

Deliverance in The Promised Land

Judges 6-7

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Sermon Summary

This message transitions us from the book of Joshua to the book of Judges. The Judges were deliverers raised up by God to rescue the Hebrew people from the oppression of surrounding people in the promised land. One of the main reasons they needed deliverers was due to their own disobedience to God and Him having to remove His hand of blessing from them. However, God's heart continued to care for His people and each time they cried out to Him, He provided a way out. The message looks at the need for a deliverer in the Promised Land, the unnamed prophet who preceded Gideon, and his message, Gideon's reluctant acceptance of his role as deliverer, and then the ultimate deliverer Jesus. Correlations between Gideon's experience and the experience of Jesus as Deliverer are explored. The main text for the message is Judges 6 and 7.

Full Sermon Notes

It's so good to be with you all this morning on this Palm Sunday! We will continue with our 260 reading plan, but by the end of the message you'll see a stark connection with our Old Testament story and The New Testament record of Jesus coming to be our deliverer! Thank you so much for joining in with us and we also thank you for your patience with us in the last few weeks with some of the tech issues we've had! Those issues have been outside our control and our service providers are working hard to fix the issues. We all have been thrust into a whole new world it seems overnight! However, God is still God and He will help us weather this storm, just like He has helped us in the past! There's so many prayer needs during this time. In fact, we're starting a prayer initiative this coming week. We will be sending out an email where you can sign up for a 30 min time slot to pray. We will be giving you a template to follow with suggestions and Scriptures. So look for that from Northshore Church and if we don't have your email address, be sure to get that to us via our Web-site Northshorechurch.net! Let's pray right now...

Prayer - Father God You know our situation better than we know it ourselves and we cry out for You to work in the hearts and lives of everyone so impacted by this tragic situation. Please touch those who are fighting for their lives this very moment. Protect and strengthen our first responders, fire fighters, EMS, and law enforcement and our health care professionals working around the clock to save lives and their families! Be with our leaders as they seek to make good decisions and may they seek Your wisdom! Sometime we don't even know what to pray or how to pray in times like this. So we simply place ourselves in your hands and seek to hear Your voice of wisdom, strength and comfort. We pray Romans 8:26-28...

Rom 8:26 In the same way, the Spirit helps us in our weakness. We do not know what we ought to pray for, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groans that words cannot express.

Rom 8:27 And he who searches our hearts knows the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints in accordance with God's will.

Rom 8:28 And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose.

In Jesus name I pray and believe! Amen!

How many of you just want things to get back to normal? I get it, I'm feeling that too, but I'm going to say something that may surprise you! I don't want things to just go back to normal and return to the way they were before this pandemic? Why would I say that? Because, if we don't learn from this and just go back to normal, that would be an additional tragedy to the lives lost during this pandemic. It has been my prayer that through this we will realize our need for God and for each other! Even with all of our modern technology, our medical advancements and our scientific knowledge, this event should teach us just how dependent we are upon God. There are things that are completely out of our hands to which we have no control. But I want to interject something here, and please know that I'm not seeking to be judgmental with what I'm about to say because I don't know the hearts or the motives of others. However, I agree with Rick Warren who said this past week that God has given us brains and He expects us to use them! I've said that same thing many times about different things. I also think it applies to our present situation.

Some people think that to quarantine is a lack of faith. I totally disagree with the pastors who feel this way and are continuing to have public gatherings. I believe God's Word teaches us to do our part and then to trust God with the things we have no control over! I've said this many times in the past, "If I die with my seat belt on, it was probably my time to go, but if I wasn't wearing my seat belt, I'm liable to get to the pearly gates and St. Peter may look at me and say, "Didn't anybody ever tell you about seat belts? You're early!" By the same token, wearing personal protective equipment, taking medicine, and going to the doctor when you're sick, is not a lack of faith, it's doing your part. Faith is trusting God to bless your efforts and let Him take care of the rest! I believe the quarantines and social distancing measures put in place by our leaders are reasonable and are designed to protect lives. God's Word tells us to obey our earthly authorities in such matters. They have not told us we cannot worship, they have simply said we can't gather together physically right now because of the threat of further spread of this killer virus! I believe it is quite selfish to insist on exercising our right to gather when we know it could put many lives at risk. Doing so is not an act of faith, but one of disobedience. I don't believe God will bless that kind of behavior. As I've said before, if the government were to tell me I cannot worship, for no other reason than they no longer wanted people to worship God, I would give my life to defy that kind of order. This is not that kind of order and people should know that!

