

Remnant Life Church
June 12, 2016
Sunday School Stories Retold:
Gideon - The Reluctant Warrior
Judges 6:11-23

READ – Judges 6:11-23

- The story of Gideon is a classic tale of God's power working through man's frailty
- Background
 - The time is between Joshua and King Saul
 - Gideon is the 5th of 13 judges that the Israelites will see raised up over a span of 410 years...and certainly the most unlikely of them all
 - Some also include Eli and Samuel in that list but they should be separate as they were prophets and priests as well
 - The judges were the embodiment of God's mercy to Israel's cyclical pattern of behavior
 - The Pattern: (sin; judgement; cry out; God delivers; peace)
 1. **6:1a** – ...*the Israelites did evil in the eyes of the Lord* – turning away from God and worshipping idols
 2. **6:1b** - ...*for seven years the Lord gave them into the hands of the Midianites* – punishment: by allowing a pagan nation to conquer or harass them
 3. **6:7** - ...*when the Israelites cried to the Lord because of Midian* – they eventually turn back to God
 4. **6:8** - ...*He sent them a prophet* – this is an unnamed prophet but God used these special speakers to call the people to repentance
(Like a motorist with a broken down car calling a garage for help but instead of a mechanic they send a philosopher – the people called out for someone mighty)
 5. **7:1-25** – *God delivers Israel* – always by His hand
- In this particular time of Israel's history the people are under a punishment of God involving the Midianites
 - The land of Midian and the Midianites figure somewhat prominently in the OT
 - + The name comes from the son of Abraham born to Keturah; wife after Sarah died; 6 children listed (**Gen 25**)
 - + Midianite merchants/traders bought Joseph and sold him into slavery in Potiphar's house (**Gen 37:36**)
 - + It is the same land that Moses fled to after killing the Egyptian (**Ex 2:15**)
 - Where he meets Jethro
 - Marries his daughter Zipporah
- For 7 years the Midianites have been swarming all over the Israelites (numbers like locust)
 - Formidable enemy utilizing a state-of-the-art combat strategy – camels
 - Historically the first mention of camels being used (1100's BC)

- The use of the camel brought advantages never before available
 - + Because Camels are 6-7 feet at the shoulder the rider would be 8-9 feet off the ground
 - + The Dromedary camel (indigenous to that region) would weigh between 660 and 1300 lbs
 - + Sprint up to 40 mph
 - + Could sustain a speed of 25 mph for an extended period of time
 - + Cover nearly 100 miles in a single day
 - + They life expectancy of 40-50 years

- At harvest time the Midianites would come in on camels and take everything they could carry destroying what they couldn't
 - A lesson that without God the Israelites were powerless
 - They did this for **7 years**
 - What were the Israelites doing during that time before they finally called on the Lord?
 - + Praying to Baal and Asherah?
 - + I don't think it needed to take 7 years for them to be delivered
 - I believe we often don't need to stay in the difficult places of our lives for as long as do
 - Humble ourselves immediately instead of looking for others to blame

- Our "hero" enters the picture but this is not a man who would engender confidence in anyone
 - The Israelites had taken to hiding when they harvested and prepared their crops and in particular thresh their grain
 - Gideon is hiding in a wine press doing just that (6:11)
 - + Normally done outdoors so that the chaff would blow away from the grain
 - + The winepress in Bible times took several forms but this particular one would have been a hole deep enough that Gideon would have been hidden from view
 - An angel appears and says, *Mighty hero, the Lord is with you.* (6:12)
 - The KJV reads ...*you mighty man of valor*
 - + God obviously saw something that no one else could

- TRUTH - Like with Gideon God sees us for who He has made us to be

- But Gideon's reaction is one that we can certainly identify with from time to time – "Who, me?!"
 - My clan is the weakest in Manasseh (the firstborn of Joseph in Egypt – his younger brother received the blessing from Isaac)
 - I am the least of my family
 - Gideon tried to disqualify himself before he even got started BUT God saw Him differently than he saw himself!
 - What was God's response? *I WILL BE WITH YOU* (6:16)
 - Whenever God calls you to a particular task He will always go with you!

