

God Unexpected

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Date: 19 January 2020

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[0 : 0 0] Father, we thank you for these beautiful ancient words that we can sing. And Father, you know way better than we do how it's easy for us to sing and hard for us to do.

And we give you thanks and praise that you know us perfectly. You know everything strong about us, everything weak, everything which is just wrong. You know it all.

And still you love us. Still you sent Jesus to be our Savior and our Lord. And still Jesus dwells within us who have put our faith and trust in him as Savior. Still the Holy Spirit dwells within us.

We ask, Father, that your Spirit, your Holy Spirit, would bring your word and your gospel very deep into who we are. That we might know ourselves better as we know you better.

And this we ask in Jesus' name, your Son and our Savior. Amen. Please be seated. Last year, this is just one of those things that ministers often know but others don't necessarily follow.

[1 : 1 0] For the first eight weeks of 2019, seven of them had really, really terrible weather on Sunday morning or Saturday night, Sunday morning.

So I guess right now we're two for three in 2020 with bad weather on Sunday mornings. One of the things, we're going to look at a weird story today.

Actually, we're going to look at two stories and a little statement. But one of the stories is just really, really, really weird. And the thing to keep in mind is we're looking at this weird story.

It's very graphic and violent. It's about a guy who sticks a knife into somebody's stomach and the dung and everything comes out. And it's one of those stories that probably doesn't get covered in Sunday school very often because I don't know how you'd do the pictures that would go with it or Bible cartoon books or something like that.

One of the things to remember, we're going through the book of Judges. And as you can see, Amy did a really good job of coming up with a graphic or an image for this series.

[2 : 1 7] It's called Messy People, Faithful God. And I told her that, you know, trying to help her come up. It was really hard. I'm not very artistic at all.

I like images, but I don't know how to do it. And I told her, I mean, really, this sermon, the book of Judges could really be described as catastrophic people, faithful God, really bad people, faithful God, constantly screwing up people, faithful God.

Like there'd be a whole list of things that the book of Judges is all about. But it regularly shows people in very, very, very dark places. And that's sort of the image that she came up with.

It looks almost like a scene from *The Walking Dead* or something, actually. But it really captures the book. So when we're going to look at this very odd and unusual story, but there's a shorter story to look at first.

Just keep in mind that that's what sort of the book of Judges is about. It's not a book of virtues, not a book of heroes, not a book of really great things to follow and copy.

[3 : 2 5] It's a book about complicated, messy people and God being faithful. So the way the book is structured, so you turn in your Bibles to Judges chapter 3, verse 7.

Judges chapter 3, verse 7. And the last two sermons and all the book up until now have been two different introductions to the book that sort of give a type of 10,000 feet in the air theological and spiritual assessment.

And now we go into a series of stories that sort of encapsulate part of what this analysis is all about. And here's how it begins.

Actually, it's not up there in the text. One of the things to grasp as we look at this is just before this, it says, so the people of Israel, those of you who have Bibles, it won't be up on the screen, verse 5 and 6.

So the people of Israel lived among the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Amorites, the Perizzites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites. And their daughters they took for themselves for wives, and their own daughters they give up to their sons, and they served their gods.

[4 : 38] And then verse 7. And the people of Israel did what was evil in the sight of the Lord. They forgot the Lord their God and served the Baals and the Asherah. And just sort of pause there before we read anything more.

As we talked about, you're going to see it time and time and time again. What the Bible portrays is a picture that every single human being worships.

And every single human being serves something. We don't have an option to not worship. We don't have an option to not serve. We can think we don't serve, but we do.

We can think we don't worship, but we do. We think we don't have loves and desires that form us and motivate us or make us afraid when we don't meet them.

But we do. And so the option is always whether you will serve and love the living God, the triune God, or something else. And that's sort of seen in how this book begins.

[5 : 35] It begins with them not worshiping the Lord their God, and instead they worship the Baals and the gods and the goddesses of Canaan.

And just one other thing before we go on further. Notice there the word forgot. They forgot the Lord their God and served the Baals and the Asherah. That's what I'm saying.

The word forgot is a good word, but the problem with the word forgot is that you might not get the proper sense of forgot. My wife and I have a very simple rule.

