

July 9, 2023

“The LORD Alone Is Our Deliverer”
Judges 8:29-9:57

FCF: The need for the one true King

PROPOSITION: (anchor) The LORD is our deliverer.

(magnet) We must wholeheartedly trust and turn to Him.

SCRIPTURE INTRODUCTION:

When President Ronald Reagan was shot on March 30, 1981, chaos ensued behind the scenes at the White House. With no real protocol in place for such a situation, everyone involved had to improvise. In an attempt to maintain calm, Al Haig, the Secretary of State, famously said to a room full of reporters, “I’m in control here.” Given the line of succession laid out by our Constitution, this created a bit of confusion, especially on the question of rule and authority.

We are continuing in our series through the book of Judges. This is the time in Israel’s history after the exodus and the arrival in the Promised Land but before the rise of the monarchy. It was a violent and confusing time, increasingly around the question of rule and authority.

SCRIPTURE READING: [Judges 8:29-9:57](#)**PRAYER FOR ILLUMINATION****SERMON INTRODUCTION:**

NASA’s website lists five basic hazards to spaceflight - radiation, isolation, distance from Earth, gravity fields, and hostile/closed environments. Any one of these is formidable. So going to the moon is a dangerous proposition simply because of the external dangers. But what of the internal dangers? What if you had problems aboard the ship itself? That’s what happened with Apollo 13 in April 1970 when one of the two O2 tanks blew, cutting off the flow of electricity, light, and water at some 200,000 miles from home. “Houston, we’ve had a problem here.”

We have to be mindful not just of the dangers from without but the dangers from within. We see that in our text. There are no foreign invaders here. What troubles Israel is Israel. There are dangers without and dangers within. It is a picture of the church. Which points us to our need for Jesus, the greater Judge, our great King and sole deliverer. That’s the message of our text. The LORD alone is our deliverer. So we must wholeheartedly trust and turn to Him.

How do we see this need in our text to trust and turn to Him? In two ways. First, the word of warning that is given. And, second, in the word of hope that is offered. May we hear it.

I. A WORD OF WARNING

Big picture, Judges 9 is a word of warning, a cautionary tale of real and present danger.

A) Foolish Choices

We see this with the parable that Jotham conveys as he shouts out from the hillside.

1. The story

What do we see in this story? The foolishness of the trees and the uselessness of the bramble. The olive tree, the fig tree, and the vine are all fruit producing. What does the bramble offer? Nothing. It produces no fruit. It provides no shade. It’s good for little more than burning.

2. The point

What is Jotham's point? Not the worthlessness of kingship but of this king. He isn't qualified.

B) Deep Roots

That's the concern. And the narrator of Judges tips us off as to the deep roots at work.

1. Not remembering the LORD

(**READ Judges 8:33-35**) How could the people make such a choice? They did not remember the LORD - not that they forgot who He is or what He'd done. But it didn't make a difference.

2. Not remembering Gideon

The facts had no bearing on their lives. They did not remember the LORD. Or Gideon and what he had done. And those things were connected, intertwined to their fall into the worship of idols.

C) Ugly Fruit

These things didn't just happen. They were rooted. And they bore some ugly fruit.

1. Fire

Fire. Fire coming out and going out in all directions - Shechem and Gaal, Abimelech and the tower of Thebez. This wasn't a garden spot. It was a forest fire. And one could hardly breathe.

2. Destruction

It reminds me of a phrase from the Cold War - MAD, a Mutually Assured Destruction. Shechem and Abimelech deserved each other. And they devoured one another. It was utterly ruinous.

And with all that, we have a warning. Be wary of the leaders you chase after. Yes, your situation is dire. Your need is real. But in your desperation, be wary of the help you lay hold of.

Illustration:

To illustrate this, Ralph Davis points out in his commentary the gullibility of the German people in the 1930's that led to the rise of the Nazi Party and the entrenchment of Adolf Hitler as the Fuhrer, the supreme leader. A sobering example of smart people swayed by the wrong things.

But consider something even more recent. There is a series on Amazon Prime right now, *Shiny Happy People*. It documents the rise of a movement within the church led by Bill Gothard that began in the 1980's. It focused on authority, rules, and order. It too was quite appealing as folks were wrestling with so much that seemed going wrong and the disorder all around them.

