

Trust

Welcome **Trust** in the LORD with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways submit to him, and he will make your paths straight. [Proverbs 3:5-6](#)

Hymn Trust and Obey

Talk 1

This morning we focus on a regular man called Gideon. He is not very impressive at first look, but he makes some choices that flow from his faith in God. So significant is the mark this very ordinary man made in his time that he is listed in Hebrews 11 alongside the movers and shakers of the Old Testament.

There wasn't anything special about Gideon. He didn't know how to lead an army and he wasn't a warrior. In fact, he was one of the smallest and weakest people in his whole family.

Not only was Gideon small but he wasn't very brave either. When God told Gideon that he wanted him to lead an army he thought it was a joke. Not only that, he didn't even believe it was God speaking to him telling him to do this outrageous thing. He made God do a bunch of things to prove to Gideon that he was real. Gideon did all of this because he didn't believe in himself. He thought that God was making a mistake by choosing him because he was so small and weak. He didn't think he could do what God wanted him to do.

God knew Gideon wouldn't want to lead the army. So, he sent an angel to tell him something he needed to hear.

God wanted Gideon to know that he wouldn't be doing this all on his own. God would be right by him every step of the way! Gideon didn't have to be afraid. God would work through Gideon to help him fight for Israel. But Gideon isn't the only person that God helps to feel brave.

Have you ever felt like Gideon? Maybe you were afraid of talking in front of a group or maybe you didn't think you were good enough to make the quiz team. No matter what your challenge, you need to know that God is always there to cheer you on. You don't have to be afraid of messing up because God will always love you no matter what. He wants to use you for big things just like Gideon so we can't let fear get in the way of that.

Prayer & Lords Prayer

Hymn: Fight the good fight

Reading 1: Judges 6:1-6

Talk 2

In our 1st reading, we find the nation of Israel coming off a time of relative ease. The bills are paid, the children are behaving, and business is good. Everything's coming up roses. And as it tends to happen to us all in such times, Israel forgot God. They became self-sufficient. They didn't need God. So the Lord shook things up by rousing an enemy against them to show them how hard life can be without Him.

The Israelites did what was evil in the sight of the Lord. So the Lord handed them over to Midian for seven years. You need to know that the Midianites were extremely powerful and oppressed the Israelites mercilessly. Every year around harvest time, the nomadic Midianites would invade Israel. They would come in like locusts, ravaging the land. What they couldn't carry with them they destroyed. The Bible reports that it was so bad many of the Israelites left their homes to live in caves and strongholds, fearing for their lives.

This went on for seven years. Finally, the Israelites cried out to the Lord for help. Why did they wait so long to turn to the Lord? Because they're a lot like us - they waited until every possible option played out and they couldn't take it any longer. Israel became poverty-stricken because of Midian, and the Israelites cried out to the Lord. How many times have hard circumstances come to us, and we never stop to ask what God is planning for us in those circumstances? Instead we hold out, thinking that we can handle it on our own. Learn this from Gideon: every experience in life is a test. And every trial in the lives of God's people is tailored to draw us closer to God.

Here's the point: When tough times come, instead of looking at them as if God is punishing us, try to see them as God's gift of grace.

C.S. Lewis said it like this, "God whispers to us in our pleasures, speaks in our conscience, but shouts in our pains. It's His megaphone to rouse a deaf world."

Reading 2: Judges 6: 7-12

Talk 3

The wonderful thing about God is that even though we're slow returning to Him, He is never slow in responding to us. When we cry out to God, He moves in mercy and love toward us. He tells us the truth, and begins to work behind the scenes to help us. For Israel, He first sends an unnamed prophet to call them back to total surrender and full devotion.

But His plan also included a most unlikely man named Gideon. We meet Gideon in threshing some wheat in a winepress to keep it from the Midianites. Normally, you would want to thresh wheat out in the open so that the wind could blow away the chaff. But Gideon has apparently been stung before, so he goes into hiding in an underground winepress, hoping to avert the attention of the Midianites. It's a pitiful sight, full of frustration, discouragement, and fear.

In case you ever wonder if God has a sense of humour, we hear that the Angel of the Lord appeared to Gideon and said: "The LORD is with you, mighty warrior." Can't you imagine Gideon looking around for the man of valour the Lord was addressing! Was God being sarcastic? Or did He see more than Gideon saw? I believe God saw what He was about to make of Gideon.

One of the biggest misconceptions we have is that God only uses special people. However, we have everything from Him we need for life and godliness! God knows who we are, even if we don't and He will work to help us see our true identity.

HYMN: **Courage brother do not stumble**

Notices & Offertory

Reading 3: Judges 6:13-24

Talk 4

After being called a mighty warrior, Gideon questions God: "Please Sir, if the LORD is with us, why has all this happened? And where are all His wonders that our fathers told us about?" Gideon's conclusion was that the Lord has abandoned them.