We have lots of simple rules, but this is one simple rule. Whoever gets out of bed last in the morning has to make the bed. Simple rule. Now, I have to confess that occasionally I'll forget.

I'm really pressed for time. I'm doing things in the kitchen, et cetera, et cetera, and I just forget. Like, I literally do forget. I come home and I see the beds unmade, and I say to Louise, I'm really sorry.

[6 : 34] I just forgot. It was just absent-mindedness. But the word here which they use for forgot is a far deeper and stronger sense of forgot. It might be better to call, say, paid no regard.

They no longer paid any regard for the Lord God at all. So it isn't something, oh, dang, yeah, I forgot to make the bed. No, no, this is like a complete disregarding of the Lord.

It doesn't come into their thinking or how they understand things at all. It's a deep disregard. In verse 8, I'm going to call him King Siar from now on, okay?

So king of Mesopotamia. And the people of Israel served King Siar for eight years. Now, just one really small thing here, but it's really important.

It's, you know, when I was speaking the other day to some people about this, and I've shared this with you many, many times, you could just say, let's walk to London, or you could say one foot up, one foot down.

[7 : 51] That's the way to London town. They're both saying the same thing, but one's very poetic and more memorable. And some of us really like ideas. We like statements of some perennial truth.

But others of us like stories. And a story can take an idea and sort of put it into our unconscious. It can put it into sort of just enter into just how we see the world without ever maybe being able to articulate the idea very clearly.

But one of the things that the Book of Judges do, if you could put up the first point, that would be great, that what we're going to see here is that the Lord has proper anger at evil. He is never overwhelmed by anger or anger-driven.

He is mercy. And that's going to be very important. All the way through all of these series of stories that we're going to see in the Book of Judges, it's always going to illustrate that.

If God never got angry at evil, it would mean that he wasn't good. If God never got angry at evil, it would mean that he's not loving.

[9 : 07] Lots of us, and I'm going to talk about this a little bit more later on, we think that God should be more like a force. But if you think about it, if you've ever gone to Niagara Falls and you go and you stand close to the falls, I remember that I had been there as a kid, and like 10 years or something ago, I went there for the first time in like decades.

And I was in the hotel, and I was, I don't know, like a couple of kilometers away from the falls. And I thought to myself, what's that noise? And then you realize as you get closer and closer to the falls, it's the falls.

And they're just completely, I mean, the sense of power around the Niagara Falls, like you feel it in your body, like it shakes you. But a force like that, it doesn't care about whether I'm doing a good thing or a bad thing.

It doesn't care if I'm loving or unloving. It's just a force. So many of us think that it would be better if God was just like a force, but God here, he gets angry, properly angry, because he loves and because he's good and because he's just, when he sees injustice, when he sees people destroying themselves with evil, he gets angry.

But the thing that the text is going to show is that he's never overwhelmed by anger. He's not ultimately described by anger. The way to always understand the triune God, the Lord, is mercy. [10:37] Mercy. So even in anger, he is merciful. Even in his judgments, he is mercy. There's a very, very, very good book written about 30 years ago by Sheldon Van Auken called A Severe Mercy.

And that phrase, A Severe Mercy, which he got from C.S. Lewis, is very, very true of all the judgments in the Bible. Every time you read of God judging, it is a severe mercy, but it is a mercy. And we're going to see that immediately. If you go on to verse, the next verse, which is verse 9. So right, God is anger, angry at what they've done.

And he allows them to come under the power of King Siar.

Their cry to him in verse 9. But when the people of Israel cried out to the Lord, the Lord raised up a deliverer for the people of Israel who saved them, Othniel, the son of Kinez, Caleb's younger brother.

[11:47] Just sort of pause that. You see, once again, what's happening here is the cry out isn't a cry of repentance. It's a cry of pain. They cry out in pain towards the Lord.

And the Lord, who has, in a sense, allowed them to be judged by this king, come under King Siar's power, if he was anger-driven, if he was overwhelmed by anger, he'd just keep punishing them. But at the very deepest level and the highest level of who God is, he is mercy. And so he hears their cry, not even a cry to come back to him, just a cry of how painful and miserable their life is. And in response, not to their faith, not to their repentance, not to their religion, not to their spirituality, but despite all of those things, just purely out of their pain, he provides a deliverer to save them.

