Judges: Straight Lines – **wk 4 Gideon – The Signs**

**Judges relays the dark ages of Israel. Museum of mistakes & victories.**

**Background: They didn’t drive out inhabitants - troubled followed.**

**God used them to judge the neighbors & neighbors to judge them.**

**Some judges get a verse; this judge gets 4 chapters.**

**2 options - skim story (1 judge a wk) or dive in. Get your swimsuit.**

**Gideon – was a reluctant fearful savior with self-esteem issues.**

**(After 40 yrs of peace) Judges 6:1 The people of Israel did what was evil in the sight of the LORD, and the LORD gave them into the hand of Midian seven years. (Repeated issue. In complacency they did evil in the sight of the LORD)**

**We can’t assume living apart from God will ever turn out good for those the Lord has called his own.**

**When those around them were wicked, God waited hundreds of years before judgement. When His elect do, discipline is swift. “The LORD disciplines the ones he loves.” Hebrews 12:6**

**\*\* It’s the nature of the relationship.**

**2 And the hand of Midian overpowered Israel, and because of Midian the people of Israel made for themselves the dens that are in the mountains and the caves and the strongholds. (Hiding in caves) 3 For whenever the Israelites planted crops, the Midianites and the Amalekites and the people of the East would come up against them. 4 They would encamp against them and devour the produce of the land, as far as Gaza, (like locust – like the IRS) and leave no sustenance in Israel and no sheep or ox or donkey. (Midianites would steal their crops and livestock) 5 For they would come up with their livestock and their tents; they would come like locusts in number—both they and their camels could not be counted—so that they laid waste the land as they came in. (wiped it out) 6 And Israel was brought very low (sadness / depression / tribulation) because of Midian. And the people of Israel cried out for help to the LORD. (HELP!)**

**Starved off their own land. Total humiliation – lost it all; food, livestock, fields, homes (cave dwellers). All their work, gone.**

**7 When the people of Israel cried out to the Lord on account of the Midianites, 8 the LORD sent a prophet to the people of Israel. (Before a judge, He sends a prophet) And he said to them, “Thus says the LORD, the God of Israel: I led you up from Egypt and brought you out of the house of slavery. 9 And I delivered you from the hand of the Egyptians and from the hand of all who oppressed you, and I drove them out before you and I gave you their land. 10 And I said to you, ‘I am the LORD your God; you shall not fear the gods of the Amorites in whose land you dwell.’ But you have not obeyed my voice.”**

**Notice LORD? A couple things here: The word LORD – is significance**

**Introduced in Genesis 2:4 …the LORD God made the earth and the heavens.**

**Given to Adam as the name of God – it is not a title. God (Elohim) is the title.**

**Hbw tetra-grammaton = “4 letters”: YHWH (Yod Heh Vav Heh).**

**Pronounces like breath - YeHoWaH – unsure - unique**

**Transliterated to YaHWeH – then Yahowah - then Jehovah. Translated in English as – LORD**

**The LORD says - I gave you my name for you to know me. I love you.**

**I chose you, I led you up and I brought you out, I delivered you, I drove them out, I gave you land, I’ve provided for you - you can count on me.**

**“I am YeHoWaH, Elohim - creator of all things, do not fear fake idols. Fear me and know me. But you let fear get hold of you!”**

**Fear kept them in caves hiding, hungry, and intimidated.**

**The Midianites were not the problem. It was their fear and lack of obedience and faith in the LORD. They were the problem.**

**That was the message of the prophet. You are the problem.**

**(pic) (Sometime later at a diff location) 11 Now the Angel (the messenger) of the LORD came and sat under the terebinth (oak tree) at Ophrah,**

**We are about to find out who this is. Theophany (Col 2 - Jesus is fullness of Godhead bodily = Christophany). We will know this…**

**YeHoWaH God of creation in human appearance. Imagine Jesus stepping onto the scene - chilling under a tree.**

**(The tree) which belonged to Joash the Abiezrite, while his son Gideon was beating out wheat in the winepress to hide it from the Midianites.**

