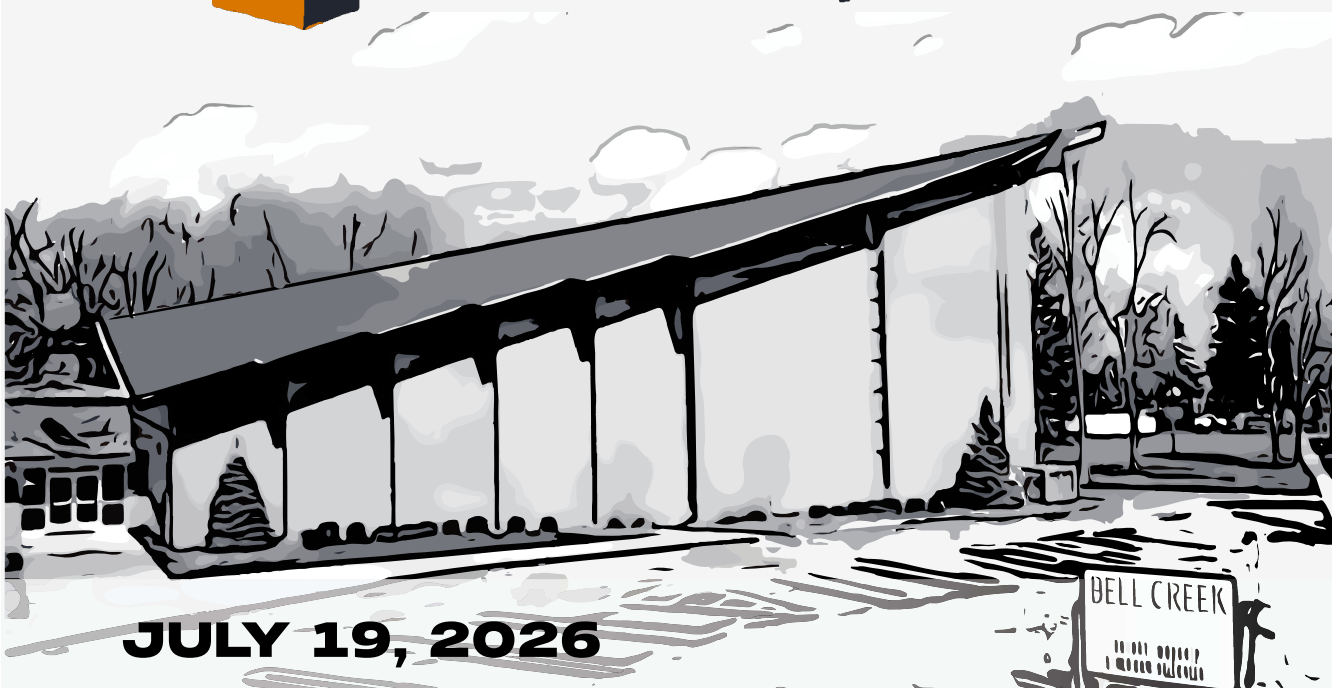


WELCOME TO



BELL CREEK

Community Church



JULY 19, 2026

THE SON OF THE KING
JUDGES 9

SERMON BY: PASTOR FRED WRIGHT

CURRENT SERMON SERIES:
JUDGES—THE GOD WHO DELIVERS

THE SON OF THE KING

JUDGES 9

A False King

A Fruitless King

A Fallen King

FOR NEXT WEEK

Read Judges 10-12.

DAILY CHRONOLOGICAL BIBLE READING

JULY 19: 2 KINGS 18:1-8; 2 CHRON. 29-31;
PSALM 48

JULY 20: HOSEA 1-7

JULY 21: HOSEA 8-14

JULY 22: ISAIAH 28-30

JULY 23: ISAIAH 31-34

JULY 24: ISAIAH 35-36

JULY 25: ISAIAH 37-39; PSALM 76

UPCOMING AT THE CREEK

FINANCIAL UPDATE

The Bell Creek Financial Team will give a financial update on Sunday, July 26, following both services.

DADCO

DadCo is a community just for dads that gives an opportunity to build real friendships, share honest advice on parenting and life, and helps dads find encouragement through monthly meetups and events. Whether you are a new dad or your kids are grown, DadCo equips you to thrive as a father, husband, and man-together in community! The ministry meets the first Monday of each month. Join us at our next gathering on Monday, August 2 at 6:30 PM in the Prayer Room. Please reach out to Alex Quint or email info@bellcreek.org to learn more.

