

Remember the Great Works of God – What A Mess!

Judges 21

Context: Chapter 19, 20, 21

Chapter 19

- A Levite's concubine committed adultery and went back to her father
- Four months later, this Levite went his father-in-law (FIL) and hope to bring his concubine back.
- Unfortunately, the FIL kept them and delayed their journey home
- On the way home, they had to stay somewhere overnight, so they stayed in Gibeah, Israel land rather than with foreigner.
- At night, the robbers in Gibeah heard that of newcomers and wanted to commit sin
- So, they demanded the host to hand over the Levite
- In the end, the Levite offered his concubine to the robbers
- Next day, the concubine came back to the house violated and died at the door
- The Levite took the body went back home, but her up into pieces and sent them to the rest of the tribes

Chapter 20

- The Israelites got their army together 400,000 against Benjamites 26,700
- Israelites won and only 600 Benjamites left, the city of the Benjamites was destroyed, women and children were included

Chapter 21:

- The Israelites were grieving over a loss tribe
- So, in order to find wives for the remaining Benjamites, they slaughterman and woman, and children from no one from Jabesh Gilead because they didn't come to the assembly.
- They took 400 virgins to the Benjamites
- Then they asked the Benjamites to captures the women dancers from Shiloh during a religious festival.

Lessons:

In this passage, all characters are God's people. How would God's people handle and respond when they face their lives' calamities?

1. Levite – Not able to face oneself with honesty (ie Not aware of one's own character darkness/shadow, area of our character that wasn't pleasing to God)

Using this Levite as an example, standing up for his dead concubine or seeking justice is the right thing to do but for the reason to protect his reputation and lie about the truth is the shadow in his character where this area of his character is still in the dark and he hasn't let God's light to reach there to bring any positive change.

In the whole book of Judges, only this Levite, single person, single-handed motivated all the Israelites as one person, one nation. The Levite used some strategy here.

⁴ So the Levite, the husband of the murdered woman, said, "I and my concubine came to Gibeah in Benjamin to spend the night. ⁵ During the night the men of Gibeah came after me and surrounded the house, intending to kill me. They raped my concubine, and she died. ⁶ I took my concubine, cut her into pieces and sent one piece to each region of Israel's inheritance, because they committed this lewd and outrageous act in Israel. (v.20:4-6)

The Levite did not tell the whole truth because it will be to his disadvantage.

Under what circumstances do we not tell the whole truth? It's very tempting when the situation is not to our advantage.

Example:

When I was young in grade two, one Saturday during badminton practice, I brought a powerful toy gun to school. In general, a school is a place that does not allow toy guns. But instead of going home after practice and pick up my toy gun and play, I decided to bring it to practice, so after practice, I can join my friend. He told me we could go to a dump and try it out. At times powerful toy guns were very popular at school. Our coach also does not like us playing with powerful toy guns. So, after practice, when we leave, he told us that we need to go straight home. He feared that we would go and play with toy guns. He also said that he would check on us by calling our home and see if we go straight home. Instead of leaving, my coach saw me turned around and thought something's not right. So I told him everything.

Application: Take a moment and think through your past, give thanks for those moments of God's conviction because your heart is still soft.

The first type of problem handling is the type like the Levite, not face oneself with honesty, hiding our own fault and only tell the side that makes us look good.

2. The people from the tribe of Benjamin – Not able to face others with honesty (ie one can only hear their own thoughts but not others' words as a result one only acts on one's will regardless of sequence)

The problem of the Benjamites is that they did not listen to others. The people in Gibeah sinned, all the Israelites requested was for the Benjamites to hand out those who sinned. But the Benjamites refused because that's losing face. The Benjamites didn't even do their own investigation. Remember that Levite's way of handling problems is to only share what's benefit to him, hide, and not share information that is not beneficial. Well, what's the Benjamites' way of handling problems?

¹⁵ At once the Benjamites mobilized twenty-six thousand (26,000) swordsmen from their towns, in addition to seven hundred (700) able young men from those living in Gibeah. ¹⁶ Among all these soldiers there were seven hundred select troops who were left-handed, each of whom could sling a stone at a hair and not miss. (v. 20:15-16)

Though the Benjamites are small in number they are confident in their elite army.

The Levite is not able to face himself with honesty and the Benjamites are able to face others with honesty.

Example:

Have you ever broken anything in your house not because they should be broken but because you didn't listen to your spouse? I have. At that moment, I thought I knew better, but the truth is that in a certain area my better half knew better than me. So not only I

have to confess I broke something in the house, but I have to confess I broke it because I didn't listen to my better half.

Application: Take a moment and ask the Lord, have there been times that you are like the Benjamites, because of pride that you have not been able to hear others' words?

