

“Lord, Rescue Us”
Judges 20:1-48

FCF: Shocking blindness to our plight

PROPOSITION: (anchor) The LORD is our King.

(magnet) We need His rescue from the power of sin.

SCRIPTURE INTRODUCTION:

A CNN story from 2017 - “Doctors Find 27 Contact Lenses in Woman's Eye” (**READ**):

A 67-year-old woman scheduled for routine cataract surgery in November thought it was just dry eye and old age causing her discomfort, she told her surgeons. But what doctors at Solihull Hospital in the UK found to be the real cause of her discomfort was much more concerning: 27 contact lenses, stuck in the woman's right eye in a "blue mass." ...Rupal Morjaria, a specialist trainee in ophthalmology and author of the paper, said the woman hadn't complained about any visual trouble before the operation. Richard Crombie, a consultant anesthetist at the hospital, was beginning to numb her eye for surgery when he found the first cluster of contacts. ...The woman had been wearing monthly disposable contact lenses for 35 years, but it's unclear how long they had been gathering in her eye. Sometimes, she told the surgeons, when she would try to remove a contact from that eye, she couldn't find it. The patient had just figured she'd dropped it somewhere, Morjaria explained, but it was actually getting stuck in her eye with the others.

This raises questions. How could she be so blind to this? How could she not see why she could not see? It's a shocking lack of self-awareness and an inability to understand her situation.

Which brings us to our text in Judges. This is the period between Moses and David, the taking of the land and the forming of the monarchy. We're at the end, the third and final section.

SCRIPTURE READING: [Judges 20:1-48](#)

PRAYER FOR ILLUMINATION

SERMON INTRODUCTION:

Unfolding events can reveal otherwise hidden realities. Think back to Friday, 03/03/23. Gale force winds moved into our area, causing power outages and damage to multiple buildings and felling innumerable trees - including one stately red oak estimated at being 350 years old. It had a seemingly fixed, permanent presence. But it collapsed and deep rot was exposed within it. Storms can do that. They can expose. Unfolding events can reveal otherwise hidden realities.

Which brings us to the people of Israel and Judges 20. The keynote text over this whole epilogue is this (**READ Judges 17:6**). We hear portions of this repeated throughout the last few chapters. Assertion - there is no king. Analysis - we need one. We need a king - not only to rule and defend us but to save and secure us. We need One to come who will deal not only with the threats out there but the threats in here. A great need has been exposed. That's what we see in our text. The LORD is our King. The LORD is our King. And we need His rescue from sin - from the effects of sin, from the spiritual corruption it brings, from all our rampant idolatry.

How do we see the need for such a rescue? In three ways. First, in the licentiousness of the town. Second, in the callousness of the Levite. And then, third, in the arrogance of the tribe.

I. THE LICENTIOUSNESS OF THE TOWN

First, in the licentiousness of the town. This unfolds in chapter 19 - the crass debauchery, the depravity, the shocking absence of any transcendent moral standards. Welcome to Gibeah.

A) How They Had Fallen

1. A town of Israel

Consider how far they have fallen. This was a town in Israel. They were called out from the nations to be a light for the nations - an open invitation to all, "Come and see the ways of God."

2. A town like Sodom

Gibeah was a town of Israel. But it was a town like Sodom. There are echoes back to Genesis 19 when Lot hosts his angelic visitors. The corruption is real. The salt is useless. The light dim.

B) What This Revealed

What does this reveal? What veneer has been lifted? What has been exposed?

1. The gods of the peoples

They have bowed to the gods of the peoples. This was an agrarian society. They depended upon their crops. Theirs was also a sexualized religion - temple prostitutes as part of their worship.

2. The assimilation of the people

This was part of the culture. And Israel had assimilated into it. They had become one with it. Instead of being in the world but not of it, they were in the world and of it. They were all in.

(**READ Judges 17:6**) And we see this in the licentiousness of the town.

Application:

What's driving this? What's beneath the surface? If you go back and read through chapter 19, it would have to be at least two things. First, a desire for intimacy. But that is found ultimately with the One who made, knows, and loves us. He is so serious about this that He has sent His Spirit to dwell within those who look to Him in faith. That is what we are looking for.

But in the violence of Gibeah, we see something else - weak men desiring power and control. And again, we must look to the Lord. We must learn to trust His power and control over our lives, His timing and provision. This frees us from the impulse to take things into our hands.

The LORD is our King. We can trust in Him to rescue us even here, even from such sin.

II. THE CALLOUSNESS OF THE LEVITE

The second thing we see here is the callousness of the Levite. This is chapters 19-20.

A) A Series of Events

The narrator sets forth a series of events - both what this man did and what he said.

1. What he did

Consider what he did. He gave up this woman to a violent mob. He flippantly acknowledged her death. He then mutilates her body and sends the pieces throughout Israel. Beyond horrible.

2. What he said

That's what he did. Then there's what he said (**READ Judges 20:3b-7**). This is so self-serving. Note how he exaggerates the danger he was in and minimizes his role in this woman's death.

B) What This Revealed

What does this reveal? What pretense has been lifted? What has been exposed?

1. Calloused

He is cowardly and calloused. He saw her as little more than property. When the morning came, he felt his property had been stolen. It was irretrievably damaged. So he calls for the assembly.

