

APRIL 26

I can tell we are all entering into the "dog days" of reading. Hang in there and as Paul said to Timothy, "*as for you, always be steady...*" (2 Tim. 4:5, RSV). The Lord has a way of blessing you with something you've read when you least expect it. And you're getting to know the Lord, seeking Him. He will definitely reward that. And again, as Paul said in Philippians, *I press on to make it my own because Christ Jesus has made me His own.* (Phil. 3:12) Happy pressing.

Judges 6

Vs. 1-6 Notice that it was the hand of the Lord that moved first and gave Israel into the *hand of Midian*. Remember that both Moses and Joshua promised the people that if they forgot the Lord and fell into idolatry, they would have to watch others take what they worked for. The Midianites made Israel look like a Walmart © parking lot.

V. 6 Notice that the people had to be brought very low before their crying out was genuine and unified. We've seen this in David and we'll see it at the end of Judges. Sometimes God allows "bad" to get worse, so that our asking goes to the depth of dependence on God.

Vs. 7-10 It seems to me that the Lord might have sent this prophet first to see if the people would respond with remorse and obedience to a human messenger. If they had said, "Who is he? He's just a guy like us," I think God would have let them sit a while longer. Apparently the people were humble.

Vs. 11-18 It is interesting that it is *the angel of the Lord* who came. Note also, that Gideon had heard the stories of God's working in delivering Israel from Egypt and was struggling with God's inactivity. He knew the stories, but not the Lord. Of course, if Gideon had understood enough of the stories, he would have known exactly why they were in such a bad situation. We know that the people didn't know the law and they were not hearing Deuteronomy read. Knowing the stories doesn't make you a follower. It is the intersection of the words of God, the listening heart and the Holy Spirit that brings life and change.

Vs. 16-18 Faith seems to have been a rare thing. Although the Lord promised Gideon victory, Gideon didn't exactly believe, but he didn't exactly disbelieve. He was asking for a test to make sure this was all true.

Vs. 19-24 There are many interesting things here. It appears as if God was not holding the people to worship at the tabernacle during this period of disobedience. Normally, sacrificing anywhere but the tabernacle was forbidden. God was looking for faith and devotion to His commands as He was giving direction. Notice that after the angel of the Lord left Gideon in shock, the Lord spoke to Gideon and calmed him. Having seen the Lord and now hearing this voice, Gideon knew it was the Lord who was invisibly with him, speaking to him. From this account and what we find later, Gideon was a fearful follower who needed lots of encouragement and direction. But, the Lord is OK with that. That's something to give us hope as we follow Christ in the harvest. We don't have to fit into the mold of any hero of the faith or into some preconceived notion of spiritual boldness.

Vs. 25-27 God gave Gideon very specific instructions. Although Gideon was afraid of the people, so that he obeyed God at night, he still did it. The altar was probably big, like a monument, so Gideon enlisted 10 men who helped him and then, apparently, informed the authorities. Again, the Lord worked with Gideon in all of this.

Vs. 28-32 I love the response of Gideon's father. I wouldn't have liked a nickname like that. At least it wasn't a tattoo.

Vs. 33-40 Verse 34 is interesting. It says the Spirit *clothed Gideon*, which is literal from the Hebrew.

One thing you see with Gideon in the case of the altar, and now in facing Midian, Gideon sought the help of others.

V. 36 I think that when a person has the right heart, the Lord doesn't mind someone asking for confirmation of His will. It might depend too, on what the Lord has already done in our lives up to that point. If He has already shown us great acts of kindness and guidance, we might not need to ask for confirmation in continuing to do what He has already shown us. In this case with Gideon, there hadn't been a sign of the Lord's working for some time. And again, the Lord showed him a lot of understanding. I think He shows us a lot of understanding too.

Notice too that before Gideon asked for this confirmation he had already sounded the alarm and begun gathering Israel. He had already acted in faith and gone forward as a leader.

Luke 22:54-23:12

Luke 22:54-71

Vs. 54-62 What is notable about this account of Peter's denial is that Luke mentions that when the cock crowed the last time, Jesus heard it and turned; and across the distance, He met eyes with Peter.

Vs. 63-65 Jesus' self-control, for our sakes, is amazing. Jesus was the only person present who was in control of Himself, and He allowed these little evil men to harm Him.

Vs. 66-71 The trial of Jesus had been illegal. They had to wait until daybreak to re-try Him with the full Sanhedrin. Notice that Jesus does some talking here. When He said that He was the Son of Man, it led to the question of being God's Son. This was a very clear statement. Verse 70 could be translated, "You have said it. I am." The *you say* is a Greek idiom meaning "yes." So what Jesus is saying is "Yes, I am."

Luke 23:1-12

Vs. 1-5 This is a hearing that looks similar to what we have seen in Matthew and Mark.

Vs. 6-12 This is only found in Luke. Jesus frustrated the entire situation by just saying nothing. It is interesting that Pilate and Herod became friends after this. That gives you a view of Pilate that makes you feel less sympathetic toward him, even if he was forced to hand over Jesus to the Jews. Apparently Pilate's remorse passed quickly.

To me, it is interesting that Jesus held to what He taught His disciples. He didn't cast pearls before swine. Herod interrogated Him at length. I'm sure it wasn't easy for Jesus to be mocked and taunted for as long as He was. This all makes me think that as a disciple, I have to be willing to be taunted and mocked; but I can stand with the security and knowledge that I am working in the harvest as Jesus was, and for the same purpose.

Psalms 95-96

Psalms 95

I don't know if this was written in conjunction with David, but I can imagine him urging this to be put to music, so the people coming to Jerusalem would put their minds on God and open their hearts.

Vs. 1-5 This is a call to come to worship their Savior King. David knew this King and His salvation very personally.

Vs. 6-7 This is a call to come and worship their Maker Shepherd. Especially in these two terms being put together, there is the urging to submit to His leading.

Vs. 8-11 This may seem like a less than happy way to end the psalm/song, but the warning is appropriate. Israel in the wilderness was blessed and still resisted God's loving leadership. God

was using David to bring the people out of 400 years of wandering and despair. They needed to embrace the blessing of David's kingship with obedience to God.

Psalm 96

Vs. 1-6 This psalm seems to be a call to the people of the world. The one Creator created all men and nations. He is the only God and He has one majesty and splendor that should be worshiped by all.

Vs. 7-9 These are strong cries to worship God. If Israel did this, the next verse would be easy.

V. 10 With the heart of conviction expressed in the last verses, this would have been an easy testimony to give to the nations. This is very much like what we hear David say so often. God's blessing and salvation are to be shared with others.

Vs. 11-13 The creation will rejoice at God's coming. These parts of creation have nothing to fear of judgment, nor will the righteous. This is a call for all men to be ready to meet God.

This is why we have been left here, to praise God in the harvest, making disciples, who make disciples, who make disciples.

Proverbs 14:5-6

With the pairing here, it is almost as if you could read that a lying, false witness will always seek wisdom in vain, but a person who tells the truth will find it easy to gain understanding. He is already on the same wavelength as God's wisdom.