

Gideon's Struggle Was Not Just to See Who God Was, But to See Who *He* Was in God's Eyes.**When Like Gideon We Make Ourselves Available to God, He Uses Us to Change the World.**

In the midst of the Israelites' oppression by the Midianites, "the camera zooms in for us on Gideon, who is threshing wheat at the bottom of a winepress in an effort to hide the grain" from the invaders, the Rev. Dr. Brook Thelander said in his sermon Sunday.

"And an angel appears and says to him, 'Mighty hero, the Lord is with you!'"

"To which Gideon replies, 'Yeah, right! If God is with us, then why are we hiding in caves,

and why am I threshing wheat at the bottom of a winepress, constantly looking over my shoulder? When God was with us, we had miracles, we had deliverance from Egypt. All that is gone now. And you're calling me a hero?"

"And the angel says, 'Go with the strength you have and rescue Israel from the Midianites. I am sending you.'

"Gideon responds with the universal human response, . . . 'How, Lord? How can I do this? My clan is the weakest in the whole tribe, and I am the least of my entire family.' In other words, 'I'm not qualified; I don't have what it takes.'"

The angel's response, "I will be with you," reminds us that "safety is not the absence of danger or risk, but the presence of God," Pastor Thelander said. "With God by your side, you can storm the gates of hell without fear. Without him by your side, you may not even be safe at the bottom of a winepress."

"One of the interesting things about this episode is that God did not need Gideon to crush the Midianites, and God did not need the Apostle Paul to preach to the Gentiles and to write nearly two-thirds of our New Testament. And God did not need Peter and the other apostles to do his work; God is perfectly capable of doing what needs done apart from any human involvement.

"But God, in his wisdom, has chosen not to do his work without us! . . . Our Scripture lessons today shine the spotlight on the typical human response to God's call on our lives to help him with his work: our perceived inadequacies and inabilities. But God is looking for something else; he's not interested so much in whether we are *able*, but whether we are *avail-able*."

When Jesus tells Peter, a professional fisherman, to go back out and cast the net again, he is teaching the disciples that "what is most important in this endeavor is not their ability, but their availability.

"It's much the same for us, dear ones. God calls us and solicits our cooperation with his divine work in the world, not because of what we can do for him, but because of what he wants to do for us and in us!" as he did with (p.2→)



"Gideon and the Angel", a woodcut illustration by Julius Schnoor von Carolsfeld. © World Mission Collection, 1997. "Mighty hero, the Lord is with you!" the angel said.

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Sunday 10:00 a.m.: Word & Table service

11:30 a.m.: Refreshments, conversation

11:45 a.m.: Post-service discussion.

6:00 p.m.: (First Sundays only) Evensong, tea, refreshments.

Thursday: Vespers, 7-7:25 p.m. Singing and discussing hymns, 7:30-8:30 p.m.

For the poor: Ground beef, chicken, sausage, bacon, fresh produce, canned fruits and vegetables, canned spam and tuna, cold cereal, milk, butter, cheese, cooking oil, pancake mix, syrup, chili powder, paprika, oregano, garlic powder, diapers, baby wipes, bathroom tissue, hand and body soap, shampoo, conditioner, razors, shaving cream, cold weather clothing.

Readings, 2/11: Jer. 17:5-10; Ps. 1; 1 Cor. 15:12-20; Luke 6:17-26. **2/18:** Ex. 34:29-35; Ps. 99:5-9; 2 Pet. 1:13-21; Luke 9:28-36.

Prayer Emphases: Bahamas; Baptist Bible Fellowship; Common Ground Community Church, Boise, and the Rev. Clay Renn; American Bible Society; parishioners on Raymond Street.

(Sermon, cont'd.) Gideon. When the angel called Gideon a hero, "Was the angel . . . using sarcasm on Gideon?" Pastor Thelander asked. "I don't think so at all," he continued. "The angel says, 'Hail, mighty hero,' because in God's eyes that's who Gideon was. So Gideon's struggle was not just in being able to see who *God* was; his struggle was also (perhaps more importantly!) to see who *he* was in God's eyes. Let me ask . . . Do you realize that you are mighty in God's sight" when you offer yourself to him?

**The Harbinger will not
publish next week.**