

“GIDEON AND THE ANGEL OF THE LORD.”

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First Christian Reformed Church

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Scripture Texts: Judges 6:11-24

Prayer: Jesus, you are the Word who became flesh and dwelt among us. Come now and dwell among us in the preaching of your Word. By your grace give us your truth that we might see the Father and be filled with your Spirit. And do this we ask all for your glory. Amen.

Introduction.

The theme of the book of Judges could be summed up in the phrase, déjà vu all over again. It is one cycle after another of rebellion, judgment and oppression, repentance (sort of), and rescue.

So Judges 6 begins the same way previous chapters did.

Judges 6:1, 6 The people of Israel did what was evil in the sight of the Lord, and the Lord gave them into the hand of Midian seven years. ... 6 And Israel was brought very low because of Midian. And the people of Israel cried out for help to the Lord.

For seven years the Midianites swept over the land and took all the harvest of grain and fruit. Seven years, year in and year out, no sustenance. Seven years of being poor, hungry, tired. For seven years all they had to eat was whatever fell to the ground or was missed or left behind.

Judges 6:11-24, the angel of the Lord.

Notice that though they only cried out to God after seven years of oppression and grievous hardship, though they didn't turn to God until they were utterly desperate, notice even though up until now they had worshiped other gods, lifeless idols, yet God is slow to anger, swift to mercy, quick to forgive, and answer their prayers.

God is willing to meet us in the days of our greatest sin and in the days of our greatest distress. The day of our greatest need is the day of His greatest help. When God seems most absent, it is then and there He is most present, and the cross is proof of it.

There are no other gods like our God, who does the unexpected. They ought to be destroyed, they ought to be cursed, they deserve nothing, but instead of judgment, they get grace.

And once again the unexpected is above and beyond, someone from beyond, someone called the angel of the Lord. Gideon is the only judge raised up by an angel of the Lord. All theophanies are unexpected grace. And again we have to ask who is this being that suddenly appears?

The word for angel can also be translated messenger. This person is a messenger from the Lord. He can be a prophet, a priest, an angel or the Lord Himself. He can be human, angelic or divine.

When the messenger is divine, it is a case of God sending God. God is the sender and the sendee. This foreshadows the fuller revelation of this truth when Jesus is sent by the Father in the power of the Holy Spirit.

The context and the language in Judges 6 point to a divine being, a pre-incarnate appearance in human form of the Son of God. This is a prelude, an appetizer, a glimpse before the fulness of time of a coming glory.

Gideon won't come to this realization until after the angel vanishes and he is left trembling with the life-threatening reality that he has had a very up close and personal encounter with God.

In verse 14 it says the Lord turned to him, Yahweh, and He speaks with divine authority, not just as a messenger, and gives Gideon a commission, "do I not send you." The Lord is with you, is one of the divine names of God, Emmanuel, God with us. That is how God identified Himself to Moses, I am with you.

We see a moment of humor when the angel finds Gideon fearfully hiding in a winepress, but calls him a mighty man of valor. This is a picture of defeat, discouragement, fear, misery. This is not a picture of a hero, let alone a mighty man of valor.

This is God's way. He comes to a 99 year old childless man and tells him now his name is Abraham, meaning father of a multitude.

He comes to an impetuous, unstable man named Simon and says your name is now Peter, meaning Rock and I will make you a pillar in my church.

The conversation between Gideon and this man is interesting, revealing in many ways the nature of both Gideon and this pre-incarnate Jesus. If this was a courtroom scene Gideon would be the one repeatedly say, "objection, your Honor, objection."

6:12-13 The Lord is with you.

Objection. If the Lord is with us then why am I hiding from the Midianites in a wine-press? Look at what Midianites have done, look at our misery, our distress, our poverty. If God is with us why are we starving? Where are all those miracles you did for our forefathers back in Egypt?

How do you reconcile the real presence of God with the hard providence of God?

If God loves me, why can't I get my locker open?

If God loves me, why did I lose my job or my spouse or my child or my health or ...?

If God loves me, why is this happening?

Satan loves to take that little word *if* and turn it into a huge doubt. Gideon asks that little word *if*, and sees no proof of God, doubts God.

Change the question. Instead of *if* God loves me, say *because* God loves me. Rather than questioning God, assume God and His love. Since God loves me what is God doing, what is God teaching me, what is God refining in me?

II Corinthians 4:17 For this light momentary affliction is preparing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison.

Psalms 23:4 Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil,
for you are with me; your rod and your staff, they comfort me.

6:14-15 *Go in might. Do I not send you?*

Objection. My tribe Manasseh is only a half-tribe of Israel, my clan is the weakest in Manasseh, I am the least in my father's house, the youngest son. We are small and poor, I am the least qualified person in all Israel. You have the wrong guy, I am not person you are looking for.

Where have we heard this before? Moses arguing with God, I am inadequate, can't talk. Send Aaron. David, the last and least, the eighth son of Jesse chosen by God. Mary and Joseph.

God most often not only uses those who are least, who are weakest, who are least wise, but He uses those who are little and least in their own eyes. God delights to use the most humble. Are you great in your own eyes or are you little in your own eyes?

God never comes to us and says get your act together and I can use you, or you get over your fears, doubts, weaknesses and then let's talk, then I can use you. He comes to transform us by His power for His glory. He comes to show His grace and power in our inadequacies.

6:16-17 *I will be with you and you will strike them as if they were only one man.*

Yes you are little and the least, yes you are poor in the resources of man of earth, yes you are nothing in your own eyes, but none of those things are hindrances to God, it is not in who you are or what you have that will make a difference, it is in who God is and what He has. God is with you, and that is all anyone ever needed. God supplies all is needed and makes up for any and every human deficiency.

