

Taking God at His Word

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[0 : 00] Father, idols affect us in many, many different and very powerful ways, and we don't even think about it most of the time. We're not even a category that we think of.

But Father, your word makes clear that the more that idols grip our heart, the harder it is for us to take you at your word. So we ask, Father, that you would continue to show mercy and grace to us this morning and pour out the Holy Spirit deeply upon us so that your word might grip us and we might take you at your word, that we might know Jesus, that we might know you, and we might be filled with the Holy Spirit.

Father, this we ask in Jesus' name. Amen. Please be seated. So I have a couple of apologies. Last week I messed up my sermon in two ways.

One of the ways, those of you who are here, and by the way, if you've listened to my sermon online, you won't know this because Andrew fixed it. But I got my 10,000 and 20,000 all mixed up, and I'm sure it was confusing to some of you that the analogy didn't make sense.

The other thing was, and pray for me all the time that I don't make those mistakes. Some of you know I'll say Moses when it should have been Joshua or something else. I can get things like that mixed up.

[1 : 20] So pray for me all the time. I know many of you do, and I really appreciate it. The other mistake I made, it's sort of a mild one because I didn't talk about it in an inflammatory way, but one of the things we talked about last Sunday was rape, actually, because it's in the biblical text.

And I was thinking about it while I was driving home that, I mean, that's not an abstract. Like for me as a guy, I can talk about it. But for women, many women, maybe even women who are here, that you might have experienced a rape.

And I should have probably just said a little bit about that just before I talked about it in case it was triggering anything. Today, I know that there are people here who have been affected by genocide. And we're going to talk about genocide a little bit this morning. And some of you, if you're a guest, you're a bit surprised that a church would talk about such things. But that's one of the benefits you get of preaching through books in the Bible.

You look at topics that, if it was up to me, I'd probably never talk about. I'd probably just give you a few positive thoughts on leadership or attitude maintenance and send you off on your way.

[2 : 21] But the Bible makes us look at things. And the wonderful thing about the Bible is the same thing that catches many Canadians by surprise, is that the Bible is so realistic about the world that it catches readers by surprise.

They're expecting something religious and spiritual. Those of you who've seen the Netflix series, The Messiah, which I'm not recommending, you expect the Bible to talk a little bit like him. But the Bible talks about real life, but it's never cynical. It's never cynical. It talks about the real world in the context of the living God. And it talks about the real world in a redemptive way that we would call out to him.

So today, we are going to be mentioning genocide a little bit because the text talks about it. And, you know, one of those things, we should just know that the Bible brings these things to our mind, that we can know Jesus better.

So it begins. We're looking at Joshua 6, verse 1. I announced that at the beginning. Some of it, if not all of the text, will be up on the screen if you don't have your own Bibles.

[3 : 26] But it's really good to bring your own Bibles. And this is how the story begins. 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.

Now, just pause. Some of you who have been going through this series with me know that it seems like every new story begins with something like that. They do evil, and the Lord delivers them into the hand of some people group.

And so, well, first of all, just, I say it every week, but it's important to remember, doing evil means in particular that they, and we're going to talk about this more in a moment, that they start serving other gods and goddesses, and they serve idols.

So they depart from the Lord. And the giving to them is actually a profound expression of human freedom, is that the punishment that they get is getting what they want.

The punishment isn't not getting what they want. That's usually when people think about God, the God, the triune God of the Bible. They think the triune God of the Bible is a big meanie who is the no-fun God, no-pleasure God, no-joy God.

[4 : 35] And he looks around and sees things that make people happy and says, na-na-na-na-na. No, that's not the God of the Bible, actually. Like, this is a shocking thing, and the book of Judges will slowly unpack it.

But often his judgment is allowing you to have what you want, like respecting your freedom. But a lot of what we want will devour us. And that's what happens here.

They go after the gods of the people, and the gods of the people, the people who worship that gods, devour them. Now, there's one other important thing here, and I'm not going to spend a long time on it, but this is actually one of the big ideas of the entire book of Judges.

And I might now put it in every couple of weeks, because it helps you to understand the whole book of Judges and every individual text. In Canada, many people say that all paths lead to God.

