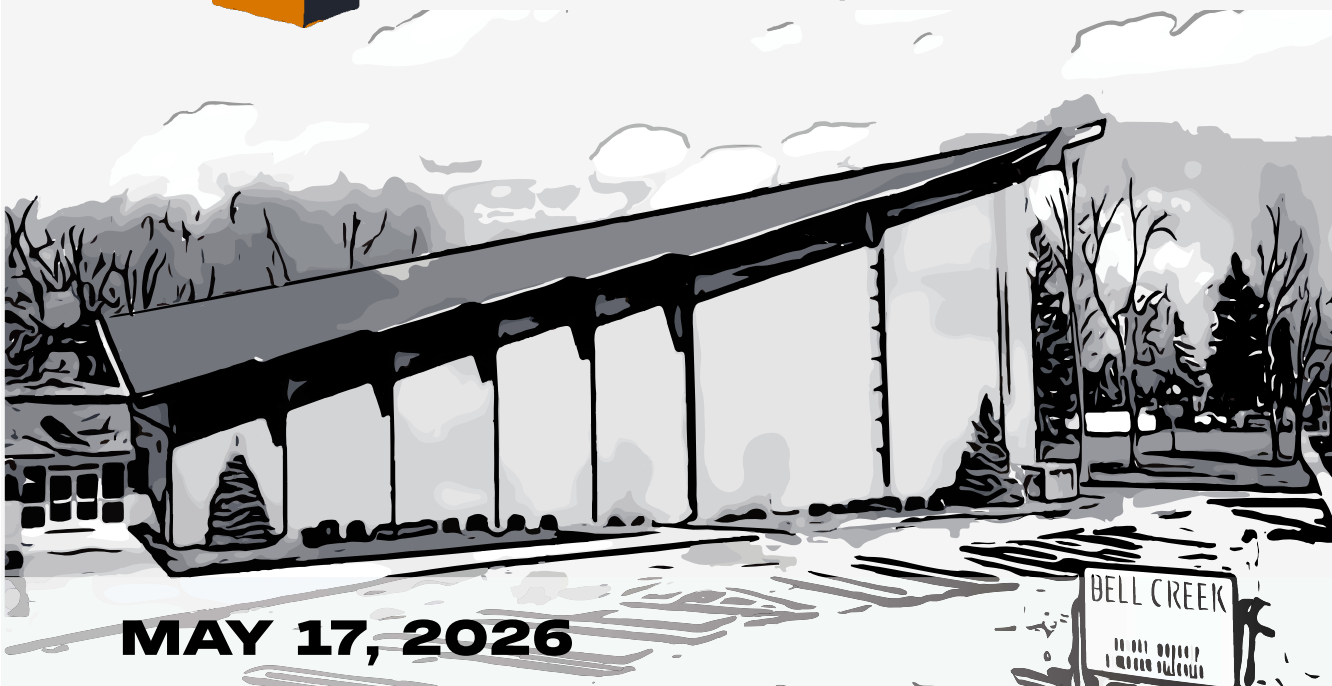


WELCOME TO



# BELL CREEK

Community Church



**MAY 17, 2026**

**THE ASTONISHING MERCY OF OUR GOD**  
JUDGES 2:11-23

SERMON BY: PASTOR FRED WRIGHT

CURRENT SERMON SERIES:  
JUDGES—THE GOD WHO DELIVERS

# **THE ASTONISHING MERCY OF OUR GOD**

## **JUDGES 2:11–23**

**The Captivating Power of Idolatry**

**The Astonishing Mercy of Our God**

**The Power of Our Stubborn Ways**

### **FOR NEXT WEEK**

Read Read Judges 3:1-11 to  
prepare for the sermon.

### **DAILY CHRONOLOGICAL BIBLE READING**

MAY 17: 2 Samuel 16–18  
MAY 18: Psalm 26, 40, 58, 61–62 & 64  
MAY 19: 2 Samuel 19–21  
MAY 20: Psalm 5, 38, 41–42  
MAY 21: 2 Samuel 22–23 & Psalm 57  
MAY 22: Psalm 95, 97–99  
MAY 23: 2 Sam. 24; 1 Chronicles 21–22;  
Psalm 30

# UPCOMING AT THE CREEK

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## **APOLOGETICS CLASS**

Join Pastor Dylan in the Prayer Room at 11:00 AM for an Apologetics Class. If you have questions, please email [dylan@bellcreek.org](mailto:dylan@bellcreek.org).

## **YOUNG ADULT MINISTRY**

Our next Young Adult group meeting for adults 18-30 years old is today in the Prayer Room right after 2nd service. Join us as we gather and build friendships with other young people in a fun and laid-back environment!