I am the Lord, I have all authority and all power in heaven and in earth. Have I not commanded you and with my commands is there not the promise of success? Do you believe that? Do you believe the promises of Scripture?

II Corinthians 9:8 God is able to make all grace abound to you, so that having all sufficiency in all things at all times, you may abound in every good work.

Philippians 4:13, 19 I can do all things through him who strengthens me. ... 19 My God will supply every need of yours according to his riches in glory in Christ Jesus.

Gideon, with God at your side the 135,000 Midianites will be as if they were one man that you had to fight. It will be as easy as killing one man.

Is there a time in your life when you did something not in your strength or ability or wisdom, but in God's? Is there a time you stepped out in faith, in total dependence on Him? Is there a time in your life when you got to the end of something and were able to say, that was totally God and not me?

Too many of us are living too small, too weak, too fearful, too much by sight. God is not looking for self-reliance, He is looking for God-reliance. We don't need more self-confidence, we need more God-confidence. He doesn't call the equipped, He equips the called. His power is made perfect in our weakness.

How many of you are in a place where you feel like you can't go on, you can't keep doing what you are doing? It's too hard, it's too long, it doesn't make any sense. How many of you are crying out to the Lord, help me?

God has one answer to all our fears, doubts, anxieties, questions, excuses and objections. One answer. Do you know what it is? It is the same answer He has been giving for four thousand years.

To Moses, I will be with you (Ex. 3:12).

To Joshua, As I have been with Moses, I will be with you (Josh. 1:5).

To Gideon, I will be with you.

To Paul, **Acts 18:9-10** Do not be afraid, but go on speaking and do not be silent, 10 for I am with you.

To us, **Matthew 28:20** I will be with you always even to the end of the age.

What else can God offer? What more can He offer than Himself, God with us.

If God is with us we have all the power needed, all the wisdom needed, all the authority needed.

And if God is with us, if God is for us, who can be against us?

Objection, your Honor. One more objection. Gideon wants proof, evidence, a sign. He humbly begs for some assurance that this authority is from God, so he can confidently face his people and the task.

I don't fault his faltering faith. If you were the least qualified person in all Israel and you were being called to do the most impossible task in all of Israel, you would want some clarity, some assurance the voice you are hearing has some authority to say what he is saying.

Is it wrong to ask for a sign? If we are wanting a miracle, something before our eyes, then we are asking too much. But we can ask God for signs or confirmations or assurances in our spirit, in our hearts. In other words, Holy Spirit, my faith is weak in this matter, would you strengthen my faith, grant me some word from your Word to strengthen me.

III. of writing a foreword for a book. Excuses, he is better writer, I never have, busy, what if I disappoint him, he had asked John Piper. Then God confirmed, then God did it.]

Seek God's will in His Word, prayerfully calling on the Holy Spirit to open His Word and speak His truth clearly into your heart.

Gideon brings an offering, a gift. The word that is used there for the meal is the same word used for a meat offering, a meat sacrifice. Perhaps Gideon wanted to see how this person would receive it.

Fire flames up out of the rock and consumes the meal. This was not a man who needed a meal, but the Son of God who is honored by the sacrifice. This is God who is a consuming fire.

Judges 6:22-23 Then Gideon perceived that he was the angel of the Lord. And Gideon said, "Alas, O Lord God! For now I have seen the angel of the Lord face to face." 23 But the Lord said to him, "Peace be to you. Do not fear; you shall not die."

The intensity of Gideon's reaction tells us this was more than an angel, but someone divine, an experience like seeing God face to face.

“There is nothing amazing about grace as long as there is nothing fearful about holiness”
(Davis, p. 97).

Yes, you saw God, but He didn't come to kill you, rather to strengthen you and use you and give you peace.

This experience was life-changing for Gideon, as should all be encounters with God.
Remember Abraham, Jacob, Moses, the disciples, those who Jesus touched and healed.

Gideon is changed, he is now willing to serve as a judge and lead the people of Israel against the mighty horde of Midianites. God is present in his hardships, God is with him in his inadequacies, God has shown Himself to him, as He has to us in the incarnation.

Implications and application.

Jesus has done this again, He has broken into our world oppressed by sin and evil. He has come to us who are poor and needy and He calls us to do battle with sin. But we are full of excuses, our sin is too many and too strong, we have been in its grasp too long, we are alone. Jesus says no I have come and I am with you and I will fight for you in my power, rely on me.

Jesus has come again to be with us, to be with us always.

Jesus has come again to be our strength in our weakness.

Jesus has come again to call us to live by faith and not by sight, to live by humble dependence and obedience.

Jesus has come again to call us to do impossible things.

To be godly Christians, husbands and wives, fathers and mothers, grandfathers and grandmothers, brothers and sisters. To live a certain ways and do certain things.

To use the spiritual gifts He has given us for His glory and for the good of others.

To be salt and light here in our little corner of His vineyard.

To raise a difficult child for the sake of Jesus; to love someone difficult to love.

To live without a husband, as a single mom or widow.

To live with your wife in an understanding way, to bless and serve her.

To bring about a reconciliation, to make peace.

To sacrifice in some way, to die to self, to serve someone else; to suffer for sake of Christ.

To die to some sin, some soul depleting habit, entertaining some alliance/allegiance/idol.

To walk by faith and not by sight through some difficult challenge.

What is God calling you to do that He wants to do by His power at work in you?

Where have you been resisting, stiff-arming God, saying objection?