

# Called to Serve

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Preacher: Rev Donald M Macleod

[ 0 : 00 ] Let's join together in a word of prayer, let's pray. Lord, as we come again before you this evening, we thank you once more for the privilege we have of worshipping you, the privilege we have of joining together, even just now, and joining together and raising up our voices to praise you.

As we even sung from your word that it is better, Lord, that your love and you and all that you are is better to love you, Lord. It is better to know you than anything else we have in this world.

But you are the source of all through joy. You are the source of all through happiness. And we know that you give us many good gifts. The gift of family and friendship.

The gifts of fellowship in this world. The gifts of careers and the gifts of even the community we live in. The gifts of creation. But we enjoy so many very good gifts from you.

But all the good things that you give us, Lord, they all are so small. So insignificant when it comes to comparing them to who you are and your love towards us.

[ 1 : 13 ] And what it is to know you, to love you, to worship you. As the apostle was able to say, as Paul was able to write, that he counted all things rubbish compared to the service and the knowledge and the love of Jesus.

We ask that it would be our same attitude this evening as we come together to worship you once more. That whatever is laying heavy in our minds just now, whatever this evening is set to disrupt us and distract us away from worshipping you fully and totally, Lord.

We ask you would remove that from us even this evening. Remove that burden away from us, we ask. We confess that we often come to this place. Even just now we have to come this evening.

And we have come with so many things in our minds. We have come this evening not ready to worship a living God. Not ready to be in the presence of you this moment.

Knowing that as we come to this place, we are in your presence. Not because of the bricks and mortar of this building. This building will pass away one day. We will be turned back to the dust.

[ 2 : 18 ] But we come just now and we're in your presence because we know that we are people gathered together. Because you have made your home in us. Because your word tells us that you tabernacle in us.

That you are here present in and with your people. And because that is true, we are here as a gathering of your people this evening. Which means also you are present with us this evening.

We know there is not one part of your creation that is beyond your understanding. That is beyond your full control. That you see all things. That you know all things.

Lord, we know that is a terror and a fear to those who as of yet don't know you. That every aspect and every moment of their lives is seen and known by you.

But for those who know Jesus and who can call him our Lord and our Saviour. The idea that you see all and that you know all. It's a great comfort to us. It reminds us there's not one place we can go in this world.

[ 3 : 16 ] Whether physically or spiritually or mentally. There's not one distance we can go to. Not one depth that we can sink to. Where you are not with us.

Your everlasting hands are below us and around us. And above us. Keeping us safe and secure. For the sake of your love towards us. Help us understand that this evening.

Help us not to come here week by week just to grow in our heads knowledge. Help us not to come here just to grow in understanding. Help us to come here whilst growing in our understanding and our knowledge.

But to leave this place having grown in our love. Our love for who you are. As we often hear Lord. We ask you to turn our theology to doxology.

That our knowledge of you would turn into a praising of you. Help us to apply our head knowledge to real action. To real living.

[ 4 : 15 ] Help us not just to be hearers but to be doers of the word. We ask that just now as we come around your word. As we read a portion from it. Lord help us as we come around seeking to understand what it is you are saying to us.

We give you praise Lord for the Holy Spirit. That he opens up your word to your people. As we seek and spend time reading it over weeks and over years and over many years.

That we slowly begin to see more and more of who you are. And we confess there are so many parts of your word which seems so beyond us and so closed to us. We give you praise that these parts which seem so complicated to us.

They are there if nothing else to show us and remind us. That we worship an eternal and infinite God. That there is no way we can begin to understand the fullness of who you are.

And of what you have done and what you do and what you will do. We give you praise that in your love for us. Even in your true majesty and true glory.

[ 5 : 18 ] Indescribable, infinite, beyond our understanding, beyond words. That you and your love towards your people. You have chosen to make yourself known. And in times of old you gave your name to your people.

You gave a name for them to call to you. A name for which they could cry out and know that you would listen to them. You gave them prophets. You gave them judges. You gave them kings.

You gave them leaders. You gave them those who would lead and serve and teach. We give you praise that in the fullness of time. As you told and prophesied from the beginning.

That your fullness, as we read this morning. Your fullness was known and seen. In the person of the Lord Jesus Christ. The second person of the Trinity. He who took on human flesh.

Who became like us in all ways apart from sin. Who lived a very real life. Who suffered all that it was to be human. Who endured those many years of humiliation.

[ 6 : 23 ] Who became like us. Who hungered. Who faced thirst. Who faced humiliation. Who faced abandonment. Who faced pain. Physical and mental.

Who faced the humiliation and the agony of the cross. The Lord Jesus Christ. Who on those shoulders of his.

Both very human and very God. Both fully human and fully God. Our great and glorious Savior. And he endured the full wrath of all the sin.

That was due for all his people. So that we this very evening. A few thousand years later. And many, many miles away. We here this evening can know for certain. That if he is ours and we are his.

That we can know that we are free in him. That we can call ourselves brothers and sisters. But more than that. Sons and daughters of the most high. Who calls us his own precious people.

[ 7 : 24 ] Who tells us that through the finished work of his son. We have the confidence to draw near the throne of grace. And it's to that throne we come once more this evening. We bring just now those who are suffering.

Physically and mentally and spiritually. Those who know you. Who are yours. But who are far away from you spiritually. Who feel as if perhaps. They have gone too far away from you this time.

We ask you would bring them back to yourself. We pray Lord for those who are not here. But who do love you. Lord perhaps those who have fallen away. Over many months if not many years.

Or we ask you bring them back to yourself. They would not only know that we welcome them back as your people. But more importantly that you welcome them back. As the God who knows them.

Who saved them. Who loves them. Who continues with them. We pray just now again this evening for our friends here. Who have come here for many years perhaps. Come here for a good time.

