

A Costly Victory

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Preacher: Pastor Andrew

[0:00] Well, it's good to see all of you this morning. Glad you're here. And of course, it is the Word of God that we bring every morning through the Scriptures.

That's where our hope is. That's where life comes from. That's what nourishes our soul. That's what strengthens us for tomorrow. That's what gives us a sense of direction and purpose in life. And it's the Word of God that we come to again today. The Word of God that's accessible. The Word of God that is life and breath for us. And I trust that you are those who immerse yourself consistently in the faithful Word of God.

I'm reminded of the psalmist who says in Psalm 1 that he meditates day and night on the Word of God. And it's that Word of God that's like a tree that's planted by rivers of water.

It gives his own soul. It gives his own life nourishment and fruitfulness. And so it's the Word of God that we anchor our trust in today. Well, I trust that all of you have been able to look at from the Maranatha Minute kind of the new process for nominating deacons or spiritual leaders that are here at our church at Maranatha.

[1:16] We have sought to kind of blend two principles. One from 1 Timothy chapter 3 that talks about spiritual leaders. And that those who pursue spiritual leaders are those who desire this position.

God has worked in their life. And there's this sense in which that they feel like God is calling them to this. It's something that they desire to do. A leadership position that they want to bless the church with by their service to the Lord.

The second is from Acts chapter 6. Speaking about deacons in particular. And Peter says, Men who have integrity. Men who demonstrate a commitment to loving and serving and trusting the Lord. And so we've thought, how do we bring that process to our church so that we encourage that kind of thing? And so we're asking each of you from the congregation to identify men from within the congregation who have those qualities.

Men of good repute. Men who are serving Jesus. Men who have a reputation of love for families and commitment to the scriptures. And that you will engage the men that God brings to your attention.

[2:35] And that God will stir their hearts to want to actively pursue, desire the pursuit of this kind of leadership. Because as you can imagine, leadership, especially in the context of the church, is becoming increasingly harder.

And the opposition that we face as leaders is challenging. And so we want the men who engage this process to do it willingly. As Peter will say from 1 Peter chapter 5.

Not out of compulsion. Because God wants to draw up men from our congregation to lead in that way. Of course you know this. But I want to draw it out to your attention once more.

That God has graciously given us so many gifted leaders. What a joy. What a blessing it is to serve alongside men who love the Lord.

Men who have devoted their attention, their life. Who have exemplified for the long haul commitment to the Lord Jesus Christ. And we have 12 men who serve as deacons, spiritual leaders in this church.

[3:45] And man, we should celebrate that. Matter of fact, can I just encourage you? Can we just applaud? Just thank you to the men who serve this body.

Just this past week. And of course, we can't touch on all the stories. And so I just, the ones I know. Just this past week, because of some of the rain damage that has happened. There was a lady in our church. Her tree, parts of her tree fell down. And it was three of our deacons that engaged that process.

And spent lots of days this past week trying to help that lady. And trying to address this problem. And that's the kind of, those are the kind of men we have serving in our body. And it's a joy. Another deacon, and I think probably others were also involved in this as well. Well, we have something called the Maranatha Movers. And so several of our people are moving to different places within the city.

[4:46] And another one of our deacons or two helped to kind of coordinate this Maranatha Movers. And that happens consistently throughout the year. And we just praise the Lord again for the faithful leaders that God has put over our church.

That exemplify service to the Lord. Lord Jesus himself in Mark 10, 45, we find he came not to be served. But to serve and to give his life a ransom for many.

And we have deacons who exemplify that kind of spirit. They are a blessing to me. And I trust they're a blessing to you as well. And I hope that you are encouraging them actively.

I hope you're actively praying for them. I hope you're actively supporting them. And God has blessed us with that. We also have a couple of deacons in their families.

Several that are serving in our children's ministry. Both in the nursery but also in children's ministry. And they coordinate this so that our families can enjoy the blessing of faithful individuals.

[5:51] Who are building into your children and my children. And so I'm grateful for them as well. Spiritual leaders, God has placed over this fellowship.

And the chance for us to be part of that process through the nominating. And recognizing faithful men who may or may not currently be serving in that capacity.

And calling them out and encouraging them to step up. We do have at least four younger men. We call them deacon elects. These are men who are qualified as deacons.

