

# Embracing the Embarrassing

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[ 0 : 0 0 ] bear with me as I turn in the actual bible because today's passage is so outlandish I want you to make sure that it is coming from the bible not from my own imagination well many of you may know who I am some of you may not if you're visiting I am not a pastor here at Cheyenne Mountain Presbyterian Church I am a minister in the Associate Reformed Presbyterian Church my name is Drew Arrington and my family has the privilege of attending here while I am stationed at Fort Carson so I am glad to be able to be here this morning and honored as usual that your session would give me the privilege of reading and expounding upon God's word for us this morning if you know we are in the book of Judges here at Cheyenne Mountain Presbyterian Church and two weeks ago Matthew opened up chapter three talking about Othniel and he called Othniel the last good judge he was the last good judge we could hold up to our children as a role model the last judge of whom we modern Christians are not embarrassed the last judge we're comfortable talking about but unfortunately we often treat challenging passages of scripture like embarrassing moments in our lives I'm not going to recount any of my embarrassing moments so I'm not going to ask you to raise any of yours but you know what I'm talking about those moments that we wish we could forget and instead of embracing those passages of scripture we do our best just like our embarrassing moments to avoid thinking about them instead of embracing those passages of scripture we do our best to avoid remembering thinking or even talking about them in fact if we had our way we would banish them from our memory as if they never occurred and the way we treat these scriptural embarrassments remind me of a conversation I had with my wife's grandmother some years ago and we asked her this question

Nani what do you think about president X not taking a second to think about it she says well I don't think about them at all that's what many Christians do with embarrassing portions of of scripture passages that we would rather not think about at all and those portions of holy text are glossed over from the pulpit ignored in our Sunday schools and skipped over in our bible reading plans but when we do that we do that to our own detriment when we ignore these embarrassing accounts in the bible the church deprives herself of life and vitality because we for we forfeit the blessings of those passages so what are we missing when we don't think about specifically what are we missing when we don't think about Ehud or Shamgar well we'll say if we look at these men and try to look at this passage as a character study we will be embarrassed if we look to these men for qualities and actions to emulate we emulate those today we will bring embarrassment upon ourselves and upon the Christian faith embarrassment will fade in the light of God's comfort encouragement and hope so by embracing the embarrassment of judges three what we will find today is a God who delights in rescuing his people let me say that again in this embarrassing passage if we look past the human examples we see a God who delights in rescuing his people and in doing so we see a God who will get his hands dirty to do that we see a God who in rescuing his people is not boring and we see a God who has a sense of humor but before we read the passage let us pray that the Holy Spirit might enable us to encounter this encouragement as we embrace this passage let us pray God I'm not worthy to stand before you except that your son through the power of the Holy Spirit has made a difference in my life and called me God we are not worthy Father even to receive your word but God through the power of the Holy Spirit you can apply that word to our hearts allow us to see the truths of Scripture and your great love for your people oh God would you do that for us this morning and might that be for our good the good of your church and the glory of our Savior and Lord Jesus Christ in whose name we pray Amen so let us take a look then at Judges chapter 3 and we are going to start with verse 12 and read through the end of the chapter as you listen along listen and see if you can hear those instances that could be considered embarrassing but then also for the encouragement that is found therein and the people of Israel again did what was evil in the

