

The Tragedy of a Self-Made King

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[0:00] Let's turn to the Lord in prayer. Fathers, we come to this moment, especially in light of the songs that we just sang this morning.

! We're mindful of how unworthy we are before a holy God. And what we really deserve in terms of your punishment on us because of sin.

But also reminded of the fact that where sin abounds, their grace abounds all the more. Thank you for grace, Lord. Thank you for the gift of your Son, Jesus Christ.

For the offer of salvation that is given to us through His death, through His resurrection, through Him paying the price of our sin, rising again, offering us life through His name, through faith in Christ.

And Lord, we praise you for forgiveness that's possible. Not because we have earned it, but because of grace. And Lord, even now, as we look into your Word, we're reminded of the fact that even in looking at your Word, we need grace.

[1:24] Your grace to help us to understand what your Word says. Your grace to bring conviction to our hearts and to help us, by your power, to walk in obedience, to walk in your steps, and to please you.

Lord, this passage this morning reminds us of the incredible power of families and the incredible opportunity that we have as parents, moms and dads, to build into our families not only an affection for the Word of God, but helping them see the pattern of how that life is meant to be lived.

Lord, I pray that you would help us in that process, not only to understand what your Word says, but to live it out. And that we can trust and rest in your grace to do the work that we cannot do in the hearts of our children, in the hearts of our loved ones, in the hearts of our friends.

And so we pray that you would do that work even now. Prepare our hearts and go before us and do the work of leading us into truth and helping us to walk in it.

We pray in Jesus' name. Amen. It's good to see each of you this morning. Thanks for letting our family be away for the last couple of weeks. We had a great time together.

[2:51] Just kind of kicking back and relaxing a little bit, but also in being able to go to a few places, both in Pennsylvania and New York.

And so thanks for the opportunity to do that. It's great to be a part of a church where you have gifted men who can kind of bring the Word for you and kind of carry that load.

So I'm grateful for our men at Maranatha who can do that and for the faithfulness to the Scripture and for the way that they help lead our hearts in that way.

One of the things that's been maybe a bit surprising to me as we have worked through this series and have been introduced to the book of Judges is this theme that keeps coming up over and over again that I probably knew something about, but it's really come out in force and it's really been surprising and that is the importance of families.

The importance of leadership in our homes, moms and dads who love the Bible, who are teaching the Scriptures to their children and are helping to model that for their families and the beauty of that and the promise of that and the blessing of that that God uses His Word instrumentally to accomplish His purposes.

[4:15] We've seen that. And I know it's not maybe as clear as it could be or should be, but the pattern of the judges is the same way. When we think about judges, we think of courtroom officials.

We think of those who are kind of legislating the law, helping to bring a verdict and helping to stand as a champion of the law for the people that are there, representing the law to the people.

And in a similar way, the pattern has been set for us also in the book of Deuteronomy for judges as well. And instead of courtroom officials, judges in the Old Testament, by design, were meant to be

local leaders.

Really, they were to be family heads, heads of households, fathers, who were helping to provide that leadership, that proximate, immediate, present leadership for their families.

And what law did they have to work from? Well, they had the law of God, the law of Moses, the Pentateuch, the first five books of the Bible. And in presenting that word, that law, to their children, they would be able to enjoy the benefits of that relationship that they have with God.

[5:30] That covenant promised relationship with God was strengthened and perpetuated and blessed by God as they followed his instructions.

And of course, Joshua becomes the first test case. He becomes kind of that first example as the people are moving into the promised land of one who's committed to the law of God and modeling for the people what that kind of life looks like.

We saw that in Joshua 1.8 where it says this, this book of the law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate on it day and night so that you may be careful to do according to all that is written in it for then you will make your way prosperous and then you will have good success.

And God was faithful to allow Joshua and those who followed his leadership to enjoy the benefits of that conquest moving into the promised land and saying God is faithful.

He's faithful to his word and when faithful men follow God's word faithfully then there's the blessing, the fruit of that that bears in the lives of the nation and the blessing that God gives to a people.

[6:43] And that's why at the close of Joshua's life we find this statement from him choose you this day whom you will serve but as for me and my household will serve the Lord. That's the model, that's the pattern that has been set for us.