[ 8 : 23 ] But who as of yet don't know Jesus. Who are perhaps searching after him. We ask that even this evening your word would speak to them. We ask for those once more outside these walls as it were.

Who have no interest in hearing the gospel. No interest and no understanding as to who you are. No understanding as to who they are. That they were created of a purpose.

They were created to worship. Until they do so nothing in their lives will make sense. Not truly and not fully. We thank you Lord for placing us in this community. Help us to be salt and light day by day.

As we heard from your word this morning. As we seek to go out sowing that glorious gospel seed. We ask we would see increase. But not for our glory but for your glory. Not for our benefit Lord.

But for the benefit of their souls. And of the gospel glory. Who would see and hear soon of days of refreshing and revival. We pray for this. We also pray for our brothers and sisters.

[ 9 : 24 ] And indeed our friends next door. We pray for them once more in their time of vacancy. We pray for the one who leads their service this evening. We be with him and give him the words to say.

As he undertakes what it is. A burdensome but glorious but solemn task of sharing the word. Lord we pray for them as they await news of one who lead and guide them.

As they patiently wait month by month and year by year. We ask you to uphold them and uplift them. Let the dual will that in good time you would send them one. So we'd see your people better serving you Lord in this place.

Lord we do ask once more for this congregation. For this community. For this place you have placed us. Help us to be faithful witnesses. Help us to be useful witnesses. Help us to be ambassadors.

To be salt and light. Help us not to shy away from the duty that as Christians every one of us has. To be your ambassadors in this place. We confess Lord often through lack of words.

[ 10 : 30 ] Through embarrassment. Through shame. Through other various reasons. We are not good witnesses. Lord forgive us for these times. We ask you bring us. Teach us. Help us to grow in what we say and what we do.

To proclaim the never ending glory. Of our wonderful Saviour. It's in his name we come this evening. It's in his finished work we trust. As we ask for the forgiveness of sin.

Knowing that our sins are many unvaried. Knowing that our sins often are so horrifying. But that our ability to sin does not outweigh or outstretch his eternal ability to forgive.

To make clean. To call holy and to make holy. I ask all these things in and through and for his precious name's sake. Amen.

Let's turn to God's word. We're carrying on our series in the book of Judges. And we can turn to chapter 6. So we're just taking a look at some of the scenes and situations.

[ 11 : 32 ] Some of the judges and some of the scenarios in this book. Judges chapter 6. We of course meet Gideon. That is our goal this evening.

To meet Gideon and to begin with him and his journey. Within a few weeks looking at Gideon. Judges chapter 6.

Let's again hear the gospel. Judges chapter 6. Again hear the word of God. Judges 6. 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. And the hand of Midian overpowered Israel. And because of Midian the people of Israel made for themselves the dens.

For it in the mountains. And the caves and the strongholds. For whenever the Israelites planted the crops. The Midianites and Malachites. And the people of the east would come up against them.

[ 12 : 32 ] Who 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.

For they would come up with their livestock and their tents. They would come like locusts in number. But they and their camels could not be counted. So 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. 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. 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.

[ 13 : 33 ] You shall not fear the gods of the Amorites. In whose land you dwell. But you have not obeyed my voice. Now the angel of the Lord came. And sat under the terebinth at Ophrah.

Which belonged to Joash the Abazite. While his son Gideon was beating out wheat in the winepress. To hide it from the Midianites. And the angel of the Lord appeared to him.

And said to him. The Lord is with you. O mighty man of valour. And Gideon said to him. Please my Lord. If the Lord is with us. Why then has all this happened to us?

And where are all his wonderful deeds? That our fathers recounted to us. Saying. Did not the Lord bring us up from Egypt? But now the Lord has forsaken us. And given us into the hand of Midian.

And the Lord turned to him. And said. Go in this might of yours. And save Israel from the hand of Midian. Do not I send you? And he said to him.

[ 14 : 33 ] Please Lord. How can I save Israel? Behold. My clan is the weakest. 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. And he said to him. If now I have found favour in your eyes. Then show me a sign.

That it is you who speak with me. Please not depart from here. Till I come to you. And bring out my present. And set it before you. And he said. I will stay. Till you return.

So Gideon went into his house. And prepared a young goat. And leaving cakes. And an ephah of flour. The meat he put in a basket. And the broth he put in a pot. And brought them to him.

Under the terebinth. And presented them. And the angel of God said to him. Take the meat. And the unleavened cakes. And put them on this rock. And pour the broth over them.

[ 15 : 29 ] And he did so. And then the angel of the Lord. Reached out the tip of his staff. That was in his hand. And touched the meat. And the eleven cakes. And the fire sprang up from a rock.

And consumed the meat. And the eleven cakes. And the angel of the Lord. Vanished from his sight. Then Gideon perceived. That he was the angel of the Lord. And Gideon said.

Alas O Lord God. For now I have seen the angel of the Lord. Face to face. But the Lord said to him. Peace be to you. Do not fear. You shall not die.

Then Gideon built an altar there. To the Lord. And called it. The Lord is peace. To this day it still stands. At Ophrah. Which belongs.

To the Abnerzites. That night the Lord said to him. Take your father's bull. And the second bull. Seven years old. And pull down the altar of Baal.

[ 16 : 23 ] That your father has. And cut down the Asherah. That is beside it. And build an altar to the Lord your God. On top of the stronghold there. With stones laid in due order.

Then take the second bull. And offer it as a burnt offering. With the wood of the Asherah. That you shall cut down. So Gideon took ten men of his servants. And did as the Lord had told him.

But because he was too afraid of his family. And the men of the town to do it by day. He did it by night. When the men of the town rose early in the morning. Behold the altar of Baal was broken down.

And the Asherah beside it was cut down. And the second bull was offered on the altar. That had been built. And they said to one another. Who has done this thing? And after they had searched and inquired.