But are young enough that we want to help put them alongside other kind of seasoned veterans as it were. And so that we can walk along the process with them.

And we call them deacon elects. And they serve alongside the deacons for a year. And every year they have their session expires. And they do it again.

[6:47] And so you're going to recognize those kinds of men as well. Younger men who are serving. And who have the fitness to serve the Lord in that capacity. Well we are continuing our study in the book of Judges.

I would encourage if you would please to open your Bibles to Judges chapter 10. If you're using the Pew Bibles it's on page 210. Judges chapter 10.

As we get started I want to show this graphic to you. You have it on your outlines. But just to have it in front of us.

So you can kind of see what's going on. This is kind of the book of Judges in summary. Kind of in a snapshot as it were. This is what's happening. And I'm kind of a visual guy.

So being able to see these kinds of things up front. You kind of can experience and get a sense of it. What the words are communicating just by looking at this graphic.

[7:46] And you can see right at the center. We talked about last time in the book of Judges. This leader Gideon and his son Abimelech. It's the only father-son duo in the book of Judges.

That kind of stand as kind of this watershed moment. Of how things begin to really take a turn for the worse. In the lives or in the history of the Judges themselves.

Judges chapter 2 verse 19 becomes the trajectory. It becomes kind of the summary phrase that helps us understand. What's taking place as we follow this timeline through.

Judges chapter 2 verse 19 says. But whenever the judge died. They turned back and were more corrupt than their fathers. Going after other gods.

Serving them and bowing down to them. They did not drop any of their practices or their stubborn ways. That's the summary of what we're reading here in the book of Judges.

[8:50] That's what we have come to expect. That's what we are seeing play out in front of us. That kind of becomes kind of the template by which we are meant to interpret the details that are coming.

That follow in this book. That generation after generation after generation. They continue to turn further and further away from the Lord.

And that's what we're going to see again in Judges chapter 10, 11 and 12. This morning as we come to chapter 10.

The main thing that we need to keep in front of ourselves is that God appointed, initially appointed deliverers. But now they have become self-appointed saviors. God originally appointed deliverers. And now these deliverers have become self-appointed saviors. We see that.

[9:51] And I trust you'll be able to kind of pick this out now from the text as I read it through the first five verses. Here it is. Chapter 10, verse 1.

It says, After Abimelech there arose to save Israel Tola, the son of Pua, son of Dodo, a man of Iskar. And he lived in Shemir in the hill country of Ephraim.

And he judged Israel 23 years. Then he died and was buried at Shemir. After him arose Jer, the Gileadite, who judged Israel 22 years.

He had 30 sons who rode on 30 donkeys. They had 30 cities called Havat Jer to this day, which are in the land of Gilead. And Jer died and was buried in Chemon.

Immediately, you should notice this cycle that's taking place. We'll come back to this slide so you can kind of see this visually as it's working out in front of us.

[10:48] We should see that this progression of the people, this downward progression of the people, is kind of prompted by two other things that are taking place simultaneously.

You see on the top left over there that Othniel, who was the first judge, was the one who was appointed by God. We find that he was a God-appointed judge or God-appointed savior for the people.

Ehud was also appointed by God. Deborah, as a prophetess, speaks on behalf of God, giving the word of God to Barak, who is also appointed by God to save and deliver the people of Israel.

And then you come to Gideon. Another prophet precedes Gideon. An angel of the Lord appears to Gideon. He empowers Gideon. He gives a direct word to Gideon. He provides the instructions on how Gideon is supposed to enjoy the benefits of God's provision for him.

And he goes out and he, on behalf of the Lord, is able to push back and oppose and deliver the people of Israel from the hand of the Midianites. And then you get to Abimelech, this self-selected leader, who then appoints himself through the help of the lords of Shechem to make himself king.

[12:09] And from here on out, what we're going to find in the book of Judges, instead of God-appointing judges, what do you notice there in verse 1 of chapter 10? Go ahead and look at it.

What does it say? What are the words that you find right there on the page? After Abimelech there arose to save Israel, Tola. What is missing here? What do you see that's not present in this verse? Well, what you see that is not present is that Tola has decided that he is going to do what God has not selected him to do.