sight of the Lord and the Lord strengthened Eglon the king of Moab against Israel because they had done what was evil in the sight of the Lord he gathered to himself the Ammonites and the Amalekites and went and defeated Israel and they took possession of the city of Palms and the people of Israel served Eglon the king of Moab eighteen years then the people of the Lord cried out to the Lord the people of Israel cried out to the Lord and the Lord raised up for them a deliverer Ehud the son of Gera the Benjaminite a left-handed man the people of Israel sent tribute by him to Eglon the king of Moab and Ehud made for himself a sword with two edges a cubit in length and he bound it on his right thigh under his clothes and he presented the tribute to Eglon king of Moab now Eglon was a very fat man when Ehud had finished presenting the tribute he sent away the people who carried the tribute but he himself turned back at the idols near Gilgal and said I have a secret message for you O king and he commanded silence and all of his attendants went out from his presence and Ehud came to him as he was sitting alone in the cool roof chamber and Ehud said I have a message from God for you and he arose from his seat and Ehud reached with his left hand took the sword from his right thigh and thrust it into his belly and the hilt also went in after the blade and the fat closed over the blade for he did not pull the sword out of his belly and the dung came out then Ehud went out into the porch and closed the doors of the roof chamber behind him and locked them when he had gone the servants came and when they saw the doors of the roof chamber were locked they thought surely he is relieving himself in the closet of the cool chamber and they waited till they were embarrassed but when he still did not open the doors of the roof chamber they took the key and opened them and there lay their lord dead on the floor Ehud escaped while they delayed and he passed beyond the idols and escaped to Saraiah when he arrived he surrounded the trumpet in the hill country of Ephraim then the people of Israel went down with him from the hill country and he was their leader and he said to them follow after me for the lord has given your enemies the Moabites into your hand so they went down after him and seized the fords of the Jordan against the Moabites and did not allow anyone to pass over and they killed at that time about 10,000 of the Moabites all strong able-bodied men not a man escaped so Moab was subdued that day under the hand of Israel and the land had rest for 80 years after him was Shamgar the son of Anath who killed 600 of the Philistines with an ox goad and he also saved Israel well I don't know about you but that account is pretty rich with what many would consider offensive and what I would say is definitely violent material

[10:39] I think about Ehud right he uses deceit and deception to get himself into a position to murder slash assassinate the ruling lord there in Israel at the time we have what perhaps could be an incident of body shaming as Eglon was a very fat man and then we can't forget and who could miss the blood the guts and the poop and then in Shamgar a short little verse we have vigilantism we have what perhaps might be a fit of rage and mass murder all of which many people would find extremely offensive and some

Christians find outright embarrassing that these accounts would be in the holy inspired word of God but really what we see here is not embarrassment but we see a God who in rescuing his people isn't afraid to get his hands dirty he's not afraid to step into the muck of life to rescue his people when they cry out to him I would be remiss if I didn't go on a little bit of a rabbit trail this morning in light of these embarrassing acts there's cunning deceit and violence here the question is is this something that God embraced and I would say the answer is yes

God did embrace that it says he raised up Ehud for this moment and the question is is this distasteful or is this something that we should embrace well yeah it is distasteful to read some of this but yet we must embrace this as God's ordained means of his decrees of ensuring that what he purposed from eternity occurred in this instant now does that mean that that is something that we can employ today does that mean that we as Christians can employ cunning deceit and violence Paul in Romans 13 kind of gives us a little bit of insight into that where he says that governments that the

Lord raises up leaders of nations to preserve righteousness and punish the evil doer to protect those who do good and punish those who do evil and that is very helpful as we consider are we to embrace or to shun these acts of cunning deceit and violence we understand this that God is working through nations today and he has charged governments with doing what Ehud and Shamgar have done here and so if you are a member of the United States military and you are called upon to practice cunning deceit and to execute violence for our nation as we are preserving peace and punishing the evil doer then yes we would say that that would be an appropriate use of

cunning deceit and violence however if you are using cunning ways to manipulate your little sister into doing what you want her to do for your own purposes that is not appropriate use of cunning if you are a husband and you are using deceit to cover up sin in your life to hide it from your family that is not an appropriate use of deceit and heaven forbid we use violence in any way in the home to intimidate and threaten whether that is a spouse or a child or an elderly parent that is not an appropriate use we could say also to you that cunning deceit and violence are necessary within other forms of government specifically police in order to protect our streets but it's not something that we would embrace to advance the means of the church yes we want to be wise but we won't want to be cunning in a way that is deceitful and dishonest and as