## **THE GOOD FIGHT MEN'S STUDY**

There is an exceptional opportunity for several men to attend a Bible study called The Good Fight - God's Plan for Every Man. The study provides men hope and healing through a closer relationship with Jesus Christ. God provides everything we need to win The Good Fight. Ron Peavler and Don Henderson will co-lead this Bible study. We will meet Thursday's from 6:30 - 8:00 PM for ten weeks. Our first meeting will be May 21st. To register contact Don Henderson at [don.h@healinghearts.org](mailto:don.h@healinghearts.org).

## **VERTICAL MARRIAGE WORKSHOP**

Mike & Mary King and Alex & Elyse Quint are hosting a 2-day Marriage Workshop on Friday, June 5 from 6:30-9:00 PM and Saturday, June 6 from 9:00 AM-12:30 PM at Bell Creek. "Vertical Marriage" by Dave and Ann Wilson provides a series of videos, small group discussions, and a couples' workbook. Registration is required, so if you would like to participate, please visit [www.bellcreek.org](http://www.bellcreek.org). If you have questions, please reach out to Pastor Dylan ([dylan@bellcreek.org](mailto:dylan@bellcreek.org)) or Elyse Quint ([elyse@bellcreek.org](mailto:elyse@bellcreek.org)) No food is provided, but we will have coffee, tea, and water. Childcare is available upon request.

## **GREETERS NEEDED**

Our Greeter Ambassador team is still in need of a few more smiling faces! We have openings at the Kids' Creek doors for the first and second services on Sunday mornings. This is a 45-minute commitment once a month (or more often if you wish!). Being a greeter is a great way to serve--an important Sunday morning assignment and a chance to meet lots of folks in the Bell Creek family! If you are interested and/or have questions, please call or text Tim Pendell at 810-602-3774 or email [pendelltim@gmail.com](mailto:pendelltim@gmail.com).

# MINISTRY OPPORTUNITIES

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## **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](http://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!**

[WWW.BELLCREEK.ORG/CONTACT-US](http://WWW.BELLCREEK.ORG/CONTACT-US)

FOLLOW US!



**BELL CREEK**  
Community Church

30000 FIVE MILE RD.  
LIVONIA, MI 48154

## The Astonishing Mercy of Our God

### Judges 2:11-23

#### Scripture Reading:

““And if you faithfully obey the voice of the LORD your God, being careful to do all his commandments that I command you today, the LORD your God will set you high above all the nations of the earth. And all these blessings shall come upon you and overtake you, if you obey the voice of the LORD your God. Blessed shall you be in the city, and blessed shall you be in the field.” (Deuteronomy 28:1–3, ESV)

#### The Captivating Power of Idolatry

“And the people of Israel did what was evil in the sight of the LORD and served the Baals.” (Judges 2:11, ESV)

Who is Baal, and why was Baal worship so captivating to the people of Israel? Baal worship was tied to fertility, crops, livestock, rain, and prosperity. So the temptation may have sounded practical.

“Yahweh brought us out of Egypt. That is wonderful. But NOW we are in Canaan! This is Baal territory. We need babies, we need livestock, we need crops, we need rain. We need security! We need to survive here. Maybe Yahweh was good for deliverance, but Baal can help us with daily life. And our Canaanite neighbors have graciously offered to show us some of their secrets to getting Baal to do what they want at their midweek service and they’ve invited us!”

That is part of the danger. Idolatry often presents itself as practical wisdom.

“And they abandoned the LORD, the God of their fathers, who had brought them out of the land of Egypt. They went after other gods, from among the gods of the peoples who were around them, and bowed down to them. And they provoked the LORD to anger.” (Judges 2:12, ESV)

This is meant to hit us hard. Think about everything the Lord had done for them.

“They abandoned the LORD and served the Baals and the Ashtaroth.” (Judges 2:13, ESV)

It gets worse when you bring Ashtaroth into the picture! Who was Ashtaroth? Ashtaroth was a Canaanite goddess associated with fertility, sexuality, and war.

Together, Baal and Ashtaroth were connected with fertility because the Canaanites believed these when these two gods “got together” it would make the land fruitful, bring rain, multiply crops and livestock, and bless human families with children. So, the worship of these two gods often included highly immoral practices because the Canaanites believed that when they role-played Baal and Ashtaroth, it would persuade the gods to do the same thing.

What a lie! And one of the sad things about this is that God promised to bless them beyond belief. Read Deuteronomy 28 to see EVERYTHING God promised to do for them!