He is now a self-appointed leader over Israel. He has risen himself to save Israel. Verse 3, same thing happens. After him, Jer the Gileadite.

You move back to, this is kind of the book ends of this section. In chapter 12, we find much of the same thing. Chapter 12, verse 8.

[13:10] This is kind of the end of this section that surrounds the story of Jephthah, who says, It says, You see the same kind of pattern.

These self-styled, self-selected leaders who are deciding to rise up and to exert some measure of authority in the land of Israel to act as deliverers.

And that's the pattern we begin to see in the book of Judges. It moves from God-appointed judges that we find in Othniel and then in Ehud, to now selected judges that happen through the prophetic ministry of the prophets through Deborah and through this prophet we find in Judges chapter 6.

And now it completely turns in the remaining chapters to now these leaders deciding that they're going to be God's gift to the nation.

This is a pattern. A pattern of those who decide that they're going to be the Savior, as it were, independent of God's work in their life to raise them up.

[15:01] We begin to see another pattern begin to emerge. The pattern of conflict that begins very far outside of Israel.

And then as we continue to move along the timeline, the history of Israel, that conflict turns inward. So now there's a conflict that's happening between Israel and themselves till you finally get to the very end in Judges chapter 17 to 21 where there's no more deliverer.

There's no more judge. There's no more outward oppressor. And all the oppression, all the conflict is internal. And Israel is struggling against itself.

That's what we're left with when we come to Judges chapter 17 to 21. And you find the trend that the more and more people decide to become the leader that God hasn't appointed, their hearts begin to turn more and more away from God.

And so their leadership of becoming a rescuer, of becoming a deliverer, what they believe is right for Israel, they're doing what is right in their own eyes, now becomes internal.

[16 : 22] Becomes a struggle against themselves. Because Canaan has got into Israel. Rather than the people of Israel driving the Canaanites out, driving the nations out from the promised land, Canaan has gotten into the hearts of the very nation, of the very people, of the very ones who were set apart as God, from God to be a kingdom, a priest, a holy nation.

The nations have gotten in. And this chart helps us to track this conflict that has moved from the outside, from Mesopotamia that was 700 miles away.

And then Ehud, which was that second deliverer, and he's opposing forces from the Moabites, who were neighbors to Israel. And then you have Barak, who's opposing and delivering Israel, from the Canaanites, who lived within the country.

And then Gideon, who's pushing back against the Midianites. And the Midianites, guess what? They were sons of Abraham. That's where they came from. And you remember that Moses married Jethro.

He was the priest in Midian. There's family relationships. It's moved inward. And now Gideon, instead of only opposing the Midianites from the outside, Gideon will now turn the page, and he will attack his own people, the men of Succoth, the men of Penueel.

[17 : 53] This deliverer has gotten a little cocky. This deliverer has gotten a big head. He's begun to assume a role that he was never entrusted with.

And because he is doing what's right in his own eyes, we find that he turns the fight inward. You see, it's easy for us, though, to look at Israel and to say, what has happened to these people? What is their problem? Why can't they understand the significance of their actions? But then as we hold the mirror up to ourselves, I have found myself saying this, and maybe you have found yourself saying this too, is that we often become the Savior instead of allowing God to be the Savior.

How many times have you confronted a problem in your life, whether it's a problem at work, or a problem in your family, or a crisis that's taking place, something that's out of control, and you have usurped and decided that you're going to step in, that you're going to set your plans, that your agenda is going to now be the prominent thing, and the last thought on your mind is to turn the issue over to the Lord, to entrust the situation to Him.

Instead, and I'll just speak for myself, how easy it is to take the bull by the horns, to pull myself up by my own bootstraps, to understand and decide what the problem is, and to work it through to fix the situation, and to become the Savior that everyone, of course, needs.

[19 : 43] But whenever we do this, whether God gives us success by His grace or not, whatever successes God allows us to enjoy, the credit, the glory goes to us, doesn't it?

Rather than glory going to God. Since we're talking about the book of Judges, and since I've mentioned the significance of Judges helping us recognize the importance of the family, that God had given specific instructions to the family in Deuteronomy, that fathers were to pass on the law to their children and their children's children, we recognize that the Judges were kind of set in place to kind of model what that was supposed to look like.

