

Faithful God - Judges 13:1-25
Notes, Family Worship, Bible Reading

Notes from the Sermon

The story of story of Samson marks the end of the cycle in the book of Judges. As the last judge, he is such a complicated figure, who is both a product of his time, but whose life is also a microcosm of the nation. While God uses him greatly to harass and defeat the Philistines, saving Israel again, his life is also a hot mess. But his birth stands in the line of seven miraculous pregnancy stories each one reminding us of God's faithfulness to individuals and His people. In six of these stories God gives a baby to a barren woman who has grown older without children (the births of Isaac, Jacob & Esau, Joseph, Samson, Samuel, and John the Baptist). Since children were so vital in life, this was a tragic situation for couples. Without children the family line would end, the inheritance pass on to some other family, and the couple would be left without any help as they aged. Basically, children represented these people's retirement plan. So being barren represented a real problem, but it was also a source of shame especially for the wife because the culture viewed childlessness as an act of God's punishment. So, in each case the birth of the miracle baby gave hope to the wife and her husband, lifting her shame. And in each of these stories the baby born was God's gift to His people and became significant characters in the covenant story. These stories are pictures of God's faithful grace to undeserving people.

So here is Manoah and his wife living in this situation at the end of the book of Judges. Israel again has abandoned the LORD, running after idols and getting themselves involved in awful and unjust practices, so God gave them over to the Philistines for 40 years. But their downward trajectory has become so bad that they do not even cry out to the LORD. This time God will give His grace and rescue the people even though they show no sign of repentance, faith, or desire to turn to Him. In an act of sheer grace the Angel of the LORD appears to Manoah and his wife. It is interesting that the story does not give her name, and at first reading this might feel like a bit of sexism, but it is actually master storytelling. Why is Manoah named and she is not? I believe the storyteller is naming Manoah because much of his actions unites him with idolatrous Israel. He does not trust her, tries to manipulate and control God's messenger, and later gives in to Samson's demands for a foreign wife. Maybe the reason she is not named is because she is the only one in the whole story who seems to trust in Jehovah, and therefore is not named with unfaithful Israel. Whatever the case, the Angel promises this barren couple the birth of a baby, and His promise comes with a clear instruction of warning. This baby will be a Nazirite from birth.

In Numbers 6:1-21 God gives his people a command about a type of vow called the Nazirite (means consecrated or separate) vow. In Numbers this vow is voluntary and for a season of life, generally a season of repentance, deep seeking after God, and pursuing God's will in a specific situation. The Nazirite vow included three key commitments. First, for the length of the vow the person would not cut hair or shave. Second, the vow included a season of abstinence from alcohol. Third, the person making the vow could not touch or go near a dead body, and if by accident he came in contact with a dead body (human or animal) he would go make a sacrifice, cut his hair, and begin again. So, for all others making this vow the season was temporary. But the Angel tells Samson's mother that he is being set apart as a Nazirite from conception till death. Therefore, she must avoid alcohol and be careful not to eat anything unclean until Samson is born. The purpose is his beautiful, her son will be set apart for God in order to be His hand of rescue for Israel against the Philistines.

This story is full of clues pointing us to God's faithfulness and His glorious grace being poured out on this couple and His people. Just the mere fact that God does not just leave Israel in the hands of the Philistines and give up on them is sheer mercy. But God comes to this couple giving His presence again. At the end of the story we are reminded of the true identity of the Angel and Manoah realizes that they have seen the LORD, and actually deserve to die in their sin. Yet his wife again reminds Him that God is showering them with

grace, accepting their sacrifice as an atonement for their sin. And He keeps His promise to the couple in the birth of Samson, which is also God keeping His promises to Israel that he would never completely forsake them and leave them.

In the New Testament the birth of John the Baptist and his story mirrors that of Samson in so many ways. Again, a miracle baby born to aging barren parents, John becomes the pre-cursor to another miracle birth, the seventh in the Bible to another woman who is unable to have a baby. But this last child is not a miracle baby given to aged barren parents, this child comes to a virgin. And in this case rather than removing shame, the announcement from the angel that brought this pregnancy bring shame on a young girl and leaves Jesus born in scandal. But unlike Samson, He is the Savior we truly need. The Samson story reminds us that the God of the Bible is the God of grace. In the Jesus story that we remember and celebrate this week we see the grace of God on full display and poured out on all of us who believe.

Bible Reading for the Week

Daily Bible Readings

Sun	Mon	Tues	Weds	Thurs	Fri	Sat
Proverbs 29	Proverbs 30	Proverbs 31	Colossians 1	Colossians 2	Colossians 3	Colossians 4

Reading from this past week’s sermon: Judges 13:1-25

Reading in preparation for this coming Sunday: John 19

Family Worship

Song - *I Believe*

https://youtu.be/-SKtnIKNGgM?si=hN29_uUnfVXrUubA

Gospel Project

Unit: Jesus Came to Earth

Story: Jesus at the Temple

Big Picture Question: Who is Jesus?

Answer: Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, who came to earth to save us.

Scripture: Luke 2

New City Catechism

Question 12: What does God require in the Ninth and Tenth Commandments?

Answer: Ninth, that we do not lie or deceive. Tenth, that we are content, not envying anyone.

Verse: James 2:8

Judges 13:1-25

- How does the author help us see the situation of Manoah and his wife in verse 2 as a mirror of the situation for Israel in verse 1? How is the birth of Samson the answer for both?
- Who is this Angel of the LORD and how do we know this? How is His appearance an act of God’s faithfulness and grace for this couple and for Israel?
- Who are the miracle babies we find in Scripture? What do their stories show us about God, His character, and His acts for His people?
- What is this Nazirite vow and where can we find it in Scripture (Numbers 6:1-21)? How is this vow important in the Samson story?
- What is grace and why are what does this story teach us about it? Why are we completely dependent on God’s grace given through Jesus?

Prayer

*Pray that the grace of Jesus would reach us deeply and change us.

*Pray for our Good Friday Service and Sunday Easter gathering.