Gideon must have been really puzzled. It says that the Lord turned to him. He looked Gideon full in the face and said, "Go in the strength you have and deliver Israel from the power of Midian. Am I not sending you?" Gideon can't work it out. He is the weakest link in his clan, the youngest in his family. He doesn't have any authority to call out the cavalry from his own tribe, let alone from others.

God confirms His priorities with His presence " I will be with you," the LORD said to him. "You will strike Midian down [as if it were] one man." Gideon is given an undeniable commission, told the remarkable results in advance, and promised the unrivaled partnership of the Lord Himself. After further confirmation that he was in fact, dealing with God Himself the pieces fell into place for Gideon. He cries out, "Oh no, Lord GOD! I have seen the Angel of the LORD face to face!" His fears comforted, His calling affirmed. So he builds an altar to the Lord.

Gideon needed a personal encounter with God. God met him right where he was, giving him a sense of peace and purpose by His promised presence.

Gideon was ready for the first test.

Reading 4: Judges 6:33-40

Talk 5

If this were a movie, when we got to v. 33, ominous music would be playing. It says the Midianites and their partners are getting ready to make their annual raid. But instead of cringing in a cave, the Spirit of the LORD enveloped Gideon, and he blew the ram's horn and the Abiezrites rallied behind him. Gideon had taken a huge step of faith in his private faithfulness and now God's Spirit was drawing people from far and wide. Thirty-two thousand men show up, ready to fight!

But even after his encounter with Almighty God, even though he had been obedient to clean shop at home, and even though the Holy Spirit was empowering him, Gideon still struggled with doubts. He knows that God has promised to save Israel through him, but he's looking in the mirror and the reflection he sees doesn't look encouraging.

Gideon says to the Lord, "If You will deliver Israel by my hand, as You said, I will put a fleece of wool here on the threshing floor. If dew is only on the fleece, and all the ground is dry, I will know that You will deliver Israel by my strength, as You said."

I love how loving, tender, and patient God is with us. Gideon is making a deal with God. He wants a confirming sign. And the Bible says the next morning, God gave it to him: the fleece was wet and the ground was dry. Even when this "Doubting Thomas" of the Old Testament reverses the test, asking that the fleece be dry and the ground covered with dew, God graciously confirmed His power to Gideon. Our Lord was developing this man into a fully convinced servant, matching each doubt with kind reassurance. God will show you the same patience as well as you seek His face, allaying your fears to grow us into people of God.

Hymn: All to Jesus I surrender

Reading 5: Judges 7:1-8

Talk 6

Gideon's now ready to rumble but God has other plans. The Lord said to Gideon, "You have too many people for Me to hand the Midianites over to you, or else Israel might brag: 'I did it myself.'" God proceeds to give Gideon a couple of tests to whittle the number down. The first test culled 22,000 men out of the army, leaving 10,000. Still too many, said God.

A second test was given. God tells Gideon to take his men down to the water and let them drink. Weed out any men who stick their face down into the water to drink; keep the ones who ladle the water to their mouths with their hands. Gideon must have gulped hard when he counted how many were disqualified: 9700 were out, leaving only 300 men.

Can you imagine how Gideon felt? Chapter 8 tells us that the Midianite army numbered 135,000 men. That's 450 Midianites to every one Israeli soldier. God wants Gideon's army to face this horde with a mere 300 men who know how to drink politely!

God created an impossible situation of human weakness to exalt His own strength. This is His specialty! What did Jesus say in Luke 18:27? "What is impossible with men is possible with God." Here's a good lesson for us: Accomplishing God's purposes is not determined by the bottom line on a finance sheet, or the size of our congregation, or the efficiency of our plans. We need to attend to all those things, but the truth is, God is looking to glorify Himself on earth through people who are fully dependent on Him, who believe He is with them and are ready to charge the hill in the name of the Lord! God doesn't need a majority vote from us on this. He doesn't need us at all. But He invites us to join Him in doing His will. When we do, we reap the benefits and He gets the glory.

It happened in Israel. In one of the strangest battle strategies in history, the 300 went out with trumpets, torches, and jars to meet the marauding Midianites. God sent confusion into the ranks of the enemy so that they began attacking each other. When it was over, 120,000 Midianites had killed one another and the other 15,000 fled. It was over. God had answered Israel's prayers. He used a common man who believed God.

So let us remember God uses tough times to get our attention. Is He getting our attention today?

God always sees more than we do. Do we see ourselves as He does?

God confirms His priorities with His presence. Can you sense His presence with you now, urging you to trust Him? Private faithfulness is a essential to public service. Are there things in your life, in your home, that need to go so God can use us for His work?

God is patient with our faith process. He meets us right where we are.

Success is determined by God's power, not ours. Will you trust Him today - with your life, with your family, your finances, your decisions?

Prayer:

Hymn: The Lords My Shepherd (and I will trust in you alone)

Blessing