Straight Lines w/ Crooked Sticks - **wk 1 The Cycle of Sin**

**This is a series I think many can relate to.**

**Series on Judges – violent, weird, odd, strange, but true… PG13 rated – but yet applies to us today in many ways.**

**Background of judges**

**Moses 40 yrs - Joshua 25 yrs - Judges 400 yrs to Samuel…**

**The author is considered Samuel – the last judge.**

**Now in the promised land, it was a rocky start with the LORD.**

**It some ways Judges is a museum of a spiritual struggles**

**They were up in down in their walk and pursuit of God.**

**I think many can relate to this. 1 week great, the next…**

**The first 2 chap of Judges explain their spiritual struggle (today)**

**Then Judges 3 starts the stories…**

**Judges 1:1 After the death of Joshua, the people of Israel inquired of the Lord, “Who shall go up first for us against the Canaanites, to fight against them?” 2 The Lord said, “Judah shall go up; behold, I have given the land into his hand.”**

**Joshua was prophet warrior and Moses’ sidekick - given charge of Israel after Moses death. Joshua leads them to the promised land. Conquers much of the land (not all) and dies.**

**What do we do now? The land is divided up, go get it!**

**And they did… sorta. Judges 1 – list some of the success…**

**Funny but important verse. They conquer Bezek - Judges 1:6 Adoni-bezek fled, but they pursued him and caught him and cut off his thumbs and his big toes. 7 And Adoni-bezek said, “Seventy kings with their thumbs and their big toes cut off used to pick up scraps under my table. As I have done, so God has repaid me.” And they brought him to Jerusalem, and he died there.**

**Brings us a great issue some have with Joshua and Judges.**

**How could God sanction killing so many?**

**\*\* Great question. Never be afraid to ask tough questions.**

**1st – This is judgment, not murder or genocide.**

**There is no national tribunal, UN, humanitarian org, or govt. institutions to keep them in check.**

**There was God sending judgment using neighboring nations.**

**Israel was an instrument of judgement on pagan evil tribes.**

**Notice King of Bezek did not say this is unfair, but rather just. 1:7 - “As I have done, so God has repaid me.”**

**God tells Abraham this will be your land – but has to wait 430 years.**

**Genesis 15:16 In the fourth generation your descendants will come back here, for the sin of the Amorites has not yet reached its full measure.”**

**That is 430 yrs of additional mercy already on the years they lived in wickedness. The time had come. No one was innocent. The cruelty was deep in their culture and spirit.**

**Midianites - child sacrifice, incestual prostitution, & bestiality.**

**Amalekites - slaughtered the sick, weak, disabled, and seniors.**

**2nd – The goal was to judge the kings and drive the people out**

**Deut 18 / Lev 18 - the goal was to drive them out and due to their wickedness.**

**Like God’s judgment on Sodom and Gomorrah – anyone who did not leave would die. Everyone.**

**3rd – Though actual events, this is “War-genre hyperbole”**

**Ancient writers even inspired biblical writer’s, used figures of speech and large exaggerated descriptive words - to tell real stories.**

**The conquests stories were written hundreds of years after the events. This was (and still is) a common thing.**

**Number inflation / speed of victory / severity or decisiveness of a battle / geographical extension.**

“**Their blood flowed like the waters of a river” “Birds made nests in their skulls”**

**“We chased them for hundreds of miles” “they were scattered across the earth”**

**We still do this today – we killed them! We slayed them! = a total win.**

**We know this is hyperbole because when they did “kill every man, woman, and child” – but surviving inhabitants mentioned.**

**This can complicate the reading for us – but awareness of this is important for accurate understanding and application.**

**The Bible is the greatest historical and literary writing on the earth. It’s a blend of imagery, poetry, and history – it tells an incredibly descriptive true story.**

**Know this - God holds everyone to the same standard.**

**Psalm 7:11 - God is a righteous judge, a God who displays his wrath every day.**

**Ps. 11:7 The LORD is righteous; He loves justice. The upright will see His face.**

**Romans 1:18 For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who by their unrighteousness suppress the truth.**

**God held Israel to the same standard later in their life. Using neighbor nations to attack and drive them out for their pagan practices. It has now been giving to ruling govt. (Ro 12)**