**(pic) Wheat normally threshed in open spaces. Separates kernels. Beat it, stomp on it, hit on stones, role large stones pulled by oxen, on mt. tops - breeze would separate the chaff.**

**(pic) But he did it in the winepress out of fear of getting robbed Underground, small, limited space, no air, extremely hard work**

**BTW - God often calls us while at work. Moses & David tending sheep, Elisha ploughing, apostles fishing and mending nets – most of Jesus parables are work related. Flipside - the enemy takes advantage of our idleness.**

**(Gideon another hard day) 12 And the Angel (messenger) of the LORD appeared to him and said to him, “The LORD is with you, O mighty man of valor.”**

**?? He was not a soldier like Ehud, mercenary like Shamgar, a person of influence like Barak, or a prophet like Deborah.**

**Gideon was working in a hole, trying to survive and not cause waves. Live, farm, work, get by. But God saw someone diff.**

**“The LORD is with you, O mighty man of valor.” I can see Gideon look around, “you talking to me?” God saw what Gideon did not see.**

**13 And Gideon said to him, “Please, my lord, if the LORD is with us, why then has all this happened to us? (If God is here, why are we struggling so much?) And where are all his wonderful deeds that our fathers recounted to us, saying, ‘Did not the Lord bring us up from Egypt?’ But now the LORD has forsaken us and given us into the hand of Midian.” (If God is here, he does not care now?)**

**Gideon’s first challenge to get past was - Himself.**

**How he viewed himself and how he viewed God.**

**He had to overcome discouragement, self-pity, fear, & blaming God. His view of God was that God was not faithful or cares.**

**God left us – but the truth was – they left God!**

**He knew the word of God and about God, he knew of God’s faithfulness to others - but - he did not recognize God himself.**

**He did not see God or who God made him to be.**

**14 And the LORD turned to him (not simply an angel – this is God) and said, “Go in this might of yours and save Israel from the hand of Midian; do not I send you?” 15 And he said to him, “Please, Lord, (not LORD) how can I save Israel? Behold, my clan is the weakest in Manasseh, and I am the least in my father's house.” (If God is there, how could he use me?)**

**Gideon gives excuse after excuse: How can I do anything?**

**I am a nobody. The least of the least.**

**Gideon saw a poor insignificant farmer; God saw a warrior.**

**Gideon did not see much in himself or his family, but God did.**

**Do you see what God sees in you?**

**(But he is half right – he can’t save Israel… alone) 16 And the Lord said to him, “But I will be with you, and you shall strike the Midianites as one man.” 17 And he said to Him, “If now I have found favor in your eyes, then show me a sign that it is you who speak with me. (Show me a sign #1)**

**18 Please do not depart from here until I come to you and bring out my present and set it before you.” (Offering - act of sacrifice & worship) And He said, “I will stay till you return.” (I’ll be right here under this tree) 19 So Gideon went into his house and prepared a young goat and unleavened cakes from an ephah of flour. (ephah is 25-50 lbs of flour = 25+ loaves) The meat he put in a basket, and the broth he put in a pot, and brought them to him under the terebinth (oak tree) and presented them. (He preps goat steaks, soup, & rolls - dude what are you doing? This must have taken more than an hour.)**

**20 And the angel of God said to him, “Take the meat and the unleavened cakes, and put them on this rock, and pour the broth over them.” And he did so. 21 Then the angel (messenger) of the LORD reached out the tip of the staff that was in his hand and touched the meat and the unleavened cakes. And fire sprang up from the rock and consumed the meat and the unleavened cakes. (Fire rose OUT OF THE ROCK and consumed the meat & bread) And the angel (messenger) of the LORD vanished from his sight.**

**He put the meat and bread on the rock, poured on the soup. Jesus touches it with his staff and instant BBQ- it’s consumed.**