They said. Gideon the son of Joash has done this thing. Then the men of the town said to Joash. Bring out your son that he may die. For he has broken down the altar of Baal.

[ 17 : 25 ] And cut down the Asherah beside it. 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 down. Therefore on that day. Gideon was called Derubabal.

Derubabal. That is to say. Let Baal contend against him. Because he broke down his altar. Now all the Midianites. And the Malachites. And the people of the east.

Came together. And they crossed the Jordan. And encamped in the valley of Jezreel. But the spirit of the Lord clothed Gideon. And he sounded the trumpet.

And the Abazites were called out to follow him. And he sent messengers throughout all Manasseh. And they too called out to follow him. And he sent messengers to Asher.

- [ 18 : 24 ] Zebulun. And Naphtali. And they went up to meet him. Then Gideon said to God. If you will save Israel by my hand. As you have said. Behold I am laying a fleece of wool.
- On the threshing floor. If it is dew on the fleece alone. And it is dry on all the ground. Then I shall know that you will save Israel by my hand. As you have said.
- And it was so. When he rose early the next morning. And squeezed the fleece. He sprung enough dew from the fleece. To fill a bowl of water. Then Gideon said to God. Let not your anger burn against me.
- Let me speak just once more. Please let me test just once more with the fleece. Please let it be dry on the fleece only. And on all the ground let it be dew.
- And God did so that night. And it was dry on the fleece only. And on all the ground it was dew. And so on. We give praise to God for his holy. And his perfect word.
- [ 19 : 23 ] Let's again sing to God's praise this time. From the Psalter. Scottish Psalter in Psalm 57. Scottish Psalter.
- Psalm 57. We can sing verses 1 down to verse 4. Of the Psalm. That's on page 288 of the church psalm books.
- Psalm 57 verses 1 to 4. Be merciful to me O God. Thy mercy unto me. Do thou extend because my soul doth put her trust in thee.
- Yea in the shadow of thy wings. My refuge I will place. Until these sad calamities do wholly overpass. Psalm 57 verses 1 to 4.
- To God's praise. Psalm 57.
- [ 20 : 42 ] Psalm 57. That's on page 288 of the church psalm books.
- Psalm 58. Psalm 58. Psalm 58. Psalm 58. Psalm 58. Psalm 58. JOHN muchos Akuerick ding notivo.
- MEangewarted. From heaven God andive. on conductive his life. II. Wolf. routeed. November Bennett. Dragon.
- In the pulmonary Said verse 1 to 4. Time vouchsale building His life through the other night. Ridiendo. The ivory child pays for me. In the pulmonary H. boastful the glory And God thee felt this never consider.
- Oh My store Ay ah Ah Oh Oh Let's for a short time turn back to the chapter we had, Judges chapter 6. Judges chapter 6.
- [ 23 : 26 ] We're carrying on our, it's a series, it's a look over the judges. We said we're looking at some judges and then looking at some of the scenes taking place throughout the book.
- This evening it's a very broad overview to Gideon in chapter 6 and then over the next few weeks we take perhaps a more precise view at some of what takes place in the life of this man.
- Before this evening focusing on the whole of chapter 6 as time allows us. We take for the sake of a text, verse 6.
- Now the angel of the Lord came and sat under a terebinth at Ophrah which belonged to Joash the Abrazite while his son Gideon was beating out wheat in the winepress to hide it from the Midians.
- Some folks when you begin to read about Gideon, some commentators and some preachers and there's plenty of books written about Gideon for all levels of Christians.
- [ 24 : 32 ] From brand new Christians for children to brand new Christians to a whole deep Hebrew analysis on the life of Gideon. Quite often Gideon is described as a coward turned hero.
- In one sense that's true. In many ways Gideon is a coward turned hero. But personally I think we'll see from the text it's not fair to call him a coward.

What Gideon was was not a coward. What Gideon was was a normal man. He was a normal man who was trying his best. He was a normal young man who was trying his best in an almost impossible situation.

Who then God takes and God uses to accomplish incredible things. And we'll see in the next few weeks in Gideon's life. He was not a man without fault.

Even though God calls him, commissions him, prepares him, trains him, shows miraculous things through him. But Gideon still was a man who was not without fault.

[ 25 : 41 ] Still a man who falls into sin. A man who commits sin. We'll see that more in the weeks to come. Rather than a coward turned to a hero. It's perhaps more fair to say in Gideon we see a man who's a normal man.

A man who God uses to bring about his incredible plans. And yes Gideon was a hero to his people. But he was still just a normal man. As normal as he was when we meet him here.

As we first encounter of Gideon in verse 11 and verse 12. We'll get to that in a second. Looking at this very large long chapter under four very broad headings.

And they will have to be broad for us to cover the ground this evening. Just four questions. Or four statements really. First is a question. Why? In verses 1 down to verse 10.

Why the need for another judge? Why do we find ourselves yet again needing a judge? Needing a saviour for Israel? Then we see Gideon becoming a warrior.

[ 26 : 43 ] Then we see the wrecking of a wreckage that Gideon makes off the altar. And finally we see Gideon as a worried man.

So first of all question why? Why do we need another judge? We begun the series last time looking at the account of Ehud.

And we said even before that as we did our introduction to judges back before our holiday. We see one simple theme in Judges. That is a whole book is one ongoing cycle.

It's one giant cycle within that. There's many cycles but the cycles are the exact same. God calls the people to serve him faithfully.

The people do the opposite. God then sends the people's natural enemies to fight against them. The people are either enslaved, captured, attacked, pestered.

[ 27 : 49 ] As we see this evening they have their food and provisions stolen year after year. And then after a few years they eventually wise up enough to call out to God. And God then sends a deliverer.

And things are good for a while. The deliverer passes away. And the cycle begins again. The people fall into sin again. God hears for a cry again.

