



**SOWING
AND
REAPING**

This is the last Sunday in our summer series on sowing and reaping.

-- The question today is, "What will we sow now and what will we reap later, blessings or cursing?"

TR: Most of us think, when we see a stamp like this . . .

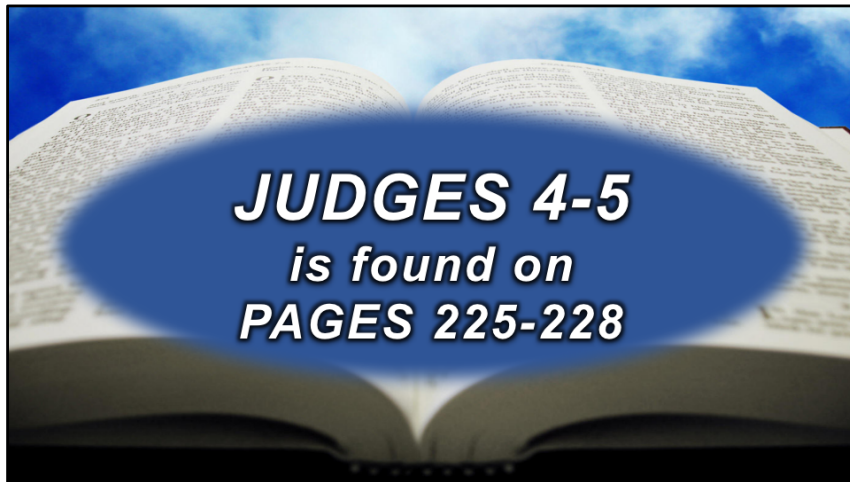


. . . that we better “act now” in order to get the sale price on something we might want to buy.

TR: But “Act Now” can also be a call to arms . . .



- . . . even as these vintage posters remind us.
- Whether we have or will ever serve in the armed forces is not the question today.
 - Rather, the question is whether we will “act now” when we are called to serve God’s Kingdom.
 - Small Groups, Trinity KIDS, PowerHouse Student Ministries to name a few.
 - In life, we will all be followers, and some of us may be called to be leaders.
 - How we sow, even today, will determine whether we reap a harvest of cursed shame or of blessing from God.
- TR: I’d like you to turn with me to Judges 4-5 . . .



JUDGES 4-5
is found on
PAGES 225-228

- . . . where we'll stay parked for our entire time today.**
- These chapters capture for us the account of God's mercy on the people of Israel in giving them peace through the leadership of a prophetess and judge named Deborah.**
 - Chapter 4 is an account of the victory over the oppressors.**
 - Chapter 5 is Deborah's song of victory that she and the military leader, Barak, sang afterwards.**
- TR: The circumstances, at the beginning of the account, may help us see how these chapters speak to our situations today . . .**

**AS WE TOGETHER FACE
HORRIBLE ODDS . . .**

- . . . for it was one of horrible odds, stacked against them.**
- After Ehud the judge died, the people of Israel again did what was right in their own eyes and reaped the results.**
- The LORD sold them into the hand of Jabin the king of Canaan.**
- Jabin's army's commander was a man named Sisera.**
- TR: Pick it up in Judges 4:3 . . .**

Then the people of Israel cried out to the LORD for help, for he had 900 chariots of iron and **he oppressed the people of Israel cruelly for twenty years.**

ESV

READ SLIDE

TR: We know the odds were horrible because verse 13 repeats . . .

Sisera called out all his chariots, **900 chariots of iron**, and all the men who were with him, from Harosheth-hagoyim to the river Kishon.

ESV

- . . . the reference to 900 chariots of iron.
 - The best military weapon of the day . . . 900 of them.
 - And, as suggested in 5:8, the shields and spears had been taken from the people . . . they were not well armed.
 - You and I are facing or will face challenges that make us feel like grasshoppers . . .
 - . . . and the only “act now” we will want to do it to jump away and hide.
- TR: But these chapters call us to something better.

**AS WE TOGETHER FACE
HORRIBLE ODDS . . .**

- 1) REMEMBER, REJOICING WILL COME BECAUSE . . .
- 2) SO, LET US BE . . .
- 3) BUT, IF WE WANT TO BE GUTLESS, FAITHLESS FOLLOWERS, WE MUST . . .

In our notes you will see three headings.

-- The first two are very positive and encouraging.

-- The last point is tied to the negative lessons of people who choose NOT to “act now” when God called them into service.

