

## Victory of the Lamb – May 21, 2017 – Pastor Bill Limmer

### Judges 6:1-24 God uses the Ordinary for the Extraordinary - Your Call From God

Doris Taylor was born in Norwood, South Australia, 1909. When she was seven an accident caused injury to her spine and she was almost continuously in hospital for the next 9 years. At the age of 16 she was very seriously disabled - she couldn't turn her head, sit up, or even feed herself. During the Depression of the 1930s she became concerned for those who were disadvantaged. Doris Taylor began supplying hot midday meals for the aged and chronically ill in their homes. This was the beginning of Meals on Wheels. Remember Doris was a cripple - she was wheeled around on a sort of light weight bed on wheels, and needed constant care, but she was still able to put so much energy into creating this organization to help others whom she considered worse off than she was. There was a need and God called Doris Taylor, ordinary, seemingly ill-suited and terribly disabled. She could have argued quite reasonably that this was too hard and should be someone else's job.

Please turn to the person sitting next to you and say God desires to do extraordinary things through you! Let's say Aidan's confirmation verse together: Jeremiah 29:11 **For I know the plans I have for you," declares the LORD, "plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.**

Today we are beginning a new series on a man named Gideon. The name Gideon means to he down or cut off. Throughout this series we will see that God uses the ordinary to accomplish the extraordinary. The book of Judges was written about 3000 years ago but even though there weren't planes, trains, cars, i-phones and androids, twitter nor Instagram, and the culture was just like ours is today. Everyone did as they saw fit. It was a time of relative truth and what makes sense to me and looking out for me. Gideon's people, the nation of Israel, were weak militarily and most unfortunately spiritually because of their lost grip on truth – that is God. The people felt they were hew down or cut off from God. Here is how humiliating things were for them - Israel would go out and faithfully plant their crops and year after year the powerful Midian army would invade and literally move their families right into the middle of Israel's crops to eat. This was humiliating and devastating to say the least because Israel could not fight back without being routed and it also meant they moved out of their homes into the caves and were without food. Israel was left hiding and hungry. It would be kind of like going to the grocery store paying for the groceries only to have someone else take them to their car.

And finally, as so often happens as a last resort, Israel cries out to the Lord. And the Lord responds by sending a prophet not a military power, a sermon instead of a sword. Thanks right. Actually the prophet did bring the sword, it was sword of the message of the 1<sup>st</sup> Commandment. Verse 10: **'I am the LORD your God; do not worship the gods of the Amorites, in whose land you live.' But you have not listened to me.**" The Israelites had set up altars to Baal and Asherah. Before we rip them a part for being so unevolved could it be that you and I have set up false god's too, people or things that really take 1<sup>st</sup> place in our hearts. Things maybe like sports, technology, social media, knowledge, information, hobbies. All these things are fine until we have to have them. **Parents please remember 100 years from now, the only thing that will matter in the life of your child is their relationship with Jesus.** ( Please keep first things first in your families.) **#thebestisyettocome**

**The angel of the LORD came and sat down under the oak in Ophrah that belonged to Joash the Abiezrite, where his son Gideon was threshing wheat in a winepress to keep it from the Midianites.**  
**<sup>12</sup>When the angel of the LORD appeared to Gideon, he said, "The LORD is with you, mighty warrior."**

Verses 11-12) This is God's mercy as he doesn't give the people what they deserve. They did deserve to be hewn down or cut off from God. In the middle of all this the angel of the LORD appeared to Gideon. As we look at the context of the verse surrounding this verse we know that the angel of the LORD is really the pre-incarnate Christ, the LORD himself. God sends Jesus to the rescue. But Gideon doesn't recognize this at first. He is focused on himself and his circumstances. Gideon is in his own mind trying to make it from one day to the next, fearful of what was out there. He was threshing wheat in a winepress. A winepress was usually built into the ground so that you could get inside a winepress and disappear. Normally threshing wheat was done out in the open by animals with a sled. Gideon has a stick and is quaking in fear as he carries out his covert operation threshing wheat. Are any of these circumstances leading you to have worry or fear? What are you afraid of? Fear of the future. Fear of not finding Mr or Mrs Right? Fear of missing out. Fear of failure. Fear of success. Fear of being found out. Fear of not adding up? Like Gideon we sometimes focus so much on our outward circumstances. Say Ethan's confirmation verse with me: Isaiah 41:10 **So do not fear, for I am with you; do not be dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you and help you; I will uphold you with my righteous right hand.**

