

What In The World Am I Doing Here?

Judges 6:17-40

Made For God's Pleasure

Introduction

Last week we discussed the subject of finding life's purpose. We can only find meaning in life, when we go back to the source of life. God is our creator. He designed each of us with a specific purpose in mind. It is impossible to find fulfillment apart from God's plan for us. We might be able to find some degree of success here on earth, but without God, nothing can satisfy. That is why we must first realize that the meaning of life is not about us at all, but rather it is about God. The Apostle Paul said it like this, **"So whether we are here in this body or away from this body, our goal is to please Him (God)" (2 Corinthians 5:9 NLT)**. In **Romans 12:1**, Paul admonishes us to **"present our bodies as living sacrifices, holy and PLEASING to God for this is true and proper worship"**. You see, worship is much more than singing songs or attending church, or even prayer. Worship is living a lifestyle that is pleasing to God. We live in such a way that our life's goal is to bring God pleasure. Any one who has children can understand this concept. When our children take the things that we have taught them and then go out and live out the standards that we instilled in them, it brings us, as parents, a great sense of satisfaction, and even pride. I know that watching my sons grow up to be moral, responsible young men who love God and work hard to provide for their families gives me a great deal of satisfaction. I am proud of them. This is pleasing to their mother and I, who tried to raise them in the nurture and admonition of The LORD (**Ephesians 6:4**). In the same way, when we live our lives with an earnest desire to obey the commands of Christ because we love Him and want to serve Him, then He is pleased with us. In short, God takes pride in us because we are living a life of worship, which is exactly what He "raised" us up to do!

It is a natural reaction to want to worship The LORD when we meet Him face to face. When Gideon met Christ on the threshing floor, his automatic response was, **"Please wait here, because I want to give you an offering" (vs.18)**. When someone has a true encounter with The Living God, they will not have to be coerced into bringing their offering, but rather, they will have an overwhelming DESIRE to do so. That is why I do not believe in begging people to give to the church. Instead, I want them to focus on knowing Christ. If the people truly know Christ, they will give without being asked. Giving sacrificially is part of living a worship-lifestyle. Gideon met God and wanted to give Him something, and not just a little something. He sacrificed a young goat and cooked it and brought freshly baked bread. The amount of grain that he used was no small amount. He offered the Lord a full *ephah* (Pronounced ee-faw about 3/5 bushel or roughly six gallons of wheat). Think about that for a moment. The same man who was hiding his grain from the Midianites gave The Lord six gallons of it! True worship will be costly. Everything that we do for our God should be done with excellence. He died to save us, and therefore, He DESERVES our very best.

Worship is not only about giving. As we stated previously, worship is a way of life. If Gideon had simply given God an offering of meat and bread and went back to being just the way that he was, then he would have entirely missed the point of worship. True worship is surrendering ourselves to God for HIS pleasure. God desires much more than the occasional "gift" in the offering plate. He will not be pleased by just having "our stuff". God wants US. The best description that I have ever seen for what it means to have a worshipful life is found in the book of **Micah 6:7-8: "Will The LORD be pleased with thousands of rams, with ten thousand rivers of olive oil? Shall I offer my firstborn for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul? He has shown you, O Mortal, what is good. And what does The LORD require of you? To act justly and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with your God."** Now THAT is a lifestyle of worship, a living sacrifice wholly and acceptable to God. Let us look at Gideon's response to God's call upon his life and see if he truly offered himself as a living sacrifice. Did he in fact: DO JUSTLY, LOVE MERCY, and WALK HUMBLY WITH GOD.

Do Justly

"Partial" obedience is in fact disobedience. God does not allow us to pick and choose which commands we will, or will not, follow. To be surrendered to Christ is to strive to fully obey ALL of his commandments. As soon as God had departed from Gideon, after assuring him that he was not going to die because he had seen God (**vs. 22-23**), The Lord instructed him to tear down the altars of Baal and Ashtoreth that were at his father's house (**vs. 25**). You see, God was deadly serious about his commandment not to have any other gods before Him (**Exodus 20:3-4**). If Gideon was truly going to have a life of worship, then he was going to have to live a life of obedience. He knew exactly what God was asking him to do. God was asking him to put his young life on the line. To desecrate his father's altars could very well mean a death sentence for Gideon. People tend to get a little radical when you insult their religious beliefs! The people in Gideon's hometown weren't going to take such action lying down, and Gideon knew it, but nevertheless, He built an altar to The LORD and sacrificed his father's prized bull, and he demolished the altars his father had set up to worship his false gods. Gideon was afraid for his life, so he did this under the cover of darkness, but the fact remains that HE DID IT! In spite of being terrified, he obeyed ALL of God's commands to the letter. He acted justly, no matter the outcome, or what others would think, Gideon obeyed God and trusted Him completely with the results.

That is exactly what it means to "act justly". To obey the commands of Christ, regardless of whether it be popular, or easy, or even costly. We must fully OBEY the commands of Christ if we are to live a life that brings pleasure to The One who created us. We are to study the Word of God and endeavor to live accordingly. The beauty of it is, that if we do this, HE will be with us and enable us to live in such a way. God didn't leave Gideon alone to face the people in his village. When the lynch-mob came to drag Gideon away, God gave wisdom to Gideon's father who said basically, **"If Baal is really a god, then why does he need us to defend his honor? Let him defend his own honor."** (**vs. 29-31**). You know, I think that would be a good message for the folks who are so brainwashed into the doctrine of Islam. If Allah really is god, then why does he need you folks to defend his honor so much? (But I digress.) From that day on, Gideon was called "Jerub-Baal" which basically meant "Let Baal deal with him". Baal never did. Because Baal was a phony. False gods can never save. They serve but one purpose, to distract our affections from The One True God. Examine your life this morning. Are you being FULLY obedient to the commands of Christ, or are there a few idols in your own back yard that need tearing down?

