I enjoyed the sport and also getting to know people in the town. But I never met Lenny on the sports field. Lenny was a young man with a disability. He got around in a wheel chair. I would occasionally see him down the street but never spoke to him. What do you say to a young man in a wheel chair?

One day Lenny turned up at church. He had heard the gospel and believed in Jesus Christ as his saviour. It was a small church so I had to speak to this young man. He was such an interesting young fellow. Lenny loved reading but mostly we talked about the Bible.

Because of poor teaching at the church we often went to a town some 50km down the road for worship on Sunday afternoon. We asked Lenny if he would like to come along. Soon I was not just talking with Lenny but lifting his small shrivelled body out of his wheel chair into our car and driving with him for half an hour.

This was many years ago but I still remember those times. What a joy it was to share just a few years with Lenny. He has long since gone to be with the Lord. I got to see beyond the disability and the wheel chair and get to know a young man called Lenny and a brother in Christ.

There are many ways in which we can meet a disabled person- though sports fields are not usually the place (in spite of the Paralympics). Society encourages us to look beyond a person's disability and take note of their ability. This is good but is it not better to look beyond their disability and look at their heart?

In the Bible we read 'man looks on the outward appearance but God looks on the heart' (1 Samuel 16:7). In choosing a new king in Israel the prophet Samuel was looking for a big strong man who could lead the army. But God chose a small shepherd boy. God looked beyond the outward to the inward part of man.

Would it not be better if we started looking at people's hearts and not just their appearance? Despite the popular rhetoric about disabilities, our society is more than ever focused on outward appearance; with 'botox beauties' and 'steroid strong men'. The recent outburst about sexism in Parliament is another example of this focus on outward things. Can we not look beyond someone's appearance and to their heart? In doing so we will not treat others as objects but will respect them as persons made in the image of God and precious to him.

Jesus says 'love your neighbour as yourself'. Let us examine our own hearts before we condemn others. Let us see ourselves and other people, no matter how different they may look, as God sees us all. Man looks on the outward but God looks on the heart.

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