

O Mighty Man Of Valor

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[0 : 00] You may be seated. Good morning. My name is Matthew Capone, and I'm the pastor here at Cheyenne Mountain Presbyterian Church.

And it's my joy to bring God's word to you today. A special welcome if you're new or visiting with us. We're glad that you're here. And we're glad that you're here not because we're trying to fill seats, but because we're following Jesus together as one community.

And as we follow Jesus together, we become convinced that there's no one so good. They don't need God's grace. And no one so bad that they can't have it. Which is why we come back week after week to hear what God has to say to us in his word.

We're continuing this morning our series in the book of Judges. And you'll remember that the book of Judges is about a number of things. It's about the need for constant renewal and revival among God's people.

It's about the need for a faithful and true king. A king who can do what no man can do, which is to change the hearts of humans. It's about the spirit, the power of spirit-filled leadership.

[1 : 10] And it's about God's mercy on hard-hearted people. People like you and me. Last week, Drew Arrington finished up for us the story of Deborah and Barak and Sisera.

And so now we move on to Judges chapter 6, where we see the story of Gideon. The story of Gideon spans several chapters in the book of Judges. And so we're going to be in this for a number of weeks.

And just at the beginning this week, we're going to try to bite off verses 1 through 24. Now, there's a lot going on even in these verses. And we could spend several weeks just in these first 24 verses up in front of us.

And what I want us to focus on, to keep our eyes on, is a paradox, a tension, that appears in this text and in this story. And the tension is between...

There's an angel. He shows up to Gideon. The tension is between the angel's description of Gideon and how Gideon actually behaves. So we're going to see the angel in verse 12. He's going to come to Gideon and he's going to describe him as this great, mighty man of valor.

[2 : 19] And then in verse 14, he's going to tell him, Hey, you have actually this great and enormous strength. Gideon, on the other hand, does not appear at all like a mighty man of valor. He appears feeble and doubting and hiding from his enemies.

And so our question this week is simple. Why does God call this hesitant and hiding man a mighty man of valor?

A related question would be, what gives us the power to go out on God's mission? What is it that gives us the power to go out on God's mission?

And with that, I'm going to invite you to turn with me to Judges chapter 6. You can turn in your worship guide. You can turn on your phone. You can turn in your Bible. No matter where you turn, remember that this is God's word.

And Proverbs chapter 30 verse 5 tells us, Every word of God proves true. He is a shield to those who take refuge in him. And so that's why we read now Judges chapter 6, starting at verse 1.

[3 : 32] 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 that are in the mountains and the caves and the strongholds. For whenever the Israelites planted crops, the Midianites and the Amalekites and the people of the east would come up against them.

They would encamp against them and devour the produce 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. Both they and their camels could not be counted. So that they laid waste the land as they came in.

And Israel was brought very low because of Midian. And the people of Israel cried out for help to the Lord. Verse 7. 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.

[4 : 43] 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. You shall not fear the gods of the Amorites in whose land you dwell. But you have not obeyed my voice.

Verse 11. Now the angel of the Lord came and sat under the terebinth at Aphra, which belonged to Joash the Abizrite, 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 valor. Verse 13. And Gideon said to him, Please, sir, if the Lord is with us, why then has all this happened to us?

And where are all his wondrous 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.

[5 : 58] 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. Verse 15.

And he said to him, Please, Lord, how can I save Israel? Behold, my clan is the weakest in Manasseh, and I am the least in my father's house. And the Lord said to him, But I will be with you, and you shall strike the Midianites as one man.

And he said to him, If now I have found favor in your eyes, then show me a sign that it is you who speak to me. Please do not depart from here until I come to you and bring out my present and set it before you.

And he said, I will stay until you return. Verse 19. So Gideon went into his house and prepared a young goat and unleavened cakes from 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.

[7 : 10] And he did so. Then the angel of the Lord reached out the tip of the staff that was in his hand, and touched the meat and the unleavened cakes. And fire sprang up from the rock, and consumed the meat and the unleavened 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 Afra, which belongs to the Abizrites. I invite you to pray with me as we come to this portion of God's word.

Our Father in heaven, we praise you, and we thank you again that you are not a God who's far off, but you're a God who comes near to us, that you're a God who's with us, that you speak to us clearly in your word.

[8 : 17] And we ask that you would do that again this morning, that you would show us your mercy and your grace, and you'd show us our need for that mercy, and you would help us to turn in faith and love to you.