TR: As we review this piece of history, we can find ourselves rejoicing . . .

**REMEMBER, REJOICING WILL COME
BECAUSE . . .**

. . . and being inspired to “act now”.

**TR: As throughout the Book of Judges, we can remember our
real source of hope . . .**

Then the people of Israel cried out to the LORD for help, for he had 900 chariots of iron and he oppressed the people of Israel cruelly for twenty years.

ESV

. . . the LORD Himself.

-- Remember, LORD = Yahweh.

-- READ SLIDE

TR: We can find courage to act now because . . .

**REMEMBER, REJOICING WILL COME
BECAUSE . . .**

- The Lord responds to our prayers.

READ SLIDE

-- If we are facing overwhelming odds, the first thing to do is to cry out to God.

TR: These chapters rejoice in a second thing.

Judges 4:10

12

And Barak called out Zebulun and Naphtali to Kedesh. **And 10,000 men went up at his heels,** and Deborah went up with him.

ESV

Judges 4:10 . . . READ SLIDE

TR: Then in chapter 5's song of victory . . .

Judges 5:2, 9

²That the leaders took the lead in Israel, that **the people offered themselves willingly**, bless the LORD!

⁹My heart goes out to the **commanders of Israel who offered themselves willingly** among the people. Bless the LORD.

ESV

... READ SLIDE

-- Bless the Lord is repeated.

TR: Verses 15 and 18 gives us more detail ...

Judges 5:15a, 18

15. . . the princes of Issachar came with Deborah, and Issachar **faithful** to Barak; into the valley **they rushed at his heels.**

18 Zebulun is a people **who risked their lives to the death;** Naphtali, too, on the heights of the field.

ESV

READ SLIDE

TR: A little geographical context might help



Overlaid on a map from the ESV Study Bible is the river Jordan and the sea of Galilee.

-- The other river is the Kishon River mentioned in our chapters today.

-- The faithful and courageous followers gather at Mount Tabor and then battle in the area southwest of there.

-- People from Issachar and Zebulun “acted now” in response to the call and “rushed at Barak’s heels”

-- At least four tribes participated in addition to the two closest, Naphtali, Ephraim, Benjamin, Western Manasseh called Machir.

TR: As we face overwhelming odds, we must remember who we will be grateful to God for . . .

**REMEMBER, REJOICING WILL COME
BECAUSE . . .**

- The Lord responds to our prayers.
- We will be grateful to God for **willing** followers and leaders who even risk their very lives.

. . . for those who . . . READ SLIDE

TR: As we face huge challenges, remember that rejoicing will come because . . .

"Has not the LORD, the God of Israel, commanded you, 'Go, gather your men at Mount Tabor, taking 10,000 from the people of Naphtali and the people of Zebulun.

ESV

. . . the battle belongs to the LORD.

-- READ SLIDE

TR: God's promise to Barak through Deborah was . . .

Judges 4:7

18

And **I will draw out** Sisera, the general of Jabin's army, to meet you by the river Kishon with his chariots and his troops, and **I will give him** into your hand'?"

ESV

READ SLIDE

TR: These promises before the battle remind us . . .

**REMEMBER, REJOICING WILL COME
BECAUSE . . .**

- The **battle** belongs to the Lord,
beginning, middle, and end .

**. . . that the beginning of the battle belongs to the LORD.
TR: Down to verse 14 . . .**

And Deborah said to Barak, "**Up! For this is the day in which the LORD has given Sisera into your hand. Does not the LORD go out before you?**" So Barak went down from Mount Tabor with 10,000 men following him.

ESV

**When Sisera has come with his 900 chariots of iron, Deborah says to Barak . . . READ SLIDE
TR: Verse 15 . . .**

Judges 4:15

21

And the LORD routed Sisera and all his chariots and all his army before Barak by the edge of the sword. And Sisera got down from his chariot and fled away on foot.

ESV

READ SLIDE

TR: The battle belongs to the LORD . . .

**REMEMBER, REJOICING WILL COME
BECAUSE . . .**

- The **battle** belongs to the Lord,
beginning, **middle**, and end .

. . . beginning, middle

TR: . . . and even to the end as the conclusion to the account of
chapter 4 tells us . . .

Judges 4:23-24

23

So on that day **God subdued Jabin the king of Canaan** before the people of Israel. ²⁴And the hand of the people of Israel pressed harder and harder against Jabin the king of Canaan, until they destroyed Jabin king of Canaan.