Othniel, son of Kinez, Caleb's younger brother. Verse 10, And the Spirit of the Lord was upon him, and he judged Israel or delivered Israel. He went out to war, and the Lord gave King Siar of Mesopotamia into his hand, and his hand prevailed over King Siar.

[13:09] So the land had rest for 40 years. Then Othniel, the son of Kinez, died. And it's a very, very simple little story of the Lord sending somebody to deliver him.

Now, one of the things, one of the things that's very interesting, and also looks very much like a hero story, right? The Lord, Caleb, was like a hero to Israel.

If you go back and you read the books that come before this, God brings the people of Israel out of slavery in Egypt into the Promised Land.

And before they're going to enter into the really fully, it gets them out of Egypt. And before they make it to the Promised Land, just on the edge of the Promised Land, the people of Israel send out 12 spies just to sort of map out the land.

And the 12 men come back, and 10 of the men say, the Promised Land, we can't go into it.

Everybody there is richer than us, smarter than us, bigger than us, stronger than us.

[14:18] They have better armies. They have better technology. They have everything about them as better, bigger, faster, smarter, stronger. We can't do it. We just can't do it.

And there's only two people who said, no, no, no, no, no, with the Lord we can do it. And one of them was Joshua who brought them into the Promised Land. The other one is Caleb. And as some of you know the story, as part of God's judgment, God said that because you wouldn't believe me and trust me, all those, that whole generation that refused, that believed the 10 and wouldn't listen to the two, that whole generation will die in the wilderness.

And only two out of that entire generation who was brought out of slavery in Egypt, only two would be brought into the Promised Land, and one of them was Caleb. So he is like a hero.

And he's given land. And if you go back and read earlier in Judges, Othniel as well was a hero. He believes God. He trusts God. He's given the land. He trusts the promises. He gets his own parcel of land.

He's an important person. And it's like a very standard hero type of story. God raises up a deliverer. He picks like part of the lineage of Caleb. The Holy Spirit comes upon him.

[15:32] People recognize him. They follow him. The Lord gives, defeats the king, and the whole land has rest. And it looks really good. It looks like that's a great story.

Like Marvel could do something with a story like that. It's a great story. One of the things they teach you in counseling, if you ever take a counseling course, is there's two or three things you should never say in counseling.

One of the things you should never say in counseling is, it will get better. Are you God? Do you know if it's going to get better? Another thing you should never say is, it will work out.

Another thing you should never say is, it's all over. And some of us are old enough to know that we've talked to people, and it just seems as if something bad happens to them, and then something worse happens to them, and something even worse happens to them, and then they die.

And it's just, so you never say in counseling, it's an easy thing for us to say. We want to say, we think it will give them comfort. Oh, it's all over. Everything's over. It'll all work out.

[16:44] It'll get better. And in a sense, what we see next with the next story is that if somebody had said after Othniel, okay, land has rest. It's all over.

It's just going to get better. Things have been sorted out. We're all following the Lord. No, if that advice had been given, it wouldn't have worked out because look what happens in verse 12. And the people of Israel again did what was evil in the sight of the Lord.

And the Lord strengthened Eglon, the king of Moab, against Israel because they had done what was evil in the sight of the Lord.

He gathered to himself the Ammonites, the Amalekites, and went and defeated Israel. And they took possession of the city of Palms. And the people of Israel served Eglon, the king of Moab, 18 years.

Now, there's a couple of things that have to be sort of pulled out of all of this. Notice here that the Lord strengthens Eglon, the king of Moab.

[17:47] And because they had done what was evil in the sight of the Lord. You know, I'm going to take a big risk.

I hope I don't lose you for the rest of the sermon. The United States is doing way better financially under Trump than they were before. Just, just, it's just a fact.

Okay. Do you think, and this isn't an anti-Trump thing, do you think Trump might ever think to himself, I wonder if God's behind things getting better?

Or do you think Trump would say, it's me. Now, it's easy for us to think that about Trump. But let's just say that over the next couple of years under Trudeau, the economy goes really, really, really well.

Or let's say it doesn't. And I'm not picking any political sides here, just an easy name. Trudeau loses the next election. Rona Ambrose leads the conservatives to a convincing victory.

