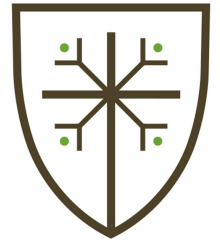


SERMON NOTES



SUMMER SERMON SERIES

THE TWELFTH JUDGE

A Return to Judges



June 25, 2023

SERMON INFO

TITLE

The Twelfth Judge -
The Final Vow

PREACHER

Rev. Tim Frickenschmidt

TEXTS

from Judges 16:1, 4-6, 15-22
2 Corinthians 5:17-6:1
Luke 8:11-15

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What are the "tragic infatuations" of our own lives? Those things in which we immerse ourselves and are drawn further away from God.
2. As new creations in Christ, how do we hold fast to the gifts we've been given and take root in them?

SERMON IN SUMMARY

Likely the most well-known part of Samson's life is his love affair with Delilah. And this week, Tim looked at how that love affair is a picture of what it looks like to, as the Apostle Paul says, receive the grace of God in vain."

Tragic Infatuation

In this story, Delilah is representative of the darkness and night in which the people of Israel live. And Samson's philandering, with one woman after another, is representative of Israel's (and our own) spiritual and moral philandering with anything and everything that is not God. In Samson's infatuation with Delilah, with the darkness she represents, his wandering further and further away from the Lord finally catches up to him. But in spite of Samson's corruption, God still uses him. God still brings about his plan through Samson.

A Ghastly Thing

Throughout his life, Samson makes a mockery of the Philistines, right up to the point where he breaks his final Nazarite vow. And in this, we should see that the enemies of God are like a joke before him. As the psalmist writes, "God holds them in derision." No matter how strong the enemy seems to be, and how fearful we are of the enemy's power, God is stronger. They are a joke to him. As one author says, "it is a ghastly thing to make oneself the object of divine laughter." In Samson's story it seems for a moment that the tables have turned. That he is now the object of derision. But "God is not mocked." The plan of God through Samson continues to play out. So, do not lose hope in your struggle against the enemies of this world. And do not put yourself in the position to be the object of divine laughter.

An Eloquent Silence

Very often, stories speak to us as much in what isn't said as in what is. In chapter 16 of Judges, unlike the other three chapters detailing Samson's life, the Spirit of the Lord is not mentioned. And in this omission we are shown the difference between the Samson who relied upon the Lord and called out to him for rescue, and the one who is now untethered from God. We must not look at Samson's hair as "magical" in the story, but rather sacramental and covenantal. Samson's uncut hair, as a part of his Nazarite vow, mediates God's presence and creates a union between God and man. And Samson does not realize that presence is God, that union has been severed. When he goes to take on the Philistines, they subdue him and make him physically blind, a state in which he already existed spiritually.

This state of Samson is a picture of what Paul speaks of in our Epistle reading, receiving the grace of God in vain. In Christ, we receive forgiveness, acceptance, and new life. We are new creations. We are exhorted to not receive these gifts in vain, but rather, to hold fast to them, take root in them. And as the end of our Judges reading shows us, it is never too late. We are never too far away for God to bring us near and show us the gifts of his grace.