God sends a deliverer again and so on. We said all of this, it feels almost exhausting. And when you read the book of Judges, the sin of the Israelites is exhausting.

When you read through the whole book, it's a fascinating but also a horrifying read. Because again and again you catch yourself thinking, what are they doing?

What are they doing? They've just been saved more sin. Just been saved more sin. Even more heinous. Even more evil sin. That's where we find ourselves again this evening in verses 1 down to verse 10.

[ 28 : 50 ] We see the people have rebelled as always. We saw this last time. The shorthand here in chapter 6 verse 1. The people of Israel did what was evil in the sight of the Lord.

We said last time that it's shorthand for them going back to the idol worship. Them doing what was evil. It's shorthand for them going back to the child sacrifice, the blood sacrifice, the sexual immorality that was involved in Baal worship.

We've covered that in detail before. But safe to say it was evil. The death of their children. The sacrifice of their living children.

The swapping of partners and everything else you can imagine. It all was part of the evil they're doing. The people of Israel did what was evil in the sight of the Lord.

And again God following the same pattern he gave them into the hand of the Midianites. The Midians these are the ones who were called to destroy in the first place.

[ 29 : 52 ] Of course we didn't do that. So now God allows these enemies to conquer his people. Verse 2. They overpowered Israel. And see what's taking place.

They weren't just attacked. Last time with Ehud we saw that the Israelites were attacked and enslaved. This time they're attacked. And they're not driven out of their land this time. But year after year the Midianites with their own clans attached to them.

The Malachites and so on. They would come and year after year when it was grain time or animal feeding time. When they would pasture their animals. They would come and be attacked.

So year after year the people for seven years were losing all their crops. Losing all their animals. And for some parts we can read over.

We just take as part of the narrative. But in verse 5. At the end of verse 5. We see that they come and attack the livestock. And their tents like locusts and umber.

[ 30 : 57 ] Both they and their camels could not be counted. And what's interesting here. Not just for ourselves. But for wider historical interest of the time. This is the earliest.

Indeed the first mention. Of camels being used in warfare. And we think whatever. That passes us by. We think that's almost a silly fact. But it's not.

Think yourself. You're living in tribes. And all of a sudden. In ways you've never seen before. They're weaponising the camels.

Big creatures. And there's hundreds of them coming. And laying waste of your village. Laying waste of your crops. Stealing them and burning them. And taking them. Attacking them.

Your livestock being killed or taken away. Year after year. You're being attacked. And surrounded. And ambushed. The fear of that. The panic of that. The worry of that.

[ 31 : 55 ] You can't relax. And we see the Israelites could not relax. They're having to go up. And to make for themselves. Dens in the mountains. They're having to hide in the caves. And in the caves we see.

As Gideon does later on. They're hiding some produce in the caves. And they're hiding produce in the dens. They're hiding produce. Wherever they can hide it.

So it won't be found. That's the context. Of this awful situation. And for seven long years. They've been attacked.

But it takes this long. For Israel to then. In verse six. Finally cry out to God. And Israel was brought low. Was brought very low.

Because of Midian. And the people of Israel cried out for help to the Lord. When God hears the cry of his people.

[ 32 : 52 ] They're crying out. We can assume for a saviour. They're crying out. We can assume for a judge. You sent us before judges. You sent us before Ophniel and Ehud.

You sent us before Deborah and Barak. Lord send us another one. But God doesn't actually send a judge. First of all. God sends a prophet.

Verse eight. The Lord sent a prophet to the people of Israel. This is an unnamed prophet. We can't say for certain. And we shouldn't say for certain.



Who this man was. Who his prophet was. But they wanted a hero. They wanted a warrior. But they get a prophet. And the prophet comes with one purpose.

The prophet reminds the people. Just what they have done. See they only care about God. When they need him. They've been years. And they haven't bothered turning to God.

[ 33 : 49 ] But now they need him. Now they realize they've got no hope. Now God's important to them all of a sudden. Now they have the care to talk to God. Now they have the care to offer sacrifice.

And turn back to the God. Who saved them from the enemies of old. Now they remember Yahweh. The only living and true God. And God sends a prophet.

And we might miss it here. But don't miss it. Look at the wording here. Again and again. Lord in capitals. L-O-R-D. As a prophet speaks. Thus says Yahweh.

The God of Israel. He's still their God. Even though they've turned their back on him. He is still their God. I delivered you from the hand of the Egyptians. I saved you. I saved you.

I saved you. Verse 10. And I said to you. I am Yahweh your God. You shall not fear the gods. And the small g there is very important.

[ 34 : 48 ] Literally the idols. The gods. Of the Amorites. In whose land you dwell. But they did fear the gods. They worshipped the other gods.

They worshipped Baal. And Asherah. And Ashtaroah as his partner. They worshipped these other gods. So called gods. They worshipped these demons. Who presented themselves as gods.

But God is kind. But whilst God is kind. We'll see in a second. God also is not mocked.

And they've been mocking God for years. They only come to God when they need something from him. They are treating him. I know we often hear this. They're treating him. Like some kind of present giver.

Some kind of father Christmas-esque creature in the sky. Who would turn to him and need him. And we think how foolish Israelites were. But how little we've changed.

[ 35 : 45 ] Friends. If I ask you. When is the last time you genuinely prayed to God? And I don't know your situation. But can I just make a guess.

And if I'm wrong, I'm wrong. But the last time perhaps friend. You prayed to God. Is when you had an awful. Or desperate. Or painful. Life situation.

You found yourself saying to God. If you get us through this. If you get so and so through this. If you help us out. If you help me out in this situation. Then I'll give my life to you. And God is gracious.

And God is kind. And perhaps. He took you through that situation. And still. You have not given your life to him. You have not come to him. Before we shake our heads at Israel. Let's think of ourselves.