ESV

READ SLIDE

TR: God subdued Jabin. The battle belongs to whom?

REMEMBER, REJOICING WILL COME BECAUSE . . .

- The **battle** belongs to the Lord, beginning, middle, and **end**.

From start to finish, the battle belongs to whom?

-- Even as we think of the battle for our salvation . . . God initiated because Christ was foreknown before the foundation of the world, we were chosen in him before the foundation of the world.

-- He went to the cross alone, the Lamb of God, slain for the world.

-- He arose victoriously and leads the triumphal procession.

-- He will return and complete all the tenses of salvation . . . have been, are being, will be.

-- The battle for our salvation belongs to the Lord, beginning, middle and end . . . and that is why we shouldn't write off anyone . . . even when it seems the odds are staked so high against them ever been won to Christ.

TR: The victory was the Lord's in Deborah and Barak's day,

because of the rain God sent in the dry season.

From heaven the stars fought, from their courses they fought against Sisera. ²¹The torrent Kishon swept them away, the ancient torrent, the torrent Kishon. **March on, my soul, with might!**

ESV

READ SLIDE (to “the torrent Kishon”)

- The 900 iron chariots were worthless on the muddy terrain.**
 - As the Kishon river swelled the odds were radically changed.**
 - As God promised elsewhere, one man would put thousand to flight (Joshua 23:10), since it is the LORD your God who fights for you.**
 - Each of these provisions from the LORD stir us to say to our own hearts . . . “March on, my soul, with might!”**
- TR: God has provisioned and will prepare you.**

**REMEMBER, REJOICING WILL COME
BECAUSE . . .**

- The battle belongs to the Lord, beginning, middle, and end .
- We will find strength to press on with each provision from His hand.

And with each provision we find strength!

-- As we face the overwhelming odds, remember that rejoicing will come.

TR: Yet, this hope of rejoicing and blessing requires a response from us to "ACT NOW!"



**These blessings are not for those who shirk their duties, who do not heed the call of God.
TR: Rejoicing will come . . .**

SO, LET US BE . . .

- Awakened from our **apathy**.

So, let us be . . . READ SLIDE

TR: Even the prophetess and judge, the strong woman of God, Deborah, needed to be aroused from her apathy at some level.

Judges 5:12

**“Awake, awake, Deborah!
Awake, awake, break out in a song!
Arise, Barak, lead away your
captives,
O son of Abinoam.”**

ESV

**She says it herself in her song . . . READ SLIDE
TR: She had been judging for some time before she
responded to the leading of God and arose . . . See 5:6-7**

Judges 5:6-7

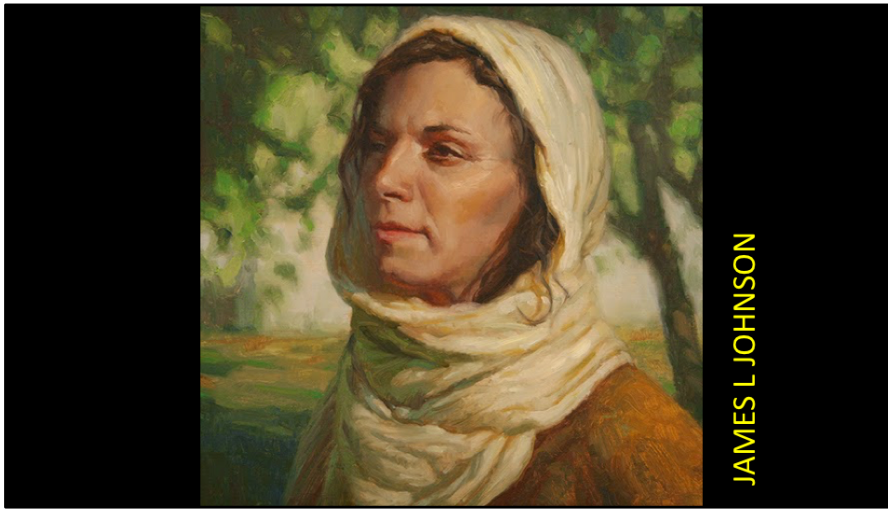
"In the days of Shamgar, son of Anath, in the days of Jael, the highways were abandoned, and travelers kept to the byways. ⁷The villagers ceased in Israel; **they ceased to be until I arose; I, Deborah, arose as a mother in Israel.**

ESV

READ SLIDE

-- Things were bad . . . commerce was blighted and the people were frightened, cowering on the byways.

