

Victory of the Lamb – June 11, 2017 – Bill Limmer

Ordinary People Extraordinary God - Judges 8:22-35 – Gideon’s Gaffe – Secret Idols

The last couple of weeks we have had a visitor at our house. Meet Chief, ([picture of Chief on the screen](#)) appropriately named because he runs the household. Chief is a 7 month British Lab. Fun and funny as all get out. More energy than ten two and half year-olds put together. Very athletic. Quick as a jet. Very well trained. He won’t even eat his food unless you tell him it is ok. As his breed would suggest he is a phenomenal retriever. He will bring you tennis balls, towels, watches – don’t ask, whatever. There is no hiding things from Chief. What is hidden will be revealed by this little four-legged black puppy. That is true with people too, what is hidden in our hearts will be revealed sooner-or-later. (Not to mention that God can see right through our hearts to begin with).

This morning we as we conclude our series on Gideon called Ordinary People Extraordinary God, let’s take a peak back. When we started this series three weeks ago Gideon was crouched down in a him, Gideon didn’t recognize who it was because he was so consumed by his dreadful circumstances. Gideon confessed that he was the weakest in all his clan. But the angel of the LORD called him a mighty warrior because God was with him. Two weeks ago Gideon was instructed by the LORD to tear down the altar to Baal and the Asherah pole because God is jealous for us and doesn’t want us worshiping something that is not only inferior to him but in the case of Baal good for absolutely nothing. Last week, in this amazing message we learned that God is for Gideon and us even when we waver in fear and that he greater and more powerful than even our biggest fears, enemies and obstacles. And God gave Gideon and his 300 men an absolutely astounding victory over 135K enemy soldiers. Gideon and his men went into battle with horns in one hand and lanterns in the other. And yet they were victorious because God fought for them. Gideon went from hiding to being honored.

But right before this battle started which God himself won we begin to see something that was hidden in Gideon. Something starts to leak through. There is a stain of ego and pride from Gideon’s heart that starts to be revealed. As Astro, the Jetson’s dog would say, Rut, Ro. And here it comes: Gideon said, **“A sword for the Lord and for Gideon.**

And so the account goes, after God’s victory over the Midianites (Judges 8:22ff) **The Israelites said to Gideon, “Rule over us—you, your son and your grandson—because you have saved us from the hand of Midian.”** Gideon is so honored, so popular that the people ask him to be king, to set up a dynasty. This is the way the people can show their appreciation to him. ²³ **But Gideon told them, “I will not rule over you, nor will my son rule over you. The LORD will rule over you.”** Way to go Gideon. God does get all the credit. He is your strength. He is the one who made you victorious. It appears that Gideon is on the right track, but the rest of the story would prove otherwise. What is hidden is being revealed. What was really going on in Gideon’s heart? Here is a glimpse. ²⁴ **And he said, “I do have one request, that each of you give me an earring from your share of the plunder.” (It was the custom of the Ishmaelites to wear gold earrings. They answered, “We’ll be glad to give them.” So they spread out a garment, and each of them threw a ring from his plunder onto it. ²⁶The weight of the gold rings he asked for came to seventeen hundred shekels, not counting the ornaments, the pendants and the purple garments worn by the kings of Midian or the chains that were on their camels’ necks.) . . . Jerub-Baal son of Joash went back home to live. ³⁰ He had seventy sons of his own, for he had many wives. ³¹ His concubine, who lived in Shechem, also bore him a son, whom he named Abimelek.** Gideon moved from being God’s instrument to allegedly being instrumental in the victory vs. the enemy. Gideon succumbs to the I deserve it syndrome. I am entitled after all because I am the one who said, A sword

the Lord and for Gideon.” So how about a little gold? Gideon just stepped over from glorifying God to glorifying himself. Give me a “humble” offering, a humble gift of gold from each of you. Nice graduation, birthday, or Father’s Day gift, right? Make no mistake about it friends, the spoils go to the king. He was saying he wasn’t going to be king but he was acting every bit like a king. Like an ancient eastern king, Gideon would go on to live large, to marry many women and he even had a foreign concubine on the side. And through this illegitimate relationship he had a son. He named the boy Abimelech. Which doesn’t mean anything to you and me except he stinks as picking out names. But here is what the name Abimelech means: Abi – means my father and melech means king. And so when we put it together we have “my father is king.” Gideon wanted a name for himself. Know anyone like that? What is hidden in Gideon’s heart is revealed.

The soldiers gave the not king, king, Gideon 1700 shekels of gold, or about 50 pounds worth of gold or right at 1 million dollars. Not bad for carrying a lantern and a horn into a battle, watching from the sidelines and never having to lift a finger, right? 1 million bucks for just showing up. Didn’t even have to stand in line at Kwik Trip to buy a lottery ticket.

Judges 8:27 **Gideon made the gold into an ephod, which he placed in Ophrah, his town. All Israel prostituted themselves by worshiping it there, and it became a snare to Gideon and his family.** So Gideon takes the 50 pounds of gold and makes an ephod, a garment commanded by God for the priests, the leaders of worship to wear, and Gideon makes one on his own without permission from God, an ongoing testimony to Gideon. This was a super huge gaffe. Gideon likely never assumed that this golden ephod would become a trap, a snare to the whole nation, including himself. But it became an idol. (The people began to worship it in awe and wonder as if it were the Michael Jordan statue outside the United Center in Chicago.)

