

First Baptist Church Smiths Falls

Sunday, May 6, 2018
Communion Sunday

Scripture: Judges 3:16-22 New International Version (NIV)

16 Now Ehud had made a double-edged sword about a cubit long, which he strapped to his right thigh under his clothing. 17 He presented the tribute to Eglon king of Moab, who was a very fat man. 18 After Ehud had presented the tribute, he sent on their way those who had carried it. 19 But on reaching the stone images near Gilgal he himself went back to Eglon and said, "Your Majesty, I have a secret message for you." The king said to his attendants, "Leave us!" And they all left. 20 Ehud then approached him while he was sitting alone in the upper room of his palace and said, "I have a message from God for you." As the king rose from his seat, 21 Ehud reached with his left hand, drew the sword from his right thigh and plunged it into the king's belly. 22 Even the handle sank in after the blade, and his bowels discharged. Ehud did not pull the sword out, and the fat closed in over it.

Congregational Prayer: "Our Father"

Our Father, Which Art In Heaven, Hallowed Be Thy Name. Thy Kingdom Come. Thy Will Be Done, On Earth As It Is In Heaven. Give Us This Day, Our Daily Bread, And Forgive Us Our Trespases, As We Forgive Those Who Trespass Against Us. And Lead Us Not Into Temptation, But Deliver Us From Evil. For Thine Is The Kingdom

Message: "The 3:16 Trail: Our Rescuer"

Introduction:

- The Peace Tower at the Parliament Buildings in Ottawa has three exposed sides - each side has a large window, and each window has scripture etched on it for all to see: Over the South window: "*Give the king thy judgments, O God, and thy righteousness unto the king's son.*" (Psalm 72:1); West window: "*Where there is no vision, the people perish*" (Proverbs 29:18); Over the East window: "*He shall have*

Dominion also from sea to sea" (Psalm 72:8). The Coat of Arms for Canada has a motto from the Bible that is also on one of these windows: Latin: "'A Mari usque ad Mare' which means 'From sea to sea.'" again a reference to Psalm 72.

- Our country is a nation built on Christian hope. Our nation is one built on sharing the Good News of Jesus Christ. Our nation has its roots in the Bible and in the tenets of the Christian Faith. And yet, where are we now? Are we getting closer to God, or is Canada falling farther and farther away from The Lord? Are we being more obedient to God right now, or are we turning our back on God, and our Christian heritage?
- In the Book of Judges, because of their own disobedience to God, holy leaders known as Judges were needed to direct the people back to God. Today, as we take our fourth walk down the 3:16 Trail, let's talk about three of God's Judges, and prepare ourselves for communion as we too call for a return to obedience to God even when we fail.

Part1: Looking Back..Fail & Rescues

- So, let's take a look back. We started the 3:16 trail almost a month ago when we noted that in the Bible, many of the books' chapter 3 and verse 16 had some amazing truths for us. We looked at Genesis 3:16, we

were amazed right away to see God’s plan for salvation even in the midst of punishment. Then, we went to Exodus 3:16 and we saw that God watches over all things in our lives. Last week we turned to Joshua 3:16, and saw a God of miracles as the waters of the Jordan River stopped flowing as the people crossed on dry ground. And here in Judges chapter 3 we have another amazing 3:16 on our 3:16 trail through the Bible.

- In the book of Judges God raised up of 12 leaders of the Israelite nation after they settled into the Promised Land. Six of these judges are major Judges [Othniel, Ehud, Deborah, Gideon, Jephthah, and Sampson] and six minor ones [Shamgar, Tola, Jair, Ibzan, Elon, and Abdon].
- The me give you the not so fancy 50 cent word for what happened to the people right after Joshua, the leader of the Lord’s people, died at the age of 110, as was recorded in Judges 2:8: apostasy. The word apostasy is defined in the “Harpers Bible Dictionary” as this: “Rebellion or abandonment of faith.” The simplest way to think of apostasy is this: you know the truth, you know the way of the truth, you know that God has been faithful in the past, and while you know all this is true, yet you turn your back on God to do your own thing.

- In the Book of Judges, chapter 2 has a long but perfect explanation as to what was happening to the Hebrew people as we approach this next section of our 3:16 trail – Judges 2:10 to 23 tells us how the people simply forgot - or refused to remember, God’s goodness. This passage says that the people feel prey to the beliefs and pagan practices of those left in the Promised Land. They walked away from God to follow what they wanted to worship. They left God to be their own gods. Verse 10 says that the next generation grew up not knowing the Lord. They grew up not knowing what the Lord had done for Israel. In verse 11 we see that they then started to serve the baals – the gods of the area. Verse 12 says that they forsook the Lord.
- Let’s just pause here. Does this sound familiar? Does this sound like what’s going on today. Canada was to be a holy Christian nation. New France was to be as the New Jerusalem. The British saw Canada as an opportunity to grow the Christian faith. Our nation was founded on the principles of the Bible. Did you know that the Parliament Buildings in Ottawa have dozens of Biblical references engraved throughout?” Did you know that in 1981, Pierre Elliott Trudeau signed his name to the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms which begins: “Whereas