[18:57] And under her leadership over the next four years, the economy just goes like that. Just, whoa, way up. Now, it's a human problem.

Do you think Rona Ambrose, I'm not picking on her, Peter McKay, pick whoever you want, pick any politician you want. Do you think Rona Ambrose would say, I wonder if God is behind our country getting really prosperous?

Or would she say, it's me. You know, people wonder why God allows bad things to happen to good people.

And they sort of imply that if God really wanted to be known, he should have good things happen to them. do you think there's more Christians in Rockcliffe that really love Jesus than other places?

Do you think that if you went into a poor community, there'd be very few people who love and trust Jesus, but you go to Rockcliffe, it's filled with people who love and trust Jesus, who every day when they get up, say, Lord, I thank you so much that you have blessed me so mightily and powerfully.

[20:05] I know it came from your hand, not mine. If you put it so baldly, most of us probably would not be surprised to find out that there's vastly more poor people who follow Jesus than rich people.

This is a very, very tiny little thing within this story. I just pointed out because many of us sort of think that somehow blessings will lead us to God, despite all the evidence to the contrary, including in our own lives.

That we might ask, why am I as a good person having these hard times? And we never say, why am I having good times? Somehow, if it's a bad time, it's somebody else's fault.

And if it's a good time, it's all my accomplishment. And we never stop to think about it. And what we're going to see in the story here, this weird story, is that the good things that happen to Eglon don't create any sense that there is a God that he must give an account to and that he should give thanks to.

But his good things make him arrogant. And the arrogance is what drives the story. So verse 14 ends with he's conquered the people of Israel.

[21 : 29] In fact, he's done it in a very, very powerful way. Moab isn't actually even part of the promised land. Moab is out of the promised land. And what it means is that the Moabites with their allies have come in and the part of Israel that they took over would have been especially galling and humbling to the Israelites because it was the first place that the Israelites had triumph in the promised land.

City of Palms is Jericho. A great moment of God's victory. And here now it's under pagan control. They're completely and utterly under the thumb of this pagan king Eglon.

And verse 15 then the people of Israel cried out. Once again it's a cry of pain. It's not a cry of repentance. They cry out to the Lord. And the Lord raised up for them a deliverer.

Ehud the son of Gerah the Benjaminite a left-handed man. The people of Israel sent tribute by him. Actually it's literally by his hand to Eglon the king of Moab.

And we have to pause here. This verse is the key to the whole story but it's I have to confess I've never preached on this story and so I didn't know this but you actually do research there's a bit of a debate about it but the majority of scholars would say that they translated his left hand but literally it means a man whose right arm doesn't work.

[22 : 53] In other words he's handicapped. He has a crippled or withered right arm. The only arm he can use is his left hand.

So it's not that he's ambidextrous it's not that he is a very very clever guy who trained himself to use his left hand so that he can fool people he well he wouldn't be standing like this.

he would be standing like this and his left hand would be his left arm would be something like this that doesn't work I can't illustrate it and maybe it would be bound in some way like this and it would just flop around and he only has one hand and he's handicapped and it's a very very powerful thing in the original language because it's by his hand his in a sense his withered crippled hand that he is to hand over the tribute on behalf of Israel he is from Eglon's point of view a completely safe person to bring because Eglon number one and Ehud with no right hand and it's a bit of a story about Israel for 18 years their strength is withered and they're crippled and God is raising up this handicapped man to be the deliverer and you'll notice in the story it isn't that the people of Israel said ah God is going to choose that man that handicapped man to deliver us so we will send him to go and pay the tribute there's no spirit of the Lord coming upon him there's no general sense that he can be the leader to lead the people of Israel against their oppressor he's probably chosen to lead them because it would serve Eglon's pleasure to think ah this is like a walking parable of the people of Israel a non-warrior with a crippled fighting arm representing the people of Israel as to how they are my vassal and I am their Lord and I am their conqueror and I have grown fat by oppressing them now we are going to unpack this in a moment but we need to go through the rest of the story so verse 16 just fairly quickly and this is where the story gets very graphic quite quickly and Ehud made for himself a sword with two edges a cubit in length in the original language this can end up being anywhere from about 18 inches long to about 19 inches about 9 inches long and those of you who like reading