Listen to what Psalm 106 says about this: “They did not destroy the peoples, as the LORD commanded them, but they mixed with the nations and learned to do as they did. They served their idols, which became a snare to them. They sacrificed their sons and their daughters to the demons; they poured out innocent blood, the blood of their sons and daughters, whom they sacrificed to the idols of Canaan, and the land was polluted with blood.” (Psalm 106:34–38, ESV)

So, Israel did not merely choose “a different religion.” They betrayed the God who loved them and had redeemed them. They had made a covenant with Him and promised to keep the it! You see, Idolatry is

spiritual betrayal. That's why idolatry in the Bible is often described with the language of adultery. It is not merely religious confusion. It is covenant betrayal.

Israel gives to Baal what belongs to the Lord: They give Baal their trust, reverence, gratitude, hope, obedience, and their worship.

And that is still the nature of idolatry! An idol is anything that takes the place of God in our hearts. It may be something wicked. But often it is something good that becomes ultimate. An idol is often a good thing, that becomes a god thing, then it becomes an evil thing.

Do we still have idols? Can Celebrities, Sports, Streaming Video, Family, Money, Success, Comfort, Politics, Politicians, Sex, Approval, Work, Traditions, become idols? Oh yes.

An idol is anything we look to and say, "If I have this, I will be safe. If I have this, I will be happy. If I have this, I will be somebody. If I lose this, life is over."

Slowly God is no longer the center of our lives. Note, He is still named! He is still acknowledged! But here's the key: our hearts goes elsewhere.

#### Questions to Help Us Identify Idols in Our Lives

1. What do I look to for ultimate security?
2. What am I most afraid to lose?
3. What do I run to for comfort?
4. What do I talk about most? What am I known for?
5. What captures my imagination, raises my energy, and makes me feel alive?
6. Where do I spend my money?
7. What makes me sin when I do not get it?
8. What do I think would finally make me happy? "If only I had \_\_\_\_\_, then I would be content." That blank might reveal an idol.
9. What do I sacrifice too much for?
10. Whose approval matters most to me?
11. What do I defend most aggressively when it is questioned?
12. What do I daydream about as my imagined salvation?
13. What would I obey even if God's Word told me otherwise?

Convicting, right? And this is where Jesus is so precious. Jesus exposes the false gods for who they are. He calls out the idols we trust in because He is the One who is better than our idols. He IS truly God, the Creator and Sustainer of everyone and everything. He provides the salvation, security, comfort, joy, approval, treasure, and salvation that our idols falsely promise but can never deliver.

Here's the other thing: Jesus is the only one who was never captivated by idols. He was never an idolater. Israel was called God's son, but Israel went after Baal. Jesus is the true Son, and He worshiped the Father perfectly.

Remember when Satan tempted Jesus in the wilderness? Satan offered Jesus the kingdoms of the world, and said all He had to do was worship him. But Jesus replied, "It is written, 'You shall worship the Lord your God and him only shall you serve.'"

Where Israel served the Baals, Jesus served the Father.

So, He has kept the covenant Himself, and He kept it for us. He went to the cross for idolaters like you and me to pay the consequences of our idolatry, and to offer us forgiveness! When we trust in Him, His faithfulness and His forgiveness become ours. THAT is the gospel.

## The Astonishing Mercy of Our God

“So the anger of the LORD was kindled against Israel, and he gave them over to plunderers, who plundered them. And he sold them into the hand of their surrounding enemies, so that they could no longer withstand their enemies.” (Judges 2:14, ESV)

God is angry! Why? Because Israel has forsaken him and is destroying herself. Because idols are not harmless, they bring sin and death. Because God is holy, and He is jealous for the good of His people. This is righteous and LOVING anger. It would be unloving to them if God was indifferent to Israel’s sin.

“Whenever they marched out, the hand of the LORD was against them for harm, as the LORD had warned, and as the LORD had sworn to them. And they were in terrible distress.” (Judges 2:15, ESV)

God had warned Israel. If they forsook him, judgment would come. So when God gives them into the hands of their enemies, He is keeping his word. This is covenant faithfulness. God is doing what He said he would do.

God lets them feel what life is like under the gods they chose. This is often how God disciplines us. He lets us taste the bitterness of what we demanded.

Then comes the surprise!

“Then the LORD raised up judges, who saved them out of the hand of those who plundered them.” (Judges 2:16, ESV)

This is astonishing. The text does not say: “Then Israel repented, and the Lord raised up judges.” It says: “Then the Lord raised up judges who saved them...”

God acts from his own heart, and moves toward the people who have moved away from him. God saves people who got themselves into this mess and do not deserve saving. That is the astonishing mercy of our God.