And he responds, **"Pardon me, my lord,"** Gideon replied, **"but if the LORD is with us, why has all this happened to us? Where are all his wonders that our ancestors told us about when they said, 'Did not the LORD bring us up out of Egypt?' But now the LORD has abandoned us and given us into the hand of Midian.** Verse 13. Gideon responds with a rebuttal: If God is with us why has this happened, where are the miracles, the wonders, why has he abandoned us. Do you ever feel like that? Have you ever been caught in the trap of your circumstances so that all you see is your circumstances and not God? Some here this morning are asking where are you God in my marriage, in my financial world. Where are you in my medical diagnosis? Don't you see I am being crushed. Let's join in Elijah's confirmation verse: **Hebrews 11:4 By faith Abel brought God a better offering than Cain did. By faith he was commended as righteous, when God spoke well of his offerings. And by faith Abel still speaks, even though he is dead.** Friends **"You can rest in the character of God even when you can't see the activity of God.**

**The LORD turned to him and said, "Go in the strength you have and save Israel out of Midian's hand. Am I not sending you?"** <sup>15</sup> **"Pardon me, my lord,"** Gideon replied, **"but how can I save Israel? My clan is the weakest in Manasseh, and I am the least in my family."** <sup>16</sup> **The LORD answered, "I will be with you, and you will strike down all the Midianites, leaving none alive."** Verses 14-16. Rebuttal part 2 but my clan is weak and I am the weakest in my family. This is a honest confession. Notice that God doesn't say, it's not true that you are the weakest. You have a cousin who is really weaker than you. God ignores all of that because God knows it doesn't matter if Gideon will take his focus off himself and focus on God instead. This is moving from the ordinary to the extraordinary. God uses the ordinary to accomplish the extraordinary. Go in my strength, the extraordinary. In confirmation class we talk about two things that are ordinary but are anything but ordinary when they are combined with the word of God. Baptism and the Lord's Supper. Simple water but combined with God's powerful word of promise brings the refreshment of life saving faith. The Lord's Supper, simple wafer and a half ounce of Mogen David wine but combined with the powerful word of God the ordinary becomes extraordinary, bread and body of Jesus, wine and blood of Jesus for the forgiveness of your sins. There is power in the name of Jesus to break every chain.

**Am I not sending you.** The exact same thing Jesus would do with his disciples of old and today. He said it this way on his ascension day, Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit,<sup>20</sup> and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.” He will be with you he is with you. The reason why God is sending you and me is so that others may come to faith in him as well. Let’s read AJ’s verse together: John 3:16 **For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.**

Gideon brings an offering of worship. **Gideon replied, “If now I have found favor in your eyes, give me a sign that it is really you talking to me.”<sup>18</sup> Please do not go away until I come back and bring my offering and set it before you.” And the LORD said, “I will wait until you return.”<sup>19</sup> Gideon went inside, prepared a young goat, and from an ephah<sup>a</sup> of flour he made bread without yeast. Putting the meat in a basket and its broth in a pot, he brought them out and offered them to him under the oak.** Verses 17-19 Understand this was a whole hearted devotion thing. This wasn’t a left over offering, a half-hearted offering. This isn’t a value meal from the beloved Golden Arches. This was an offering of the equivalent of twenty loaves of bread and whole animal. God consumes the offering showing that it is acceptable. As we move forward in this study we will find out that there will be no contest, not because there is not a conflict, not because Midian will route Israel but because of God’s power. Friends you can trust in God’s power regardless of the circumstances. We conclude with Fa’s confirmation verse: Philippians 4:13 **I can do all this through him who gives me strength.** Like Gideon we are pretty ordinary but God has prepared the extra ordinary for us to do. Jesus has made us his own (baptism), he has given us purpose (the Great Commission) and the power to carry it out (agency). He is calling you. Follow him right into heaven. Amen.