So we are the exact same as Israel. We do the same things. In the same way. And here we find the Israelites. But God. Yes he is not mock. But also.

[ 36 : 41 ] God is kind. And he hears. The cry of his people. And whilst he sends a prophet. To remind them. As to how far they've gone. At the same time.

God has also sent. An angel. God has also sent. To this boy. This young man. Gideon. God has reminded his people.

By the prophet. How they've gone wrong. Whilst preparing for them. Behind the scenes. Preparing for them. A judge. In Gideon. We see that. Here.

As we see. The warrior. Verses 11. Down to verse 24. The angel of the Lord. Came and sat. Under the terebinth. At Ophrah. Which belonged to Joash.

And so on. Down to verse 24. Now. There's not a time. This evening. And this requires. There'll be a. A sermon. In its own right. Or perhaps a series. In its own right. But just to note.

[ 37 : 35 ] It's important going forward. I'll come back to it. God willing. Next week. And a week after. When we see. The angel of the Lord. In scripture. Sometimes.

Then there's. Mixed understanding of this. And there's different opinions. But sometimes. And. Here's one of the occasions. Where it seems. Very clear. That the angel of the Lord.

Speaking here to Gideon. Is something. We could call. Perhaps a theophany. Or a Christophany. Which is to say. It's either. An incarnate appearance. Of the Lord.

Or an incarnate appearance. Of Christ. And we get that. Especially looking at verse 14. Because in verse 11. It's the angel of the Lord. Speaking. And verse 14.

We see it's the Lord. Turned to him. And said. The translation. Is mixed. On purpose.

[ 38 : 29 ] Because here we see God. Speaking to his people. And it's either. And it's. I won't be definite. Because I shouldn't be definite. Because we can't be definite. But it's either. The angel of the Lord.

Speaks. And the Lord speaks through him. Or when this. Angel of the Lord. Appears. As he often does. As he appeared to Abraham. As he appeared to other various things. And as a study.

We'll get to. Lord willing. One. One good year. We'll get to that study. Very often. The angel of the Lord. Appears. And he speaks. As if God. Himself. Is speaking. Which leads us.

To say things. And assume perhaps. That here. Gideon is facing. A Christophany. A pre-incarnate. Appearance. Of Christ. As Christ.

Leads his people. Through this time. Of pain. And misery. But that's. More to be said than that. In the future. The Lord. Send an angel.

[ 39 : 21 ] The angel of Yahweh. Appears. In physical form. And he sits. And often we see that. When angels appear. They appear in human form. Or physical form. And they look like us. And they speak like us.

And more often than not. They act like us. At least for a time. And this angel is sent. And he sits. Under the tree. At the same time. Gideon here. Is behind the tree.

Oh he's behind the tree. And he's in a winepress. He's in a. A cut out. A hole. In the ground. And why is Gideon. In the winepress. He's beating out the wheat.

To hide it from the enemies. He's doing his best. To hide the wheat he has. To feed his family. To help look after his family. He's doing it hidden. So they can't see. If the invaders come.

They may not see him. He's in a hole. Beating out this. This wheat. Threshing it. We could say. He's there. Trying to provide some food. You can imagine. The winepress. Isn't a big cavern.

[ 40 : 19 ] It's just a small hole. Probably the height of his pulpit. About three. Four foot tall. Four foot deep. Which you see. So he's there. Crouching over. Threshing the wheat. Getting the grain off.

This terrified man. Crouching down. Hiding from the enemies. And what's the first words. The angel speaks to this man. In verse 12. The Lord is with you.

O mighty man. Of valour. Whatever a less obvious word is spoken. I doubt there has been.

Here we see what some call the cowardly Gideon. Crouching down and through the enemies. Trying to hide a few bits of wheat from them. A few bits of grain from the enemies.

And the angel of the Lord addresses this crouching young man. He's crouching down in fear. Protecting the small amount he has left. And the angel of the Lord calls him.

[ 41 : 16 ] Honestly calls him. Clearly calls him. A mighty man of valour. Now Gideon of course sees a man speaking to him. We'll see later.

Gideon as of yet doesn't quite understand who he's speaking to. Gideon assumes. We can assume it's someone sent from God. Or some godly man. But he doesn't know yet. This man is from God.

This is an angel. Gideon doesn't know that yet. He's about to discover it soon. But not yet. And Gideon says back to this man. Quite honestly. If God's been so good to us.

Verse 13. If God is so good. If God is with us. Then how has all this happened to my people? How has he let this destruction take place to our land and to our nation?

Please my Lord. And see Lord there is in small letters. That's just a term of politeness. He's speaking to a man who's older than him. He uses a polite term. As we would.

[ 42 : 15 ] It's Shu and Shiv here. It's just a polite term. Please sir. We could say. If the Lord is with us. If Yahweh is with us. Why has that happened?

We heard everything he did in the past. He stayed us from Egypt. He did all these amazing things. So we heard. But now he has. I note the wording. But now the Lord has forsaken us.

And given us into the hand of Midian. These aren't the words of Gideon. This is what Gideon has heard. God's forsaken us. God left us. No word. It's the other way around.

The people have long since forsaken God. Long since abandoned God. And now note here. The Lord turned to him and said.

Go in this might of yours. And save Israel with my hand of Midian. Do not I send you. And we see. Poor Gideon. He does not understand.

[ 43 : 11 ] What is taking place here. How is he being asked. Or being tasked. To do this great task. He has no idea. Can't understand it. The truth.

And the importance. Comes in verse 16. And Yahweh said to him. But I will be with you. And you shall strike the Midianites as one man. But I will be with you.

This terrified young man. Hiding in a winepress. But God reminds him. That he is with him.

That he will not abandon him. That he will not forget him. That is the truth. Of what is taking place. In these verses. And we see how quiet.

And how scared this Gideon is. How this young man is. We can see that. The pardon me. Or the please he says. In verse 13. And verse 50.