And so our family over the last couple of weeks got a chance to kind of see a taste of that as I went back to Pittsburgh it was the first time in a very long time I've been back to Pittsburgh and my grandpa and grandma were instrumental in planting a church there in Pittsburgh.

We got to go back and see that church. We got to go back and reminisce a little bit about the faithful ministry of that pastor who came to that church the word of God that raised up people and the health of that congregation that produced itself and the effects of it were still visible in the building and the property that was there.

But then the pastor that came after him did not prioritize the scripture and so now it's a shell of what it was when my grandparents were first there. It's a reminder again of this principle the word of God embracing the word presenting the word teaching the word patterning the word and the benefits of that is what we see in Joshua's life.

Our next stop was in Lock Haven in Pennsylvania and I was my dad was an assistant pastor in Lock Haven 50 years ago and this was the first time in 50 years I was able to go back to that church and it was amazing that some of those people that were there during my dad's ministry they're still there and I recognized them it was amazing to be able to go to certain classrooms and remember specific things that were taught to me from specific teachers and I try not to prolong this too much but one experience I was probably about three years old when this happened and one of my teachers said I told one of my teachers I know Jesus sinned and she's like uh uh Jesus did not not sin but I was sure he sinned because I remembered the story about Jesus staying in Jerusalem when his parents went back to Nazareth and I was sure that was the example and you know

[9:14] I isn't it neat how God uses teachers to help help correct us and uh and sometimes sometimes we we err and uh we have we have teachers that still love us through that process but but faithful people faithful servants of the Lord still at that church and uh and seeing that the benefits of of ministry faithful ministry from the word of God that's still happening there their third stop was in New York and we were in Allegheny, New York that was where my my grandpa Ross was a pastor for many many years and again uh the people that are still there many of them were people that I went to their pool and I I swam with their kids and and there they are still still there faithful faithful servants of the Lord and the the pattern of faithful ministry from faithful people and the results of that the benefits the blessings of that that are bearing out in in that place it was a it was an important reminder to me it's also a reminder as we step into into uh

Judges chapter 9 I would encourage you to open with me if you would to Judges chapter 9 if you're using the Pew Bible it's on page 208 208 in the Pew Bible it was a reminder to me that that God himself is our father and we find that all the way kind of embedded in the law Exodus chapter 4 verse 22 says thus says the Lord Israel is my firstborn son Deuteronomy chapter 14 1 you are sons of the Lord your God Deuteronomy 32 6 is he not your father who created you who made you and

established you we see the this this this this relationship that God has with his people God is father the heavenly father and we recognize his leadership over us in that way and this morning we're gonna see we're gonna see again not the the good leadership of our heavenly father but we're gonna see

I believe this this pattern of failed leadership that begins to work its way out in Abimelech this this character that we'll look at in in Judges chapter 9 and and we see in Abimelech the tragedy of self-made rule the tragedy of self-made rule Abimelech propped himself up his ambition his desire his empire building his spirit is gonna come front and center to us we're gonna see that he will demand to be to be to be made king and his the tragedy written over his life is a tragedy of this self-made rule grasping for power rather than submitting to God rather than following his directions and it came as we're gonna see as a product of compromise and I'm gonna try to focus on this briefly so we can so we can really get through this material in a way that's beneficial but if you're there with me in Judges chapter 9

I'm gonna read the first five verses we're gonna concentrate about 90% of our time on these five verses so when it gets to the end you're like ah we only have 10 minutes to go and he still has 50 verses left well that's okay we're gonna we'll get we'll get through okay we'll get through I just wanna to prepare you for this here we go verse 1 now Abimelech the son of Jerubal went to Shechem to his mother's relatives and said to them and to the whole clan of his mother's family say in the ears of all the leaders of Shechem which is better for you that all 70 sons of Jerubal rule over you or that I that one rule over you remember also that I am your bone and your flesh and his mother's relatives spoke all these words on his behalf in the ears of all the leaders of Shechem and their hearts inclined to follow Abimelech for they said he is our brother and they gave him 70 pieces of silver out of the house of Baal-berit which with which