KIDS' CREEK MIDWEEK

Children ages 4 through 4th Grade are invited to the Large Group Room to enjoy Bible Lessons, discussion, activities, worship, and games on Wednesday, August 5 from 6:30-7:45 PM. Please register your child at www.bellcreek.org/calendar to join us for the class. If you have any questions, please reach out to Rachel Nash (rachel@bellcreek.org) or Elyse Quint (elyse@bellcreek.org).

AWANA VOLUNTEERS NEEDED

If you are interested in serving, our AWANA Ministry is in need of volunteers to serve beginning in September. Please reach out to our AWANA Director, Gretchen Schick (awana@bellcreek.org) for more information.

YOUNG ADULT MINISTRY

Our Young Adult group is now open for adults 18-30 years old! Our next gathering will be Sunday, August 9, after the second service in the Prayer Room. Join us for lunch, fellowship, games, and encouragement in our faith. Other gatherings and outings will be planned for various times throughout the year. Join us as we gather and build friendships with other young people in a fun and laid-back environment!

MINISTRY OPPORTUNITIES

PRAYER MEETINGS

WEDNESDAYS 6:30 - 7:30 PM

FRIDAYS 12 NOON

PRE-TEEN & MIDDLE SCHOOL BIBLE STUDY

WEDNESDAYS 6:30 - 7:45 PM

SUNDAYS AFTER WORSHIP

2ND SERVICE

AWANA

WEDNESDAYS 6:30 - 7:45 PM

SEPTEMBER-MAY

HIGH SCHOOL BIBLE STUDY

SUNDAYS 11:00 AM

FIND OUT MORE ABOUT MINISTRY OPPORTUNITIES
AND EVENTS AT BELLCREEK.ORG

OUR MISSION

MATTHEW 22:37–40

He said to him, “Love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the greatest commandment. The second is like it: Love your neighbor as yourself. All the law and prophets depend on these two commandments.”

MATTHEW 28:19–20

Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe everything I have commanded you. And remember that I am with you always to the end of the age.

STAY CONNECTED

WE HOPE TO SEE YOU HERE!

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BELL CREEK
Community Church

30000 FIVE MILE RD.
LIVONIA, MI 48154

Sermon Series | Judges – The God Who Delivers

Sunday, July 19, 2026 | “The Son of the King”

Sermon Text: Judges Chapter 9

Introduction

Gideon (Jerubbaal), God’s chosen deliverer from the Midianites has died. Gideon refused (with his words) to be king, but he lived like a Canaanite king and had multiple wives. Abimelech, is Gideon’s son through a concubine (they were not married) from Shechem.

A False King

“Now Abimelech the son of Jerubbaal went to Shechem to his mother’s relatives and said to them and to the whole clan of his mother’s family, “Say in the ears of all the leaders of Shechem, ‘Which is better for you, that all seventy of the sons of Jerubbaal rule over you, or that one rule over you?’ Remember also that I am your bone and your flesh.” And his mother’s relatives spoke all these words on his behalf in the ears of all the leaders of Shechem, and their hearts inclined to follow Abimelech, for they said, “He is our brother.” And they gave him seventy pieces of silver out of the house of Baal-berith with which Abimelech hired worthless and reckless fellows, who followed him. And he went to his father’s house at Ophrah and killed his brothers the sons of Jerubbaal, seventy men, on one stone. But Jotham the youngest son of Jerubbaal was left, for he hid himself. And all the leaders of Shechem came together, and all Beth-millo, and they went and made Abimelech king, by the oak of the pillar at Shechem.” (Judges 9:1–6, ESV)

So, after Gideon’s death, Abimelech went to his mother’s relatives and persuaded the leaders of Shechem that it would be better for one of their own relatives to rule over them than for Gideon’s seventy sons to rule them.

Look at Abimelech’s character and the nature of his kingdom! He is not chosen by God to be a Judge or a Deliverer (see the note on Deuteronomy 17:14-20 below), he chooses himself, not to serve his people but to take power. He manipulatively appeals to family and tribal loyalty. The leaders of Shechem agree! They bankroll him with 70 pieces of silver taken from an idolatrous temple.

