

Is there Any Hope? - Judges 19:1-21:25 **Notes, Family Worship, Bible Reading**

Notes from the Sermon

No happy ending to Judges. No valiant prince who defeats the dragon to rescue the kingdom. No cute couple who find love after a series of weird and humorous escapades. No last second shot for the underdog to win the game. Nope, Judges ends with a thud, an awful thud. The final story is possibly the ugliest, darkest, most messed up story in the whole of Scripture (outside of the crucifixion of the Son of God of course). The author of Judges wants us to enter in to see how terribly fallen and wicked the Hebrew nation has become. They live among the Canaanites who deserve God's justice, yet, God's people are no longer just like the Canaanites, they are worse. Interestingly enough, the inspired writer gives us no names in this awful story, his way of telling us that the people in the story stand as representatives for the values, culture, and sin of the entire nation. And its bad. In fact, the story intentionally harkens back to Genesis and the story of Sodom and Gomorrah, subtly showing us that the covenant people are now just like these cities.

We begin with a man who treats his wife as nothing more than a slave, so she ditches him. He finds her and brings her home, yet, while on their journey home they stop in Gibeah with the plan to sleep in the town square because no one shows hospitality. An old man rescues them from staying the night in the bad side of town, only to be startled by the wicked men of the city who want to use this traveler as seeing the man as a sex toy. To save his own skin, the man is all too willing to push his concubine out of the door where the men of the city rape her all night and discard her in the morning where she dies. The man then does the insane, he cuts her corpse up and ships body parts to the various tribes, not so much because he loved his wife, but because they ruined his property and threatened him. This ugly episode ends up with the whole of the nation coming for revenge against the town, and when the men of the tribe of Benjamin decide to defend them instead of giving them over to justice a civil war breaks out. But the war turns to capricious violence as the 11 tribes not only attack the fighting men of Benjamin, they turn on the town where they live killing everyone and burning down the city. 600 men from this tribe flee and take hiding in the hills. Meanwhile, the men of the other 11 tribes make a silly vow that they will in no way give their daughters to any of these men. Mind you, they have been more than willing to intermarry with the Philistines, Amorites, and Canaanites. But, "No way my girl is marrying a Benjaminite." Only after their anger subsided do they realize that they have created a situation that would result in one of their 12 tribes ceasing to exist. They have to get wives for the survivors from Benjamin. Their answer to this is two more horrible episodes that includes the wiping out of another Israelite town leaving only the virgins alive followed by the permission for the remaining men of Benjamin to kidnap women who are dancing in worship during the celebration of a Hebrew festival. It's nuts, filled with the absolute mistreatment of women, devaluing human life, sexual wickedness, violence, and rash decisions that make matters worse. Why in the world is this in the Bible?

Actually, the answer to that question is really important. The Bible is not some fake religious book painting the picture of a false utopian existence where everything is daisies and lemonade. Rather, the Bible shows us the utter consequences and ugliness of human sin. The Bible is real world and does not hide the ugly reality of human depravity. The Fall runs deep, and the horror is even more tragic when wickedness overtakes the religious, those who are supposed to know and represent God. The Bible is one grand story telling us the story of God and His redemption. In this story, though, God does not hide or soften the horror of people and a world deserving His justice. In this story every single person deserves God's harsh and immediate justice. It's not only the Benjaminites who deserve fire from heaven like Sodom and Gomorrah. And the story wants us to see that this is always how it goes when everyone does what is right in their own eyes. The world is 8.3 billion people who

have all declared themselves to be the center, their own king, wicked hearts in need of redemption. Is there any hope?

The Bible is so raw and real because the grand story of the Bible answers the final narrative in Judges. If you are a follower of Jesus you know that the grand storyline of Scripture leads us to His coming, life, death, and resurrection. The world around us often looks a lot like Judges. It's bad out there. Worse, in so many churches and religious circles, it's just as bad in here. The hope will not be found in some governmental power seeking to do justice, or in some religious system trying to shame people into better behavior. The cross of Christ shows us how deep sin and the Fall affect us individually and as a culture. The only sacrifice sufficient to divert God's just wrath from us is the death of Jesus. And the only power capable of changing the human heart flows from the resurrected Christ who is the victory over even this hot mess of a story.

Bible Reading for the Week

Daily Bible Readings

Sun	Mon	Tues	Weds	Thurs	Fri	Sat
Leviticus 22	Leviticus 23	Leviticus 24	Leviticus 25	Leviticus 26	Leviticus 28	1 Kings 1

Reading from this past week's sermon: Judges 19:1-21:25

Reading in preparation for this coming Sunday: Matthew 9:35-38

Family Worship

Song - *His Glory and My Good*

<https://youtu.be/a-EyQVWCEBI?si=lgfIAVzXgFL3a1P>

Gospel Project

Unit: Jesus' Ministry Continues

Story: Jesus And Nicodemus

Big Picture Question: Did Jesus ever sin?

Answer: No, Jesus never sinned.

Scripture: John 3

New City Catechism

Question 19: Is there any way to escape punishment and be brought back into God's favor?

Answer: Yes, God reconciles us to himself by a Redeemer.

Verse: Isaiah 53:10-11

Judges 19:1-21:25

- How does this story make you feel? Do you see similarities between this story and the real world in which we live?
- Why would the Bible tell a story like this? What reasons might God have for showing the awful nature of depravity in the world and even in His own people?
- How would you answer a person who asks if there is any hope in a world where violence, rape, murder, and greed seem to rule? What if they point those things out in the church?
- How is Jesus the answer to this story in the grand narrative of the Bible?

Prayer

*Give thanks that Jesus is truly the answer and hope for a fallen world.

*Pray that God would give us the sort of passion in prayer represented by the persecuted church, and then spend time praying for the persecuted church.

*NOTE - Make sure you download and read the C. H. Spurgeon sermon on corporate prayer during our May Prayer Month.