Abimelech hired worthless and reckless fellows who followed after him and he went to his father's house at Ophrah and killed his brothers the sons of Jerubal 70 men on one stone but Jotham the youngest son of Jerubal was left for he hid himself as we enter this scene I wonder what questions might be running through your mind and the same kinds of questions that were running through my mind after reading this amazing story of Gideon and this example of faith and how God raised him up and the spirit of the Lord was upon him and great victory was wrought and then we get to Abimelech and we're like what in the world just happened where did this come from who is this guy what is going on how did a man who is used of God Gideon how did he leave a family in such a mess how is that even possible and I think the answer that we're going to find is sobering one it's a sobering answer that we find it's embedded in our text it's obvious for us it's here it's accessible we don't have to make stories we don't have to draw out things that aren't available to us we just look in the word of God and the clues are embedded here for us and Pastor David so faithfully last week looked at the life of Gideon and I don't want to hijack all the things that he said but in order for us to really appreciate what's going on here we look at this life of Abimelech and by the way he's the only example in the book of Judges where there is a father son who are kind of leading one right after the other so it provides this perfect test case for us to see this example

[15 : 24] I believe of failed leadership failed training he is a product Abimelech is a product of his training he is the outworking of his conditioning and he just carries things to maturity we see here in the first several verses he's the product of a compromised legacy that's point number one Abimelech is the product of a compromised legacy his father Gideon in the compromised legacy that then leads to Abimelech remember that the book of Judges is this historical record for us it's a way for us to see what the family pattern looks like right up close and here it is it's laid out for us in this book to see not only the power of a family that's walking after the Lord but also the danger the path that Gideon sets is just a road that Abimelech takes to its ultimate culmination it's the only time like I said in the book of

Judges where we find this father son leadership duo and it's here for a reason for us to understand the warnings to fathers the warnings to parents to follow after to submit to the word of God Gideon's story and Abimelech's story are interwoven it becomes this unmistakable conclusion of what we find when God's word is not the voice of authority in our life and I want to just draw your attention to the first few verses of chapter 9 here we're going to see this name that's used for Gideon and what is that name Jerubal the name Jerubal shows up four times in the first five verses twice in verses one and two and twice in verse five verse one now Abimelech the son of Jerubal went to Shechem verse two which is better for you that all seventy sons of Jerubal rule over you or that one rule over

you then verse five he went to his father's house at

Ophrah he killed his brothers the sons of Jerubal seventy men on one stone but Jotham the youngest son of Jerubal was left remember Jerubal means let Baal contend or let Baal plead his own case or let Baal defend himself and remember how Gideon gets that name well he gets that name because he goes into his father's house and he removes the Baals and the Ashteras he cuts them down interestingly Gideon's name means hewer it means one who cuts down and what does he do his first act of Gideon is to cut down the Baals and to cut down the pole the Ashtera he's a hewer but after his victory we find this very noticeable this very noticeable transaction that happens all the way up through this story he's been known as

Gideon but then after his victory we find something astonishing that takes place in verse 27 of chapter 8 Gideon makes an ephod of it and he puts it in the city in Afra and all Israel hoored after it there so it became a snare to Gideon and to his family Gideon hacked down cut down the Baal and the Ashtera and now Gideon is raising up this ephod whatever this ephod is we'll get to that in just a moment and right out of the gate the next time we're introduced to Gideon in verse 29 he's now Jerubal not Gideon verse 29 Jerubal the son of Joash went and lived in his own house and now in chapter 9 we will not find him referred to Gideon again he will only be referred to by this new name by this name Jerubal the one who contends with Baal four times in the first five verses once in verse 16 once in verse 19 once in verse 24 once in verse 28 and once in verse 57 we find in Gideon confused and compromised legacy a man who got to enjoy and experience the benefits of God's power through his life and because of this compromise that's taking place in his heart the legacy of pointing to God and referring to his wonder and calling attention to his glory and saying God has accomplished great things instead of that now he's raised up this ephod and the rest is history his legacy is no longer about showcasing the wonder of God but drawing attention to himself and so it shouldn't be any surprise that Abimelech picks up from the pattern of his father and carries it through to the next stage we find also he was not just a product of his compromised legacy but a product of his compromised worship and the two are really intertwined here verses 3 and 4 chapter 9 says and his mother's relatives spoke all these words on his behalf in the ears of all the leaders of Shechem and their hearts inclined to follow Abimelech for they said he is our brother and they gave him 70 pieces of silver out of the house of Baalberit with which Abimelech hired worthless and reckless fellows who followed after him there's several observations