Here’s the irony of Shechem and the oak: Shechem was a place of extraordinary covenant significance. There, in Genesis 12 we see Abraham first received the promise that God would give the land to his offspring. There in Joshua 24, Joshua calls the tribes of Israel to renew the covenant. Nearby stood Mount Gerizim, the mountain of covenant blessing. Yet in that covenant place, the people turned to Baal-berith, “Baal of the covenant,” which is an idolatrous counterfeit of the Lord who had truly made covenant with Israel.

With the money, Abimelech hires “worthless and reckless fellows.” He murders his seventy brothers on one stone. The leaders of Shechem make him king by the Oak of the Pillar at Shechem (possibly the place of these famous covenants with Abraham and Joshua).

His kingdom is founded on pride, manipulation, idolatry, and bloodshed

Note on Deuteronomy 17:14–20 which required Israel to appoint the king whom the Lord chose. The king was to live under God’s written law, fear the Lord, and refuse to exalt his heart above his brothers. Abimelech chose himself, exalted himself, and murdered his brothers.

A Fruitless King

“When it was told to Jotham, he went and stood on top of Mount Gerizim and cried aloud and said to them, “Listen to me, you leaders of Shechem, that God may listen to you. The trees once went out to anoint a king over them, and they said to the olive tree, ‘Reign over us.’ But the olive tree said to them, ‘Shall I leave my abundance, by which gods and men are honored, and go hold sway over the trees?’ And the trees said to the fig tree, ‘You come and reign over us.’ But the fig tree said to them, ‘Shall I leave my sweetness and my good fruit and go hold sway over the trees?’ And the trees said to the vine, ‘You come and reign over us.’ But the vine said to them, ‘Shall I leave my wine that cheers God and men and go hold sway over the trees?’ Then all the trees said to the bramble, ‘You come and reign over us.’ And the bramble said to the trees, ‘If in good faith you are anointing me king over you, then come and take refuge in my shade, but if not, let fire come out of the bramble and devour the cedars of Lebanon.’” (Judges 9:7–15, ESV)

““Now therefore, if you acted in good faith and integrity when you made Abimelech king, and if you have dealt well with Jerubbaal and his house and have done to him as his deeds deserved— for my father fought for you and risked his life and delivered you from the hand of Midian, and you have risen up against my father’s house this day and have killed his sons, seventy men on one stone, and have made Abimelech, the son of his female servant, king over the leaders of Shechem, because he is your relative— if you then have acted in good faith and integrity with Jerubbaal and with his house this day, then rejoice in Abimelech, and let him also rejoice in you. But if not, let fire come out from Abimelech and devour the leaders of Shechem and Beth-millo; and let fire come out from the leaders of Shechem and from Beth-millo and devour Abimelech.” And Jotham ran away and fled and went to Beer and lived there, because of Abimelech his brother.” (Judges 9:16–21, ESV)

This is the center of the story! Jotham goes to Mt. Gerizim. This is significant! It’s the place where God pronounced the blessings the people of Israel would experience if they followed Him. In Deuteronomy 11 and 27. But this time it’s not blessings! Jotham’s fable (he’s not named as a prophet, but this is clearly a prophecy!) exposes Abimelech as the “fruitless bramble!” The olive tree refuses kingship because it will not abandon its oil. The fig tree refuses because it will not abandon its sweetness and fruit. The vine refuses because it will not abandon its wine.

The bramble accepts immediately! The bramble offers shade (thorn bushes don’t have shade!) and threatens consuming fire.

Again, Mt. Gerizim is the mountain associated with covenant blessing. From the mountain of blessing, Jotham pronounces a curse. He warns Shechem that its treachery will bring destruction. Jotham rhetorically asks whether the people have acted “in good faith and integrity.” The answer is of course, NO! He reminds them that Gideon risked his life to save Israel, while they repaid his household by slaughtering his sons. He then prophesies mutual destruction. Fire will come from Abimelech against Shechem, and from Shechem against Abimelech.

So then, Jotham fled. For three years Abimelech ruled over Israel. It may have seemed that his violent seizure of power had succeeded, but the word spoken from Mount Gerizim had not been forgotten, and the judgment of God was on its way!