[ 44 : 12 ] Gideon says. Please my Lord. And again in verse 15. Gideon says. Please Lord. Quite literally. It is pardon me. It is a very subservient. I am sorry to speak my Lord.

But can I just say this. This poor boy is terrified. He is just being told. He is going to save his people. And he goes along with it. As far as we can understand. At least for a while.

He then says. Well this is the case. If I found favour in your eyes. Yeah. I want to go and. And bring you a gift. Bring out my presence.

I said it before you. Again Gideon still does understand. This is God he is speaking to. Or at least an angel of the Lord. He is speaking to. Gideon prepares the offering. Verses 19.

And we see. Then. The angel of the Lord. Now shows to Gideon. Who it is he is dealing with. Verse 21. We see that. The fire of course. The fire hitting the offering.

[ 45 : 10 ] As we saw last week. It signifies. On Thursday actually too. It signifies. God being pleased with the offering. It also confirms. All was said. When Gideon gives this offering.

It shows that God is pleased with Gideon. And that all that's been said. By the angel to Gideon. Is true. And in that moment. When the offering is taken up in fire.

Then in verse 22. Gideon now perceives. Gideon now gets it. Gideon now understands. Verse 22. When Gideon perceived.

That he was the angel of the Lord. And Gideon said. Alas O Lord. For now I have seen the angel of the Lord. Face to face. But now God speaks to Gideon once more. The Lord said to him. Peace be to you.

Do not fear. You shall not die. Dear friends. Gideon is called. To serve the Lord. In a glorious way.

[ 46 : 09 ] This young man. This useless man. This terrified man. God calls him. And note that God meets him where he is. God doesn't first prepare him.

Doesn't first teach him. Or try him. God meets Gideon. As he is sitting there. Shaking with fear. We can imagine in a wine press. Waiting for Midianites to appear in a second. To come and.

To take away the food. And perhaps kill him. And there. In that place of fear. That place of panic. That place of weakness. Is where God meets Gideon. And says. Gideon.

I will use you. You will serve me. And I will use you. To bring salvation. To your people. Gideon was a useless.

On paper at least. A useless. And pointless. Candidate. And Gideon knows that. He says himself. His clan's weak. And he's weak. My clan's useless.

[ 47 : 03 ] I'm useless. How's this going to work? Gideon's honest. If nothing else. Brothers and sisters. We ourselves. Are no Gideon. But we ourselves. Can identify with Gideon.

I'm sure. And we think. Lord. How can I serve you? I'm a bit useless. My understanding of you. As times. Feels useless. My history. Is a bit useless. My efforts.

Seem useless. And the advice. Is the same. As Gideon receives. I am with you. Dear brother. Dear sister. The Lord is with us. As we seek to do.

His work. Both in our own lives. But also. In the wider. Community. Here in Tolstown. God. Calls. The unprepared. God. Makes use.

Of the unprepared. God. Calls. Those who are not expecting. To be called. And gives them. Unexpected. Work. To do. Unexpected. Duties. To perform. In life. Friends.

[ 48 : 00 ] Speak to any Christian here. And the Christians here. Will tell you. That the life they have led. Since they were saved. Is nothing close to the life. They have planned to lead. God takes us.

And he gives us. Lives that are. A time. So impossible. To believe. But which are glorious. Because he is with us. Every step. Of the way.

I can assure you. One thing. There's not a single minister. For example. Who stood there before you. Not a single minister. Who has preached before you. In this pulpit. Over the years. Who ever imagined himself. To be here. And that's the truth.

And for Christians here. Brethren and sisters. How often does the Lord. Lead us. And take us. To places. We never imagine. He will lead us. And take us to. But he is with us. As he does. His work. Through us.

God on side. As Gideon faces up. To the wrath. And the power. Of a whole nation. And a group of nations.

- [ 48 : 58 ] Of great power. Great military power. And Gideon. This young man. In his own. This young man. In his own. Who has been called. By the Lord. Is of much more power. Than all the armies.
- Of the world. A man. With God on side. Is worth. 10,000 men. Without him. To roughly.
- Quote Knox. In one of his. Many. Sermons. On. That very topic. Gideon. Is then made use of.
- Instantly. We see that. That. Verse 25. That night. The Lord said to him. That night. Yahweh said to him. We read. What the instructions were. Gideon is to pull down.
- The altar of Baal. His father's altar. But also. We see. This must have been. The main. Village altar. The main one. They'll look to. Because they'll notice. It's gone straight away.
- [ 49 : 54 ] The altar of Baal. Was always on a high place. Of the highest place. You could find. In the area. In the village. In the town. So. Gideon's father. Must have looked after it. It's either built on his land.
- Or. He's somehow involved. In Baal worship. We don't know. But either way. Gideon's father. It's his altar. It's the highest place. In the town. Highest part of the village.
- And Gideon is called. And given instruction. By God. To tear. Down. This altar. And more than that. More glorious than that. He is called.
- To even use. The wood of the altar. Itself. This torn down altar. To then burn. In the new altar. He makes for the Lord. That same night. When God calls.
- Someone to serve him. God equips you. To serve him. Gideon has no training. He has very little understanding. In who God is. He's not been trained. He's had seven years.
- [ 50 : 50 ] He's a young man. Probably late teens. Early twenties. At most we could say. He's had no great training. No great understanding. His family are all Baal worshippers. But God calls.
- And God equips. Equips. And then God sends. And God sends Gideon. To go and do this work. Instantly. That very night. The Lord speaks to him.
- Now Gideon. Some will berate Gideon. For verse 27. Because he's too afraid. Of his family. And the men of town. To do it by day. He did it by night. God lays no judgment there.
- Neither should we. Gideon. Is a practical man. He's a normal man. He's too scared. Of the day time. So he does it at night. There's no sin there. There's no problem there.
- He gets the job done either way. He fulfills his calling. Either way. God. I'll see in a second. God knows we are human. And with respect.
- [ 51 : 47 ] In God's eternal plan. The fact we are human. Not sinners. The fact we are human. With human limitations. That is factored into God's plan. That is part of God's plan.
- When he calls us. To serve him. Gideon serves the Lord. Out of every way. And he destroys the altar. He cuts down. The Asherah pole. As instructed. He burns it all up.
- As instructed. He offers a sacrifice to God. He rebuilds. A proper. Altar. And this is not for this evening. Time is going. But just for future reference.
- We'll come back to. This. In a later series. In a different way. But note the wording. Of verse 26. Where Gideon is told. To build an altar. To the Lord your God. On top.
- Of the stronghold. There. That is not speaking. Of a physical stronghold. We could say. We touched on that this morning. In our reading. There are strongholds. There are places.
- [ 52 : 41 ] In this sense. In this village. Where Baal was worshipped. There are parts. And places of this world. Where evil is worshipped. And evil is engaged in. And often.
- These places. Christians. Will often feel. At times. We will feel. A real sense of evil. A real sense. Of darkness. There are places. Where the evil one.