But the Bible says, Christians would say, Jesus would say, it is not true that all paths lead to God. But it is true that the triune God uses many paths to bring people to himself.

[5 : 44] And that's one of the things that you're going to see. It's not that God constantly is locked into a particular pattern. He uses a prophetess and a woman with a tent peg, and he uses a warrior, and then he uses a completely and utterly debauched person like Samson later on.

And he uses Gideon. And the pattern keeps changing. And it's the same thing, you know, if we were to take some time and break up into small groups, and those of us who are Christians, we were to share how we became Christians, we'd be surprised at the many different ways that God has used to bring people to himself.

And that's part of the big story of Judges, is that God doesn't keep working the exact same way. He works different ways every time. And so how is it going to be different in this particular time?

Well, let's start to read the story. Verse 2 of chapter 6. Verse 2 of chapter 6. And the hand of Midian overpowered Israel. And because of Midian, the people of Israel made for themselves the dens that are in the mountains and the caves and the strongholds.

For whenever the Israelites planted crops, the Midianites and the Amalekites and the people of the east would come up against them. They would encamp against them and devour the produce...

[6 : 57] I skipped it too quick. They would encamp against them and devour the produce of the land as far as Gaza and leave no sustenance in Israel and no sheep or ox or donkey. Now we're up on the screen. It should be the right verse.

For they would come up with their livestock and their tents. They would come like locusts in number. Both they and their camels could not be counted so that they laid waste the land as they came in.

And Israel was brought very low because of Midian. And the people of Israel cried out for help to the Lord. Now just sort of pause here for a second.

What's going on here is genocide, attempted genocide of the people of Israel. It's not that a foreign power has come in to conquer. It isn't that a foreign power has come in to merely live there, to occupy the land.

They're doing something very, very, very different. And it's very significant. I didn't plan it, that just recently we've been remembering the anniversary of the Holocaust. There's been newspaper and other media outlets around that.

[8 : 04] The closest I came to it was as a young kid, 10, 11, 12-year-old boy. I was a Boy Scout. And I remember being in the car one day with my Boy Scout leader.

And I lived in an all-Jewish neighborhood. And as I'm driving, I look over and I notice for the first time tattooed numbers on the arm of my Scoutmaster. And I asked him what it was about.

And he got teary-eyed. And his wife said, well, and then she told me, he was in the camps. He is a survivor. He was a survivor of the Holocaust.

And even just as relevant, maybe more relevant in this particular case, some of you might know of something which is very familiar to Ukrainians, is that in the 1930s, the Soviet Union created a forced famine in the Ukraine to punish the Ukrainians.

And as a result of that forced famine, millions and millions and millions of people died. And it's remembered by Ukrainians. It's a double tragedy because all of the leading lights of North America and Western civilization were praising Soviet Union for being a great, a perfect place to live.

[9 : 18] At the same time that they were praising them, they were creating a forced famine to literally kill millions and millions of Ukrainians. So what's happening here in this story is that Midian comes in, they steal the animals, they steal the food, and after they've stolen all they can carry and all they can consume, they destroy everything else.

They destroy everything else. And this is very hard for us in Canada to understand right now. Like I'm old enough that I remember when there were certain fruits you didn't get all year round.

Like I remember when all of a sudden it was exciting that there was fruit in the stores again in the spring. But, you know, for much of the world, one bad crop means hundreds if not thousands of people die.

And this was an intentional policy by the Midianites. And its only purpose would have been to destroy the people of Israel. And that's the situation which they're in.

So, how is God going to respond? So you see in the text up there they cry out to the Lord for help. It's all part of the normal pattern. So how is God going to respond to this? Well, he breaks the pattern.

[10 : 27] He does something which is a little bit different. He sends them a sermon. Not what they were expecting. Not what they were wanting. But if you just pause and think about it for a second.

I just said how kids at a certain age when they lose it they just lose it. Their poor little brains aren't developed enough. They just, their brains aren't developed enough. You know, like all you can do is try to comfort them and quiet them in some type of way.

But when the kids get older, like every single one of us who has kids this is what we do. It's not just that they you know, they mess up, they do something really, really wrong and you have to end up either, you know, both disciplining them and maybe rescuing them.