What does any of this have to do with our message today? Well quite a bit actually. The Hebrew people were no strangers to rebellion, disobedience, and selfishness. In fact, the Old Testament

is full of examples of how the people would promise, with strong words of commitment to follow God's instructions only to quickly fall back into the same patterns of wickedness and disobedience. Zach preached such a good message last week and reminded us of how Joshua had led the people to conquer the promised land and encouraged them to make a choice and to stay faithful in their commitments to God. Remember Joshua had made this statement...

Josh 24:15 But if serving the LORD seems undesirable to you, then choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve...

The people had this to say...

Josh 24:17 It was the LORD our God himself who brought us and our fathers up out of Egypt, from that land of slavery, and performed those great signs before our eyes. He protected us on our entire journey and among all the nations through which we traveled.

Josh 24:18 And the LORD drove out before us all the nations, including the Amorites, who lived in the land. We too will serve the LORD, because he is our God."

Sounded great right? But, as Zach pointed out last week, Joshua knew the people had a propensity for making bold commitments and breaking them. He knew they were weak, and it turns out he was right. Listen to this as we move from the Book of Joshua to the Book of Judges and discover that in the Promised Land there was...

1. The Need for Deliverance!

Judg 2:8 Joshua son of Nun, the servant of the LORD, died at the age of a hundred and ten.

Judg 2:9 And they buried him in the land of his inheritance, at Timnath Heres in the hill country of Ephraim, north of Mount Gaash.

Judg 2:10 After that whole generation had been gathered to their fathers, another generation grew up, who knew neither the LORD nor what he had done for Israel.

Judg 2:11 Then the Israelites did evil in the eyes of the LORD and served the Baals.

Memory Verse

Judg 2:12 They forsook the LORD, the God of their fathers, who had brought them out of Egypt. They followed and worshiped various gods of the peoples around them. They provoked the LORD to anger...

So there's trouble even in The Promised Land! How quickly, the people abandoned their promise to God. The very next generation didn't even know the Lord or what He had done for Israel. This should tell us something of the importance of teaching our children the things of God and showing them through the way we live our lives! Something had gone terribly wrong in the spiritual culture of the Hebrews and they had rejected the God of Abraham, Issac, Jacob, Moses

and Joshua. As a result of their rejection of the covenant God had made with them this happened...

Judg 2:15 Whenever Israel went out to fight, the hand of the LORD was against them to defeat them, just as he had sworn to them. They were in great distress.

Now I want to share with you something. It says God's hand was against them! However, I know His heart was not! He had given them choices and they originally said yes to the covenant, but then chose to break their end of the deal. God had told them what would happen if they did this. For one thing He would not be able to bless their disobedience so He would have to remove His hand of blessing from them. So sometimes, I believe, God's hand being against someone is maybe like this... "Whoa, hold on, I can't bless that! You're on your own and it's not going to be good. You're going to learn the hard way that you really do need me and when you do, I'll be here for you!" Now how do I know God's heart was not against them? Listen to the next verse in Judges 2:16...

Judg 2:16 Then the LORD raised up judges, who saved them out of the hands of these raiders.

So God delivered them, and notice it says judges, plural! In other words this happened over and over. In fact listen to the next couple of verses...

Judg 2:17 Yet they would not listen to their judges but prostituted themselves to other gods and worshiped them. Unlike their fathers, they quickly turned from the way in which their fathers had walked, the way of obedience to the Lord's commands.

Judg 2:18 Whenever the LORD raised up a judge for them, he was with the judge and saved them out of the hands of their enemies as long as the judge lived; for the LORD had compassion on them as they groaned under those who oppressed and afflicted them.

Judg 2:19 But when the judge died, the people returned to ways even more corrupt than those of their fathers, following other gods and serving and worshiping them. They refused to give up their evil practices and stubborn ways.