**That means it was received as a witness to that conversation.**

**22 Then Gideon perceived that He was the angel (messenger) of the LORD. (Finally, he can see - went from thinking he was just a man to believing he is God) And Gideon said, “Alas, O LORD God! For now I have seen the angel (the messenger) of the LORD face to face.” (I believe) 23 But the LORD said to him, (now a voice only) “Peace be to you. Do not fear; you shall not die.” 24 Then Gideon built an altar there to the LORD and called it, The Lord Is Peace. (YeHoWaH-Shalom) To this day it still stands at Ophrah, which belongs to the Abiezrites.**

**The altar was an act of worship and consecration to the LORD. God was revealed thru this act of humble worship.**

**That worship changed Gideon’s life forever.**

**(Now an act of obedience & sanctification) 25 That night the LORD said to him, “Take your father's bull, and the second bull seven years old, and pull down the altar of Baal that your father has and cut down the Asherah that is beside it 26 and build an altar to the LORD your God on the top of the stronghold here, with stones laid in due order. Then take the second bull and offer it as a burnt offering with the wood of the Asherah that you shall cut down.” (Burnt offerings = total surrender, nothing left – this is repentance) 27 So Gideon took ten men of his servants and did as the LORD had told him.**

**\*Use the bulls to tear down the idols (Baal and Asherah)**

**\*Use the (father and son) bulls to do the work**

**It was an act of faith, but the bulls did the hard work**

**\*Use the son bull (strong innocent valuable life) and sacrifice it.**

**Do you see it yet?**

**27b But, because he was too afraid of his family and the men of the town to do it by day, he did it by night. (He obeyed – but ironically still fearful)**

**28 When the men of the town rose early in the morning, behold, the altar of Baal was broken down, and the Asherah beside it was cut down, and the second bull was offered on the altar that had been built. 29 And they said to one another, “Who has done this thing?” And after they had searched and inquired, they said, “Gideon the son of Joash has done this thing.” (till caught) 30 Then the men of the town said to Joash, “Bring out your son, that he may die, for he has broken down the altar of Baal and cut down the Asherah beside it.” (Baal – god of weather / Asherah – goddess of fertility – they were serious)**

**Dad steps up – 31 But Joash said to all who stood against him, “Will you contend for Baal? Or will you save him? (Do you need to fight and save Baal?) Whoever contends for him shall be put to death by morning. (If he is real, he will kill him) If he is a god, let him contend for himself, because his altar has been broken down.” (If Baal is real, let him defend himself) 32 Therefore on that day Gideon was called Jerubbaal, that is to say, “Let Baal contend against him,” because he broke down his altar.**

**New nickname of honor. Lit man who fights w/ Baal (god fighter)**

**33 Now all the Midianites and the Amalekites and the people of the East came together, and they crossed the Jordan and encamped in the Valley of Jezreel. (Raised up army to attack) 34 But the Spirit of the LORD clothed Gideon, (Spirit came upon him like a garment) and he (Gideon) sounded the trumpet, (shofar) and the Abiezrites were called out to follow him. 35 And he sent messengers throughout all Manasseh, and they too were called out to follow him. And he sent messengers to Asher, Zebulun, and Naphtali, and they went up to meet them. (The Spirit of the LORD powered the trumpet call – and they came).**

**32,000 men showed up to help the farmer Gideon war against 132,000 Midianites. Even while clothed with the Spirit - Gideon was still afraid and wanted another sign. God I am still scared.**

**(Sign 2) 36 Then Gideon said to God, “If you will save Israel by my hand, as you have said, 37 behold, I am laying a fleece of wool on the threshing floor. If there is dew on the fleece alone, and it is dry on all the ground, then I shall know that you will save Israel by my hand, as you have said.” (Overnight – if it’s wet an all-around it dry) 38 And it was so. When he rose early next morning and squeezed the fleece, he wrung enough dew from the fleece to fill a bowl with water. (Okay, that was too easy…)**

**(Sign 2) 39 Then Gideon said to God, “Let not your anger burn against me; let me speak just once more. Please let me test just once more with the fleece. Please let it be dry on the fleece only, and on all the ground let there be dew.” (Overnight – if it’s dry and all-around it is wet) 40 And God did so that night; and it was dry on the fleece only, and on all the ground there was dew.**