TR: UNTIL Deborah was . . .



. . . awakened by God's call to arms. God's call to service.

-- Until she was willing to be a mother in Israel.

TR: Perhaps we are like Deborah, doing a good work, but God is calling us to even more. To carry the weight of parenting beyond just your own kids.

SO, LET US BE . . .

- Awakened from our apathy.
- Encouraged beyond our **insecurities.**

Or perhaps we are more like Barak, who needed to be . . . READ SLIDE

TR: Back in chapter 4 we read . . .

Judges 4:8-9a

Barak said to her, "If you will go with me, I will go, **but if you will not go with me, I will not go.**" ⁹And she said, "I will surely go with you. Nevertheless, the road on which you are going will not lead to your glory, for the LORD will sell Sisera into the hand of a woman."

ESV

READ SLIDE

- Barak was willing to go and yet still frightened. Perhaps he didn't think the people would rally to him and that he needed Deborah's clout and respectability as a woman of God.
- Her response tells us that this insecurity was not a badge of honor.
- True, men like Moses, Gideon, and Jeremiah all struggled with insecurity.
- I've even wanted to write a book entitled, "The Insecure Pastor." But Kathy reminds me that we all have a measure of insecurity.
- God is gracious, He will not ask us to do what we are not

able to accomplish in His strength.

-- If we are insecure, ask Him to provide the encouragement we need to not be gutless, faithless followers.

TR: We must be awakened from our apathy, encouraged beyond our insecurities, and, we may also need to be . . .

SO, LET US BE . . .

- Re-focused on “helping the LORD.”

READ SLIDE

-- We might say, “But I thought the battle belongs to the Lord?”

-- It does . . . but our responding to His call to arms lets us be His “helpers.”

TR: In Chapter 5 . . .

Judges 5:11

To the sound of musicians at the watering places, there they repeat the righteous **triumphs of the LORD**, the righteous **triumphs of his villagers** in Israel.

ESV

in verse 11 we read that the praise went forth of the triumphs of the LORD and of the villagers.

-- READ SLIDE

-- Hebrew poetry and parallelism between LORD and villagers.

TR: Down in verse 23 we see the opposite . . .

"Curse Meroz, says the angel of the LORD, curse its inhabitants thoroughly, **because they did not come to the help of the LORD, to the help of the LORD against the mighty.**

ESV

The people of Meroz (mê·rō·wz), from right around Mt. Tabor, are cursed because . . . **READ SLIDE**

-- In a very real sense, God doesn't need our help, He is all-powerful.

-- Yet, He has deemed it necessary that we by faith partner with Him, even as we by faith receive Christ.

-- In your facing down the overwhelming odds, have you slipped into a passivity that doesn't "ACT NOW" because we are "letting go and letting God"?

TR: God calls us to action . . . by faith . . . even as I think He called Jael (yā·'êl)

SO, LET US BE . . .

- Re-focused on “helping the LORD.”
- Reminded of who we really are, ready to take what action we can.

As we consider what this other strong woman did, as described in these chapters . . . we can be horrified or encouraged.

-- Her husband has a pact of neutrality with Jabin and Sisera.

-- She invited him into her tent when no man would think of going.

-- She treated him with apparent hospitality.

TR: But then something changed, or so it seems.



After Sisera tells her to lie to protect his whereabouts, she realizes that the battle had turned to the favor of the tribes of Israel.

-- This woman, married into the family of Moses' father-in-law, remembers who she really is . . . at least that's how I read the way her heritage is introduced and repeatedly focused on.

-- The woman, who would have had the job of setting up the nomad tents that were used back then.

TR: This woman drives a tent peg through evil Sisera's head.

Most blessed of women be Jael, the wife of Heber the Kenite, of tent-dwelling women most blessed.

ESV

Yet we read . . . READ SLIDE

-- She could have been found out . . . Sisera could have awoken and killed her . . . but she made a decision of whose side she was on.

-- We sow by deciding how we will respond to the call to arms in the service of the Lord . . . and we reap either blessing or curses.

-- If we have trusted Christ, we have a duty to say, "Here am I, send me."

-- We may be insecure like Barak was . . . and Deborah said a woman would get the glory.

-- But it wasn't Deborah . . . it was Jael, a stay-at-home wife who knew how to swing a hammer.

TR: Allow me a third point to make . . . a contrarian view that imagines that we want . . .