American crime novels and stuff like that it would really be like a shiv it's just a piece of sharpened metal sharpened on both sides without a hilt and it's strapped on the right hand side normally of course a right handed person if they're going to get a sword would be on their left side he has something here his arm just hanging down obviously handicapped this shiv this 9 to 18 inch piece of sharpened double edged metal on his right thigh easy to use with a left hand but it's not where you would normally have something hidden so to speak and verse 16 again and Ehud made for himself a sword with two edges a cubit in length and he bound it on his right thigh under his clothes and he presented the tribute to Eglon king of Moab now Eglon was a very fat man verse 17 and when Ehud had finished presenting the tribute he sent away the people who carried the tribute that he there is Ehud but he himself turned back at the idols near Gilgal and said

[27 : 07] I have a secret message for you oh king and the king commanded silence and all of his attendants went out from his presence and just sort of pause there for a second just a little tiny mess a little tiny detail but in Gilgal which is under nominally Israelite control although ultimately Eglon is their over ruler there's idols and it's just mentioned as a little bit part of it just showing how idol worship has become part of the people of Israel Ehud goes past this spot sends everybody else away he goes back to Eglon all by himself handicapped man obviously looking unarmed and he goes back an unarmed handicapped man to the great and mighty Eglon the king of Moab and he says I have a private message for you and in verse 20 and Ehud came to him as he was sitting that's Eglon the king and the king is sitting alone in this cool roof chamber and Ehud says I have a message from God for you and

Eglon rises from his seat and as Eglon rises from his seat Ehud reached with his left hand took the sword from his right thigh and thrust it into the king's belly and the hilt also went in after the blade and the fat closed over the blade for he did not that is Ehud did not pull the sword out of the king's belly and the dung came out he soiled himself you can see why it's probably not in most Sunday school curriculums be an interesting craft time for the teachers after the part of the class then Ehud went out into the porch and closed the doors of the roof chamber behind him and locked them so part of the story here of course is the arrogance of the arrogance of Eglon he's the great and mighty he's a big guy he's a prosperous looking guy he's powerful he has this handicapped guy in front of him handicapped in a way that affects his ability to fight he has no sense of danger nothing to do he doesn't worry about it all he sends out his attendants his guards he lets this guy get really close to him and this handicapped nobody kills him and while

Eglon had no sense that maybe his prosperity and maybe his power was something that was being given to him as a gift from God but he takes it upon himself to think it's all his and it makes him arrogant it makes him think he's competent when he's not and all of the rest of the story just shows incompetence upon incompetence and incompetence upon incompetence and in fact in the next little bit when it talks about stout or strong men it's a word in Hebrew which can either mean stout or strong or fat in other words it ends up emphasizing that they go into this thinking that they're big and powerful but it ends up revealing that they're just easily killed look how it continues in verse 24 when he that is Ehud had gone the servants came and when they saw that the doors of the roof chamber were locked they thought surely the king is having a poop in the closet of the cool chamber and they waited till they were embarrassed but when he still did not open the doors of the roof chamber they took the key and opened them and there lay their lord dead on the floor Ehud escaped while they delayed and he passed beyond the idols and escaped to Sarah when he arrived he sounded the trumpet in the hill country of Ephraim then the people of Israel went down with him from the hill country and he was their leader and he said to them follow after me for the Lord has given your enemies the Moabites into your hand so they went down after him and seized the fords of the Jordan against the Moabites and did not allow anyone to pass over and just sort of pause there for a second you know we're just so used to the fact that after something like this you can hop in your car drive 125 kilometers an hour down the Queens way if it's the right type of day and you could be a far distant you know back then you would have walked and one of the funny things if any of you have ever lived in rural areas is gossip travels faster than you can walk I mean I don't know how it works but even without phones it just travels really quick and so the news of the fact that the king of Moab has died has spread and so because of this they rally around this handicapped guy they go down to the fords and we'll look what happens in verse 29 to the end and they killed at that time about 10,000 of the

