

The Eighth Sunday after Trinity – Pr. Faugstad sermon  
1 Kings 12:26-33: “We Follow the LORD’s Heart.”  
August 9/10, 2025 | Saude, Jerico, & Redeemer Lutheran Churches

**In Nomine Iesu**

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O gracious God, Thy loving heart  
Was full of sweet compassion;  
And felt our woe and desp’rate smart,  
And planned our restoration;  
Thy grace and justice found a way  
To save us from death’s horror;  
And everlasting judgment stay,  
And give us joy for sorrow. Amen. (*Evangelical Lutheran Hymnary* #449, v. 7)

*Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. Amen. (Rom. 1:7, etc.)*

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*The sermon text for today is written in the twelfth chapter of the First Book of Kings. We read selected verses in Jesus’ name:*

And Jeroboam said in his heart, “Now the kingdom will turn back to the house of David. If this people go up to offer sacrifices in the temple of the LORD at Jerusalem, then the heart of this people will turn again to their lord, to Rehoboam king of Judah, and they will kill me and return to Rehoboam king of Judah.” So the king took counsel and made two calves of gold. And he said to the people, “You have gone up to Jerusalem long enough. Behold your gods, O Israel, who brought you up out of the land of Egypt.” And he set one in Bethel, and the other he put in Dan. Then this thing became a sin, for the people went as far as Dan to be before one. / He also made temples on high places and appointed priests from among all the people, who were not of the Levites. And Jeroboam appointed a feast on the fifteenth day of the eighth month like the feast that was in Judah, and he offered sacrifices on the altar. So he did in Bethel, sacrificing to the calves that he made. And he placed in Bethel the priests of the high places that he had made. He went up to the altar that he had made in Bethel on the fifteenth day in the eighth month, in the month that he had devised from his own heart. And he instituted a feast for the people of Israel and went up to the altar to make offerings. <sup>(ESV)</sup>

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*These are Your words, heavenly Father. Sanctify us by Your truth, Your Word is truth. Amen. (Joh. 17:17)*

In Christ Jesus, who faithfully carried out His work of redeeming love for the salvation of our weak and sinful hearts, dear fellow redeemed:

For seven years, King Solomon built a beautiful temple in Jerusalem. Its dimensions were estimated to be 90 feet in length, 30 feet in width, and 45 feet in height. The walls and floors were lined with boards of cedar and cypress. Intricate carvings were made in the wood, and then the wood was overlaid with pure gold. The Holy Place and the Most Holy Place were built within the temple. The Most Holy Place is where the Ark of the Covenant of the LORD was kept. When the Ark was brought into the temple, the LORD came in a cloud, and His glory filled the temple (1Ki. 8:10-11).

The LORD was pleased with Solomon's faithful work. He told Solomon that if he would walk *"with integrity of heart and uprightness"* as David had and would follow His Commandments, then Solomon's throne would be established over Israel forever (1Ki. 9:4-5). But He warned that if Solomon turned aside from following Him and followed other gods, his great kingdom would crumble, and even the temple would become a heap of ruins.

As the chronicle of Solomon's life continues, we learn that he took for himself 700 wives and 300 concubines. When he was old, these wives who came from foreign lands turned his heart away from the LORD to serve their gods. Solomon built altars to their gods and joined his wives in worshipping them. So the LORD raised up adversaries against Solomon, one of whom was a man named Jeroboam. This is the Jeroboam we hear about in today's reading.

When Solomon died, his son Rehoboam began to reign in his place. And when the people from the northern tribes of Israel asked Rehoboam to be more merciful than his father Solomon had been, Rehoboam listened to bad advice and said that he would be much harsher than his father had been. So the people in the northern tribes of Israel rebelled against Rehoboam and decided to make Jeroboam their king. This all happened according to God's will because of Solomon's unfaithfulness. The LORD told Jeroboam that if he would be faithful to Him, his kingdom would be firmly established.

But Jeroboam did not remain faithful, as we learn about today. He was jealous to keep his power. He worried that if the Israelites went to the temple in Jerusalem to make sacrifices to the LORD, then Rehoboam might win them back. So he made a plan. He would set up new places of worship where the people could go, so they wouldn't go to Jerusalem. He set up two calves of gold, one in Bethel and the other in Dan. And where have we heard about golden calves before? That's the idol the Israelites made right after the LORD led them out of their slavery in Egypt.

What the Israelites said then is basically what Jeroboam said now about the golden calves, *"Behold your gods, O Israel, who brought you up out of the land of Egypt."* Jeroboam's idolatrous plan *"became a sin,"* as our reading says. He promoted this idolatry by making temples on high places, appointing priests not from the Levites, and establishing a feast day *"in the month that he had devised from his own heart."* This grand idea started in his heart and was guided all along the way by his heart. He would have fit right in in our culture today.