Is worshipped. Where his. His servants. Gather together. And here. That stronghold. As it's named here. It is. Completely captured.

To the Lord's service. So Gideon. Destroys. The altar. And look at the chaos. Look at the agony. In the morning. And the men wake up. Early in the morning. Why?

Because early in the morning. Was the time. Of course. She would worship Baal. Morning. Afternoon. Evening. We wake up early in the morning. To go and worship. And as they climb up.

[ 53 : 36 ] And as they look forward. And towards. The highest point. In the village. The town. They see. Their glorious. Statue of Baal. Their glorious altar. To Baal. The Ashtoreth.

Pole beside it. It's gone. All they see. Is the smoke. Of a sacrifice. To Yahweh. It's been a long time.

Since they last saw that. A long time. Since they last saw. The true worship of God. Being carried out. In their midst. And they are terrified. And they are angry.

So angry. They are happy. To kill Gideon. Now Gideon's father. At some point. Either during the night. Or at this point. Has had a change of heart.

He goes from being. Almost probably in charge. Of the altar. To then. Arguing against Baal. We see that here. Bring out your son. But he may die.

[ 54 : 32 ] He's broken the altar. He's cut down the Asherah. But Joash. Makes a very obvious point. If Baal. Is truly God. He can. Take care of himself.

Otherwise. He's got no power. Whatsoever. Gideon. Gideon. Follows. The instructions of the Lord.

And from. That moment. We see then. The Lord. Begins to work. Powerfully. Through Gideon. The glorious. Beautiful word. Of phrase. And image.

Of verse 34. Gideon. Following. The instruction of the Lord. Then. Allows us. To see. The spirit of the Lord. Clothed Gideon.

And of course. In the New Testament. With the Holy Spirit. Being poured out. Upon his church. We see. That every believer. We are filled with the spirit. Again. That's a future series for us.

[ 55 : 29 ] What that means for us. And the wonder of that. But we see in the Old Testament. God. Selects. His people. And he allows them. To have his spirit. Poured out upon them.

To serve him. In special ways. We have a privilege. That. The people of Israel. Did not have. Each one of us. Has God's spirit. Poured it upon us. Living in us. Working through us.

Each one of us. Has that. As believers. Here this evening. Only the select few. The Old Testament. Had that. And we'll see that more in detail. As we go on. Even through judges. By the way. God is now.

Fully working. In Gideon. This man. Who has. Clearly. Despite his own fears. And worries. Has given himself. Over to the Lord. God. But we see.

He's still human. And time's gone. So I'll end with this. But he's still human. This well known account. We have. From verse 36. Down to verse 40. We see Gideon.

[ 56 : 25 ] As a worried man. He has done amazing things. He's listened to the Lord. He's been called by the Lord. Set apart by the Lord. He's had the strength. To pull down.

This great temple. This great altar. I should say. Of Baal. This village altar. He's had the spiritual. And mental strength. To get that. Incredibly hard thing done.

And now. He's leading. About to lead. An army. Against. His enemies. But Gideon. Still Gideon. He's still human.

And we see that here. Now. Often we come to look at this. Account of a fleece. Account. Some will say. That there's nothing wrong with this. That he's just.

Being cautious. If you read it carefully. Even Gideon himself. Knows what he's doing here. If not wrong. Then it's not the best. Course of action. And we see that.

[ 57 : 21 ] He's not testing God. Some would say. But really. He probably is. Isn't he? He has seen already. God's blessing upon him. He's seen already.

And heard already. God's voice. Instructing him. But look at the wording. When Gideon said to God. If I. If you will save Israel by my hand. As you have said.

I'm laying a fleece. And how human. How small. An evidence. Gideon needs. It's such a human idea. Isn't it? If the fleece is wet. Then you're God. Next time the fleece is dry.

Then you're God. And it's all okay. It's so human. It's so silly. It's such a foolish thing to say. And to do. And we see Gideon knows it's foolish. Verse 39.

When Gideon wants the second goal. Just to make sure God is with him. Then Gideon said to God. Let not your anger burn against me. Let me speak once more. Gideon knows he's being a bit.

[ 58 : 18 ] Well. He knows he's being unfaithful really by saying this. He knows he's quite literally testing God here. But what we should note here.

Is even though Gideon's actions are fueled by worry. Even though Gideon's actions are perhaps less than ideal. God knows Gideon's heart.

And Gideon here obviously is not in sin. Because God. Even though God's reassured Gideon. God obliges Gideon. With his silly wee example.

With his silly wee idea. His man made idea. Of a wet fleece and a dry fleece. God obliges Gideon. God in his mercy and his love. He allows Gideon to get his way in this example.