2. Deceitful

In the midst of which he is utterly deceitful and manipulative. His speech is designed to get all eyes off of him and to shift the spotlight completely upon the men of Gibeah. And it works.

(**READ Judges 17:6**) And we see this in the callousness of this Levite.

Illustration:

Think of test days in school and temptations to cheat. I'm sure it's all very sophisticated now. Why would you do this? You didn't study. You're feeling pressure. You want to do well.

Application:

That's the way it is with all our sin. There's some deeper desire, some felt need below the surface. How are we like the Levite here? Think about the hateful things we've done or said to or about another person. What does that reveal? Or the deceitful things we've said, the edits to the story we've made? What does that reveal? What are we afraid of losing? Or gaining?

We need to trust the LORD in such times and not take things into our hands. He is our King. We can trust Him to rescue us from the power of sin. We don't have to do these things.

III. THE ARROGANCE OF THE TRIBE

Third, we have the arrogance of the tribe of Benjamin. When confronted by the demands of the other tribes, look at their response. (**READ Judges 20:12-14**) This too is truly shocking.

A) The Obvious Choice Ignored

The obvious choice before them, however hard it might be, goes totally ignored.

1. The inevitable slaughter

They have to know of the inevitable slaughter. They can hold out awhile but they cannot win.

2. The closing of ranks

Still, they choose to close ranks. They close their eyes to any sense of morality and decency. "No outsiders are going to tell us what to do!" So they close ranks and justice goes denied.

B) What This Revealed

What does this reveal? What veil has been lifted? What has been exposed?

1. A disdain for unity

An utter disdain for unity. The unity of the other tribes on display here is surprising. And tragic. The questions asked of the LORD harken back to Judges 1. Which sounds good. But this is so very different. This is a unity of the people against their people. And Benjamin is stoking this.

2. Their hearts' true priority

What's on display is their hearts' true priority. Their ties of blood and community are greater than any other or anything - even that which is right, that which is commanded of God. "Our people" have become their god. And they will sacrifice all for that god. Which is so dangerous.

(**READ Judges 17:6**) And we see this in the arrogance of this tribe.

Illustration:

Think of your posture to your favorite sports team. Now imagine a scandal that breaks out about your team involving a player or a coach. Everyone else is calling it out. And if it was any other team, so would you. But you can't. You won't. Why? Because it's your team.

Application:

How might this apply today? Think of our many divisions. "My people, my tribe, my family" over all else. My party. My denomination. My race. My heritage. It's gang warfare.

What's the answer? We can be thankful for what is good in any of those things. But our identity? That is not in those places but only in Jesus. Christian, the church is your people, your tribe, your family. If you are a follower of Jesus, the only blood that ultimately matters is His.

The LORD is our King. We need to trust Him to rescue us from our sin. And we can.

CONCLUSION:

I came across an account of events that took place on Mt. Everest back in 2012 (**READ**):

24-year-old Israeli climber Nadav Ben-Yehuda, who was 300 meters from the summit of Everest, gave up his dream of conquering the planet's highest peak in order to save an injured Turkish climber.

Ben-Yehuda described the incident as follows: "I passed two fresh corpses. The corpses were fresh, because they were the bodies of people on the same ropes along which I climbed, realizing that they were dying and not having the strength to move, people did not crawl away, but buckled up, and fell into a coma and died. Those who continued to move stepped over them. When I saw him, I recognized him. It was Aydin Irmak (Turkey), we met him in the camp. He was unconscious, he had no gloves, no oxygen, no crampons, his helmet was off. He was waiting for the end. Other climbers walked past him without lifting a finger, but I knew that if I passed by, he would surely die. I knew I should have at least tried to save him.

Aidin and I started the descent, it lasted 9 hours. It was very difficult to carry him because he was heavy. From time to time he regained consciousness, but then turned off again. When he came to, he screamed in pain and this made our descent even more difficult. Very slowly, but we descended, but at some point my oxygen mask broke, a little while later we met a climber from Malaysia, who was also on his last legs. It became clear that it was completely impossible to go further. I yelled at the climbers I met going up and demanded some oxygen for the two wounded, some responded ... "

They reached the camp, were evacuated by helicopter to Kathmandu, and were hospitalized. Everyone got frostbite, Nadav Ben-Yehuda suffered severe frostbite on his fingers as he was forced to take off his gloves during the rescue operation.

"I was faced with a choice - to be the youngest Israeli to climb Everest, which would be great for my career, or to try to take a climber off the mountain - I chose the second option and I managed to do it...Thanks to everyone who helped me in preparation and taught me, which gave me enough strength to go down the mountain myself and pull down the one in need of help "

Keep this in mind. Everyone on that trail saw the climbers who had fallen. So what do we make of the response of those who kept going? Shocking depravity and callous disregard for human life. Twisted priorities. It's a demonstration of the impact of idolatry - in this case, the need to reach the summit. That's us. That's any of us when we serve anything other than the Lord.

What of the response of Nadav Ben-Yehuda? He saw the need and gave up the ascent. He grabbed hold of this man and went down. Which is a demonstration of our need. We are the man nearly frozen on the Everest trail. And this rescue is an illustration of what Jesus has done for us - not descending and living to climb another day but descending and dying in our place.

My friends, this is a God worth praising. This a Savior worth trusting. This is a King worth serving. The LORD is our King. We can trust Him to rescue us from the power of sin.

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