[21:15] I want to just draw briefly from these couple of verses and we might ask ourselves this question again why does Abimelech find himself to be so friendly now with this pagan world how is he able to be chum buddies with the pagan men the leaders of this city of Shechem how has he departed so far from his family legacy again the answer is sobering the clues are given in our text the money that Abimelech receives for his campaign that we will look at in a little bit more as we go this campaign comes from this treasury of Baalberit it should sound strangely familiar Baalberit we see that in chapter 8 verse 33 as soon as Gideon died the people of Israel turned again and whored after the

Baals and made Baalberit their god did you notice that how long did it take for the nation to abandon God and to follow after Baal and Baalberit how long immediately as soon as Gideon is dead this new allegiance they've abandoned God they've turned to Baalberit Baalberit means the god of the covenant the lord of the covenant now you should understand the significance of that because Yahweh is the covenant lord and they have abandoned the covenant lord for the lord of the covenant the Baal Berit in this house of this Baal covenant they have displaced Yahweh their own covenant god for the god of the covenant how did this happen how did pagan worship arrive how is it such a natural tendency it was because the pattern was set long before

Abimelech ever came on the scene and we I think we probably say it happened probably as early as what we find in chapter 8 verse 22 it happened as soon as this victory that God had given to Gideon as soon as that victory takes place and ephod goes up we find from chapter 8 verse 28 Midian was subdued before the people of Israel they raised their heads no more and the land had rest for 40 years in the days of Gideon I would submit to you that probably for about 40 years Gideon is leading them with this ephod along this path and whatever this ephod was whatever Gideon's motivation would have been it was not after God's pattern it was not according to God's instructions they were not following the law you see Shiloh was where this tabernacle was supposed to be set it was supposed to be the capital city as it were of worship

Gideon thinks I've got a better plan I'm going to set up this place of worship in my hometown it's more convenient it's easier for me we're going to do it there and whatever the ephod was that he designed was not the ephod that was designated the ephod that was designated was something that the priests were to wear they were supposed to go about their priestly duties in the tabernacle before the altar Gideon thought he had a better way he thought he had a better design so Gideon re-centers this worship in his hometown and he sets up his own means of interfacing with God whatever that meant and in that way he replaced this token of worship he replaced it with this token of worship this degraded worship which of course is idolatry any worship that's not according to God's pattern any worship that's outside of

God's design is not true worship it's polluted worship it's corrupt worship and so in that way Gideon becomes as it were the first designated leader in Israel to promote idolatry from the front now this is interesting look with me in chapter 8 verse 24 I'll try to make this quick it says this and Gideon said to them let me let me make a request of you every one of you give me the earrings from your spoil for they had golden earrings because they were Ishmaelites and they answered we will willingly give them and they spread out a cloak and every man threw in the earrings of the spoil and the weight of the golden earrings that he requested was 1700 shekels of gold besides the crescent ornaments the pendants the purple garments worn by the kings of Midian and besides the collars that were around the necks of the camels this was a treasure for kings and just for comparison 1700 shekels is 43 pounds of gold equivalent to about two and a half million dollars today it should sound strangely familiar

[26:58] Gideon says hey give me your earrings and the people say oh fine they give him his earrings and out pops an ephod well that's what happens in Exodus 32 right Exodus 32 1-4 says the people gathered themselves to Aaron and said to him make gods for us who shall go before us so Aaron said to them take off the rings of gold that are on your ears of your wives your sons and your daughters and bring them to me so all the people took off the rings of gold that were in their ears and brought them to Aaron he received the gold from their hand and fashioned it with a graving tool made and made a golden calf and they said these are your gods oh Israel who brought you up out of the land of Egypt the similarities are unmistakable give me your gold earrings so they do and out pops a golden calf well Gideon does the same thing give me your earrings 1700 shekels of gold 34 pounds of gold and out pops an ephod for the first time idolatry is the officially sponsored by a leader of Israel compromised worship we could talk about so many other things but but the compromise is embedded in his heart in Gideon's heart and so it should be no surprise that Abimelech then takes it to its fulfillment he's also a product of compromised rule a product of compromised rule going back to chapter 9