Jesus said to the apostle in the garden of Gethsemane his kingdom is not built by the sword but by the word of God so thank you for engaging me on that little side tangent and it's important because a lot of us serve in the military a lot of us are in the police but it's also important to understand the right and left limits of that so here we have Ehud and we have a God who is embracing this cunning this deceit this violence in order to accomplish his decreed will but we know that this isn't the ultimate expression of God not being afraid to get his hands dirty we've seen this happen before we've seen it throughout judges we've seen it in the plagues in Egypt where God brings destruction and death and disease upon Egypt in order to free his people we see it when

[17:35] God gives the command of the Israelites to go into the nation of or into the land of Canaan and obliterate wipe out the people that are there but we see the ultimate expression of this of God getting his hands dirty to rescue his people in the life death and resurrection of Jesus Christ what an awesome picture of God who is beyond what we can think or imagine without sin without the sting of sin taking on human flesh with all of its frailties getting his hands dirty with the daily things of life and then taking on the filth of our sin on the cross so that we could have a restored relationship relationship with our heavenly father well this reminds me of a quote by

Dale Ralph Davis it's on the back of the bulletin if you want to read along this is what he says Yahweh is not a white gloved standoffish God out somewhere in the remote left field of the universe who hesitates to get his strong right arm dirty in the yuck of our lives the God of the Bible does not hold back in the wild blue yonder somewhere waiting for you to put Clorox and spray Lysol over the affairs of your life before he will touch it whether you can comfortably put it all together or not what great news that is for us that we don't have to get our lives all straightened out we don't have to be perfect to come to Jesus Christ because he has first come to us so not only is God not afraid to get his hands dirty and rescuing his people God is not boring and today's passage is a very good example of that you know God delivers his people from the mess that they find themselves in in a variety of ways in ways that we could never imagine or develop ourselves we got Ehud here who's a son he's of Israel albeit he's from kind of a loser tribe of Benjamin you'll learn more about that as we progress through the book of Judges but he's also left handed and actually the word there in the original manuscript isn't oh yeah he uses his left hand he was left hand dominant it was he wasn't able or capable of using his right hand so a lot of questions to that as to what that means either it means that he was looked down upon because he was left handed or there was something wrong with his right hand which might make sense as to why they sent him to be the one to bear the tribute because Eglon would think nothing of somebody who had some sort of deformity and then we have Shamgar quite the opposite here's an outsider somebody who's not part of Israel in fact he's a worshiper of a false god based on the text and his last name what an unlikely ally for the nation of Israel and so it just goes to show us that God's decrees aren't formulaic

God doesn't have a set pattern by which he rescues his people he delivers his people from their difficulties and from their situations in which they find themselves no no God in the words of a past Christian artist Rich Mullen says you never know who God is going to use a princess or a baby or maybe even you and me no and that's true think about biblical history God used not too long ago leading up to the entrance into the promised land God used a prophet who wasn't a prophet of Israel named Balaam to basically tell a king who wanted to destroy Israel before they even entered the promised land that God was going to give the Israelites victory if he attacked not only did he use Balaam

God used Balaam's donkey to actually preserve Balaam's life as he was on his way to deliver this message to the king we think of Miriam as a young girl God used her to ensure that Moses had someone to care for him in his infancy and then we got Moses himself think about that a baby floating in a basket in a river who grows up disconnected from his family with a huge stutter and

God uses him to deliver his people from Egypt and we could go on and talk about many in the New Testament and specifically all of the uneducated fishermen from the backwoods of Galilee who became the central piece of Christ's ministry and many others not to beat a dead horse but Dale Ralph Davis in Judges