Any idols in your life? **Let’s watch a video about idol worship. Play video.** Oops. Do we find our value our identity in sports? Are we better than others because we play sports better than others or because the team we cheer for is better than others? I can’t read your heart and you can’t read mine but God can and does. Sports are not bad in and of themselves, making sports the most important thing in our life is idolatry. Any secret idols in your life? The other day I asked a twenty something “what would you be lost without?” What do you think the response was? It was social media. As I asked the question the twenty something was . . . scrolling through Instagram. We are so good at using technology we are dead tired, we can’t go to sleep because we have our phone in her hand glowing in the midnight or later darkness of our bedrooms. A saw report that related that many of us have become so reliant on our smartphones, we use them to carry out a staggering 221 tasks every day. Any secret idols in your life? Last week I was talking with a really great guy, who broke down and said my relationship with my son is not what I want it to be. I don’t blame him. I was just working so much when he was younger. It is kind of a case like the cats in the cradle. He was a workaholic. I think I must have received at least one email a day last week that talked about life/work balance. Of course, I didn’t read them because I have things to do. Oops. Any secret idols in your life like maybe wanting to have a name for ourselves, make ourselves look better - as in a “a sword for the Lord and for Gideon/Bill.” Have you ever gossiped? When is the last time in gossip did the person being gossiped about get lifted up. That is not how it works, is it. The person being gossiped about is brought down. When we gossip, whether we realize it or not, we are attempting to make a name for ourselves because we are better than so and so. What is hidden will be revealed. Sometimes we gossip because we are hurt. “When people are hurt in their life or have been hurt by an authority figure and they can’t do anything about it, they will take it out on the closest

authority figure to them. If they can't find an authority figure, they will simply take it out on the person closest to them that they are jealous of." If you have been hurt by anyone, gossip isn't the answer. The answer to all hurt is the grace of Jesus Christ.

Any secret idols? All of them will be revealed. Paul says in Romans 7 **I do not understand what I do. For what I want to do I do not do, but what I hate I do.** ¹⁶ **And if I do what I do not want to do, I agree that the law is good.** ¹⁷ **As it is, it is no longer I myself who do it, but it is sin living in me.** ¹⁸ **For I know that good itself does not dwell in me, that is, in my sinful nature. For I have the desire to do what is good, but I cannot carry it out.** ¹⁹ **For I do not do the good I want to do, but the evil I do not want to do—this I keep on doing.** ²⁰ **Now if I do what I do not want to do, it is no longer I who do it, but it is sin living in me that does it.** ²¹ **So I find this law at work: Although I want to do good, evil is right there with me.** ²² **For in my inner being I delight in God's law;** ²³ **but I see another law at work in me, waging war against the law of my mind and making me a prisoner of the law of sin at work within me.** ²⁴ **What a wretched man I am! Who will rescue me from this body that is subject to death?** ²⁵ **Thanks be to God, who delivers me through Jesus Christ our Lord** I have worship things and people that had nothing to do with God. I could easily go down my list from myself, to sports, tech, people pleasing, to entertainment, to family, to work, to stress and more. How about you? What is hidden will be revealed. Friends our faith and our thoughts, words and actions will never be perfect this side of heaven because we have sin. But don't get crushed by your accusing enemy Satan. A church theologian has said, "as long as there is a battle you know that you are alive in Christ." One of my favorite passages is found in Mark 9:24, It says, **I believe, help my unbelief.** And the Holy Spirit is making us new in Christ. The reason there is a struggle against sin is because the Holy Spirit is working in us. We are being empowered to steer clear of sins because sin is not our master Jesus is! (Again, we will be perfect when we get to heaven not before.)

So, Gideon messed up big time. But do you know we meet Gideon in Hebrews 11. For those of you who have been going to church for a long time you may recall that Hebrews 11 is the so called "heroes of faith chapter." There he weaknesses and all, in the heroes of faith chapter! He is the heroes of faith chapter with all the others with their sins and weaknesses too. Gideon and all the others fell into sin but not away from grace. The gospel of Jesus Christ is no longer hidden but it is revealed and in full sight. We have fallen into sin too but not away from grace. We will be in heaven not because we didn't worship false gods – we have. We will be in heaven not because we were perfect in worship – we weren't. We will be in heaven not because our hearts, secrets, motivations and attitudes have always been pure – they haven't. We will be in heaven not because we gave all glory to God – we haven't. We will be in heaven not only because Jesus died for our sins but his perfect worship and obedience to God is also credited to our heart, our life before God! Through the cross and empty tomb, Jesus revealed that he is our Savior God no matter what sins were a part of our life, original, actual, secret or hidden.

Prayer of Martin Luther and ours too: Lord Jesus you are my righteousness, I am your sin. You took on you what was mine; yet set on me what was yours. You became what you were not, that I might become what I was not. **God made him who had no sin, to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.** That's the comfort, the joy, the love of God. That is GRACE. Amen.