Judges chapter 9 we see this and now Abimelech the son of Jerubal went to Shechem to his mother's relatives and said to them and to the whole clan of his mother's family say in the ears of all the leaders of Shechem which is better for you that all 70 of the sons of Jerubal rule over you or that one rule over you remember also that I am bone your bone and of your flesh so he makes his way to Shechem Afa was about 30 miles away he makes his way kind of to the trade center of Israel the nation of Israel had Shechem as kind of the crossroads it was the center of transaction Gideon is from the tribe of Manasseh and if you have your study guides for this morning you can kind of see on the back kind of where in the world is Ephraim and Manasseh located and you can kind of see it's right there in the center you can see that

Ephraim and Manasseh are very close together well Shechem happened to be on the edge not only of Manasseh but bordering Ephraim and so it was really easy for these leaders to give allegiance to Abimelech Shechem was one of the most important crossroads in Israel's central country it sat in this narrow pass between Mount Gerizim and Mount Ebal which we'll talk about in just a moment and all of the major crossroads converged there if you controlled Shechem you controlled Israel Abimelech knew that he knew this was the power center and he goes to a group of leaders who we find out actually have the ability the authority to make him king as we'll see in verse 6 he's going to the power center he's demanding he's demanding to be king from them but the rule that was offered to his father and at least kind of declined in terms of lip service is going to be an offer or even a proposal for that matter that Abimelech will make me king he's ambitious he's assertive he's vicious where did this seeming heart change happen how did this begin to cultivate in Abimelech's heart well I think the answer is laid out for us in the passage verse 2 which is better for you that all 70 of the sons of Jerubal rule over you or that one rule over you

Abimelech's not talking about possibilities he's talking about reality the 70 of his sons in some way were exercising some measure of authority already in that region that's what puts teeth in Abimelech's proposal if it was not reality then he has no ground to stand on Abimelech is saying well here is the reality you want 70 sons to rule over you or just me make your choice and of course the choice was easy because Abimelech is from the town he's part of them and we see all of this taking place we recognize that Gideon may not have accepted the formal position of being king over Israel but what seems clear from the text is that he acted as the de facto king one commentator says this whether or not Gideon exercised kingship his sons exercised de facto power in a subject city state and by their rule provoked the unrest of the citizens indicates that some measure of rule was already happening and so

Gideon had set the course it was rule that was happening there already and we see clues of this in our text we don't have time to really go in detail about them but you remember the accusation of the two Midianite kings Ziba and Zalmunna in chapter 8 verse 18 they say as you were Gideon so were they speaking of Gideon's brothers every one of them resembled the sons of a king there's some resemblance and that resemblance is not just appearance that resemblance is posture that resemblance is performance that resemblance is authority it's the domination that they pressed on the people and it was noticeable it was noticeable to these Midianite kings and it's picked up and carried through by Abimelech and then we find this in Judges 8 21 then Ziba and Zalmunna said rise up yourself

[33 : 36] Gideon and fall upon us for as the man is so is his strength and Gideon arose and he killed Ziba and Zalmunna he took the crescent ornaments that were on the necks of the other camels it's a bold taunt it's met by a very bold response their statement connects manhood and strength to the ability to kill and earlier Gideon his weakness was displayed his strength but now he exerts himself he carries out a personal vendetta and he exercises and wants to demonstrate yeah I have strength I'm going to push through and I'm going to show you who's really in charge here in Israel there's much more to say but the evidence that we find throughout the rest of chapter 8 also demonstrates this empire building posture of Gideon remember his concern in chapter 6 when the

Lord speaks to him Lord how can I save Israel behold my clan is the weakest in Manasseh and I am the least in my father's house well the rest of his life serves the purpose of changing and reversing that problem many wives many sons 70 sons to be specific and Gideon is empire building he is doing what it takes to posture himself and his legacy to be in charge to be in control he gives lip service to I'm not going to rule over you God's going to rule over you but the reality of it was he was exercising very strong dominant authoritative leadership he was in charge he was the answer man compromised leadership he's also the product of Bimelech is the product of compromised violence aggression notice verse five it says and he went to his father's house at

Aphra and he killed his brothers the sons of Jerubal 70 men on one stone and one thing we can say about Bimelech is he was he had a plan and he knew how to follow it through he's driven by ambition and he goes to these leaders and interestingly the leaders and the way that they're described here in the Hebrew text it used the word we have the translation lords of Shechem the actual Hebrew word is Baal it's the it's the same name that's used throughout the book of Judges described this pagan god Baal and these lords are exercising that kind of leadership in Shechem there's no wonder why they're so corrupt prior to Abimelech's rise Shechem appears to have been governed by this assembly of notable leaders who apparently have the authority to name a king that's where he goes and he encourages them proposes to them hey give me the money that I need to fund this campaign which they do and all this financing comes from the coffers of Baal