Canada is founded upon principles that recognize the supremacy of God and the rule of the law.”? Did you know that we used to have Dominion Day on July 1st, until 1983 when a back-bencher’s bill was passed with only 12 MPs in attendance, so now, July 1st is called Canada Day? It seems rather clear that we are getting further and further away from our Christian roots. We are getting further and further away from our Christian heritage. We are getting further and further away from our Christian background on which this great nation stands. We have done this as a nation, and it is apostasy just like the Nation of Israel. We have chosen to walk away from the truth of God and instead we have become people who do what we really want to do, what we really think others might like us to do. We are so concerned with being politically and in other ways as correct as possible, that, quite frankly, it is killing us.

- Keep in mind that God Himself was to be the leader of the people during the time of the Judges. And all the people had to do was listen, obey, and follow. They were to be a holy nation led by God alone.
- Sadly, today, too many of our leaders seem to be intent on leading us as quickly and as powerfully as they can away from God. Elections are coming on all three levels of government so that, by the end of next year

we all have a chance to have a voice. Let me say it like this: please exercise your right as a Christian to let your voice be known in the ballot box about the direction that you know God wants us to be in this community. It is a privilege to be able to vote – go speak the truth in love. You have a voice in your vote and it can and will make a difference – go make sure that your voice is heard to our leaders.

Part 2: Ehud and Two other Judges

- So, therefore, let’s take a look at our 3:16 verse today from the book of Judges. I don’t know whether to laugh, cry, or feel some other way when I read Judges 3:16, but it is part of a remarkable story: “*Now Ehud had a double edged sword about a foot and a half long which he strapped to his right thigh under his clothing.*” Okay, admittedly, this verse does not seem to be as outstanding as others on our 3:16 trail, unto you look closer. Judges 3:12 tells us that the people of Israel once again walked away from God and the king of Moab held power over the people of Israel for 18 years until (verse 15) the people of Israel finally cry out to God - God, we remember you now in our trouble.
- Let’s pause here. This sounds like a game almost - the people get into trouble (fail) and then they cry out to God (the rescuer). And while it

looks like a game, know this: the book of Judges is about the people learning how to fall back in love with God. The book of Judges is about the people learning how to rely on God's strength and not their own. Judges is about God rescuing the people when the people fail.

- Here's what I want you to take from this part of the Bible: you can make all sorts of mistakes; you can walk away from God, even to the point of apostasy; you can turn your back on God and get yourself into all sorts of messes and failures, and God will be there to rescue you. God will not forsake you. God will not turn His back on you. When you sincerely turn to the Lord, asking Him for help, our God is the deliverer. When you earnestly repent of your sins, give your all to Him, and walk away from your own self and the messes that you have created, God will rescue you.
- God raised up Ehud who killed the evil king (*v. 21), and then overthrew the Moabites (vv. 27-29). Look at verse 30: the land had peace for 80 years. And if you look at verses 7 to 11 and verse 31 you will see two other stories in this same chapter 3 about ordinary men doing extraordinary things for God as His Judges over the land.

Part 3: The 3:16 Trail And Communion

- So, therefore, what are we going to do with the story? We are about to come to this table of remembrance of what our God did for us in giving His life as a payment, as a ransom for your debt of sin and mine. We are about to come to this table of remembrance to recall the most amazing act of love ever: the sacrificial death of Jesus, that atoned, or paid for, all of our sins, all of the world's sins for ever. This table is about acknowledging God as God, and Jesus as the Lord of all.
- So, what does this table have to do with us today, and with our story of Ehud from our 3:16 trail? Let me read to you from 1 Corinthians 11:27 [NIV]: "*Therefore, whoever eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty of sinning against the body and blood of the Lord.*" There's a warning that's here – don't commit apostasy. That's the link. That's what the story from Judges chapter 3 is all about. That's why we have this table here, we come to it once a month at this Church. This table of communion is a reminder to go back to the beginning, to go back to your faith, to go back to following our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. This table is our Ehud - a way for us to turn back to God, once again, over and over, and the take up our cross (Luke 9:23) and follow Jesus every day of our lives, and all the time. If

we deny God, He'll deny us (2 Timothy 12:2). Should we choose to live for Him, should we choose to make our lives a living monument to Him, should we choose that our life is nothing compared to the surpassing greatness of the Living God, the Lord of all, the giver of peace, the lover of our souls, the One who died as a sacrifice for us, then (and only then) we shall live as He has planned.

Conclusion:

- Apostasy. Ehud teaches us that the Book of Judges is all about the people turning their back on God, and denying Him as they fail. We live in a world that takes delight in doing the same. Ehud was raised up to direct the people back to God. So are you and I. And God will lead us, and love us as He rescues and restores us.
- Come to this table having asked God to forgive you, and direct your steps. Come with our failures and shortcomings, but come having laid them all before God. Come cleansed and restored, ready to be lifted up by our Rescuer.