These family heads, they were providing proximate leadership among the people. But now these proximate leaders, instead of directing attention to the Lord, they're directing attention to themselves.

They've become their own self-prescribed deliverer, their own self-described Savior. And that's so often our problem. Paul Tripp will put it this way.

He says we become glory robbers. Whenever we direct people's attention away from the Lord, and we direct that attention onto ourself, and whether we're doing that intentionally or unintentionally, whenever we take credit for the success that God gives, we're drawing attention to us, not drawing attention to the Lord.

[21 : 15] Whenever we can pat ourselves on the back and say, hey, look at my family. Look how great I did as a dad. Whenever we think we can do that without giving credit to the grace of the Lord Jesus, we become glory robbers.

Whenever we have a ministry, whenever we have an effective evangelistic kind of exchange, where somebody comes to faith in the Lord Jesus, or whenever we have a great opportunity to succeed in the office, but that attention is directed to us, and our skill, and our abilities, and the way we could just pull it off, and we don't allow God to enjoy, and to be described as the one who gives that to us by His grace, we become glory robbers.

1 Peter chapter 4 puts it this way. In verses 10 and 11, he says, As each has received a gift, use it to serve one another, as good stewards of God's varied grace.

Whoever speaks as one who speaks the oracles of God, whoever serves as one who serves by the strength that God supplies, in order that in everything, God may be glorified through Jesus Christ.

To Him be glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen. That's why we exist. We exist to draw attention to the wonder of our God.

[22 : 55] Every service, every way that you serve your family, and the benefits, and the way that God helps you to raise up your children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.

All the successes that you have at work, all the successes that you might have in sharing the gospel, all the successes that you might have in various ministries, whatever that success, praise the Lord, direct attention to Him, and let Him receive the glory.

Don't become a glory robber. That becomes the prevailing problem in Israel. The tipping point has happened. The people have raised themselves up.

They have asserted for themselves, We will be the Savior. When the Savior has always been present, they just needed to trust Him. Next we see in verses 6 to 16, you see the people have confused godly sorrow with worldly sorrow.

They've confused godly sorrow with worldly sorrow. Look at this in verse 16. It says, The people of Israel, this is verse 6, again did what was evil in the sight of the Lord.

[24 : 10] And they served the Baals and the Ashtra, the gods of Syria, the gods of Sidon, the gods of Moab, the gods of the Ammonites, the gods of the Philistines, and they forsook the Lord, and they did not serve Him.

This is now the seventh and final time the apostasy of the nation of Israel will be described. The seventh and final time is meant to demonstrate the fullness of the way in which the people of Israel have rejected God, the totality of their rejection against the Lord.

That's what this is meant to show us. And the totality is final. By this point, this pattern has become tragically familiar. If you have the notes in front of you, you can see kind of there in the, along this point, the six other places in the book of Judges where this is referenced.

Judges chapter 2, 11 to 13. Judges chapter 3. Judges chapter 3, verse 12, and 4, verse 1. Judges chapter 6. Judges chapter 8. And now, Judges chapter 10.

And what you find is this progression that's taking place. It started out with two deities, the Baals and the Astra. This was the distraction. This was the idolatry that was taking place.

[25 : 36] It begins small, if you want to say it that way. It was embedded in culture, okay? But the Baals and the Astra were the things that were tripping them up.

But now, the nations have totally perverted the people. So that, now the writer of the book of Judges wants us to understand how complete and thorough this pollution, corruption had become. Now seven different deities have infiltrated the nation. This is meant to show us, again, the seriousness of their depravity.

But then we come to chapter 10, verse 10. And I think it's really easy for us to think, hey, here's the bright spot. Here's the, here's the, the turn, the confession that's taking place.

Hey, look at this. This is great. And we see this and we think, okay, a revival has happened.

Confession has taken place. Look at, look at verse 10.

[26 : 34] And the people cried, of Israel cried out to the Lord saying, hey, we have sinned against you because we have forsaken our God and have served the Baals. And the Lord said to the people of Israel, did I not save you from the Egyptians, from the Amorites, from the Ammonites, from the Philistines, the Sidonians, the Amalekites, and the Monites oppressed you?