This may sound appalling. But there is a commonality between the two. In both cases, folks were facing desperate situations without prayerfully tuning to the depths of God's word.

Application:

Don't misunderstand me. We do need leaders. At the time of the judges, the LORD was preparing His people for His rule through a monarchy. One of the Messiah's roles is to be king.

The problem is not so much rule and authority. The problem is when we lose sight of the character qualities God sets forth for those who would lead His people. Put another way, the problem comes when, out of our desperation, we settle for and submit ourselves to brambles.

Which raises some questions. Why the desperation? Yes, we need deliverance but why the desperation? The LORD is our deliverer. We must wholeheartedly trust and turn to Him.

II. A WORD OF HOPE

So, big picture, Judges 9 gives a word of warning. But it also brings us a word of hope.

A) *Judgment Is Absent*

That may sound surprising given that, on the surface, it looks like judgment is absent.

1. No “LORD”

It’s worth noting that there is no mention in Judges 9 of the LORD, the covenant name of the God of Israel. That is to say, He is not worshipped and obeyed. He is ignored and cast off.

2. But “God”

That said, that’s not to say He is not active. Twice, “God” is mentioned ([READ Judges 9:23-24, 56-57](#)). This spreading fire was the fulfillment of Jotham’s curse, of divine judgment poured out.

B) *Judgment is Present*

So though judgment seemed absent, it was quietly present. For God was quietly present.

1. The destruction of evil

The evil was being destroyed. What’s interesting is that evil has a way of destroying itself. Evil knows no fellowship, no cohesion. It’s sharks in the water, feeding in a frenzy on themselves.

2. Through the ordinary

And it can happen in the ordinary flow of events as alienation and a devouring unfold. This is how the LORD often brings judgment in the present, through the outworking of the moral fabric.

C) *Judgment Is Coming*

Judges 9 brings a word of hope. Judgment is present. But judgment is also coming.

1. We have a defender

This too is a word of hope. For we have a defender. He is everything Abimelech was not. The King of the kings is raised up not by Himself but by God, brings not oppression but redemption, gives not chaos but rest, and is not the enemy but the one who saves us from all our enemies.

2. We have an assurance

This is Jesus. In Him we have a defender. And from Him we have an assurance. Judgment is not just present and partial. It is coming and will be complete. All wrongs will be made right.

And that is good news. That enables us to hold on, to wait, to wait on Him.

Illustration:

I know this may sound shocking. But you could call this the good news of hell. That may sound shocking to you. It may sound offensive, perhaps even absurd to you. But I would respectfully say that that response is born of the luxury of never having known true hate, of never having suffering under horrific cruelty and oppression, and never having seen things made right.

Application:

This is part of the good news - a message not just of God's love but of His justice. All wrongs will be made right. All will be made new and all will be made right. We can catch glimpses of it even now. For we do not live in a secular universe - a world in which the only reality is what you can count and measure. This is not a secular story. Judges 9 is not a secular story. All that we see in Judges 9 is real. God is real and at work. He speaks and can be known.

The LORD alone is our deliverer. We must wholeheartedly trust and turn to Him.

CONCLUSION:

We love a hero. How do I know? Think to your childhood and the stories you cherished. What typified the main character? A noble sacrificial spirit. We love a hero. Harrison Ford is 80 and is still cracking the whip as Indiana Jones. Or take a look at the box office receipts over the last several years. In the MCU (Marvel Cinematic Universe - Iron Man, Captain America, Spider-Man), since 2007 there have been 23 films. In the DCEU (Detective Comics Extended Universe - Superman, Batman, Wonder Woman), since 2011 there have been 15 films. Some of them are better than others. But the general rule with fans is that, if you film it, they will come.

We love a hero. Why? We need one. Down deep within every one of us, there is a deep instinctive visceral knowledge that we need one. So our hearts are pulled when we see one depicted well even on a screen, in a tale, in a comic book. We know this. We deeply know this.

That longing is satisfied in only one place - in the Hero of the heroes, Jesus Christ. He is our deliverer. He is the One we are looking for. We must wholeheartedly trust and turn to Him.

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