**Know this - everyone will receive full complete justice for their actions. And we will either receive the full penalty – or have faith in Jesus who took the full penalty.**

**John 3:36 Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life; whoever does not obey the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God remains on him.**

**The wicked who die today - who seem to receive little consequence for their actions, will receive the full judgment and wrath of God in the afterlife = justice.**

**But notice in chapter 1 - Judges 1:19 And the Lord was with Judah, and he took possession of the hill country, but he (tribe of Judah) could not drive out the inhabitants of the plain because they had chariots of iron. (Ancient day tanks – they had 900 – they were the first to build iron chariots)**

**Wait what, God can’t defeat the chariots? We see a turning point in the text here… Working in their own strength.**

**21 Benjamin did not drive out the Jebusites…**

**27 Manasseh did not drive out the inhabitants of Beth-shean…**

**29 Ephraim did not drive out the Canaanites…**

**30 Zebulun did not drive out the inhabitants of Kitron…**

**31 Asher did not drive out the inhabitants of Acco…**

**33 Naphtali did not drive out the inhabitants of Beth-shemesh…**

**34 *Dan could not drive out the Amorites…***

**\*\* Your own strength is not enough.**

**Working in your own strength and ability can only get you so far.**

**You will hit your challenge of “chariots of iron” in life.**

* **What is an area you are trying to control on your own strength? You can’t do it w/out the LORD.**

**Look how chap 2 starts – Judges 2:1 Now the angel of the LORD went up from Gilgal to Bochim. (Theophany – appearance of the LORD – speaks in first person – Jesus shows up – Colossians 1) And he said, “I brought you up from Egypt and brought you into the land that I swore to give to your fathers. I said, ‘I will never break my covenant with you, 2 and you shall make no covenant with the inhabitants of this land; you shall break down their altars.’ (That was the deal – I am your God, do as I command, and don’t compromise my word) But you have not obeyed my voice. What is this you have done?**

**1st thing God does – he reminds them of His faithfulness.**

**2nd thing – he points out their unfaithfulness.**

**3rd thing – there are consequences.**

**3 So now I say, I will not drive them out before you, but they shall become thorns in your sides, and their gods shall be a snare to you.” 4 As soon as the angel of the Lord spoke these words to all the people of Israel, the people lifted up their voices and wept. 5 And they called the name of that place Bochim. (weepers) And they sacrificed there to the Lord.**

**They became a source of constant warfare in their life. Some (like the philistines) constantly attacked and antagonized.**

**\*\* Small compromises of the heart lead to big disasters**

**When God says get it out of your life – get it out. Sin is not your friend.**

**Don’t leave room for sin.**

**Left some there and forced some into labor, kept around for their benefit. I can use this - but God said drive them out.**

**Late Tim Keller – this chap is written like a press release with a spin. We didn’t do what God says, but it worked out – we got forced labor, so it’s really a win.**

**\* Not just they can’t - this was they won’t - and they didn’t trust God**

* **Where are you saying, I can’t, or I won’t. God says – drive it out of your life it has been in control long enough.**
* **A sin in your life – I can’t, I won’t it is helpful, I like it**
* **Unhealthy relationships - but I love them. God wants me happy**
* **Unforgiveness – I know I should, but I wont and can’t**
* **Financial trust – generosity – I can’t – I need it. I won’t.**

**Small compromises in your heart = disaster!**

**But God I can’t, no - you won’t trust God – you are relying on your own strength and understanding.**

**Judges then recaps the final last days of Joshua (prequel)**

**2:6 When Joshua dismissed the people, the people of Israel went each to his inheritance to take possession of the land. 7 And the people served the Lord all the days of Joshua, (good) and all the days of the elders who outlived Joshua, who had seen all the great work that the Lord had done for Israel. (good)**

**Joshua led Israel into the land, defeating 31 kings in the process, then:**

**2:8 And Joshua the son of Nun, the servant of the Lord, died at the age of 110 years. 9 And they buried him within the boundaries of his inheritance in Timnath-heres, in the hill country of Ephraim, north of the mountain of Gaash. 10 And all that generation also were gathered to their fathers. (They died too.)**