3. The Israelites – Not able to face God with honesty (ie did not inquire God in the first place)

If we say that the Levite is insidious, cunning, or crafty or even sneaky, then the group of Israelites is absurd and ridiculous. Once again, when they heard the story from the Levite, they didn't do their own research. At once they decided to attack the Benjamites. They seek the Lord after they sent their army.

Do we see ourselves in the Israelites sometimes, we decided to take a certain job or go a certain direction in life and then we ask God to bless us? It's like we cut a cheque and ask God to put his signature there.

The Israelites made and kept a promise to God that they will not give their daughters to the remaining Benjamites but they forgot God's basic commandments: do not murder, do not covet, et cetera (Ex. 20:2-17; Duet. 5:6-17).

⁸Then they asked, "Which one of the tribes of Israel failed to assemble before the Lord at Mizpah?" They discovered that no one from Jabesh Gilead had come to the camp for the assembly. ⁹For when they counted the people, they found that none of the people of Jabesh Gilead were there.

¹⁰So the assembly sent twelve thousand fighting men with instructions to go to Jabesh Gilead and put to the sword those living there, including the women and children. ¹¹"This is what you are to do," they said. "Kill every male and every woman who is not a virgin." ¹²They found among the people living in Jabesh Gilead four hundred young women who had never slept with a man, and they took them to the camp at Shiloh in Canaan. (v. 21:8-12)

The intention behind why God gave them commandments in the first place is for them to love God and to love others. The Israelites totally missed that.

Have we made the same mistakes before that the Israelites, that we promise we will serve in a certain position but refuse to love the people we serve? We may say yes in order to provide a service but no to love brothers and sisters in Christ because it's a different thing altogether.

From one victim to another victim:

Judges 19 to 21 are all related.

- one Levite's tragic experience turned into a nation broken;
- one concubine being forced by cruelty and died turned into 600 innocent Israelites girls being forced to marriage;
- one concubine's tragic death turned into 40,300 Israelites and 25,000 Benjamites died in battle.

When one uses his or her own ways to face problems with lies one after one another, it breeds hatred, causing one walking further and further away from God's heart.

The group of Israelites couldn't face God with an honest heart.

- a. They entered sent out their army without inquiring God
- b. They followed God's guidance by keeping their promise but missing the point of God's teachings: to love God and to love others.
- c. They cried out to God that Israel is missing one tribe except they were the ones who annihilated the tribe of Benjamin. It's like one student fails his or her test and asks the reason. The reason is obvious that one didn't study hard enough.

³ "Lord, God of Israel," they cried, "why has this happened to Israel? Why should one tribe be missing from Israel today?" (v. 21:3)

- d. In order to save the tribe of Benjamin, the Israelites asked the Benjamites to capture Shiloh's women dancers during a religious ceremony. Then comfort the men of Shiloh that this is not breaking the promise we made to God which is we didn't give our daughters away, the Benjamites robbed the girls. The Israelites made up how they should follow God and really twisted the truth.

In summary:

The Levite, the Benjamites, the Israelites all did what fit in their own eyes. They can't because honest to face themselves, others, and even God.

Illustration:

There is a house owner who wants to sell his house. But the buyer did not have enough money, so the house owner said, I am willing to sell you my house own if you can save me a space that is enough for me to put a nail on your front door. The buyer said that's a good deal, so he bought the house. A few years later, the previous owner wants the house back, but the new owner didn't want to sell back. So, the cunning previous owner decided to put a dead dog on the nail that he reserved on the house front door since according to their agreement, that position belongs to the previous owner, no one can touch it. The house smelled so bad. The new owner couldn't stand it anymore so he sold it back to the previous owner.

What do you think this story is about?

Today, we have many things that belong to God and we should listen and follow him. But there is a space as small as a nail that we do not want to give up?

Today, if we cannot face ourselves, others, and God with honesty, it's like our Christian journey has saved a space as small as a nail for ourselves. Take a look in the world, how many Christ-followers have saved a space as small as a nail for themselves? If we say we put our trust in Jesus Christ our King and He had done many great things for us, then He is our all in our lives. He is our King that has done great things for us.

Give it all to Him. Don't keep a space as small as a nail to ourselves. Take the first step by giving Jesus our all. Be honest with ourselves, be honest with others, and be honest with God.

At the end of the book of Judges, there is a phrase said, "In those days Israel had no king; everyone did as they saw fit." (v. 21:25)

A life without God is a life that acts whatever fits or whatever one feels right in one's own eyes. After studying the book of Judges, I saw the tragic consequences of self-assertion and self-idolatry. I also saw the perseverance of God's grace and his unfailing love towards a group of people that he kept forgiving and delivering. The story does not end in the book of Judges. God still tries, again and again, to call his people back to faithfulness and obedience. My prayer is that we will give all to our God and King Jesus Christ and count our blessings every day by remembering the great works of God.