Isn't it amazing how God had worked so miraculously for the Israelites over and over again. Saving them from 7 year drought by letting Joseph become a leader in Egypt. Then, after Joseph died and another Pharaoh, who did not know Joseph, enslaved the people, God sent Moses to deliver them and wow the miracles God worked to get them out of Egypt. And then, even with their disastrous behavior in the desert, God still hung in there with them and raised up Joshua to get them to the promised land and helped them defeat powerful and very wicked nations. But somehow they just kept walking away from The God who loved them and saved them! They ran after false gods. So hard to believe, right? Or is it? What about us? What about America? What about our culture? Have we not been chasing after the same kind of false gods? The Hebrews allowed the surrounding cultures to influence them and they lost their distinctiveness as followers of the One True God, Yahweh God! One of my professors at

Mississippi College, Dr. William Stevens wrote the following in a text book on the Old Testament...

“The fertility cults of the Canaanites were alluring enough to ensnare the Hebrews and lead them away from a strict worship of Jehovah and an adherence to the law of Moses!”

Sexuality, which God had intended to draw a husband and wife together for life and for pro-creation of children, had become instead a false god to be worshipped. God had given the law, not to restrict and hinder people from enjoying life, but as a guide on how to really enjoy life to the fullest and in the most healthy way! But people so many times listen to the lies of the enemy and choose not to trust God's intentions behind His instructions! When we choose to reject God's ways we always end up in a snare, in a struggle, in a desperate situation, in a sad state of desperation, and many times enslaved to our sin! Just like the Israelites! But when God saw the Israelites groaning under their oppression and affliction, even though it was their own doing, He had compassion on them and would send a deliverer. However, before He sends the deliverer God sends a prophet to clarify the situation and establish His right to expect compliance with the covenant.

2. An Unnamed Prophet Brings a Message

Judg 6:1 Again the Israelites did evil in the eyes of the LORD, and for seven years he gave them into the hands of the Midianites.

Judg 6:2 Because the power of Midian was so oppressive, the Israelites prepared shelters for themselves in mountain clefts, caves and strongholds.

Then down in verse 7...

Judg 6:7 When the Israelites cried to the LORD because of Midian,

Judg 6:8 he sent them a prophet, who said, "This is what the LORD, the God of Israel, says: I brought you up out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery.

Judg 6:9 I snatched you from the power of Egypt and from the hand of all your oppressors. I drove them from before you and gave you their land.

Judg 6:10 I said to you, 'I am the LORD your God; do not worship the gods of the Amorites, in whose land you live.' But you have not listened to me."

This is fascinating! The Israelites did evil and God sends a prophet to confront them with their sin and to remind them of what God had done for them in the past. We don't know the name of this spokesman from God, but his message was powerful! Like I said, God is establishing His right to expect compliance with the covenant. This prophet declares that God is LORD, Yahweh God, but the people had not listened to God's Word, and had not obeyed the covenant they had made with God. I love the way Edward R. Dalglish put it in the Broadman Commentary:

“To this declaration there is inseparably united the inflexible corollary--the utter rejection of the Amorite gods. But it is at this very juncture, when the divine goodness seeks its rightful response from Israel, that the nation has abysmally failed. The largeness of the divine grace and the smallness of the divine demand make the brevity of the indictment stand out in relief: so much was given, so little was asked! But even that was refused.”

In other words, God had promised to be their Protector, their Provider, their Peace, their Power, and to allow them to experience His Presence in their daily lives. His only ask was that they not follow the false and pagan gods of the surrounding cultures. But they refused, and who could blame God if He would have just given up and walked away from these people? But He loved them and had chosen to love them and He wanted to give them yet another chance to choose life by choosing Him! So God sends yet another deliverer, Gideon. Gideon was the fifth Judge of fifteen Judges who had acted as deliverers for the Hebrew people. Gideon followed the Judge named Deborah, whom God had used to deliver them from the oppression of the Canaanites. Now it's the Midianites who are giving the people grief. But God sees their predicament and sends...

3. An Unlikely and Reluctant Deliverer

Gideon was a young farmer. He was threshing wheat when this happened...

Judg 6:12 When the angel of the LORD appeared to Gideon, he said, "The LORD is with you, mighty warrior."