And we ask all these things in the mighty name of Jesus Christ. Amen. Amen. As we begin in chapter six, we see in verse one a phrase that we've seen over and over before.

In fact, this has become something of a formula to explain what we've talked about before of the judge's cycle, or the judge's spiral, as some have called it. That the judges are faithful to God for a time, they fall into idolatry and disobedience, and then they again cry out to him.

And so we see in verse one, the people of Israel did what was evil in the sight of the Lord. It's a formulaic statement that we've seen with Ophniel and Ehud. We saw it with Deborah and Barak.

And so in a sense, we're expecting the same thing to happen again in this passage. Once again, we're going to see God's people turn away from him, a judge be raised up, and then they come back.

[9 : 24] But this time, things are worse than ever before. In fact, that should not surprise us. Remember when the cycle is introduced, Judges chapter two, verse 19, it tells us each time there's a cycle, things are going to get worse and worse.

Things are so bad here, verse two, they are hiding out in caves. They have never had to do this before. This was not part of the previous stories in this book.

And we find out very quickly why it is that they're hiding out in the caves. Verses three and four, things are not just bad. Actually, things are so bad.

They are not just oppressed like they were before. They are actually starved. We have not heard before of the food supply for the Israelites being cut off, but that's exactly what's happening here. Verse four, they're devouring the produce of the land and they leave no sustenance in Israel, no sheep or ox or donkey. And so that helps explain for us what's happening later in the chapter.

[10 : 33] Why do we find Gideon, verse 11, beating out wheat in a wine press? Well, he's doing everything he can, right, to hide food from those who are coming to pillage and destroy.

It helps us understand why are they hiding in caves? Well, because they're trying to keep their food, the little food that they have, away from those who are pillaging them and plundering them.

We haven't heard this phrase before. Verse six, Israel was brought very low. Things are worse now than they have been in chapters one through five.

And so they do what they've always done. Verses six and seven, they cry out. Notice though, what they don't do, it's what they failed to do in the past.

They cry out, they don't repent. They're sorry that they're in the situation where they're being plundered. They are not sorry that they've turned aside, verse 10, worshiped the gods of the Amorites.

[11 : 38] And so God comes, verses eight through 10, by this angel, speaks on his behalf to spell out for them what exactly has gone wrong. Look, I told you all to do this and you did that.

I told you all not to worship foreign gods, but instead you have chosen to do that. It's worth noting here that God's condemnation in verses eight through 10 is immediately followed by his deliverance in verse 11.

We'll come back to that later. For now, I want us to move on to our friend Gideon who we meet in verse 11 and he is hiding food. He is beating out wheat in the wine press, hoping somehow that these plunderers as they come through are not going to see him.

Somehow he's going to be able to preserve food for himself and his family by changing his location. He is struggling for basic existence.

In fact, all of Israel here is struggling for basic existence. And the angel comes and says probably one of the last things we would expect him to say. The angel does not first come to deliver some sort of instructions or encouragement.

[12 : 47] No, the angel just shows up, verse 12, and says this, The Lord is with you, O mighty man of valor. And so you can imagine Gideon's thoughts as he is hiding out in a wine press just trying to have enough food to eat.

This angel shows up out of nowhere and just says, You know what? God's with you. And you know what? You are a real strong guy. And of course, Gideon does not buy it.

Verse 12, The Lord is with you. Verse 13, what does he say? If the Lord is with us. You might tell me that God is here with us.

It certainly doesn't feel like that. You might tell me that God is with us. It certainly doesn't look like that. We have heard all the stories about what you did for our forefathers, but where are you now? What good does the story of the Exodus do for us when we can barely eat? What good do your words of presence do for us when we're being ransacked by other countries?

[14 : 01] Gideon is cynical and jaded. He's cynical and jaded based on what's been happening in his country.

That fact that he's having to hide out and just preserve enough food to survive. And what does the angel respond? The angel doesn't answer his complaints at all.

The angel doesn't tell him, Oh no, this is how you should think through it. No, he just gives him a command. Thank you for sharing those complaints, Gideon. And here's what I have to say to you.

Verse 14, go in this might of yours and save Israel from the hand of Midian. Sorry you're feeling oppressed. I'm sorry you're struggling for food.

Step two, go and defeat your conquerors. Which raises our question again, why does God choose this hesitant and hiding man a mighty man of valor?

[15:06] Gideon does not have a great resume. Verse 11, what is he doing? He is not going out in this great strength that he supposedly has to fight Israel's enemies.

No, he's hiding away. He is staying as low as he can. And it makes sense, right? But this is not some great act of bravery or courage.