A Fallen King

“Abimelech ruled over Israel three years. And God sent an evil spirit between Abimelech and the leaders of Shechem, and the leaders of Shechem dealt treacherously with Abimelech, that the violence done to the seventy sons of Jerubbaal might come, and their blood be laid on Abimelech their brother, who killed them, and on the men of Shechem, who strengthened his hands to kill his brothers.” (Judges 9:22–24, ESV)

God sends an evil spirit (!) “between Abimelech and the leaders of Shechem” in order to bring the violence done to Gideon’s seventy sons back upon them. This treachery and political chaos is divine retribution. God causes the evil people to turn on each other!

Summary of Judges 9:25–44 The leaders of Shechem turned against Abimelech. They placed men in ambush against him, and a new leader named Gaal arose and challenged Abimelech’s authority. Abimelech’s commander, Zebul, warned him. Abimelech attacked, drove Gaal away, and then turned his fury against Shechem itself.

“And Abimelech fought against the city all that day. He captured the city and killed the people who were in it, and he razed the city and sowed it with salt. When all the leaders of the Tower of Shechem heard of it, they entered the stronghold of the house of El-berith. Abimelech was told that all the leaders of the Tower of Shechem were gathered together. And Abimelech went up to Mount Zalmon, he and all the people who were with him. And Abimelech took an axe in his hand and cut down a bundle of brushwood and took it up and laid it on his shoulder. And he said to the men who were with him, “What you have seen me do, hurry and do as I have done.” So every one of the people cut down his bundle and following Abimelech put it against the stronghold, and they set the stronghold on fire over them, so that all the people of the Tower of Shechem also died, about 1,000 men and women.” (Judges 9:45–49, ESV)

Abimelech captures Shechem, kills its inhabitants, destroys the city, and burns approximately one thousand people alive in the stronghold of the temple (men and women). Jotham’s curse is fulfilled: the bramble has caught fire. The one they made king becomes the instrument of their destruction.

“Then Abimelech went to Thebez and encamped against Thebez and captured it. But there was a strong tower within the city, and all the men and women and all the leaders of the city fled to it and shut themselves in, and they went up to the roof of the tower. And Abimelech came to the tower and fought against it and drew near to the door of the tower to burn it with fire. And a certain woman threw an upper millstone on Abimelech’s head and crushed his skull. Then he called quickly to the young man his armor-bearer and said to him, “Draw your sword and kill me, lest they say of me, ‘A woman killed him.’ ” And his young man thrust him through, and he died. And when the men of Israel saw that Abimelech was dead, everyone departed to his home.” (Judges 9:50–55, ESV)

At Thebez, Abimelech attempts to repeat what he did at Shechem. But a woman drops an upper millstone on his head. Mortally wounded, Abimelech commands his armor-bearer to kill him so that people will not say that a woman killed him. He began his reign by killing his brothers on one stone and ends his reign crushed beneath a stone!

“Thus God returned the evil of Abimelech, which he committed against his father in killing his seventy brothers. And God also made all the evil of the men of Shechem return on their heads, and upon them came the curse of Jotham the son of Jerubbaal.” (Judges 9:56–57, ESV)

God returns Abimelech’s evil upon his own head and the evil of the men of Shechem upon theirs. Jotham’s curse comes upon them all.

Jesus, the True King

When we step back from the wreckage of Abimelech's kingdom, we are left longing for a different kind of king. Not one who grasps for power, destroys his brothers, and brings judgment on his people, but a true King who gives Himself for his brothers, saves his people from judgment, and reigns with love, power, and righteousness forever. That King is Jesus!

Abimelech was not a king, but he grasped after kingship.

Jesus was and is the true, eternal King, yet he did not demand the privileges that were rightfully His! As Philippians 2 says, He humbled himself, took the form of a servant, and became obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.

Abimelech manipulated the people of Shechem into making him king.

Jesus refused to manipulate the crowds and to be manipulated by them. When the people intended to seize him and make him king by force, Jesus withdrew from them (John 6:15). He would only receive His kingdom from His Father, in his Father's time, and by his Father's appointed path.

The people of Shechem supported Abimelech because, they said, "He is our brother." They defined brotherhood according to blood, tribe, and political advantage.

Jesus defined his family differently: whoever does the will of God is his brother and sister and mother. Jesus creates a new covenant family gathered not by tribal loyalty, but by faith and obedience to God.

Money was taken from the temple of a pagan god, Baal-berith, and given to Abimelech. With seventy pieces of silver, he hired worthless, and reckless men who followed him into murder and violence.