Judg 6:13 "But sir," Gideon replied, "if the LORD is with us, why has all this happened to us? Where are all his wonders that our fathers told us about when they said, 'Did not the LORD bring us up out of Egypt?' But now the LORD has abandoned us and put us into the hand of Midian."

Judg 6:14 The LORD turned to him and said, "Go in the strength you have and save Israel out of Midian's hand. Am I not sending you?"

Judg 6:15 "But Lord," Gideon asked, "how can I save Israel? My clan is the weakest in Manasseh, and I am the least in my family."

Judg 6:16 The LORD answered, "I will be with you, and you will strike down all the Midianites together."

Judg 6:17 Gideon replied, "If now I have found favor in your eyes, give me a sign that it is really you talking to me."

Judg 6:18 Please do not go away until I come back and bring my offering and set it before you." And the LORD said, "I will wait until you return."

God is so patient! He waits on Gideon and then shows him powerfully that it was really God speaking to him. You'll read this in your readings this week. God tells Gideon to tear down his father's altar to Baal and to cut down the Asherah pole beside it. Asherah was another fertility goddess, considered the mother of Baal and evidently her image was carved on a wooden pole. Gideon obeys God and the people wanted to kill him for tearing down their pagan altar.

Evidently Gideon's dad, Joash, was a leader in the community and they called on him to hand over his son Gideon. Here's his response...

Judg 6:31 But Joash replied to the hostile crowd around him, "Are you going to plead Baal's cause? Are you trying to save him? Whoever fights for him shall be put to death by morning! If Baal really is a god, he can defend himself when someone breaks down his altar."

Judg 6:32 So that day they called Gideon "Jerub-Baal," saying, "Let Baal contend with him," because he broke down Baal's altar.

Got to hand it to Joash, even in his pagan mindset, he realized if Baal were real, he could handle things himself! It's amazing that the people were about to kill the very one who would be their deliverer! You can only imagine how Gideon felt. He was probably a bit worried. If this was the response from his own people, what would happen when he went out against the enemy! So Gideon asked God two more times to confirm that he was truly supposed to be the one to deliver the people from their enemies. This is where the phrase "Laying out the fleece" comes from. You'll read about it in your readings this week. God confirms both times that Gideon is the man for the job. What happens next is a powerful reminder that we cannot save ourselves and even though Gideon was the deliverer God was going to use as a vessel of His grace, the miracle of salvation is from God alone! Check this out, it's one of my favorite stories in the Old Testament history...

Judg 7:1 Early in the morning, Jerub-Baal (that is, Gideon) and all his men camped at the spring of Harod. The camp of Midian was north of them in the valley near the hill of Moreh.

Judg 7:2 The LORD said to Gideon, "You have too many men for me to deliver Midian into their hands. In order that Israel may not boast against me that her own strength has saved her,

Judg 7:3 announce now to the people, 'Anyone who trembles with fear may turn back and leave Mount Gilead.'" So twenty-two thousand men left, while ten thousand remained.

Judg 7:4 But the LORD said to Gideon, "There are still too many men. Take them down to the water, and I will sift them for you there. If I say, 'This one shall go with you,' he shall go; but if I say, 'This one shall not go with you,' he shall not go."

Judg 7:5 So Gideon took the men down to the water. There the LORD told him, "Separate those who lap the water with their tongues like a dog from those who kneel down to drink."

Judg 7:6 Three hundred men lapped with their hands to their mouths. All the rest got down on their knees to drink.

Judg 7:7 The LORD said to Gideon, "With the three hundred men that lapped I will save you and give the Midianites into your hands. Let all the other men go, each to his own place."

So God takes them from 32,000 to 300! God was making a point and it was powerful. The victory belonged to God and no one else. God was going to do something for Israel that Israel couldn't do for itself! He cements His point when He tells Gideon how they're going to defeat the enemy. Check this out...

Judg 7:16 Dividing the three hundred men into three companies, he placed trumpets and empty jars in the hands of all of them, with torches inside.

Judg 7:17 "Watch me," he told them. "Follow my lead. When I get to the edge of the camp, do exactly as I do.

Judg 7:18 When I and all who are with me blow our trumpets, then from all around the camp blow yours and shout, 'For the LORD and for Gideon.'"