**BUT, IF WE WANT TO BE GUTLESS,
FAITHLESS FOLLOWERS, WE MUST . . .**



**. . . to be gutless, faithless followers . . . chickens of the faith.
-- If this is who we want to be, there are some role models in
these chapters for us, too.
-- Not Deborah, Barak, Jael, the people of Issachar, Zebulun and
the other tribes who heeded the call . . .
TR: But rather those who became by-words for the cowardly
complacent.**

When new gods were chosen, then war was in the gates. Was shield or spear to be seen among forty thousand in Israel?

ESV

In 5:8 we read . . . READ SLIDE

-- This was before the battle and describes everyone, in some sense . . . this is before God calls Deborah and Barak to “awake” and to ACT NOW.

-- Why were the people of God under the cruel oppression of Jabin and Sisera?

-- Because the people had turned away from the LORD, and new gods were chosen.

TR: And this went on for 20 long years when gutless, faithless followers . . .

**BUT, IF WE WANT TO BE GUTLESS,
FAITHLESS FOLLOWERS, WE MUST . . .**

- **Wallow in **complacency** about the idolatry that creates oppression.**

. . . wallowed in . . . READ SLIDE

-- Someone I care about, who has rejected Christ so far, posted in response to Charlottesville, “Evangelicals, this is on you!”

-- I wanted to defend myself and evangelicals . . . but if the world is getting more rotten it is because the salt and light of Christians has grown complacent.

TR: There are several other anti-role models for us . . . pick it up in 5:15b

Among the clans of Reuben there were **great searchings of heart.**
¹⁶Why did you sit still among the sheepfolds, to hear the whistling for the flocks? Among the clans of Reuben there were **great searchings of heart.**

ESV

READ SLIDE

-- (Whistle for the flocks)

TR: If we want to be gutless and faithless, in order to reap a harvest of cursed shame then . . .

**BUT, IF WE WANT TO BE GUTLESS,
FAITHLESS FOLLOWERS, WE MUST . . .**

- Keep “**searching** our hearts” but never get up and do something. We must be the “whistling navel-gazers of Reuben.”

READ SLIDE

-- Talk about the problems, but do nothing.

TR: Gilead, Dan and Asher are three other tribes and territories that blew off the call to arms.

Gilead **stayed** beyond the Jordan;
and Dan, why did he **stay** with the
ships? Asher **sat still** at the coast of
the sea, **staying** by his landings.

ESV

Verse 17 . . . READ SLIDE

TR: To be gutless cowards, let's make sure we . . .

**BUT, IF WE WANT TO BE GUTLESS,
FAITHLESS FOLLOWERS, WE MUST . . .**

- Stay at a safe distance or remain comfortably preoccupied with business as usual. We must be the “**unmoved** of Gilead, Dan and Asher.”

READ SLIDE

TR: Or perhaps, the worst role model of all was Meroz.

Curse Meroz, says the angel of the LORD, curse its inhabitants thoroughly, because they did not come to the help of the LORD, to the help of the LORD against the mighty.

ESV

Verse 23 . . . READ SLIDE

-- Cursed, not by Deborah or Barak but by the angel of the LORD.

-- These were the folks who lives right around Mt. Tabor . . . they had the most to gain from the victory.

-- They probably sat around saying to each other, "Somebody ought to do something about this mess we're in."

TR: Those who want to reap cursing should be sure . . .

**BUT, IF WE WANT TO BE GUTLESS,
FAITHLESS FOLLOWERS, WE MUST . . .**

- **Not get involved, even when our families have the most to gain. We must just be “shirkers of Meroz.”**

READ SLIDE

TR: I, for one, have no desire to allow complacency to overtake me or the communities I can influence. I am asking God to not allow me to be counted among the . . .

ARE WE LIKE THE . . .

**“whistling navel-gazers
of Reuben”**

**“unmoved
of Gilead, Dan and Asher”**

“shirkers of Meroz.”

READ SLIDE

- Is God calling you to arms? Is He calling you into service for His kingdom? Is He awakening you from the slumber of apathy and complacency?**
- Is He nudging you to be a willing follower or leader, who is ready to risk even his or her life?**
- Is He mercifully today encouraging you beyond your insecurities?**
- Is He calling you to “help Him” win the victory?**
- Has He reminded you of who you are and what you already have in your hand?**
- Or have we become . . . READ SLIDE**
- Blessed are those who respond to God’s call to arms and cry out with Deborah and Barak, “March on, my soul, with might!”**