

MIGHTY WARRIOR! Judges 6:1-32 (Key Verse 12)

"When the angel of the LORD appeared to Gideon, he said, 'The LORD is with you, mighty warrior.'"(6:12)

From today's passage we are going to learn what really is our true identity, from the key verse God says we are Mighty Warriors, however more often people do not consider themselves as Mighty Warriors, even the greatest people in the world still are reluctant to say that they are Mighty Warriors, and because of this many people live with a sense of helplessness and cannot live with joy and peace. But glory to God for through today's passage we are going to learn what it really means that we are Mighty Warriors, how is it possible that we are Mighty Warriors and how we can live everyday as Mighty Warriors. I pray that God may have mercy on us to receive one word so that we can live with a sense victory and without fear on daily basis.

The passage today begins with the Israelites who did evil against the Lord, this was only after 40 years of peace that God granted them through Judge Deborah, the mother of Israel. When God saw this repeated behaviour of the Israelites, he gave them into the hands of the Midianites. The Israelites were God's chosen people, God granted them the promised land to be theirs, the land flowing with milk and honey, but when they did evil, God disciplined them, by handing them into the hands of the Midianites. And because of their sins, the Israelites could not handle the power of oppression of the Midianites, because of their sins the Israelites could not stand in unity to defend themselves against the Midianites. They oppressed them such that whenever they tried to plant crops, the Midianites, the Amalekites and other eastern people invaded their country and camped on their land ruining their vegetation, destroying their livestock everything. The Midianites occupied the land that God gave to the Israelites as though it was theirs, they came in great numbers with their livestock to settle in the land of the Israelites and all the Israelites could do was run off to the mountains in fear.

Even though they ran off to the mountains, the Israelites continued to suffer under the oppression of the Midianites. the Midianites continued to them hunt down and oppressed them, in **verse 6** it says: *"Midian so impoverished the Israelites that they cried out to the Lord for help."* There was no longer a flow of milk and honey in the land for the Israelites. And all this was because the Israelites did evil against the Lord. Because the oppression was so unbearable, and the Israelites had no other plan to rescue themselves, they cried out to the Lord. They were God's children, they were God's chosen people, but yet when they were in trouble, they did not go to him first, God was the least of their options. However, when they cried out to God, he did not neglect them, but immediately responded to them. How did God respond to the Israelites? Let us look at **verse 8-10**: *"he sent them a prophet, who said, 'This is what the Lord, the God of Israel, says: I brought you up out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery. I rescued you from the hand of the Egyptians. And I delivered you from the hand of all your oppressors; I drove them out before you and gave you their land. I said to you, 'I am the Lord your God; do not worship the gods of the Amorites, in whose land you live.' But you have not listened to me."*

This time the Lord responded differently to the Israelites, before, God responded by raising for the Israelites a Judge who immediately fought and rescued them. Through this God wanted to reveal to the Israelites that He is the almighty God, their father who loved them so dearly, the one and only who fights for them and provides for them. But because of their sins, the Israelites could not see this, so to help them this time around God raised for them a Prophet, through the prophet God revealed to the Israelites their fundamental problem. Their problem was sin, they worshipped other gods, they neglected God. They completely disregarded who God is, they did not consider and value what God had done for them, how God rescued them from the land of slavery, how He sustained them on the dessert for 40 year, how He granted them victory against the nations in the promised land. But how did the Israelites become like this? They became like this way because they considered fleshly desires more valuable than God, and so they began to worship Baal the god of the flesh, who promises to grant material needs, pleasures and desires. When the Israelites worshipped Baal, they lost their identity, they forgot who God is, and as a result they became very fearful and helpless people who could be overcome by the Midianites who were not even iron chariots. They could be overcome because the Baal they worshipped could not protect them, he had no power and ability to unite and grant the Israelites strength. All Baal could for them was divide them and leave them in fear.

Actually this is a very familiar story today, many people are so drawn into the idea of making money, the idea of being famous, the idea of being wealthy to provide for our family, to have a decent life and to travel the world. However, many suffer from all kinds of stress from the pressure they get from their work, many are divided and in conflict with one another. The other day I heard on the radio about how so many celebrities suffer from depression. This is strange as one would think they would be fulfilled by their careers, even though they are famous and seem to have everything, they still feel alone. They put all their hope in their career dream and when they experience pressure, they breakdown in helplessness and fear just like the Israelites. I believe all this is because God is not a reality in the people's hearts, Jesus is not the center of the people's lives, people do not know that Jesus is Emmanuel God. But glory to God, who sent for us a prophet revealing to us that our fundamental problem is sin, sin of worshipping materialism over the almighty God. May God help us to repent and see Him for who He is, our father, the almighty and provider of our every need, Amen.

When God sent the prophet to the Israelites, the people of Israel were really not in the best condition, they were in hiding filled with so much fear and hopelessness. Hearing that they were in that position because of their sins was very necessary for them to repent and think about

who God is in their lives. Hearing this must have been very tough them, this could leave them filled with so much guilt, regrets and unworthy of God's protection and love. Because of this God did not just leave the Israelites at that, but rather he went further to encourage them and restore them. And this he did by sending his angel to them. The angel came to Gideon Son of Joash the Abiezrite, who was filled with so much fear for the Midianites such that he even was threshing wheat in a winepress, because of fear he could not comfortably thresh his wheat in an open area where wind blows to effectively thresh his wheat, but rather he did so in discomfort in a winepress just so the Midianites will not see him. What then did the angel do to encourage the very fear filled and down hearted Gideon? Let us look at **verse 12**: "*When the angel of the Lord appeared to Gideon, he said, 'The Lord is with you, mighty warrior.'*" The angel called Gideon mighty warrior, this was the true identity of the people of Israel, this was independent of how they look or how they speak. They were mighty warriors because the Lord is with them, what the angel told Israel was not a new thing, God was always with the Israelites but they ignored him and followed their own way, and so today the angel came to restore, the angel came to open the eyes of Israel, to open the eyes of Gideon.