Jesus called disciples to lose their own lives for his sake and for the Gospel. Jesus sent his followers to preach, serve, suffer, and lay down their lives for God's people. (Yet one of the twelve became a betrayer: Judas sold the true King for thirty pieces of silver!)

Abimelech murdered his brothers in order to become king.

Jesus, the true King, gave his life in order to save those whom He is not ashamed to call his brothers. Jesus shed his own blood to bring his brothers and sisters into his kingdom.

Abimelech was made king beside the oak or terebinth connected with the pillar at Shechem. His rule was founded upon idolatry, murder, and human ambition.

Jesus, the righteous King, was executed upon a tree. Through the cross, he bore the curse of his people, obtained righteousness for sinners, defeated death, and broke the power of Satan.

God sent a harmful spirit between Abimelech and the leaders of Shechem so that their evil alliance disintegrated and they destroyed one another.

God gave the Holy Spirit to Jesus without measure (John 3:34). The spirit sent in judgment divided Abimelech's kingdom; the Holy Spirit given through Jesus creates and preserves Christ's kingdom and unites his people to him and to one another.

Abimelech turned against the people who had made him king. He pursued them, slaughtered them, destroyed their city, and burned their stronghold over their heads.

Jesus gathers his people rather than scattering them. He lays down his life for the sheep, brings in those who were not formerly part of the fold, leads his people to green pastures, and gives them eternal life.

Abimelech's death was an act of justice against a murderer and tyrant.

Jesus' death was the unjust execution of the only truly innocent man that has ever lived. Yet through that unjust death, God accomplished the salvation of the guilty.

Abimelech could not bear the shame of being remembered as a man killed by a woman. Even while dying, he remained preoccupied with his reputation and ordered his armor-bearer to kill him to end his misery.

Jesus despised the shame of the cross, but He endured it, for the joy set before him. Jesus refused the wine mixed with myrrh that might have dulled his suffering. He consciously and willingly drank the cup the Father had given him.

Abimelech's head was crushed by a millstone.

Jesus, through his death and resurrection, accomplished the victory promised from the beginning: the offspring of the woman would crush the serpent's head.

A woman rolled a stone of the top of a tower onto Abimelech's head, and he was destroyed.

A great stone was placed across the entrance of Jesus' tomb, and on the third day, the stone was rolled away. The true King rose from the dead, never to die again.

Abimelech's kingdom ended with his death. When his men saw that he was dead, they departed and returned to their homes.

Jesus' kingdom was established through his death and vindicated by his resurrection. He is alive forevermore, gathering his people from every tribe and tongue and nation.

Conclusion!

Abimelech was a false king, a fruitless king, and a fallen king. Jesus is the true King, the humble King, the fruitful King, the crucified and risen King. Abimelech killed his brothers to save his throne, Jesus gave himself to save his brothers, Abimelech promised shelter but brought fire, Jesus bore the fire and gives his people shelter. Abimelech received the judgment he deserved, Jesus bore the judgment we deserved, Abimelech's reign ended at his grave, Jesus' reign will never end.

Question For Believers: Where are we still tempted to grasp for control, power, or security for ourselves instead of trusting and following Jesus, the true King?

Question For Those Who are Suffering: When pain or evil seems to rule and appears to go unanswered, can you wait and trust that Jesus is still King? He sees you, He loves you, He will help you, and He will finally make all things right.

Question For Unbelievers: Which king will you trust with your life? The false kings and kingdoms of this world that ultimately fail, or Jesus Christ, the crucified and risen King whose kingdom will never end?



The Son of the King

1. What did you think of the sermon "The Son of the King?"

2. Abimelech wanted to be king, but pursued power his own way instead of God's way. Where do you see the temptation to seek control, recognition, or security without trusting the Lord? What does it look like to submit those desires to Christ instead?

3. Jotham's parable contrasts fruitful trees with the fruitless bramble. The fruitful trees continued serving others instead of chasing power. What has God called you to faithfully produce? How can you avoid being distracted by selfish ambition?

4. God's justice may seem delayed, but it is never absent. Can you think of a time when you struggled to trust God's timing? How does this passage encourage you? Do you believe that God sees evil and will ultimately make all things right?

5. Which comparison between Abimelech and Jesus stood out to you the most? How does seeing Jesus as the humble, crucified, and risen King change the way you will live this week?