We often hear that we can't go wrong if we just follow our heart. Following your heart is seen as the path to happiness. Ignoring what your heart tells you could lead to a lifetime of regret and unhappiness. But why do people think the heart is such a reliable guide? Has anyone's heart ever led him wrong? Listen to how the heart is described in the time before the Flood: *"The LORD saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every intention of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually"* (Gen. 6:5). Through the prophet Jeremiah, the LORD said, *"The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately sick"* (17:9). Then we have Jesus' own words about the heart: *"For out of the heart come evil thoughts, murder, adultery, sexual immorality, theft, false witness, slander"* (Mat. 15:19).

Clearly the heart can steer us wrong. It is not a trustworthy guide. It can and often has led us astray. So how can we know if the feelings and thoughts of our heart are good and beneficial, or if they are leading us in the wrong direction? We know this by comparing what we are thinking and feeling with what God tells us in his holy Law.

So if my heart is telling me to disobey my parents and do things they tell me I shouldn't, then my heart is contradicting the Fourth Commandment. If my heart tells me to pursue a sexual relationship outside the blessed boundaries of marriage, then my heart is going against the Sixth Commandment. If my heart tells me to attack someone else's reputation in an attempt to elevate myself, then my heart is violating the Eighth Commandment.

The theme of today's service is "Beware of False Prophets." The false prophet to be most aware of is the false prophet that lives within us, within our heart. It is the old Adam that disobeys God, and that looks with desire at what God says is sin. There are two ways that the old Adam in coordination with the devil works: One is outright opposing what God says in His Word; the other is twisting what God says in His Word.

The first is when we are tempted to reject or ignore what God says because it doesn't agree with the way we think. We don't want to be outsiders in the world; we want to fit in. Maybe we want to accommodate our own sin or the sin of someone else, so we write off something in the Bible as being outdated or unclear or unhelpful for the mission of the church. The other way the old Adam operates is to subtly change the Word of God, soften it, explain away something that challenges us. Maybe we excuse someone's sin and even lend our support to it because, after all, God tells us to love our neighbor, and we interpret love as never questioning someone's choices.

Jeroboam directly contradicted the Holy Scriptures in everything he did and said to keep the Israelites away from Jerusalem. How does Jesus tell us in today's Holy Gospel that we will recognize false prophets? He says we will "*recognize them by their fruits*" (Mat. 7:16), especially by what they say. Do we say things that contradict what the Bible says? Then that is the old Adam talking and not our new man of faith.

Jesus says that those who will enter the kingdom of heaven are those who by faith do the will of His Father who is in heaven. Doing the Father's will is believing and following exactly what He says in His Word. This is how we "hallow His name," as we say in the Lord's Prayer. We hallow God's name by teaching His Word in its truth and purity and by living holy lives according to it as His dear children (Luther's Explanation to the First Petition).

There is a reason we have to pray for this. A pure life lived according to God's Word doesn't come naturally to us. We struggle to hold to His Word. We struggle to do what is right. Our life is full of failures to "fear, love, and trust in God above all things" (Luther's Explanation to the First Commandment). We have at times followed the god of self-satisfaction. We have followed the god of pride and personal glory. We have followed the god of popularity and acceptance by the world.

We pray along with King David, "*Create in me a clean heart, O God*" (Psa. 51:10), because we know how unclean our heart has been. David wrote these words after following his heart and

succumbing to terrible sins. God forgave him those sins, just as He forgives you your sins. He knows how evil and desperately sick your heart is by nature. If it were good or even neutral, He would not have needed to send His Son to die on the cross in your place.

But He did send His Son. The coming of His Son in the flesh was necessary for you and every sinner. We needed Him to apply His perfectly pure heart to keeping the Law of God in our place, so we would be credited with His perfect love toward God and neighbor. We needed Him to hallow God's name in every way by obeying His Father's will and offering up His holy life for you and me.

You can't find what you need for life and salvation in your own heart with all its wayward passions and desires. But you can find what you need in Jesus' heart. He makes His love known to you by inviting you to partake of His means of grace, to hear His Word of truth and salvation and to feast on His holy body and blood.

What He gives you here through His Word and Sacraments may not seem as exciting or impressive as what is going on with the golden calves of prosperity, power, and pleasure that are worshipped by the world. But just as the LORD promised to be present in the Most Holy Place of the temple, so He has promised to be present here in this most holy place, where He comes to bless you with His gifts.

This is where He expresses His faithfulness to you, and where He strengthens your faithfulness to Him. This is where He cleanses your heart and pours His love into it, so it is ready for fruitful service to the people around you. This is the good plan and purpose for your life that the LORD formed in His own heart and revealed to you in His holy Word. By hearing and trusting His Word, you are submitting your heart to His will. And when you follow *His* heart, you will ever have His joy, His life, and His peace.

*Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Ghost; as it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, forevermore. Amen.*

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