But the other thing that every parent does is you want them to understand that it's wrong. And hopefully you do that in a good way. I remember being in a Starbucks and a parent was trying to discipline her five-year-old kid and the way she said it is she's kept doing bad things.

It was in a Starbucks connected to a chapter of Indigo Books and she kept going and taking books and sort of wrecking them. And she said, it's how she tried to teach the kid right and wrong.

[11 : 36] You're making mommy unhappy. I thought, what? I almost went over and said, that's not how you tell a kid not to do something wrong. You're making me unhappy.

You know, anyway, there you go. I mean, Lord have mercy upon that parent and the poor little kid, however they're going to develop. But the fact of the matter is that we all try to explain. And so what happens here isn't what, and nobody usually wants to have that happen to them, but at the end of the day that's how we hopefully learn how to be vaguely moral, if not well, you know, more moral individuals.

And so that's what happens here. God this time doesn't just deliver them. He sends them a sermon. So here you see verse 7 and 8. When the people of Israel cried out to the Lord on account of the Midianites, the Lord sent a prophet to the people of Israel and he said to them, and here's the summary of the message.

So we had a, God sends a prophet that wanders around the people of Israel and this is the summary of his message. Thus says the Lord, the God of Israel, I led you up from Egypt and brought you out of the house of slavery and I delivered you from the hand of the Egyptians and from the hand of all who oppressed you and drove them out before you and gave you their land.

And I said to you, I am the Lord your God. You shall not fear the gods of the Amorites in whose land you dwell, but you have not obeyed my voice. Now, this is very, very, very significant what he says.

[13 : 02] I'm going to put this up. This was a very slow lesson for Israel to learn and obviously they didn't learn about the triune God until Jesus came, although all of the hints of the fact that God is triune are all the way through the Old Testament.

But unlike idols, the triune God is love and he loves ordinary people like you. Unlike idols, the triune God is love and he loves ordinary people like you.

If you do a bit of research about the gods of the world at that time, the reason they created human beings was to feed them, not for the gods to feed human beings, but for the human beings to feed the gods. In a sense, a human being was just a type of slave for the God, a servant of the God. But the Bible teaches something radically, radically different and it's caught in this scripture text. I'll just put back to the scripture text. We lose the full significance of reveal.

You know, we go to a bank machine and we stick our bank card in the machine and it knows our name and it reveals that it's the right bank machine by all of its signs and we just think of that as being something mechanical and something automatic.

[14 : 24] But, if you understand that from all eternity, before there was any human being that was ever made, that God the Father loved the Son and the Son loved the Father and the Holy Spirit is both the love between the Father and the Son and the Son between the Father and the Holy Spirit is a person himself and also is love and that all things were created out of God's love for human beings and only the triune God can account for the fact that we value love so highly.

The idols don't love but God loves. He creates all things out of love and it's out of love that he delivers them out of Egypt. It's out of love that he delivers them constantly from their oppressors and it's out of love that he reveals himself.

Think of it this way. When I do, when somebody asks me to do their wedding ceremony, I almost always say, how did you meet? Everybody meets somehow or another. You know, maybe some of you met when you were in grade 5 or grade 6 or grade 7 or grade 8 or some of you met far later than that but everybody meets the other some way and in many cases, I know it's a bit different now because you can meet people online but even then there must be something that's a little bit like that is that what happens when you meet somebody that you're going to start, you're going to fall in love is the other, for the whole process to happen, the other person has to, you have to reveal a little bit about the fact that you like the person and they have to reveal back to you a little bit about the fact that they like you and a little bit about who they are.

That's how it works. I mean, for my wife and I, it begins, we're sitting at the same library table and you glance over and there's glances and there's glances and mine was the second type of glance not the first type of glance and she glances back and because I was pathologically shy around women and the more attractive the woman was, the more pathologically shy and embarrassed and awkward I would be.

You know, if there is a purgatory, purgatory for me would be showing everybody films of what I was like in the presence of such a woman and that would be purgatory for me amongst other types of things.

[16 : 38] Amusing for all of you, cringeworthy and embarrassing for me. Anyway, but eventually at some point in time despite my pathological shyness it goes from glances to high to which the other person can either give the very powerful signals, what is this creep doing talking to me or they can say hi back.