- Gideon is the gutsiest man in the Bible
 - He actually puts God to the test 3 times in order to prove Himself!

- + Fire to light the offering (6:21)
- + Dew on the fleece but dry ground (6:36-38)
- + Dry fleece but dew on the ground (6:39-40)
- The closest to this is Abraham bargaining with God, like in a marketplace, trying to save Sodom
 - + 50 down to 10 but only 4 could be found – (Gen 18:22-32)
- God’s willingness to comply with Gideon’s requests is a perfect demonstration of His patience with us
 - Longsuffering (KJV)
 - Slow to anger (NIV)
 - We need to remove from our thinking the image of an angry God just looking for a chance to zap us with a bolt of lightning
 - That was the picture for many growing up in churches that taught obedience to God out of fear of punishment and not His great love
 - No wonder so many struggle with I John 4:8 *God is Love*
- Gideon is finally convinced
 - God’s love is so great He threw Gideon an additional piece of encouragement – the dream of the soldier (7:9-14)
 - Gideon prepares to go against the Midianite army numbering at least 135,000 (8:10)
 - Gideon rallies the people and 32,000 men reply (7:3)
 - God pared it down to 10,000 and then 300
 - Just like Jericho God gave them the victory without a battle of men taking place – ONLY BY HIS HAND
- But watch how easily the Israelites fell into that same destructive cycle again
 - The people want Gideon to rule over them (8:22)
 - He actually gives the right answer that God is the ruler of the people not man (8:23)
 - Instead Gideon asks for a tribute of gold (8:23)
 - + 43 pounds of gold is given – today’s market just a little under \$800,000
 - With it he makes a solid gold ephod
 - + An ephod was a holy garment worn by the high priest
 - + But the Israelites started to worship the ephod (8:27)
 - + They were still holding on to the past and the results of their lack of faith in God that had plagued them since leaving Egypt
 - + It was a problem for Gideon and the people for the rest of his life (8:27)
 - In spite of that sin God gave them 40 years of peace (8:28)
- Immediately after Gideon’s death the people fell back into idol worship (8:33-34)
- Gideon was actually a weak and very flawed man from beginning to end
 - Not one of the “great men” of the OT were perfect
 - + Abraham and Isaac lied about their wives
 - + Moses was a murderer
 - + David was an adulterer and murderer
 - + Solomon allowed and even participated in idol worship
 - + Samson, the 13th and final judge, could not control his lusts

- + Every one of the disciples continually struggled with doubt and they all abandoned Jesus
- But like each of them God still accomplished His will through Gideon if only for a brief time
- God is still working in us, His people, today
 - But I am convinced that it will not be the richest, most well-known, or “successful” who will have the greatest impact for the Kingdom
 - But the meek and humble who are willing to surrender their all
- I believe that the Kingdom of God is going to be ushered in not by mega-churches and famous preachers but the small, what the world would call insignificant churches, that are sold out to worshipping God, walking a life filled with faith and righteousness, regardless of the obstacles
- What I want to know is will Remnant Life be that type of church?
- That is up to each of us
 - Is our greatest desire to live a life fully surrendered to God
 - To know God better?
 - To be in the center of His will for my life?
 - To demonstrate humility, kindness, and love even to those who are hard to love everywhere I go?
- Tony Evans – “God must have your fully committed heart. He doesn’t want you to be divided. He doesn’t want you committed to Him on Sunday and to the world on Monday. He doesn’t want you to be two-timing Him...think about it. God is always looking to find someone to show His power through.”
- After Solomon had finished dedicating the temple God appeared to Him and spoke these words...

2 Chron 7:14-15 - ...if my people who are called by My name humble themselves, pray and seek My face, and turn from their evil ways, then I will hear from heaven, forgive their sin, and heal their land. My eyes will now be open and My ears attentive to prayer from this place.

This mandate is not only for Solomon and the nation of Israel but for every nation and every church today

God will work through any person, every church, heal any nation-**how?**

1. Humble ourselves
2. Pray
3. Seek His face
4. Turn from sin