Such a Great Salvation says this there is no reason why God's way must be dull and boring the people who know Yahweh as their God will never lack for excitement so what do we do with this? [ 24 : 24 ] what do we do with this fact that God is not boring and that God delights in rescuing his people I think we become people of prayer praying that God might deliver us and being open to the ways that he might it might be from an unlikely individual within our own community that God provides rescue or it might be somebody from outside of our community also gives us great freedom to know that God doesn't operate in a set way opens us up to the possibility that we could partner with others outside of the Christian faith as we address some of the great challenges within our culture at this moment I think about the tragedy of transgenderism and what it would look like to ally ourselves in this area to seek deliverance for God's people from these practices and to save our culture from this tragedy if we embraced and worked with such people as the famed author of Harry Potter so much against what we stand for in so many ways but in this one area we could find ourselves perhaps partners or we consider the abomination of abortion in our country and as we continue to address that you might find some unlikely partners outside of the Christian faith could think of several that have the same understanding of the right to life that we have and what about partnering with our

Muslim neighbors as we continue to fight against vanishing religious liberties and rights in our country but let me bring it a little bit more personal what does it mean when God is not boring and delivering his people from their difficulties and challenges know that you you are uniquely crafted for God's glory glory and if God can use somebody who was challenged of body like Ehud if he says in the New Testament passage we read that the man born blind wasn't born blind because of sin but because God purposed to display his glory through him oh what great news that is for us who wish that our bodies were just a little bit different than what they are to know that God has sovereignly crafted us for his purpose and his glory perhaps you know

I was in high school once middle school also and from time to time I felt like an outsider and perhaps you feel like that today here in the audience like an outsider that you don't quite fit in you don't have that group Shamgar was an outsider he was somebody that wasn't part of the people of God yet God used him in a mighty way and God can use you as well or maybe you're here and you think you know what I'm just too young too young for God to use me you know what Esther was a teen when she became queen and God used her to rescue her people from near annihilation Timothy Paul wrote to him and said hey don't let people despise you because of your young age but rather remain faithful in preaching and teaching the word of God what a great encouragement that God is not constrained by the ways in which man judge you are good enough to rescue people or you are good enough to save people or we can use you because you have this and that talent no God has specifically and uniquely crafted each and every one of us to display his glory and to accomplish his purposes

Matthew Henry puts it like this in his commentary on this passage it is no matter how weak the weapon is if God direct and strengthen the arm what a great encouragement that is from this passage that in rescuing his people God is not boring and he can use each and every one of us finally we see here in this passage that God has a sense of humor I know this is the point that a lot of the younger men and boys in this congregation have kind of been waiting for God has a sense of humor you know we were traveling from the great sand dunes last Saturday and erupted in the car what I call the great Christmas song controversy we were listening to a playlist and up popped joy to the world and one of my daughters says quick quick change it we can't sing

Christmas songs now it's too early the other one says what no we can sing Christmas songs anytime we want it's Christmas every day of the year and on and on this went for probably 5 10 I don't know maybe 15 minutes and you may say wow that doesn't sound like that's very humorous like it kind of was but was more humorous the next morning when we're sitting here right over here on this side and guess what we read in a bulletin joy to the world oh my how exciting that was to read it was an unexpected moment of joy and happiness in the service something that we could not have anticipated again God isn't boring and God has a sense of humor and you may say well where's the humor in Judges 3 there well it's a dark humor it's a dark humor for people in the throes

of persecution let me just really quickly go through this dark humor

[ 31 : 58 ] Ehud was a Benjaminite and if you're reading this post Judges you look back and say this was the people who were extremely inhospitable in a culture that valued hospitality and actually committed a horrible desecration of a woman and because of that faced near desolation how funny is that that this is going to be the way in which God brings about salvation for his people also Ehud as we've mentioned he's a lefty actually he's incapable of using his right hand not necessarily a ringing endorsement for somebody who's going to deliver God's people from the hand of their oppressors Eglon a very fat man may not mean much to us right now right kind of funny haha fat man no Eglon means calf you get where I'm going with this he's the fattened calf about to be slaughtered right that's hilarious

