

Steady Leadership, Selfish Leadership

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[0 : 00] 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. I'm a special welcome if you are 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. Now, we're continuing this morning our series in the book of Judges, and you'll remember that the book of Judges is about many 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 human can do, which is to change the hearts of men. It's about the power of spirit-filled leadership, and it's about God's mercy to hard-hearted people, people like you and me.

Last week, we ended the story of Abimelech, and we also ended Judges chapter 9, and you'll remember our big question was, what is our hope when we find ourselves under wicked leaders? And we had a couple of answers to that. The first one was that God is still at work, whether we see Him or not.

And the second one was that those wicked leaders will, in fact, receive justice. In fact, we've been spending some time now over the past several weeks looking at leadership from different angles. And so, when we were at the very beginning of Judges chapter 9, we saw the principle that we'll talk about again this morning, that we often, not always, we often get the leaders we deserve. The very end of chapter 8, as we saw the end of the Gideon story, we saw that success reveals the heart. And at the beginning of chapter 8, as Gideon was winding down, we saw the sorry state of Israel, that groups and individuals were loyal only to themselves. We ended last week in something of a chaotic note as we closed out the Abimelech administration. Remember that Abimelech received his just desserts, and the men of Gilead he had an alliance with received their just desserts. And yet, Israel is left in chaos, which leads us to our passage this morning. And our question is, how does God preserve His people in the midst of chaos? How does God preserve His people in the midst of chaos? Now, it's with that, we turn now to Judges chapter 10. I invite you to turn with me 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. God tells us that His Word is more precious than gold, even the finest gold, and it is sweeter than honey, even honey that comes straight from the honeycomb, which is why we read now in Judges chapter 10, starting at verse 1. After Abimelech there arose to save Israel Tola, the son of Pua, son of Dodo, a man of Issachar. And he lived at Shamir in the hill country of Ephraim, and he judged Israel 23 years. Then he died and was buried at Shamir. Verse 3. After him arose Jer the Gileadite, who judged Israel 22 years. And he had 30 sons who rode on 30 donkeys, and they had 30 cities called Habath Jer to this day, which are in the land of Gilead. And Jer died and was buried in Cammon. I invite you to pray with me as we come to this portion of God's Word. Our Father in heaven, we do thank you again for the sun this morning that melts our parking lot, that we'd be able to gather together in person and worship you.

[3 : 54] We thank you also for your Word, that you continue just as you sustain this earth through the sun, you sustain us by your Word, that you speak to us, that you nourish us, you challenge us, you encourage us. We ask that you would do that this morning, and most of all, we ask that you would show us Christ, that we would see even more how beautiful and glorious and loving he is. We thank you that we don't worry this morning about whether we've earned these things or deserve them. We know that we don't and we haven't, and so we simply ask for them in the mighty name of

Jesus Christ. Amen.

Some of you, not all of us, were alive on August 8, 1974. And if that date rings a bell, it's because it is the day that Richard Nixon announced his resignation as president in the midst of the Watergate scandal. And so the next day, August the 9th, Gerald Ford was sworn in as president. Now, if you are coming up on history trivia anytime soon, this is important for you to stash away, Gerald Ford is the only president in the history of our country who was neither elected as president nor as vice president. You'll remember that Nixon's vice president was Spiro Agnew, who had to resign over tax evasion. And so Ford was basically nominated, selected. The people did not vote on him. It's the only time that's happened in our nation's history. And Ford became a solid, a steady president known as a fair dealer. He kept the economy on track, and he was president for a grand total of about two and a half years. Also an extremely short time to serve our country.

Now, I hope I don't offend anyone with what I'm about to say, but Gerald Ford was boring. Gerald Ford is not known for his great accomplishments. We know him for a few things.

He pardoned Nixon, which some people say that's why he lost to Jimmy Carter. Of course, I'm sure that's a debate. And he kept the economy on track. So boring, but faithful. Boring, but faithful.

Gerald Ford stabilized the country after the chaos of Richard Nixon. And it's exactly that same thing we see this morning. We could say the same about Tola, the son of Pua. We know almost nothing about him. We learn a few pertinent points. Verse one, we're told he arose to save Israel. Verse two, he judged Israel for 23 years. And outside of some geographical and family details, that's it.

That's what we know about Tola. Saved Israel, 23 years. Now, that should create a little bit of a problem for us. You should be thinking to yourself, okay, he saved Israel, but from whom? No enemies are named here. We don't hear, as we've heard before, about the foreign nations or kings that he had to conquer. So in what sense did Tola, the son of Pua, actually save Israel? Now, one pastor puts it this way. He asks the question, who did Tola rise to save Israel from? Tola saved Israel from itself.

[7 : 18] Tola was Gerald Ford to Abimelech's Richard Nixon. We've seen all over chapter nine, just a spiral that happened under Abimelech, the downward fall of Israel. Now, it's certainly possible that Tola saved them from some sort of external enemies, but the challenge here is obvious. How do you come back from a leader like Abimelech? How do you recover from someone who goes around? He kills his own brothers. Remember, beginning of chapter nine, everyone except for his youngest brother is killed. He kills 69 of his 70 brothers. How is Israel supposed to recover from that? Well, the answer is Tola.

Tola comes to save Israel from the chaos of the Abimelech administration. Tola comes and has a life that appears to be like Gerald Ford's. It is a life of quiet, steady, boring faithfulness.

In fact, after Tola and Jer finish their terms, it's 45 years in total. Tola is there for 23 of those years, Jer for 22. We're told, we didn't read this this morning, but in the very next verse, verse six, Israel returns to idolatry. And so what he does in the midst of being a boring, in some ways, inconsequential leader is actually very powerful. He steadies the nation of Israel. He holds them back from further idolatry. After the just train wreck that is Gideon and Abimelech, he pulls God's people back. And so in this short passage, these five verses with very few details and two judges about whom we know almost everything. There's a few principles for us. The small principle, the lowercase p principle is this. There are worse things than a steady and faithful leader. There are worse things than a leader who's boring. There are worse things than a leader who has a steady hand on the wheel.

That's the small principle, a principle about leadership. The big principle is this. God never gives up on his people.