We have no indication that Gideon has a resume of bravery and courage. Verse 13, we find out he is a disaffected and cynical and jaded young man who has doubts and questions about whether God is really with them.

Verse 15, he goes on to help this angel understand that his resume is really bad. His clan is the weakest in Manasseh. And it's not just his clan that is a problem.

He is also a problem. He is the least in his father's house. And so we have a pretty strong case up front that God has picked the wrong man.

[16:12] God, at least in Gideon's eyes, has made a mistake. There are other clans to choose from. Within his clan, there are other men to pick from.

And so why does God come to Gideon of all these people and tell him in the midst of his failure, his weak resume, no indication, there's no track record here of his victory against oppressors that he is the mighty man of valor?

Well, I've told you only one side of the story. The angel says, O mighty man of valor, but that's not the first thing he says.

What does the angel say first? Verse 12, the Lord is with you. The Lord is with you, O mighty man of valor.

Verse 13, Gideon has doubts about God's presence. What does he say? Verse 14, do I not send you?

[17:27] Gideon explains verse 15 that his resume is really bad. He is the weakest and the least. And what does the angel say? Verse 16, the angel does not say, oh, no, no, Gideon, that's not true.

Manasseh's not the weakest. You're actually such a strong man. No, he doesn't argue with Gideon. What does he say? But I will be with you.

This is the same thing we saw with JL a couple weeks ago. God is not interested in picking the strongest or the most talented.

God does not choose to do his work through those who are most gifted or impressive. God works through those who follow him in obedience.

Victory comes to the faithful who take God at his word. By the way, he doesn't just promise his presence, he also promises great victory.

[18:39] The same thing he promised to Barak. Verse 16, you shall strike the Midianites as one man. Why is Gideon a mighty man of valor?

Gideon is a mighty man of valor because God is with him. God does not call the qualified.

God qualifies the called. God is not interested in the most talented or gifted or flashy people. God is interested in those who will obey.

And God gives his presence to his people. Gideon is a mighty man of valor for one reason and one reason only.

God's presence with him. Remember I mentioned the other question we're asking is this, what gives us the power to go out on God's mission?

[19:52] And the answer is the same, God is with us. Proverbs 18, verse 10 reminds us, the name of the Lord is a strong tower.

The righteous man runs into it and is safe. Psalm 125, verse 1. Those who love the Lord are like Mount Zion, which cannot be moved, but abides forever.

Psalm 125, verse 2, as the mountains surround Jerusalem, so the Lord surrounds his people from this time forth and forevermore.

Christian, how can you follow after God? How can you go on the mission that he has called us to? For one reason and one reason only, God is with you.

Gideon's question in verse 15 is our question as well. He says to him, please, Lord, how can I save Israel?

[21 : 16] Behold, my clan is the weakest in Manasseh and I am the least in my father's house. Don't we ask the same questions?

how can I share my hope in Christ with my neighbor? I am awkward and I lack skill, but I will be with you.

How can I stand for truth when I know that others will slander me? Behold, I am someone who only likes peace, but I am with you.

How can I love my enemies and pray for those who persecute me? When I look in my heart, all I see is anger, but I am with you.

How can I make the call that I know that I need to make and I'm desperately avoiding? I'm not even sure what I'm going to say. but I am with you.

[22 : 29] How can I remain faithful to my marriage vows when it is a relationship that's filled with coldness and distance? But I will be with you.

How can I move towards those who have hurt me with forgiveness? Behold, I am filled with bitterness. but I will be with you.

How can I confess my sins and stop living a double life? What will happen when people find out? What about the consequences?

But I will be with you. Some of you are wondering, you want to switch to this mic? I'm some of you are wondering, how do I continue the journey that I'm on with parenting?

It's been a long road. There's failures and mistakes in the past. There's things that I would change. I'm not sure I want to keep going.

[23 : 44] I'm not sure I have the perseverance or the wisdom that it takes, and I wonder if I should just give up if it's too late. And God's word to you is the same, but I am with you.

Gideon is right in a sense. Gideon is right that obedience is impossible if we're left to ourselves. Obedience is impossible unless God is with us. We are not moralists. We don't believe that we can pull ourselves up by our bootstraps. We don't believe we can will ourselves to obey.

Our hope is that God's spirit is at work within us stirring up our hearts and our minds to obey. Without God, we can't.

With God, we can. God is with us by his Holy Spirit. There's comforting words on the back of our worship guide which remind us of this.