Berit this temple there in Shechem interestingly he gets 70 shekels one shekel for each of his brothers in Leviticus 27 verses 3 to 7 we find that an adult male slave is worth 50 shekels so the price of his brothers is pretty cheap instead of 50 for one it's one for one and with his money Abimelech hires worthless and reckless men and he comes and kills his brothers on one stone what's that all about well he kills them execution style they're not scattered because they're running away he has gathered them together he's probably come by surprise they're totally unexpected he gathers them up and he executes them one after the other on one stone merciless but what we see in the son was also true of the father Gideon's pattern was also one of violence we see his violence that is extended towards the men of succoth and the men of penuel vicious nature men who were afraid well

Gideon had been afraid too and God's mercy had been on Gideon but Gideon's not willing to extend any mercy to these two towns in their fear but then it's telling we get towards the middle portion of chapter 8 and we find the use of this word kill it's used four times to describe the events in the first six chapters of Judges but it's going to be used eight times to describe Gideon eight times to describe the actions of Gideon six of them are in these final verses in chapter eight the violent aggressive hostile self-serving nature of Gideon is reflected in his son no wonder why Abimelech is going to kill his brothers no wonder why he's after them there are no bounds there are no moral boundaries and that pattern has been set by his father but let me turn in the next couple of minutes here there is hope okay it's not just bad news and I think we see some shining hope that comes throughout the rest of this chapter and we find here in verses 7 to 21 and I want to just [39:27] I'm just going to summarize these last 50 verses okay so just bear with me here we see in verses 7 to 21 this promise of a better way there is a promise of a better way remember that Jotham was saved alone because he hid from his brother Abimelech and God is going to use Jotham instrumentally to prove a case we find in verse 7 it says this when it was told to Jotham he went and what was told to him was that his brothers were dead he went and stood on the top of Mount Gerizim he cried aloud and he said to them listen to me you leaders of Shechem that God may listen to you there's several things I think we find here in this just this one verse that demonstrates that Jotham is not like his brother Abimelech and I'm not suggesting by the way that Jotham has any really good motives here he may have just been really young he was probably really weak he might have been very timid and very fearful the text does not tell us that but what it sets before us is this pattern of a better way what is this better way well you see it

Jotham does not take matters into his own hands he doesn't act like his brother Abimelech he doesn't act like his father Gideon he doesn't take matters into his own hands he experiences this injustice that has been poured out on his family but he doesn't take matters into his own hands second Jotham is not resorting to violence boy this would have been justified wouldn't it for Jotham even to secretly find a way to get to Abimelech and to have it out and to see it through he doesn't do that third Jotham is operating within the law and I'll just show you that in just a moment here he's operating within the law that God has set he becomes this good pattern for us of God's better way and how things work out for us when we follow God's design his instructions his pattern and fourth this is probably the best of all he appeals to God he appeals to God he entrusts this entire situation into God's hands let God see he says and let

God be the judge vengeance is mine I will repay says the Lord God and Jotham for whatever his motivations were pure or not becomes an example of the better way he stands on top of Mount Gerizim and just briefly to give you some context of why this is significant is because Mount Gerizim was the place where Israel was to go and they were to present the law back and forth to each other it was kind of like this singing and response that's taking place on Mount Gerizim Mount Gerizim was the mount of blessing Mount Ebal was the mount of cursing and so they would work through the law and the six tribes on the Gerizim slopes would speak the blessing parts and the tribes that were on the Mount Ebal part would speak the cursing part and here is Jotham he goes to the Mount Gerizim of all places the mount of blessing why would he go to the mount of blessing well because that was his tribe's designated mountain he's appealing to Yahweh the covenant God to see and to exact punishment and justice on Abimelech and upon the leaders of Shechem for their role in the death of his of his brothers he entrusts it to him and he does it from Mount Gerizim from all places and in this story he describes three different fruit bearing trees an olive tree a fig tree a grapevine we see them in verses 8 through 13 and the olive tree he responds to the call to be king by saying should I stop producing oil that honors God and blesses the people just so I can rule over the other trees the fig tree answers in verse 11 should