Ehud says Ehud sends messenger sends a message back to Eglon right he's already gone off and he's like hey guys look you know what you guys keep on going hey I got a special message for the king oh wait a minute he strapped a sword to his right thigh ooh a special message huh and then Eglon he hears it and he's like oh he's got a special message for me just for me oh hey everybody everybody this message is just for me all of you get out and you're just sitting there thinking oh no no he didn't Eglon or Ehud soared Eglon sent everybody else away we already know he's probably not that fit of a man because of his stature oh this is not going to be good so then we see Ehud shows up everybody's gone and Ehud is alone with Eglon you've got to be getting me second proclamation Ehud arrives he sees Eglon sitting down he says oh I have a message from God for you at which point big old hefty Eglon struggles to his feet out of his chair because this is a special message from God just for him and then we hear see the motion left hand goes to the right thigh and then as he's staggering to receive the message the blade goes in and the fat closes over the blade and I bet he really got the point yeah

God was saying here's the message for you and it wasn't a message of confirmation it was a message of judgment oh and then it gets worse right it gets worse the sovereign Lord Eglon soiled himself the dung came out how the mighty persecutor of Israel fell and it gets better right the servants come running the servants come to the door after Ehud had left and locked it and they see the doors closed they see the doors locked they smell the smell of dung oh you know what I bet you the king he's in the toilet that okay we'll give them some time and space back away says they wait for the Lord the king to come out to the point of embarrassment wow he is really really doing a number servants return embarrassed oh we really need to check on them oh hey the keys are right here are you kidding me the keys to the king have been there the whole time the servants are like oh okay well I guess just waiting for him so they take the keys they unlock it and the passage it says more of like surprise the king is laid out on the floor dead you know what's even more hilarious

[ 37 : 26 ] Ehud just makes a casual escape while they're waiting gets out of town no big deal I mean just an amazing passage filled with a humor that lets people know that we serve a God who is greater than our greatest persecutor we serve a God whose power turns the greatest of men in the most desperate situations into a canvas for his glory and a canvas that will bring us joy that's what this passage did for the people of Israel in future times when they were oppressed they could look back to this passage and say look at the great

God that we serve who has a sense of humor who knows how to rescue his people and not only rescue his people but to bring them joy again Dale Ralph Davis the quote finishes like this the God of the Bible does not hold back in the wild blue yonder somewhere waiting for you to put Clorox spray Lysol over the affairs of your life before you will touch it whether you can comfortably put it together or not he is the God who delights to deliver his people even in their messes and likes to make them laugh again he is the God who allows weeping to endure for a night but sees that joy comes in the morning so whatever difficulty you find yourself in whatever challenge you're facing though it may seem dark know that

God has a sense of humor and he is waiting to bring joy back into your life when he delivers you from that when we close our consideration of Ehud and Shamgar by remembering that God delights delights in rescuing his people it's not a drudgery he enjoys doing it he wants to rescue his people the situation doesn't matter he delights in rescuing you his people from long-term oppression or from an immediate threat he enjoys rescuing you from moral evil or from natural evil he enjoys rescuing his people in the midst of their own rebellion against him or from the sins of others perpetrated against them many consider this passage as a great embarrassment you know it's the

apostle Paul in 1st

Corinthians said that the critics of Christianity in the first century said the same thing about the cross of Christ that it was an embarrassment yet Paul tells us that the cross and we know for ourselves that the cross is the very crux and foundation of our faith a foundation by which God graciously rescues his people from the power of sin gives us a place and a purpose in his eternal kingdom and welcomes us into the great joy of his salvation so far from being an embarrassment the accounts of Ehud and Shamgar for those who embrace them deepened faith and reliance upon a God who's not afraid to get his hands dirty a God who is far from boring and a God who through a sense of humor restores joy to his downtrodden people well by embracing these accounts may we proclaim the following along with the prophet

Habakkuk though the fig tree should not blossom nor fruit beyond the vines the produce of the olive fail and the fields yield no food the flock be cut off from the fold and there be no herd in the stalls yet I will rejoice in the Lord I will take joy in the God of my salvation let us pray oh gracious heavenly father as we close this service Lord may we indeed through the power and presence of your Holy Spirit and your rescuing of us find great joy in your salvation amen