**And there arose another generation after them who did not know the Lord or the work that he had done for Israel.**

**What can / will be said about this rising generation?**

**2:11 And the people of Israel did what was evil in the sight of the Lord and served the Baals. (Other gods) 12 And they abandoned the Lord, the God of their fathers, who had brought them out of the land of Egypt. They went after other gods, from among the gods of the peoples who were around them, and bowed down to them. And they provoked the Lord to anger. 13 They abandoned the Lord and served the Baals and the Ashtaroth.**

**They started to go off the rails!**

**2:14 So the anger of the Lord was kindled against Israel, and he gave them over to plunderers, who plundered them. And he sold them into the hand of their surrounding enemies, so that they could no longer withstand their enemies.**

**\*\* Either you serve the God who saves or the gods who enslave**

**Idolatry leads to slavery and the grave.**

**You think it promises you freedom, but it will only control you.**

**Money, people, success, possessions – they will control you.**

**2:15 Whenever they marched out, the hand of the Lord was against them for harm, as the LORD had warned, and as the Lord had sworn to them. And they were in terrible distress.**

**\*\* God expects and deserves total dedication to him alone**

**Make no mistake - God will not share his deserved devotion with others. God is a jealous God**

**Deuteronomy 4:24 For the Lord your God is a consuming fire, a jealous God. (This is not sinful jealousy) Deut 6:14 Do not follow other gods, the gods of the peoples around you; for the LORD your God, who is among you, is a jealous God and his anger will burn against you, and he will destroy you from the face of the land.**

**(Jealous = Kan-naw) Means a demand of exclusive service. Only God can claim that. That is why it is a sin for us to have.**

**The first commandment reflects this**

**Exodus 20:2 “I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery. You shall have no other gods before me.**

**Idolatry is like spiritual adultery from God.**

**Mark 12:29 Jesus replied, “This is the most important: ‘Hear O Israel, the LORD our God, the LORD is One. 30 Love (devotion) the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.’**

**A verse in Judges sums up the attitude during that time**

**Jud 17:6 In those days Israel had no king; everyone did as he saw fit.**

**Anarchy prevailed. Religious, social, political, moral principles disappeared. Civil war - fought neighbors and each other.**

**They were God’s people - granted great promises - had clear direction – made stupid choices and paid a high price for it.**

**But look what God does - Judges 2:16 Then the Lord raised up judges, who saved them out of the hand of those who plundered them. 17 Yet they did not listen to their judges, for they whored after other gods and bowed down to them. They soon turned aside from the way in which their fathers had walked, who had obeyed the commandments of the Lord, and they did not do so.**

**Notice:**

* **They did not know LORD (desire to know) – v10**
* **They did was what evil in the sight of the LORD – v11**
	+ **What God says is evil is diff than what you think is evil.**
* **They abandoned the LORD – v12 (left it behind them)**
* **They did not listen to the judges – v17 (ignored leaders & council)**

**Judges 2:18 Whenever the Lord raised up judges for them, the LORD was with the judge, and he saved them from the hand of their enemies all the days of the judge. For the Lord was moved to pity (compassion) by their groaning because of those who afflicted and oppressed them.**

**\*\* God sends a savior in our foolishness (this is mercy and grace)**

**Even in their rebellion and hard heart – God made a way of rescue.**

**The character and love of God - Ro 5:8 But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.**

**Problem – judges were humans who struggled to do right, they needed a savior too. That is why the true savior came, Jesus.**

**God in his mercy - raised up judges each time they cried out**

**Some were great / some not so great. Each judge was sent to bring their eyes back on God. \*Teaches a different lesson in overcoming sin.**

**A Recurring theme**

**Judges 2:19 But whenever the judge died, they turned back and were more corrupt than their fathers, going after other gods, serving them and bowing down to them. They did not drop any of their practices or their stubborn ways.**

**\*\* A cycle that repeats itself in the book of Judges: The Cycle of Sin**

**Israel serves God - Israel falls into sin and idolatry - Israel is enslaved - Israel cries out to God - God sends a Judge (savior) - Israel is set free**

**SOUND FAMILIAR? When we disobey, life falls apart – we desperately cry out. God comes to the rescue. Then we…**

**\*\* Judges shouts – The depravity of the human condition.**

**No one is w/out sin - even the good guys. We all need a savior.**

**We all desperately need the true judge and savior. Only one is able = Jesus. Will you face Him as judge or savior?**