[24 : 48] Christ promises a spirit that no enemies will be able to withstand. God's children in the time of opposition, when they understand themselves and what they stand for, are given by God a spirit against which no enemies can stand.

The spirit of liberty gives boldness, strength, and courage against opposition. God's spirit, God's presence with us is what gives us everything we need to follow after him in obedience.

In fact, we can have even greater confidence than Gideon had. We have greater confidence than Gideon had because we have greater access to the Holy Spirit than Gideon had.

We don't live in the time of the Old Testament. Verse 9 on your worship guide helps us understand the difference between God's presence in the Old Testament and the New Testament.

This is a theologian named Herman Boving who says the Holy Spirit, and this is he's talking about the Old Testament, had come down to a few independent persons and only temporarily for a specific purpose.

[25 : 57] Remember, one of our themes for the book of Judges is the power of spirit-filled leadership. What do we see? We see the Holy Spirit showing up here and there on specific people. And what does he tell us?

Now, that is in the age of the New Testament, it descended upon the whole church and upon all its members, and it remains dwelling and working there permanently. Christian, God promises you his presence by his Holy Spirit.

If you are in Christ, God is with you. God is with you in a way that he was not with every Israelite in the Old Testament.

God has poured out his spirit in a way that is new in the new covenant. God has poured it out on all believers. It is not something had by some, but had by all.

You have God's presence. God is with you turning a heart of stone into a heart of flesh. God is with you giving you the courage that you need to stand against opposition.

[27 : 06] As we follow after God, we know that we have his presence. obedience. As we follow him in obedience.

Now, it's important to say as we follow him in obedience because sometimes preachers say things like this and people hear, oh, God is with me in whatever I do. God is not with you as you try to pick winning numbers for the Powerball.

God is not promising success in every business venture that you try out. He does promise his ultimate power and his ultimate success as we follow after him in obedience.

God promises us success in the way that the psalmist talks about in Psalm 27, that he knows he will see the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living.

God promises his presence in the way Jesus speaks about it in Matthew 28, verse 20. He gives the mission to the church, right? He says, you're going out to make disciples of all nations.

[28 : 13] Behold, I am with you always, even to the end of the age. Christian, God is with you.

In fact, this passage is dripping. It is saturated with God's grace. Remember, I told you in verses 8 through 10, God comes with this word of condemnation and we see zero repentance from the people.

And what does he immediately do? He moves into deliverance. God does not wait for his people to repent before he raises up Gideon.

That's the same thing we're told in Romans chapter 5, verse 8. It was while we were still sinners that Christ died for us. It is deliverance followed by obedience.

It is not obedience followed by deliverance. Verse 17, Gideon is looking for a sign. Now, it would be tempting at this point to say, oh, Gideon lacks faith.

[29 : 18] He needs some sort of confirmation. But we have to remember, Gideon is trying to act out the old Russian proverb, trust, but verify. It's not that he doesn't trust God's word.

It's that he needs to make sure it is actually God who is speaking. And so what he's saying is here is, I want to make sure I'm not having a hallucination. Okay? Please confirm for me that this is a word from God.

And God comes and confirms that for him. Gideon did not have clarity. We do. We do not need a sign to remind us or confirm God's presence.

We have already received the greatest sign. The greatest sign is this, that God sent his one and only son, that whoever would believe in him would have eternal life. The greatest sign is that we look to Christ who became a man and walked life on this earth.

Colossians 1.15 tells us this, Jesus is the visible image of the invisible God. God. We no longer look for a sign. We have the greatest sign possible.

[30 : 26] And so now, after Christ's resurrection and his ascension, his presence is even greater than it was in the Old Testament. That's the promise that Jesus makes in John chapter 14.

In John chapter 16, I'm going to send my spirit to be with you. In the Old Testament, the spirit was given to certain people at certain times.

In the New Testament, God gives it to his whole church. Without God, we can't.

With God, we can. God is with you. Why does God call Gideon a mighty man of valor? Because God is with him.

What gives us the power to go out on God's mission? The answer is the same. God is with us. Christian, God is with you.

[31 : 29] You are mighty men and mighty women of valor because of God's presence. Let's follow after him. Let's pray.

Our Father in heaven, we praise you and thank you for your word. And we thank you that we live as Jesus is already ascended to the right hand of God the Father. That he pours out the spirit on us as he's promised.

That we are assured of your presence and your power. We ask that you would remind us of that. that it would motivate us and enable us to move forward following you together this week.

We ask these things in the mighty name of Jesus Christ. Amen.