

June 11, 2017  
Lesson 2: Judges 6-8  
Gideon's Call

**Context:**

This next call story focuses on Gideon, a judge who is not only a warrior, but a thinker and someone who is not afraid to ask big questions. Set in the midst of the line of judges, Gideon's story can be overlooked because it lacks the novelty of Deborah the prophetess or Samson the giant he-man. But the story of Gideon is a powerful one as it focuses more on Gideon's faithfulness despite the odds that may appear to be pitted against him.

For two chapters we hear about Gideon's warrior tactics that lead the Israelites to victory. As he works with wheat in a winepress, a messenger appears to Gideon. In their conversation, Gideon asks questions about God and about his own call to go and rescue Israel from the Midianites. When the messenger reminds him that God is directly using Gideon, Gideon also reminds him that he is the youngest of his family and comes from the weakest clan.

God doesn't take no for an answer though. God's messenger conveys the word that God will be with Gideon and the Midianites will be defeated. Gideon has one condition though. God must show a sign to him. In the passage following the one quoted today, we hear of Gideon presenting a sacrifice consumed by a spontaneous fire and the messenger disappears. And thus begins Gideon responding to the Lord's call. Even though it is a short narrative, each story with Gideon reveals him constantly seeking the Lord's blessing and then continuing on in battle to lead God's people to victory. He was known for taking on the Midianites with only three hundred men selected by God and had peace for forty years in the land of Israel. He had a downfall when making an ephod made of gold that became an idol later on after he died. But he was a judge and one that responded to God's call.

**Application:**

For some reason, I remember the story of Gideon most fondly from my childhood. Each night my mother would read one fun book and one Bible story out of a Children's Bible. One of our "fun books" though was the story of Gideon that was its own book. Or at least it was fun to me. I loved to pick that one for different reasons. The book always reminded us that Gideon was the youngest in the family. His family was one of the smallest out of all the tribes in Israel. He worked and lived among the fields. Gideon was also a thinker; he asked for signs and wasn't afraid to ask God big questions. I probably honestly liked Gideon because he sounded like me in many ways (except for being the youngest in his household.) His story reminded me of Odysseus and Jason of the Argonauts. He overcame odds and had adventures that led him to greatness.

I think the story of Gideon is one that should inspire us all. Whether you are a seven year old boy reading before bed time for the thousandth time or the sixty year old woman revisiting the Old Testament for something new. Gideon is looking for God's signs and God keeps telling him he has everything he needs right in front of him. Our

God is one who believes in us and wants us to lean into our callings. Even if we aren't sure where those callings will take us.

I think it is appropriate that the story of Gideon falls as we return to our churches after Annual Conference. For me personally, this was one of the most special Annual Conferences for multiple reasons. This past Annual Conference I was ordained as an Elder in Full Connection. The moment was pure holiness. For years, my ordination cohort and I have responded to God's call and this past week that was affirmed by the Board of Ordained Ministry and by the church at a beautiful service at First United Methodist Church. Within the liturgy though were statements where we all declared to serve God with our gifts and talents. That evening was not just about my colleagues and me; it was about realizing that God was calling all of us to be all what God has created us to be.

Two of the most powerful speeches at Annual Conference were the passing of the torch speeches where representatives of both classes gave words before the service. After many years of service, Libba Stinson talked about the joys and challenges of being one of the first female clergy in the AWF. She powerfully described how she and others looked saw glimpses of God leading them in the right direction even with obstacles along the way. She celebrated the fact that our own Annual Conference this year had powerful women serving in worship through Word and Sacrament along with people from all different races and ages. Our class representative Woods Lisenby talked about how our class had their own obstacles and paths to get to ministry. We had people in our class who were from different walks of life and some that were second career and left behind jobs that paid more than what they currently make. But all of us responded to the call and all trusted that God would use us in different ways. And all of that was because of the gifts and graces that people, some sitting in that conference hall, saw in us at some point.

Like Gideon we all may go about our day-to-day business and wonder if God can really use us. We may have excuses and we may even question God. Our God is persistent though and even in tension, frustration, and obstacles, God is in the miracle business. Our theme this year at Annual Conference was "Imagine by faith it can happen." We were encouraged throughout the conference to not be overwhelmed by the challenges facing our local churches and our denomination. Instead, we are to think about all the things that God may be calling us to do. Maybe it is to see a need in your community and pursue ways to get your church to be involved. Maybe it is to serve on a committee that you've never served on before. It might be to think of different ways your church can serve with other churches in the area. Whether you are small membership or large membership, God can use you to do amazing things.

As I reflect on my own time at a small membership church, I am amazed at the things they have been able to do. They make flood buckets for those in need, they prepare lunches for the Junior Varsity and Varsity football teams, and they help feed teachers before the school season starts. Size does not matter to them. They have gifts and talent and they use them. So what is God calling you to do? And before you give an excuse, remember Gideon and know that God has called you by name to do great things. If God can use the youngest member of the Manasseh clan in ancient Israel to lead God's people, God can certainly someone in the AWF conference to be the hands and feet of Christ in this hurting world.

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