Right? And we don't think about it much but that's what happens is you go through a process of revealing yourself to the other person and the other person revealing themselves to you. And that's what's going on here. That's what's going on.

That's what's so completely and utterly stunning about the book of Exodus. It's what's so stunning about everything in the Bible and it's just so stunning that we don't get it because we think of this as a mechanical type of process but what God does is he said listen I delivered you out of slavery in Egypt I deliver you from your oppressors and I revealed myself to you I made myself known to you to show you that I love you that I want to be in a relationship with you and I want you I'm hoping that you respond by my acts of mighty love and my love of revealing myself to you that you would reveal yourself to me and love me.

and instead about not worshiping other gods I mean if next Sunday Louise came in and said to you folks one on one drink coffee by the way George has affections towards another woman he's in love with another woman as well as with me every single one of you would side with her and you'd be right to side with her because you know that just doesn't work with love and so if you think about it within that context that God is love from all eternity is out of the overflow of his love that he creates and that human beings in rebellion against God want to become their own God and turn against him and all the things that happen and God delivers out of slavery delivers out of oppression delivers us

from our sins and delivers us and delivers us and reveals himself in such a way that we would know who he is just like you know at some point in time

Louise revealed herself to me and I reveal myself to her and because we're finite human beings that's a process that goes on for good and sometimes really well and sometimes not very well for all of the time that you're together and then God says all I ask is that you don't worship other gods and what does the prophet say but you have not listened to my voice you have not listened to my voice now what we're going to see next is we're going to meet the first Canadian in the Bible you didn't know that but the first Canadian who could fit into any coffee I mean any coffee shop whether it's Tim Hortons or a hipster place or something like Starbucks which isn't hipster you'd you could meet this character and his name is Gideon and here's here's what happens with Gideon remember the prophet's been going giving this message verse 11 God isn't just giving a sermon he's going to deliver the people of Israel verse 11 now the angel of the Lord came and sat under the terebinth at Ophrah which belonged to Joash the Abizrite while his son Gideon was beating out wheat in the wine press to hide it from the

[20 : 07] Midianites and the angel of the Lord appeared to him and said to him the Lord is with you almighty man of valor now just before I go to the next verse he's not a man of valor he's hiding normally when you're going to be harvesting bringing the wheat to that point in time you go to something which is like a stage compared to the floor higher up maybe not as high as this but nice and flat and high where when you beat it and then you throw it up and the wind will blow away the stuff you don't need and the wheat which is heavier falls to the ground and that's how you separate the wheat from the chaff wine presses you dig something down in the ground and it has both a lower part and a higher part but it's still low and so what Gideon is doing is he's not up there on the threshing floor he's hiding in the wine press and trying to make the whole thing work where there's no breeze and he's doing it not because he's a mighty man of valor but because he's in fact hiding from the Midianites and

God is as we'll see in a moment in Gideon's response God is is is both saying something prophetic about the future but he's also saying something that's going to try to get his attention and bring something out to develop the relationship with Gideon remember I said to you that the Lord does it not it's not that all paths lead to God but the Lord uses many many different paths to bring people to himself the thing that began my journey that led me becoming a Christian was seeing an advertisement on a telephone pole on Elgin Street that's what first got my attention didn't happen any of you probably that's what happened with me God uses different things with different people but Gideon's response is this verse 13 here's where we see that he's a very very typical Canadian and Gideon said to him please sir if the Lord is with us if the Lord is with us why then is all this happened to us where all his wonderful deeds their fathers recounted to us saying did not the Lord bring us up up from Egypt but now the Lord has forsaken us given us into the hand of Midian how is this like a typical Canadian here's what the typical Canadian thinks C.S. Lewis I think it was in the 40s wrote a an essay called God in the Dark and he was referring to something that he'd noticed and as a classical scholar he realized that the way that average English people and Scottish and Irish and Welch were thinking back in the 40s was very different than how most of the world thought and was very different than how people had thought throughout most of human history and for modern English people and he's talking about the 40s it's even more true today God is on in the dark in other words God's on trial for the average modern person it's like this the triune God listen the triune God we have a whole list of charges against him he is offended against us he's homophobic he's racist he's in favor of slavery he's in favor of power he hates transgender people he only wants to spoil us and have fun he's patriarchal he's this he's that he's all of these types of things and there's we have brought charges against