Moabites all strong able-bodied men strong able-bodied men literally means stout and it could either mean stout or fat not a man escaped so Moab was subdued that day under the land of Israel and the land had rest for 80 years and just before I read the next little bit when you read the book of Judges every time you read it you have to ask yourself a question about a number do they mean the number in a numeric sense or a symbolic or metaphorical sense so it probably wasn't 10,000 people who heard me say a couple of times maybe I'll talk about what it was like when I was a kid and I'll say 100 million years ago and I 31 the next deliverer after him was

[33 : 17] Shamgar the son of Anath who killed 600 of the Philistines with an ox goad and he also saved or delivered Israel and just before we sort of sum it up it's a very interesting thing there's a good chance that Shamgar is not Jewish so the next deliverer so God goes from like the stereotypical deliverer who has good lineage and has land and has some recognition as being a

person of substance and importance the next deliverer is a handicapped man and the next deliverer worships Baal's sister who is the goddess of war who is worshipped because people believed that if you shed blood on land it would make it more fertile and there's good reason to think that if he was Jewish he wasn't a very good Jew because he was understood to serve the goddess

Anath but by his name he might have in fact not even been Jewish and God uses them to deliver him so how do we sort of wrap up all of this stuff in terms of the power of the story you know actually Andrew if you could put up the second point you long for a left handed God to provide a left handed savior who saves you in a left handed way and I'll try to explain what that what that means like the average Canadian like when I get a chance to actually talk to a lot of non-Christians about the Christian faith in the gospel you can see that it disappoints them it's a letdown they were hoping for something more and that's because at the level of our imagination at the level of our surface how we think what we'd like is one of three things or some combination of three types of things to solve our problem we'd either like

God to be sort of like the force in Star Wars like wouldn't that be cool you know you can feel things going on in the force and you can fight blindfolded and you can make people do things and we sort of feel that God should be sort of like something like the force or we'd like we'd really wish that it would be something as if God gave us some simple steps that we always follow so that we get the types of things that we want to have happen and don't have the things that we don't want to have happen to happen that there be some steps that allow us to always be happy or successful and he just delivers to us the keys to these types of successes these steps or we want God to be really like a very powerful type of emotion so that we only have good emotions we only have good emotions all the time something that just sort of comes upon us we know God and we receive

God or we trust in God or we believe the Bible or whatever it is we get baptized we get confirmed whatever it is for my non-Christian friends in our own hearts we have the same desires and if that just happened this constant type of good emotion would be present and we hear instead about the gospel and it just seems to be a bit of a let down but if you think about it for a second to meet somebody who always seems to have the same type of emotion all of the time you're describing somebody stoned or drugged and none of us look up to them none of us look up to them and the fact of the matter is is that when you think of just God as being something like a force or a power it's just like I said it would be like going to

Niagara Falls and it's just there and it doesn't love you it doesn't care about you it's not good it's not bad would we really like it that God gave people power like Niagara Falls like I don't do the Star Wars thing very much I personally I know I've just not a lot of you won't like me I find it a bit boring but now I know a lot of you don't like me anymore but I just do find it boring but the fact of the matter is would we really like it if people had that type of power don't you think that at some point in time people with that power would do it to get rid of that stupid person driving too slow in front of them or get their boss and have something bad happen to them like don't we think that if God was just like a power that gave it to us he ends up just being impersonal and amoral and it actually wouldn't really be good for us or for society or for other people and it's the same type of thing like what would it really be like if

[38 : 25] God just told us a couple of things it meant that we were always going to be successful and never bad that never unsuccessful but like surely sometimes what we think of as successful as just another language for selfishness and narcissism and actually isn't good for other people it would just end up making me more and more and more like God so on one hand the surface desires that we have of God that we find when God describes how he actually acts towards us and it seems to be a bit of a left it seems to be a bit of a let down but the fact of the matter is is that every single one of us are left handed in the sense of the Bible and I'm not trying to I'm not minimizing the fact that some people have really extreme types of handicaps but I mean the fact of the matter is is that we are morally broken in big ways at some times and at some point in time physically our bodies will just break down and the fact of the matter is that

God could effortlessly just say you just ask this word of me and I'll give you whatever you want he could do that God could just come and say to you I'm going to give this overwhelming power to you and whatever you want it's going to happen and he could come and just overwhelm you in some type of emotion or awe of him or worship of him or whatever it is he could make every one of us just like a puppet if he wants but the fact the matter is is that at a deeper level of what we deeply more deeply really want is we want we want God to love us and we want him to care for us and we want

him to understand us and we want him to understand that we can't do this religion thing right all the time and we can't just do the moral thing or the money thing and example things all the time that we mess up and we want a