Love Mercy

Have you ever really considered that in order to worship God you must be willing to show His grace to others? **God so loved THE WORLD that He gave His only Son (John 3:16)**. So, it stands to reason that you can't live a life that is pleasing to God and not love the ones that He loves. Look at Gideon. When the Midianites start preparing for war Gideon sounds the call to arms and ask the people of his town to join him in the army of The LORD (**vs. 34**). These are the very same people that wanted him dead earlier for tearing down Baal's altar, and now Gideon responds by asking them to join him. He doesn't have them executed for their wickedness, but rather he longs to see them on God's side. And why do you think that these people, who had so hated him earlier, were now willing to join with him and fight? Because they could see that The Holy Spirit was upon him that's why! They came forward in mass and volunteered to fight by Gideon's side. The LORD Himself weeds some of them out later, but Gideon issues an invitation for all to come and join his army. Thanks to God's mighty power Gideon has now become the "Mighty Warrior" that God saw all along.

If we are to be a true worshipper, then we must be willing to show mercy upon those who have wronged us. To the very ones who have treated us with contempt, we must return only the love of Christ. This is what HE has commanded of us (**Matthew 5:44**). Jesus said in His famous "Sermon on the Mount" that his true worshippers would be blessed for showing mercy (**Matthew 5:7**) for they would receive mercy in return. You see, God will be just as forgiving of our sins as we are the sins of others (**Matthew 6:15**). Are you the kind of person who can easily hold a grudge? Then sadly, you are not a true worshipper.

per. God is pleased when His children love mercy. The definition of mercy is simply not getting what you deserve for your trespasses. Gideon didn't want to punish those who had opposed him, but rather, he wanted to see them restored to a right relationship with God. Serving Baal had gotten them into a terrible predicament that they had surely deserved, but Gideon wanted them to be set free. He didn't want them to be in bondage, he wanted to be their deliverer. His encounter with Jesus had forever changed him. Gideon had become a mighty man of mercy!

Walk Humbly With Your God

I love what Gideon did after he summoned the his army for battle. He asked The LORD not once, but TWICE, for conformation that he should lead his troops into battle. I have heard many pastors over the years chide Gideon for his lack of faith, that he would ask God for two separate confirmations for His will. The scriptures have already shown us that Gideon was a timid and humble man, which would explain his extreme caution in this regard. However, notice that The LORD doesn't say one negative thing about Gideon putting out the "fleece" for conformation. It is my sincere belief that The LORD wasn't bothered by this at all. In fact, he answers Gideon's prayer both times. Let us not forget that Gideon wasn't praying about whether or not he should take his men out for ice cream. He was leading them into BATTLE! I would think a little extra conformation on such a perilous endeavor would be warranted. Gideon humbly wanted to make sure that God was indeed with him in the upcoming battle. He was well aware that if God was not with him then he would surely fail. That is the essence of humility, knowing that **apart from Christ we can do nothing (John 15)**.

I am convinced that most believers today fail to realize that Christ intends for us to fully rely upon him for our every move. He wants us to walk humbly with our God. Why? Because God longs to be more than just our LORD, he longs to be our friend. Yes, I said it. You were created to be God's friend. He longs for you to walk through this life, and into the eternity beyond, with your hand firmly in His. Your purpose in life is to be a friend of God! Don't believe me? Just listen to the words of Jesus the night before he went to the cross:

"Greater love has no one than this: to lay down one's life for one's friends. You are my friends, if you do what I command. I no longer call you servants, because a servant does not know his master's business. Instead, I have called you friends, for everything that I have learned from My Father I have made known to you" (John 15:13-15).

Did you catch that? Jesus longs for you to be much more than just a servant. He longs for you to be His friend. Your purpose is to live a life of worship by bringing pleasure to God, YOUR FRIEND! When God says that what He requires of you is to **"walk humbly with your God"**, He is calling you to an intimate relationship. If you would like to know the difference between Christianity and EVERY other religion, it is simply this: Christianity is a loving daily walk (relationship) with a Holy, Awesome, God who longs to be your friend. When he appeared to Gideon that day on the threshing floor, He was looking for much more than a servant. He was calling Gideon to a friendship. He does the same for us today. Has there been a time in your life when you truly encountered a Risen Savior who took you by the hand and said, "Walk with me, I want you to be my friend?" OR, have you settled for a bunch of religious beliefs that leave you feeling as empty and inadequate as before. Forget empty religion, Jesus wants you to walk with Him. He wants you to trust Him with your life's direction. He wants to give you purpose. Finding your purpose in Him and living up to your potential is the only way that you can give God pleasure. It is the only way to live a life of worship. God is calling you this morning. He is calling you to an abundant life, the kind of life that makes Him smile. The life of a true worshiper is a life that is fully obedient to His commands (Live Justly), one that shows compassion and love for others (Loves Mercy), and one that prays for God's guidance with every step (Walk Humbly With Your God). I cannot speak for you this morning, but that is the life I want to live. And ALL of God's people said... TRUTH !!!