You cried out to me and I saved you out of their hand. Yet, you have forsaken me and served other gods. Therefore, I will save you no more.

Wow. Let that sink in a little bit. I will save you no more? They've confessed their sin.

They've come clean about their idolatry. They've acknowledged the problem. And God says, I will save you no more?

What in the world is going on? It's the same thing that goes on every time. We give lip service to confession, but nothing actually changes in our heart.

[27:45] We acknowledge our sin and a lot of times, and what Paul will draw out in 2 Corinthians 7, is this difference between godly sorrow and worldly sorrow, and the difference is pretty stark.

It has a lot of the same similarities because the individuals, they recognize how difficult their sin is. They come clean about their sin.

They feel very bad about their sin. Sometimes, they're really emotional. They say the right words. But worldly sorrow is to remove consequences.

Worldly sorrow is to move past the pain. Worldly sorrow is just to acknowledge these things to God so we can get on with our life.

Whereas, godly sorrow is the kind of sorrow that says, God, this has affected you. Against you and you only have I sinned and done what is evil in your sight, O Lord.

[28:46] Please forgive me. I acknowledge this and I will do whatever it takes to orient my life in a way that pleases you. There is this true repentance that takes place and not just a confession or acknowledgement of sin but there is a true turning of heart and life.

This consistent trajectory of life that points itself to God. That's what repentance is. It's different. It's willing to accept the consequences.

It's the kind of repentance that's willing to do what's necessary in order to restore what's been lost and to mend and to heal the hurt that's been imposed.

And of course, we can't do all of that personally but we entrust that to the Lord and we allow Him to work in our life and the Lord knows the hearts of these rascals here in the nation of Israel in Judges chapter 10.

He knows the truth behind the story. Behind the words, God knows the heart. It's the same of what we find in John chapter 2.

[30:01] John chapter 2 verses 23 and 24 when Jesus is addressing the people in the first century He says, Now when He was in Jerusalem at the Passover feast many believed in His name when they saw the signs that He was doing.

Hey! Spectacular! They believe in Him! But then it goes on. But Jesus on His part did not entrust Himself to them because He knew all people.

Did you catch that? Jesus knew what was truly going on in their life. He knew that they received the spectacle of His miracles.

They trusted that He was the one who could do this but they did not believe the man. They believed the miracle worker but they would not believe the man that He was the Son of God and that believing that He was the Son of God it required a posture of worship that He is the Lord that He is the one who calls the shots.

It was this superficial kind of faith that had no depth in it to change a life. It's what we find in Matthew chapter 15 verses 8 and 9.

[31:21] This people honors me with their lips but their heart is far from me. In vain do they worship me teaching as doctrines the commandments of men.

that is a horrifying reality and it's the very thing that's happening here in Judges chapter 10. The people that were worshiping Him with their lips but their heart was actually very, very distant and that is probably the most dangerous place to be.

We come to church on a Sunday morning. We sing songs that are saturated in the scriptures. We talk about the Lord Jesus in our conversations before and after the service but nothing has actually changed in our life.

We feel safe because we're actually in a place of worship. We're among God's people but it perhaps is the most dangerous place for superficial people to be.

So what do we do? well, you say, Lord, I've got blind spots. I need you to examine my life. I need you to shine the spotlight on me.

[32:42] I can't see what I can't see. I need you to expose the deep realities of my life. I don't want to just be comfortable where I am. I want to be moving in the direction of Jesus Christ.

I want his life to be the trajectory of my life. I don't want to just come to church to be comfortable. I want to come here to worship, to serve, and to change.

And I want to be part of the change in others. Not just to show up as a consumer but I want to be one of those individuals that is offering and supporting and encouraging and teaching and

admonishing the rest of the congregation to do what Hebrews says to stir one another up to love and good deeds.

Lord, I want my participation when I come to be with your people to be fully in, to be fully engaged. I don't want to just be a pretender.

I want to be somebody who's fully in. We find as we move on to Judges chapter 11. And by the way, we're done.

[33:57] Okay? This is just, I'm going to footnote and we're going to pick this up next week. Okay? Because we have, this is now at the heart of what we need to talk about.