What was their response to God’s mercy?

“Yet they did not listen to their judges, for they whored after other gods and bowed down to them. They soon turned aside from the way in which their fathers had walked, who had obeyed the commandments of the LORD, and they did not do so.” (Judges 2:17, ESV)

Ugh! Really!? Yes. Then what?

“Whenever the LORD raised up judges for them, the LORD was with the judge, and he saved them from the hand of their enemies all the days of the judge. For the LORD was moved to pity by their groaning because of those who afflicted and oppressed them.” (Judges 2:18, ESV)

God is moved by their groaning! And remember, they are groaning because they got themselves into this lousy mess! This is amazing grace from God. Their groaning isn’t full repentance yet, it’s simple misery. But God still hears! He is moved with pity!

Ok, how did the people respond to THIS incredible mercy?

## The Power of Our Stubborn Ways

“But whenever the judge died, they turned back and were more corrupt than their fathers, going after other gods, serving them and bowing down to them. They did not drop any of their practices or their stubborn ways.” (Judges 2:19, ESV)

The cycle is downward. It’s getting worse. They become more corrupt and are going after other gods. Look at this phrase:

“They did not drop any of their practices or their stubborn ways.”

These are patterns, practices, and habits of heart. This is firmly rooted sin.

Judges shows us that the deepest problem is not merely around us. It is within us. We need much more than better circumstances, or even Godly leaders. We need new hearts.

“So the anger of the LORD was kindled against Israel, and he said, “Because this people have transgressed my covenant that I commanded their fathers and have not obeyed my voice,” (Judges 2:20, ESV)

“I will no longer drive out before them any of the nations that Joshua left when he died, in order to test Israel by them, whether they will take care to walk in the way of the LORD as their fathers did, or not.”” (Judges 2:21–22, ESV)

“So the LORD left those nations, not driving them out quickly, and he did not give them into the hand of Joshua.” (Judges 2:23, ESV)

In verses 20-23, God says he will no longer drive out the nations quickly. Why? To “test” Israel.

This is both judgment and mercy! God brings consequences and difficulties to expose what is really in their hearts. Their suffering reminded them that they needed God and it led them to cry out to Him. That’s God’s mercy.

But they could not break the power of stubborn sin! It kept getting worse. And that’s the power of sin – it’s not just evil things that we think, or do. It enslaves us and we can’t break free.

So, we need a greater Judge. We need a Deliverer who does not die and leave us to return to our corruption. We need a Savior who lives forever. We need someone who is sinless, and can pay the penalties for our sins, and break sin’s power over us and who forgive our sins. That is Jesus.

So, Judges 2:11-23 shows us at least three things:

First, idolatry is captivating, and we must ask ourselves: What has captured my heart? What am I trusting, loving, fearing, or pursuing more than God?

Second, God’s mercy is astonishing. He is angry with sin, but He raises up deliverers. He disciplines us, but He does not abandon us. He hears our groaning and He is moved with pity.

Third, our stubborn ways are powerful. And we need to ask ourselves: What stubborn way am I refusing to drop?

But the idolatry and stubborn sins do not have the final word in our lives. The astonishing mercy of our God is that He gives us Jesus.

Jesus is the faithful Son who never bowed to idols. Jesus is the true Judge who delivers his people. Jesus is the crucified Savior who bears the wrath we deserve. Jesus is the risen Lord who lives forever. Jesus is the giver of the Holy Spirit who changes stubborn hearts.

What does the name Jesus mean? It means, “the LORD saves.”

So come to Him! Bring him your idols so He can smash them and show you that He will provide for you and make your heart glad! Bring him your misery and groaning so that He can show you that He cares and comfort you and help you! Bring him your stubborn ways, and He will forgive you and set you free! Come to Him!

### **Benediction:**

“She will bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins.”  
(Matthew 1:21, ESV)



## The Astonishing Mercy of Our God

1. What did you think of the sermon "The Astonishing Mercy of Our God"?

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2. In Judges 2:11, Israel took up idols and served the Baals. This was the Israelites turning away from God and their covenant when temptation crept in. When/where have you done this in your own life?

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3. What is taking from you what belongs to the Lord? This is spiritual adultery. How can you take steps this week to remove these things from your life and trust & commit fully to God?

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4. God has always kept His word. God gave the Israelites into the hand of their enemies. Have you ever gone through your own trials and felt God's discipline?

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5. God showed the Israelites tremendous mercy and grace even when they went away from Him. When has the Lord shown you His mercy in your life? What did that look like? Did this make you realize He is in control and that you need to fully depend on and trust in Him?

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