However, because of the influence of the world, Gideon did not believe what the angel told him. Because of his limited worldly view of things, with disbelief Gideon responded to the angel firstly in **verse 13**: "*Pardon me, my lord,' Gideon replied, 'but if the Lord is with us, why has all this happened to us? Where are all his wonders that our ancestors told us about when they said, 'Did not the Lord bring us up out of Egypt?' But now the Lord has abandoned us and given us into the hand of Midian.'*" Here Gideon did not believe that God was with him because of their current suffering in the promised land, he did not understand how God is with him and the people of Israel while he is suffering in this way at the hand of the Midianites, especially because it is God who handed them over to the Midianites. He was ignorant on the fact that real reason the Israelites were given into the Midianites was because of their sins, the reason they were oppressed by the Midianites is because they did not depend on God but other gods, they depended on materialism. Even though God handed them over to the Midianites, if they had repented and depended on God, they were going to be victorious. Basically, what the angel was saying to Gideon is that he can overcome his situation if only he can believe that God is with him. If he can invite God into his life, then he can be victorious and be a mighty warrior.

Furthermore, Gideon insisted that he is not a mighty warrior. God wanted to raise Gideon to save the people of Israel, he said to him: "*Go in the strength you have and save Israel out of Midian's hand. Am I not sending you?*" However, because of his worldly view of things he still maintained his disbelief, let us look at **verse 15**: "*Pardon me, my lord,' Gideon replied, 'but how can I save Israel? My clan is the weakest in Manasseh, and I am the least in my family.'*" Listening to this response one may think that Gideon is being humble and identifying himself as the least which we have learnt that it is the greatest thing to do. But actually, what Gideon did here was disbelief, God commanded him and promised to be with him, but he still disregarded God's word and only considered his strength, abilities, background and the likes. And this is the very sin that led Israel into this situation, because of this sin Israel did evil in the eyes of the Lord, because of this sin Israel was handed over to the Midianites. It is very heart-breaking because when I look at Gideon, I cannot help but see myself. Many times, I considered myself very lowly, because of my background I thought it is better to play things safe and not offend other people, as I was always afraid to challenge in fear of how I will defend myself, in fear failure. However, from today's passage I have learnt that this is a great sin, with severe implications, I pray that I may repent and look at God in all things and not my own strength.

When God saw the disbelief in Gideon, he did not give up on him still, but rather he continued to love him and encouraged him further to plant faith and hope in his heart. Let us look at **verse 16**: "*The Lord answered, 'I will be with you, and you will strike down all the Midianites, leaving none alive.'*" Why was God so persistent in his encouragement to Gideon? Why did he spend so much time with Gideon, why did he not appoint someone else? Especially when Gideon still requested a sign from God that he is indeed the one he wants to send to redeem the Israelites. God even had to wait for Gideon who went to prepare an offering. Why did God go through so much trouble, so much waiting? God did this because of his love for Gideon, it was not about Gideon fighting for the Israelites, but it was more about Gideon finding God, having a relationship with God and seeing his future with God who will fight for him, protect him and walk with him each and every step of his life journey. This is the form of worship that God wanted to restore in Gideon's heart, worship from the heart, dependence on God and having an intimate relationship with God. Being a friend of God, sharing every minute of life with God. And by the mercy of God, finally Gideon could personally meet God. This happened when angel of God said to him take the meat and the unleavened bread, which he prepared as an offering and place them on a rock and pour out the broth. When Gideon did so, the angel of the Lord touched the meat and the unleavened bread with the tip of the staff that was in his hand, fire flared from the rock, consuming the meat and the bread. After this encounter Gideon's faith was restored, and he built an altar to the Lord there and called it The Lord Is Peace.

After this, Gideon's faith was still not perfect, but when he obeyed God even to the slightest, God could bless him. This happened when he chose to take down the altar of Baal at night instead of during day light when God commanded him, in fear of the people. When the people found out that it was, he who took it down, God protected him through his father who defended him saying: "*Are you going to plead Baal's cause? Are you trying to save him? Whoever fights for him shall be put to death by morning! If Baal really is a god, he can defend himself when someone breaks down his altar.'*"

Conclusion

From today's passage we have learnt that without God we remain helpless, oppressed, fearful and with no hope. But when we acknowledge God, depend on him and allow him to work in our lives we become totally different, we become Mighty Warriors. In therefore pray that we may all surrender ourselves to Jesus allow him to work in our lives, depend on him. I believe if we sincerely do this, our lives will be changed, we will be mighty warriors in all that we do. Furthermore, I want to play a scene from the movie the Shack, to see how a man just like Gideon who was in a crisis, mess, fear and hopelessness could become a Mighty Warrior who walks on water when he surrendered all and depended on Jesus.