God and any human being who wants to go and try to defend God is a reprehensible human being who does not he's not able to think he's not aware of what's really going on in life but we have brought charges against God and God we are the prosecutors we are the judge it is like a show trial God is guilty he has no defense against the charges that we can bring against him for evil homophobia denying women the right to do what they want with their body opposed to people being able to have a doctor ask them to kill them or us being able to ask the doctor to kill one of our loved ones God is guilty and it is just what everybody knows everybody knows that God is guilty and he has no possible defense that's what Gideon says he talks like a modern

Canadian he talks like most of the people that are your neighbors and your co-workers and maybe how many of you maybe how some of you think you know the older I get the more I believe that Genesis 3 and Romans 1 is empirically true if you go back and read the beginning of Genesis 3 it is that the average human being desires to be like God and when that causes their life to get messed up when Adam confronts God confronts Adam Adam says not my fault Eve God speaks to Eve not my fault the snake and that is so much how we're hardwired and if you go back and read Romans 1 later on yourself and after verse 16 and 17 which says sort of the theme of the whole book you read from Romans 1 18 to the end of the chapter the book talks about the fact that we are innately worshipers and we've exchanged worshiping of God who we at some fundamental level we know that the triune God exists for worshiping other things and then one of the things which is so significant is when it gives at the end of

[25 : 56] Romans 1 it gives evidence of the fact that there is in fact a God and that we are under his judgment the way it describes that the last little bit of it is partly it is the reality of evil that every time we experience evil on one level it is God we experience in a very very tiny way God's judgment in advance and the way we experience God's judgment in advance is by actually experiencing murder and lies and hatred and sloth and envy and gluttony and sexual sin and sins of the mind and selfishness that in some way sin is its own punishment even though we choose it and friends that is just so deeply psychologically true but we are like Gideon who thinks that the pain that we experience as a result of the sin that we willingly pursue is somehow a sign that God does not exist that it is somehow his fault and we don't see the darkness that has come over our own mind to understand that all of that pain is to help us to understand many things but one of those things is that the world is broken that I am broken and even to be able to articulate broken implies that there is something unbroken someone who made it unbroken in this broken world and this wonderful message of the Bible is the world is broken you are broken

I still love you I have delivered you from the house of Egypt I have delivered you from your oppressors my common grace restrains your evil and I have sent my son to die upon the cross for you and we will talk about that more in a moment I have to be careful of my time here how does Gideon respond?

well he is so first of all it is very interesting the angel of the Lord who is this very interesting figure in the Old Testament it is not clear whether it is a theophany which means an appearance of God it is not clear whether it is an angel who is a special angel that represents the Lord it is not even clear whether in fact it might be a pre-incarnate Jesus and it is very uncertain about what it is in the Old Testament but you will see that the person speaking is the same as the Lord speaking all the way through the text it is part of the mystery of what is going on here that is never actually explained but in verse 4 so the Lord actually never defends himself why does he have to defend himself?

he is love and you know here is the other thing not only is it only the triune God that can actually be a loving God but it is actually only the triune God who can be good you see if there is only a singular God then how can he be good?

there is just him unless there is something other than him you can't actually know if he is good it is only the triune God that you can really see that God is love and that God is good that there is this goodness and love that has existed even before there was creation and even before there was the fall he does not defend himself to us he is going to redeem them he is not going to defend himself verse 14 and the Lord turned to Gideon and said go in this might of yours and save Israel from the hand of Midian but then do not I send you and Gideon said to him please Lord how can I save Israel behold my clan is the weakest in Manasseh and I am the least in my father's house and the Lord said to him but I will be with you and you shall strike the Midianites as one man in other words even though the Midianites are like locusts that completely and utterly cover the land and completely overwhelm them and even though the Israelites have been humbled and they've been in the process seven years into a genocidal process so that they are deeply removed deeply reduced that God will make the battle with Midian as if as if all of Israel is fighting one man that's what the original language means as if all of Israel is just fighting one person and Gideon said to him if now I have found favor in your eyes then show me a sign that it is you who speak with me please do not depart from here until I come to you and bring you out my present or my offering and set it before you and the angel of the Lord said