I stop producing my sweet and delicious fruit just so I can rule over the other trees in verse 13 but the grapevine replies should I stop producing wine that brings joy to God and people just so I can rule over the other trees and so they resist the call to be king because God has given them another role another role to play it's a role that benefits the people it's not something they can assume it's something they need to be given but then in verse 15 they come to the thorn bush and they ask the thorn bush of all things to be king and this thorn bush of course adds no inherent value but harm and the thorns are a part of this original curse Genesis chapter 3 17 to 18 talks about how God cursed the ground he cursed the ground because of Adam and Eve's sin and because of their sin it's going to produce thorns and this is the very nature of

[44:55] Abimelech he has one inherent quality the quality to destroy and that's what we find that works its way out through the rest of this chapter this quality to destroy but lest you think that Abimelech and the last word we find in verses 22 to 57 the power of a better king Jotham sets the right pattern he appeals to God and he realizes that God is sovereign God is in control and verses 22 to 57 help us know the power of that better king verse 22 says Abimelech ruled over Israel three years and God sent an evil spirit between Abimelech and the leaders of Shechem dwelt treacherously with Abimelech that the violence done to the 70 sons of Jerubal might come and their blood be laid on Abimelech their brother who killed them and on the men of

Shechem who strengthened his hands to kill his brothers and the leaders of Shechem put men in ambush against him on the mountaintops and they robbed all who passed by along the way and it was told to a conflict that by the way is instrumentally under the hand of God God has answered God has seen the covenant God has answered he's the one who sends this troubling spirit this evil spirit and the conflict results in extermination not only extermination of the of the lords of Shechem but also ultimately the extermination of Abimelech himself and we get the final assessment of this story from verses 56 and 57 it says this thus God returned the evil of Abimelech which he committed against his father in killing his 70 brothers and

God also made all the evil of the men of Shechem return on their heads and upon them came the curse of Jotham the son of Jerubal God had the last word God is in control so what do we do with this story what do we learn from Abimelech I think there are two lessons and I'm way over time so please forgive me I'll try to make this quick the two lessons of this story is first understand and recognize the power and maybe even say the joy of family leadership God has entrusted to us moms and dads the joy of leading our families in the way of the Lord the beauty of this by the way is not that we have to have it all always right and not that our kids are always going to make the right decisions and they're always going to follow the

Lord all the time this is not a guarantee of that but it is an invitation for us to trust in God who writes the story and there was a point in this story where everything felt like it was completely out of control where Abimelech had the upper hand against his brothers but God had the last word parents don't be discouraged about your even present or past failures as a parent be encouraged about the power of God's word to do the work in your kids life and continue to pray for them continue to model God's word for them continue to trust the scriptures and to present them to your children and to believe that God will have the last word with your family don't be discouraged don't give up don't throw in the towel second is this that whether or not whether or not we understand or acknowledge or even live as if

God were king he's king he's in control he reigns and isn't it interesting Abimelech which means my father is king was true not because Gideon was king but because Abimelech's heavenly father was king whether Abimelech acknowledged it or not Psalm 2 6 says I have set my king in Zion my holy hill Psalm 93 1 says the Lord reigns he is robed in majesty Psalm 96 10 says say among the nations the Lord reigns Psalm 97 1 the Lord reigns let the earth rejoice Psalm 99 1 the Lord reigns let the peoples tremble Psalm 103 19 the Lord has established his throne in heaven and his kingdom rules over all that's the reality of

[50:28] God's reign and whether we acknowledge it or not whether we bow our knee to King Jesus he's king oh may God help us to understand and to bow the knee to King Jesus Lord thank you even for the hard stories that we read in the book of Judges and thank you that they're here for our benefit they instruct us they encourage us they lead us they help to point us to a better way Lord I pray that we would be encouraged this morning not discouraged as we understand and recognize the wonder of your word and the power of your word for moms and dads and even for those who aren't married the power of the word that is transmitted from your people to those in this world

I pray that you would allow us to enjoy the benefits personally and corporately of that powerful word as we seek to apply it into our own lives and the lives of those we minister to may you may you be honored and magnified in Jesus name amen Thank you.