

Weekly Devotion November 9, 2020
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“When Facing Uncertainty? Part 1: Confidence in Who is With Us.”

Well, here we are. It’s a week or so after the election and we have seen angst and division unlike any other time. As razor thin margins in controversial states are litigated and debated any result now will result in half the country feeling cheated. 2020 it seems continues to bring more uncertainty to an already difficult time. It’s this uncertainty that have endured all year I would like to address in these next two devotions.

A feeling of uncertainty often hits hardest in difficult times. For example, when we have lost a spouse, or when we lose our job, or when a divorce takes hold or a number of other things happen, familiar territory suddenly feels very foreign. On the other hand, when times are good, we are confident often in things that take us from the Lord more than draw us to Him. This is our sinful nature. Judges 6:1-10 reminds us that this was a problem for Gideon’s community. They trusted in idols over the Lord but blamed the Lord for the Midianites who bullied, abused, and dispirited the Israelites. The Midianites were allowed to raid the community and take all their food and livestock. People lived in caves because caves couldn’t be destroyed like homes. It was a desperate scene brought about because the Israelites did not listen to the Lord but allowed each person to do what right in their own eyes. And when we meet Gideon, he is secretly threshing wheat in a wine press. This was a job usually done outside so the wind could blow away the chaff. Gideon had learned to protect what little food he had so he meticulously separated the wheat and chaff by hand. But God is merciful.

For Part 1 this this week consider the conversation in Judges 6:11-16. The Angel of the Lord comes to Gideon, 12 When the angel of the LORD appeared to Gideon, he said, “The LORD is with you, mighty warrior.”

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 the tone of blame in Gideon’s voice—no doubt echoed by his family.)

14 The LORD turned to him and said, “Go in the strength you have and save Israel out of Midian’s hand. Am I not sending you?” (The strength you have. Gideon was hiding, fearful, doubting God but he is exactly the perfect candidate for God’s purpose to be accomplished. It would have been easy to underestimate Gideon. But that’s the way of our Lord. “Whoever is the least will be the greatest” (Luke 9:48).

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.” (Exactly, just like David would be just a rugged shepherd boy who brought down a giant.)

16 The LORD answered, “I will be with you, and you will strike down all the Midianites, leaving none alive.”

Up to this point we learn a lot about the nature of our Gideon’s humanity. Midian seeks power over Israel and exercises that power to destroy the spirit of those like Gideon. Midian is using starvation as a tool to control Israel. And Then there is Gideon. Fear of Midian has him working hard to protect what he has left. In upcoming verses God patiently gives Gideon a sign to help him overcome his doubts. But up to this point Gideon is not living up to his full potential. He is living as if Midian is against him rather than with the fact that God is with him.

How about us are we living more like something is against us more than God is for us? Something we need to realize and remember is that there is always something against us. The Devil’s goal is to use any means to make us desperate and stupid enough to give up our faith. Our sin has built within it a strange and powerful capacity for self-destruction. And our natural reaction is to hide, in order to avoid becoming a target. Israel hid and Midian came. Israel hid again and Midian took more. And so, it went. This was the wisdom; “Don’t fight back, just hide and complain”. But for Gideon and God’s people hiding only provoke the Midianite’s to keep taking things from them.

We always have something working against us but we have with us is greater than the world that is for us. The disciples once hid like Gideon, disillusioned and facing deep uncertainty. He hid for fear of the Jews behind a locked door. But when they met the resurrected Jesus they went before those very same religious leaders they once feared and preached Jesus openly. Their fearless preaching changed the world. Twice the Lord told Gideon, “The Lord is with you.” That’s something we need to be reminded of as well.

We live in a time where faith must be real. It is not a time to hide even when every instinct tends toward self-preservation. It is a time to listen to God’s Word, read it and follow it. It is a time to believe what we say we believe. The best way to meet uncertainty is to turn to that which is certain as Gideon eventually did. It is Jesus who promises, “I will not abandon you but will give you another counselor” (John 14:15-21). And in the Great Commission of Matthew 28:20 the whole book of Matthew ends with this phrase. “I will be with you always for all days.” Jesus is a certainty. God took a nobody in Gideon and made him into the very instrument who would inspire others, strengthen the weak, and defend the honor of His God. So, if God can raise you from the dead in and through Jesus’ resurrection as He promised, we will do well to remember to place our confidence in Him, who is with us rather than be afraid of what is against us. So, I encourage you to take courage in who is with you in these uncertain times. In Jesus. Amen.

Announcements and Blessing
Matthew Woods
John 3:30