[30 : 47] I will stay until you return I'm going to sort of fast forward through this next little bit what you're going to see if you go on and read because I'm going to jump down to a very very important

part of the story what you're going to see here is that God does a remarkable miracle Gideon is so paganized so canaanized that when he brings an offering to the angel of the Lord he doesn't bring an offering according to the Mosaic law what he does is he brings an offering as if he's going to be worshipping Baha'al or the Asherah he brings a whole goat and he brings enough bread if you take 22 pounds of flour and make bread that's how much bread he brings and he brings this broth and the angel says the angel of the Lord says put it all on a rock and then Gideon does that and the angel of the Lord touches it and a fire comes from the rock and consumes the whole thing and it's like a whoa moment and then Gideon who has both within his heart and his mind is both a worshipper of Baal and Baal and the Asherah but he also knows things about the Lord and so he now worries that he's going to die because he's seen the Lord face to face and the Lord speaks to him and says you're not going to die and so Gideon is relieved and makes an altar saying the Lord is peace and then the Lord says to him you need to go to your father's house and then we discover that his father is the custodian and the sponsor and the patron of the worship of Baal and Asherah in that region and he says to Gideon you've got to go Gideon and what I want you to do and what I want you to do is I'd like you to because you're just worshipping me there's no other gods

I want you to go and tear down the altar to Baal tear down the Asherah kill a bull and significant because bull is the way the Baal is imaged the image of the Baal is a bull and so I want you to take a bull and after you've cut down the Asherah pole and destroyed the altar on top of the fortress that helps to protect the gods and the goddesses I want you to make the Lord's altar and I want you to using the wood from the Asherah pole I want you to sacrifice the bull but you sacrifice it to me and Gideon does it but he's afraid he does it in the middle of the night and the next morning people come up they see that the altar is destroyed they see that the Asherah pole is gone they see that the bull has been all cut up they do an inquiry and the result of the inquiry is that they go to Gideon's father because he's still under the head of the family and they say to him Gideon has to die and even though the dad is the patron of Baal and the patron of the Asherah the fact of the matter is he's not going to let his boy die over this I mean it's his boy idols are one thing your kid is another right so he says if you could skip ahead to I think it's verse 31 that would be very helpful there you go but Joash said but Joash said where we are my own bible but Joash said to all who stood against him will you contend for Baal or will you save him whoever contends for him shall be put to death by morning if he is a god let him contend for himself because his altar has been broken therefore on that day

Gideon was called Jeroboam that is to say let Baal contend against him because he broke down his altar I need to wrap it all up let me see here oh back there here's the thing about idols and of course power is one of the main idols that we all face power kills to protect itself love will die for the beloved one of the things that struck me when I was reading this story about Joash's speech to the people is he puts out this very very very stark challenge if Baal is a god he can defend himself now what struck me the first time

I read this this week and I don't know if it struck any of you is that something very similar happens in the gospels what do three of the gospels record that Jesus is hanging on the cross and he's all bloody he's been completely and utterly whipped he's surrounded by soldiers he's hanging on the cross he's dying a criminal's death and all the leaders the intellectuals the religious the spiritual types the cultural influencers they all say he saves others let him save himself come down from the cross show us that you can save yourself if you are God if you are the savior now Jesus doesn't come down from the cross he stays on the cross and he dies but we understand that not to be a defeat of Jesus but to in fact be his victory a victory which matters to us and we only begin to understand it if we understand that God is love that the triune

God is love from all eternity the father is love the son and the son is love the father and the father desires to have ordinary people like you and me know him so that we will love him and experience his love and we can love him not because he needs love he has the love of the son and the holy spirit from all eternity but it is the nature of love to love and to receive love and to give and to be good and it's the very nature of power to sacrifice others so that no power is lost and so for Baal who's all about power for him not to defend himself is in fact an indictment against him but the cultural leaders and the influencers and the intellectuals and the religious leaders who at the end of the day do not know that God is love but worship power for them what they want to see is a display of power and they do not know that they know that if power is real that power will act to defend itself but they do not understand that if love is real love will die for the beloved many of you heard the