And God visits. And treats Gideon gently. And carefully. God could have easily. Reminded Gideon who he was here. Reminded Gideon not to test him.

[ 59 : 18 ] Not to question him. Not to make such a fool of himself. But he doesn't do that. God knows Gideon's heart. God knows Gideon is just human.

God has called this human. This man. This young man to serve him. And God is willing. Even though the thing itself is so foolish. God is willing.

To assure. And to reassure Gideon. Brothers and sisters. How important that is for us. I am willing to say. There's not one of us here this evening.

Not one Christian here this evening. And we've not found ourselves. Again and again. When we find ourselves having to do something. Or we find life. Getting a bit more complicated. When we find hard situations.

Hard days. Hard weeks. Hard years. Sometimes. We find ourselves saying. God. Are you still with me? God. Do you still have me? Do you still keep me?

[ 60 : 15 ] And like Gideon. We might shake our heads. At his foolish idea here. But like Gideon. Perhaps not physically. But mentally and spiritually. We say. Lord.

Will you please show me. You're still with me. Will you please reassure me. You're still for me. But I am still yours. Do you still have me? And God. The ever patient.

God of covenant love. Who is gracious. Day after day. Year after year. Century and decade. After century and decade.

Who cares for his people endlessly. He is willing to come down to our level at times. And his love. His forbearance. He comes down to our level. And he reminds us.

He loves us. He were his. He keeps us. He has not forgotten us. As Gideon is about to engage. In warfare against his enemies.

- [ 61 : 09 ] As he's about to begin. The next unstoppable phase of his life. With attack after attack. And every day seems to be getting. More and more full of.
- Of craziness against him. And more and more full of attack. Gideon takes his time. Before he begins. To make sure the Lord is still with him. And because God is merciful.
- And full of mercy. God reassures Gideon. In a very human way. He reassures Gideon. At a very human level. He's still with him. Brothers and sisters.
- We need no fleece. We need no physical test. Of God's love for us. Gideon did. We have. Given to us.
- And shown to us. The ultimate evidence. That God. Is with us. The person of the Lord. Jesus Christ. Took on human flesh. Became like us.
- [ 62 : 11 ] In all ways. Apart from sin. Who at this very moment. Fully man. And fully God. In his full perfection. Of the right hand of the father. Is still bearing in his body.
- The marks of his love. Towards us. That is the confidence. We have this evening. Gideon needed this extra sign. Our confidence. Does not come from a fleece. Wet or dry.
- Our confidence comes. From the living Lord Jesus. Who he is. What he has done. What he continues to do. As we spend time. The next few weeks. Looking at the exploits.
- And the adventures. And the warfare. And the victories. Of Gideon. We are reminded. That after Gideon. Israel sinned again.
- And sinned again. That Gideon. Pointed forward. To one. Who would save his people. Not just for a few. Short years. But eternally.
- [ 63 : 07 ] That is our ongoing reminder. In this terrifying. Reminder. Of a book of judges. As to our own sin. But this constant reminder. That in God.
- In Yahweh. There is a saviour sent. Who brings hope. Even to the most hopeless. Of situations. Even when we are so far away. From God. God says. I will send a saviour.
- Who will bring the captives. Out of captivity. Who will bring the lost sheep. Home. Who will bring those. Far away from me. Back to myself. And that's a hope. We're reminded.
- Week after week. In our study. The book of judges. Spare our heads. And a word of prayer. Lord we thank you. For the gift. Once more of your word. Thank you this evening. For the. The account.
- Of Gideon. Of that young man. You called to serve you. In an incredible way. That young man. You called to serve you. Against all the odds. In a way that. He himself.
- [ 64 : 00 ] Had no ability. And no power to do so. We ask Lord. That this. This reminder. This account. Would. Would serve us well. This week. As a reminder.
- That you're a God. Who calls. The small and the weak. To do impossible tasks. What's impossible for us. Is not impossible to you. You the God. Who created. And sustains.
- The whole of creation. We pray Lord. The encouragement. Of your people. This week. For any here. Who as of yet. Have not come to know you. As we hear. Of the accounts. Of how you can take.
- The lost. And the small. And the seemingly useless. The useless in this world. And take them. And call them your own. And use them for your purposes. Lord. We'd all be encouraged.
- By that truth. Help us one more time. To sing your. Praises of hearts. And minds. Full of understanding. And full of thanksgiving. Ask all these things. In and through.
- [ 64 : 54 ] And for Christ's. Precious name's sake. Amen. Let's bring our time. Of worship. To a conclusion. This evening. Again.



From the Scottish Psalter. Scottish Psalter. And this time. Psalm. 28. Scottish Psalter. Psalm. 28.

We can sing. Verses 5. Down to verse 9. That's on page. That's on page. 2. 3. 8. Scottish Psalter. Psalm. 28. On page.

2. 3. 8. Verse 5. God shall not build. But them destroy. Who would not understand. The Lord's own works. Nor did regard.

The doing of his hand. Forever blessed be the Lord. For graciously he heard. The voice of my petitions. And prayers. Did regard. Psalm. 28.

[ 65 : 49 ] Verses 5 to 9. God's praise. God's praise. God shall not build.

But them destroy. Who would not understand.

The Lord's own works not good regard, the doing of His hand.

All heaven blessed be the Lord, for graciously He hears the voice of my petitions, and with His did regard.

The Lord's my strength, and she in my heart, upon Him did rely.

[ 67 : 21 ] And I am heaven, with heavens my heart, the joy exceedingly.

And with my song, I will live in peace, their strength is God alone.

He also is the sixth man of His anointed one.

O thy Lord, be the truth and sin, bless thy will be the chance.

Then also do thy freedom end forevermore than man.

[ 68 : 49 ] May the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God the Father, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, both of you now and forevermore. Amen.