**HAIR! MM O/L**

**Oh no! Did you hear what Dominic Raab said? He said that we can’t get a haircut until 4th July – at the earliest! So, unless I’m willing to risk self-laceration with the dog’s clippers, I guess I’ll have to accept that I’ll be looking like a refugee from a 1960’s hippy commune for the next couple of months. And, so, I was gazing disconsolately into the mirror, imagining myself disappearing under a tangled thatch, wondering what I could talk about this week, when I scratched my scalp through my matted locks and thought, “I know! I’ll talk about a subject we rarely get sermons on: why not talk about….*hair*?”. No, don’t switch off – I’m serious. I hope to demonstrate today that a bad *hair* day needn’t mean a bad *prayer* day!**

**Now, preachers always say that the first mention of a subject in the Bible is especially significant, so I started to turn the pages eagerly to discover whose hairstyle is the first to be mentioned. Do you know whose it is? Esau – although it’s not just talking about his head: Rebekah is in labour and we’re told, *When the time came for her to give birth, there were twin boys in her womb. The first to come out was red, and his whole body was like a hairy garment; so they named him Esau* [which means *hairy*] *(Gen. 25:25).* I have to confess, I was struggling to find a spiritual application for this rather startling news. I’m not even sure whether it’s an encouragement or not to any of my ginger listeners! Do you remember the name of Esau’s twin? Jacob, who was born clutching his heel (25:26). Were they identical twins? Definitely not: Jacob’s own testimony in later life was, *my brother Esau is a hairy man while I have smooth skin (27:11).* And, you may remember, Jacob then disguised himself as Esau with goatskins to steal his brother’s blessing from their blind and aged father (27:12ff).**

**So I think I can make a general point from all this. You see, we make a lot of our hair (or lack of it): we primp and plump it, curl it when it’s straight and straighten it when it’s curly; blondes dye it dark and brunettes dye it blonde; we can spend a fortune on it and if anyone ever invents a guaranteed cure for baldness, he or she will never need to work again! But Esau was hairy and Jacob was smooth - and they were both dirty rotten scoundrels! Jacob’s name means “twister,” while Paul says in Romans that Esau is one of the few people that God says He hates (Ro. 9:13). Perhaps our elaborate hairdos (or otherwise) mean more to us than they do to God – as He told Samuel long ago, *Man looks at the outward appearance, but the LORD looks at the heart (1 Sam. 16:7).***

**In fact, an elaborate coiffure could be positively dangerous in Bible times! Now, who has the one haircut in the Bible that everyone’s heard of? Surely it’s Samson, whose hair was never cut from his infancy (Judges 13:5) in fulfilment of his dedication to God as a Nazirite. Never cut, that is, until he met Delilah, who, we’re told, put him to sleep on her lap and called the Philistines in, who shaved his head (16:18-19). Now, how can anyone be put into such a deep sleep that their head can be shaved without them waking up? Well, when you remember that another promise a Nazirite was meant to keep was to abstain from wine and when I tell you that Delilah was from Sorek (16:4), which means *vine,* could we suggest that she got him sozzled first? Anyway, soon he was bald and he, who had once killed a lion with his bare hands, was left as helpless as a kitten (14:6, 16:20-1). I guess the lesson we learn here is, as Paul says, God cannot be mocked (Gal. 6:7). But read the end of the story in Judges ch. 16 and see how gracious God was to Samson as his hair grew again (vv. 22ff). Samson prayed that simple prayer that God always honours: *LORD, remember me….(v. 28).***