I want to rush through this because this is probably some of the most important material we're going to get to in the book of Judges because this is where everything begins to become very confusing for us because Jephthah, his speech in Judges chapter 11, we're going to encounter the name Yahweh, the Lord.

And every time you're reading through the scriptures and you see capital L, capital O, capital R, capital D, that's the name Yahweh, that's the covenant keeping God.

Every time you see that, you think, God's involved. Jephthah is going to use, he's going to invoke the name of Yahweh, I think some 15 times throughout this chapter, but let me tell you, he is not talking about the Lord in the economy of God himself.

His concept about the Lord, and I'm going to show this to you more next week, is so polluted, it's so immersed in culture, it's been so corrupted that he has no idea what he's talking about.

[35:18] He's talking about the Lord, but it doesn't mean the Lord God himself, the covenant keeping God, and when the Spirit of the Lord comes upon him, we have come to take that to mean that when the Spirit of God is there, then he's validating the ministry or the work of that individual.

Well, that is not the case here in Judges chapter 11 and ongoing. the Spirit of the Lord comes on the man in spite of the man because the Spirit of God is keeping true to his covenant-keeping nature, his covenant to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and the instruments that he's using are just there to show the faithfulness and mercy of our God.

We'll see that more. We have come to know from the New Testament ministry of the Holy Spirit that when the Holy Spirit comes within an individual, he changes them.

He transforms them. We see that in Titus chapter 3 verse 5. It talks about that we were washed, we were regenerated, we're cleansed, not by works of righteousness which you have done, but according to his mercy he saved us by the washing of regeneration, by the renewing of the Holy Spirit.

That's the work in the New Testament that we often carry over into the Old Testament and assume that when the Spirit of God is present, then the man who is being used by the Spirit is also validated, his ministry is confirmed, and that is not what's happening.

[37:00] And that perhaps is also very scary. There's a lot of things that God graciously allows us to do that really have nothing to do with God's work in our life.

And we're going to see, we're going to see from the life of Jephthah how he barter with God, how he negotiates with God. And it's the same kind of thing we find ourselves doing periodically when we say, God if you just fix this crisis, you fix this problem, then I'm going to give my whole life to you.

I'm going to go back to church, I'm going to send this money, whatever it is, and it's the same kind of thing that happens in Jephthah's heart and life. It's this negotiation that takes place where God is a part of the equation, but I'm at the center rather than God being at the center.

We're going to talk about that more next week. But the beauty, the beauty of what we're about to celebrate here, the beauty of what we're going to remember is communion, the work of the Lord Jesus Christ to change all of that for us.

All of that polluted motives, all of those obscured desires, all of those things that flood in and want to turn us upside down can be corrected and changed and cleansed by the Lord himself.

[38:39] We find in 1 John 1.9, if we confess our sin, he is faithful and just to forgive our sin and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

There is a reset that's available. It's available through Christ. So, if you feel like a failure, like I often do, you feel like I wish you could go back and fix all the brokenness that I've created, you say, if I just made better decisions in my life, things would be better now.

The Lord Jesus, by his grace, can change that. He won't necessarily change the past, but he's going to change the person.

He's going to change you. He's going to help you be changed from the inside out. There's this transformation that those who place their faith in the Lord Jesus get to anticipate.

Transformation, being changed from one degree of glory to the other. That's what 2 Corinthians 4 talks about. And that's what's offered to us through the death and resurrection of our Lord Jesus.

[39:54] That's what we celebrate this morning. Let me pray. I'll ask the deacons to come forward. And we'll remember the Lord Jesus in our time of communion. Lord, thank you for sending your son, Jesus.

Thank you that he lived the perfect life that we could never live. Lord, as we take this honest look at ourselves, we recognize that there are areas that are out of step.

And so, we pray that by your grace, you would expose us, that you would draw attention to those things that are not godly, and that by your spirit and by your power, you would help us to walk like Christ, to walk worthy of the gospel.

Thank you for sending your son so that we could anticipate a life with God that begins the moment of faith. as we remember this this morning, this do in remembrance of me, as we remember your work this morning, I pray, that it would move us along this path of repentance, of real change, heart change, life change, that those who look at us will see not us, but they'll see our Lord Jesus, and they'll give glory to him.

We pray in your name. Amen. Amen. Amen.