Judg 7:19 Gideon and the hundred men with him reached the edge of the camp at the beginning of the middle watch, just after they had changed the guard. They blew their trumpets and broke the jars that were in their hands.

Judg 7:20 The three companies blew the trumpets and smashed the jars. Grasping the torches in their left hands and holding in their right hands the trumpets they were to blow, they shouted, "A sword for the LORD and for Gideon!"

Judg 7:21 While each man held his position around the camp, all the Midianites ran, crying out as they fled.

Judg 7:22 When the three hundred trumpets sounded, the LORD caused the men throughout the camp to turn on each other with their swords.

What a powerful lesson! Who in their right mind would ride up on the battle field with trumpets, empty jars and torches hidden inside? The truth of this story showcases how God wants to save us and He's the only One who can save us! Now you might remember that I've been talking about the scarlet thread or the crimson chord which runs throughout the Bible that points to...

4. The Ultimate Deliverer

The ultimate deliverer would not come for many years, but God was already putting in place very strong hints of the Savior, the Promised Messiah, The Lamb of God who would deliver us from our wickedness and reconcile us to the God of the Covenant. And how would He do this? Listen and be amazed at the similarities in the stories of Jesus the ultimate deliverer and Gideon the reluctant deliverer.

1. Both Gideon and Jesus came to a people in desperate need of deliverance!

A prophet preceded Gideon and confronted the people with their sin against Yahweh God! John the Baptist preceded Jesus and had a Word from God as well...

Mat 3:7 But when he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees coming to where he was baptizing, he said to them: "You brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the coming wrath?

Mat 3:8 Produce fruit in keeping with repentance.

Gideon rides up on the battlefield with trumpets, empty containers and torches. Jesus enters Jerusalem on a the fold of a donkey!

When Gideon broke down the alter to Baal and cut down the Asherah Pole the people wanted to kill him. Because Jesus had confronted the religious leaders with their hypocrisy and false

religion they wanted to kill Him. And watch this, Jesus had this to say to His disciples when His enemies came to arrest Him...

Mat 26:50 ...Then the men stepped forward, seized Jesus and arrested him.

Mat 26:51 With that, one of Jesus' companions reached for his sword, drew it out and struck the servant of the high priest, cutting off his ear.

Luke tells us that Jesus immediately heals the guys ear.

Mat 26:52 "Put your sword back in its place," Jesus said to him, "for all who draw the sword will die by the sword.

Mat 26:53 Do you think I cannot call on my Father, and he will at once put at my disposal more than twelve legions of angels?

Mat 26:54 But how then would the Scriptures be fulfilled that say it must happen in this way?"

What way was that? Listen to this Old Testament prophecy written hundreds of years before Jesus' sacrificial death...

Psa 22:7 All who see me mock me; they hurl insults, shaking their heads:

Psa 22:8 "He trusts in the LORD; let the LORD rescue him. Let him deliver him, since he delights in him."

Psa 22:17 I can count all my bones; people stare and gloat over me.

Psa 22:18 They divide my garments among them and cast lots for my clothing.

And check out Isaiah 53...

Isa 53:4 Surely he took up our infirmities and carried our sorrows, yet we considered him stricken by God, smitten by him, and afflicted.

Isa 53:5 But he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was upon him, and by his wounds we are healed.

Isa 53:6 We all, like sheep, have gone astray, each of us has turned to his own way; and the LORD has laid on him the iniquity of us all.

Isa 53:11 After the suffering of his soul, he will see the light of life and be satisfied ; by his knowledge my righteous servant will justify many, and he will bear their iniquities.

Isa 53:12 Therefore I will give him a portion among the great, and he will divide the spoils with the strong, because he poured out his life unto death, and was numbered with the transgressors. For he bore the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors.

Dr. Frank Stagg put it this way...

“Jesus rejected the world’s weapons. He would conquer with a cross, not a sword. He would conquer by giving life, not taking it.”

Charles H. Spurgeon, a Baptist preacher who lived in the 1800's put it this way...

The law shows the distance which there is between God and man; the gospel bridges that awful chasm, and brings the sinner across it.”

And what is that bridge made from? The wood of an old rugged cross!

Let's pray!