God who forgives us and we want a God who doesn't overwhelm our freedom but makes us more free we want in a sense a God who limits himself for our good and saves us in a way which isn't what we think we want but is actually what we really want and that's what we see in the gospel this whole series of stories with its fact that they keep sliding back into idolatry and they can't fix themselves so really describing what goes on in every single honest human heart that we can't fix ourselves and we need God but in a way that is with us and respects us and loves us and deals with what we can't deal with for ourselves and in a sense the book of Judges is setting up a riddle that only the gospel will solve and it's a riddle that answers the riddle of every one of our hearts that God saves us not by shouting and showing how powerfully is his God but by emptying himself of all of his appearance as God and taking into himself our human nature and being in the womb of Mary and living amongst us and he reveals himself and saves himself by living an ordinary life and he reveals himself and at the same time saves us by dying upon a cross by taking upon himself in a sense all of that arrogance and dung and he takes it upon himself and he he he takes me as his own because he loves me he takes you because he loves me and he died for you and for me and he died for you and me knowing that the fact of the matter is that there's always these things about us that are just broken that are just wrong and he uses people like us who are imperfect and our temper or other things are just broken and still he loves us and uses us that in fact at a deeper level we actually really long for a left handed

God to provide a left handed savior who saves you in a left handed way not by being powerful or very religious or very spiritual but just crying out to him in our pain and asking that he would just save us and come in and he would do whatever has to be done to make us right with him and know that he has done that in the person of his son and he loves us and and that he can and that he will follow him in a left handed way because every single one of us follows Jesus left handed every single one of us follow him left handed and part of the reason you and I struggle with despair or cynicism is because we want to pretend we're not left handed this two points very very quickly just to close if you could put them both up just really read them what we see in the story is that the [44 : 04] Lord is faithful reliable and sovereign but he's never tame see all of the types of God that we think we'd really want are tame God he gives I've tamed God so he can give me those steps to success I've tamed God so he gives me the force that I think I want when I need it and I've made God tame so I want them and every one of them is a tame God and the book of Judges shows us time and time and time again God is never tame but he's faithful and he's reliable and he's sovereign and the final one if you could put it up that would be great and we see that the Lord will keep his word his way and his time for your good and his glory and that's what we see in the story he says he's going to keep delivering them because he'll never leave them or forsake them and one time he uses a hero he uses somebody who has the right parents and has the right education and the right power and all that right stuff and the next time he takes somebody who's maybe not even Jewish and if he is Jewish he's the worst possible Jewish person of all because he worships the goddess of war war to make fertile like how sick is that and but you see and that's how God works with every single one of us he's not tame he hears our prayers in heaven one of the things that we will probably praise God for is how many times we are now how thankful we are that he didn't answer so many of our prayers because they came out of pride and arrogance and hatred and racism and classism and we'll go and say God oh I prayed that oh thank you you didn't answer it or you answered it in some left handed way that humbled me and was really ultimately for my good and the book of

Judges will time and time and time and time and time and time and time again show he keeps his word but he keeps his word his way in his timing but it's always for your good and for his glory can you please stand just bow your heads in prayer father we give you thanks and praise that you do not wait until we become ambidextrous or a super warrior or super religious or super spiritual or very successful in our careers or very successful in married life or family life or very successful intellectually or successful emotionally or successful in whatever we give you thanks and praise that you do not wait until we become right handed but that you see us as left handed people and still you love us and sent your son setting aside his glory and divine prerogatives you sent your son to die upon the cross to be far more left you can't be poorer than dead father and he died that we might

become rich left handed people like us that we might become rich we ask father that you would deliver us from the ways that we think we can only be used by you or be successful if we are right handed and grow within us such a being gripped by the gospel and the truth of your word that that we can be understand who we are in light of

Jesus and be content with the fact that we are left handed as we follow you and that you use left handed people for our good and for the good of the world and the good of this city and for your glory so father we ask that you do that mighty work within us who are here and all this we ask in amen