**Gideon then got up the next day ready to fight - but this time God was going to test Gideon w/ a surprise request - next wk.**

**Gideon is all over the place: Where is God? How can I possibly make a difference? Why am I so afraid? How can I have peace?**

**What can we learn from Gideon so far – Going from Fear to Peace**

**Notice I did not say from fear to courage – he was still lacking courage.**

**1. God does not call the brave; he makes brave the one he calls**

**Gideon was not called because he was courageous, but he was made courageous as a result of the call of God.**

**God doesn't see us or define us by the condition of our past, or that we are in, but by what he has determined to make us.**

**Moses- insecure stutterer / Abe- sterile gypsy / Gideon- fearful farmer**

**That is great news! You may feel scared weak and a mess, but the Lord looks at you and says, “mighty one, stand up!” (Dad)**

**Maybe you’re afraid, maybe weak, maybe insecure… stand up!**

**2. Step out in the faith you have**

**5yr boy asked to go into the pantry to get a can of soup - didn’t want to go. "It’s dark in there - I’m scared." She said, “It’s OK-Jesus will be in there with you." Johnny walked to the door - peeked inside, saw it was dark, and said: "Jesus, if you’re in there, would you hand me that can of tomato soup?" Maybe that’s you**

**v.14 LORD says, “Go in this might of yours *(Go in the strength you have - NIV)***

**God saw Gideon as stronger than Gideon saw himself.**

**You might not have much - mustard seed – Matt 17:20**

**That night Gideon did what every one of us needs to do, clean house**

**3. Real change begins in our own house – Revival starts at home!**

**First thing God called Gideon to do was to get his house in order.**

**More specifically Gideon has to start with himself – his idols.**

**He came from a family of idol worshipers people got mad at him. He put God in his proper place in his life. What are your idols? What’s your family like? Some won’t like it.**

**Let me say this: The fleece - God entertained it, but it shows a lack of faith and trust. Gideon already knew what he was to do. We find ourselves in the hole and in fear because we keep asking for a sign.**

**You don’t need to keep praying about and asking for a sign concerning what the LORD has already spoken on (examples).**

**4. Courage is not the absence of fear, it’s obeying God in the midst fear**

**27b But because he was too afraid of his family and the men of the town to do it by day, he did it by night.**

**Obedience is more important than courage**

**God told Gideon you can do this because – “I am with you”**

**If God has spoken clear in his word about it, even if it might turn your world upside down, know this - God is w/ you.**

**In Gideons fear he kept asking for a sign. And God in his mercy gave it.**

**God how can I know you are really on my side?**

**Some of you today are still looking for a sign. You're asking God, “show me a sign, let me know that you are here.” The LORD says look at the sacrifice – and you will see.**

**5. The Cross is our sign and peace (Jesus is over this passage)**

* **The Christophany appearance**
* **Jesus is the young goat sacrificed as a sign.**
* **Jesus is the unleavened (sinless) bread offered on the rock**
* **Jesus is the very rock itself – by which the fire rose**
* **Jesus is the sacrificial bull – the powerful innocent sacrifice**
* **Jesus is the death of a lamb that gave him the fleece**

**The LORD says look at the sacrifice – and you will see.**

**Jesus says - Only then will you recognize me.**

**The cross says: God is in control, God has made a way, God is with us.**

**Look to the cross and fear will be vanquished!**

**1 John 4:18 There is no fear in love, but perfect love casts out fear. For fear has to do with punishment, and whoever fears has not been perfected in love. 19 We love because he first loved us.**

**Who is this perfect love? Christs love is perfect (sufficient & constant). Christ took the punishment – no need to fear.**

**In the presence of God at the sacrifice, Gideon found peace in the middle of his fear. And called that place (YeHoWaH-Shalom)**

**Do you need peace? Look to the sacrifice!**

**Dads - God says – Go mighty man of valor, I am with you!**