story

[37 : 15] I'm just going to tell part of it right now my wife and six or seven of my kids at the time were in a house fire caught on the second floor first floor consumed with flames in the middle of the night Louise woke up and she woke up the kids and she woke up her mom and Louise was able to open a bathroom window which there was enough room about three feet down into the side a shed and I can tell you right now who was the last one out of the house Louise why she opened the window she hands the kids out she gets the kids out and whenever kid is out she leaves and if she had died not being able to get all of the kids out she would not have viewed herself as a failure because she got all of her kids out it's a nature of love to be willing to die idol idol worshipers go to great lengths to save their idols but the Lord went to great lengths to save and deliver you think of the lengths that we go those of us who worship beauty the lengths we go as our beauty fades

I know a woman who asked a doctor to kill her because she was in she'd always been very very very very very very well made up and she could no longer look beautiful and she wanted to die her idol devoured her and we worship money and the money starts to fail us but we don't say money is a failure no we save it we say no no no no the market will correct itself it'll work it'll work it'll work it'll work and what we see throughout this entire text is that God comes to Gideon when Gideon is still worshipping Baal and Asherah and here's what we learn in the gospel while you were still giving yourself to idols Messiah Jesus died for you if you go back and read the rest of the story of Gideon it's after this it even always had a remarkable miracle of the equivalent of how many bread you could make from 22 pounds of flour and a whole goat and all the broth all just taken up in fire and the

Holy Spirit comes upon him and he's able with the Holy Spirit's power to rally the people of Israel to fight against Midianites and still Gideon can't believe that God has actually spoken to him and promised to him and so there's the famous story of the fleece that could you make the fleece wet and the ground dry and then God does it and then he says oh just one more time could you make the ground wet and the fleece die and the problem is that that's not a story about seeking God's will he already knows God's will God's told him time and time and time again you're going to go fight Midian and I'm going to destroy them he doesn't need to know God's will he just can't believe that God's word is true you see the more an idol grips your heart the harder it is to believe that the Lord keeps his word friends gathering together on the Lord's day to worship together is a chance for us to say Lord those idols have gotten really powerful in my heart this week and I have a hard time believing you keep your word and it's a time for us to remember the gospel because the Lord has given us something far better than a fleece he's given us Jesus dying on a cross and he's given us the resurrection and it's time for us to come and remind of the gospel we have the Lord's supper what do we remember the new covenant the fact that he died for us and it's time for us to once again come back and reset and say Lord I so need to remember what you did for me on the cross that while I still worship idols and I was not even thinking of you you died for me knowing the depth that idols have on my heart you died for me and you died for me knowing that even today even after I've come to a faith in you how powerful it is for me to return to the idols of money or sex or of race or of ethnicity or of politics or of ideology or myself or my family or my house or my car or my looks or whatever it is that I give my heart to time and time and time again and you knew all of that and still you died for me still you died for me not weighing my my wonders but pardoning my offenses not knowing how religious and spiritual and pure I am but knowing how far I am for that still you died for me and so we are gathered to call out to the Lord to say

Lord take those idols from my heart because those idols get close to my heart your word seems untrue invite you to stand just bow our heads in prayer Father we thank you so much that you call us to gather once a week on the Lord's day to celebrate the Lord's supper to remember Jesus and what he did for us on the cross until he returns that we get to read your word and be reminded of the gospel that you are the God Father who delivered your people who's delivered us who are your people who reveals yourself to us idol worshipers like ourselves and we ask Father that the Holy Spirit would both grip us with the gospel if there are any here Father who have not yet come to know Jesus as Savior and Lord may the Holy Spirit Father move in their lives that they might call out to you and say Jesus be my Savior deliver me from my idols be my

[43 : 24] Savior and Lord forever thank you Lord that you keep your word and you will come and take that man or woman to yourself and Father for us you know the idols that are so close to our heart that make you seem distant and your word seem not powerful and true and we ask once

again Father that your Holy Spirit would both grip us with who Jesus is and what he did for us on the cross but that you would help us Father to turn from idols to turn from idols to you and we thank you Father that where you are there is freedom that where you are there is love where you are there is goodness where you are there is truth Father make us people of truth of justice of lovers of the good and of beauty lovers of you and all God's people said Amen