**Now let me tell you about Absalom - he was buff! As it says in 2 Samuel 14:25, *In all Israel there was not a man so highly praised for his handsome appearance as Absalom. From the top of his head to the sole of his foot there was no blemish on him.* But his glory was his hair: *Whenever he cut the hair of his head – he used to cut his hair once a year because it became too heavy for him – he would weigh it, and its weight was two hundred shekels* [that’s about 5 lbs!]. Now, if God’s given you lustrous hair, thank Him for it and look after it well, but do I detect more than a hint of vanity in Absalom? Come on, who *weighs* their hair? Anyway, his handsome looks deceived because he murdered his brother (2 Sam. 13:28-9) and rebelled against his father and declared himself king (2 Sam. 15:10). Well, by now, David was an old man while Absalom was every inch kingly – especially that hair! Ah, that hair….according to 2 Samuel 18:9, *Now Absalom happened to meet David’s men. He was riding his mule and, as the mule went under the thick branches of a large oak, Absalom’s hair got caught in the tree. He was left hanging in mid-air, while the mule he was riding kept on going.* You’d be tempted to say that God must have a sense of humour, except that it was no laughing matter, because David’s general Joab found him hanging there, plunged three spears into his heart and threw him, hair and all, into a pit (vv. 14, 17). Perhaps it’s better to say that God believes in consequences: whatever is your glory will kill you, unless it’s God Himself. As Paul wrote, *All that is not of faith is sin (Ro. 14:23),* even your haircut!**

**I’m getting the impression that hair can be a bit dangerous! But so can lack of hair – that is, dangerous to *others*. Elisha was bald and, when he went to Bethel, *as he was walking along the road, some boys came out of the town and jeered at him, “Get out of here baldy!”. He turned around, looked at them and called down a curse on them in the name of the LORD. Then two bears came out of the woods and mauled forty-two of the boys (2 Kings 2:23-4).* I remember at a Bible study once being asked why God was so angry because someone had called Elisha a spam-head! But, of course, that’s not it. Elisha was on the Lord’s business. He was on his way to Carmel and Samaria (v. 25) and he was *alone.* The word for *boys* also means *youths* and there were at least 42 of them! And where were they? Bethel – which means *house of God.* Once again, He will not be mocked. Like the Temple in Jesus’ day, the *house of God* had become a house of godlessness (Mt. 21:13). And, remember, He believes in consequences….**

**So thank God for your head and what’s on it and look after it but look after your soul more. Both Peter and Paul had to rebuke people who thought more of their heads than their hearts (1 Peter 3:3-4, 1 Tim. 2:9-10). Because it’s not all bad news: one of my favourite verses is Proverbs 16:31, which reassures me that *Grey hair is a crown of splendour; it is attained by a righteous life.* In other words, godliness, like hair, *should* grow. If you’re worried about that first grey hair, adopt the slogan, “It’s *not* grey hair, it’s wisdom highlights!”.**

**Which brings me to Jesus’ own hair. I wonder what colour it was. Years ago, our kids had an illustrated children’s Bible which depicted Jesus as a blond - in fact He looked more like a Viking than a Mediterranean Jew! No, I’m pretty sure His hair would have been black and curly. But when John met the resurrected Jesus on Patmos, he wrote this in Revelation ch. 1, *The hair on his head was white like wool, as white as snow (v. 14).* But this was no Santa Claus. John was seeing what Daniel saw: *thrones were set in place, and the Ancient of Days took his seat….the hair of his head was white (Dan. 7:9). The Ancient of Days*….the last time John had seen Jesus, He had looked 33: now He looked ancient - as the hymn calls Him, *the potentate of time [Crown Him with Many Crowns].* And John fell at his feet as though dead (Rev. 1:17).**

**And this is what Jesus, the Ancient of Days, who is and was and is to come, the Almighty (Rev. 1:8) did to that old man grovelling terrified at His feet: *Then he placed his right hand on me and said, “Do not be afraid” (1:17)* because Jesus had already prophesied to John and all His friends about the terrible days that were coming and He had assured them in Luke 21:18*, Not a hair of your head will perish.***

**So, don’t be afraid in these fearful times, whether your locks are luscious or scanty, curly or lank, dark, fair, grey or white. *Even the hairs of your head are all numbered (Lk. 12:7),* said Jesus.Not even your hairdresser knows how many hairs you’ve got, but Jesus does! If He knows that, then He knows your every secret….and still He loves you!**