

## Order of Worship for June 9, 2024

### Prelude

P: The Lord be with you.

**C: And also with you.**

### Opening Hymn: *"I Leave All Things to God's Direction"* - Hymn #719

P: In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

**C: Amen.**

P: If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us.

**C: But if we confess our sins, God, who is faithful and just, will forgive our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness.**

P: Let us then confess our sins to God our Father.

**C: I, a poor sinner, plead guilty before God of all sins. I have lived as if God did not matter and as if I mattered most. I have not honored my Lord's name as I should; my worship and prayers have faltered. I have not let His love have its way with me, and so my love for others has failed. There are those whom I have hurt, and those whom I have failed to help. My thoughts and desires have been soiled with sin. Amen.**

P: Almighty God in His mercy has given His Son to die for you and for His sake forgives you all your sins. As a called and ordained servant of the Word, I therefore forgive you all your sins in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

**C: Amen.**

### Entrance Psalm: (Psalm 83)

P: O God, do not keep silence;

**C: do not hold Your peace or be still, O God!**

P: For behold, Your enemies make an uproar;

**C: those who hate You have raised their heads.**

P: They lay crafty plans against Your people;

**C: they consult together against Your treasured ones.**

P: They say, "Come, let us wipe them out as a nation;

**C: let the name of Israel be remembered no more!"**

P: For they conspire with one accord;

**C: against You they make a covenant—**

P: the tents of Edom and the Ishmaelites, Moab and the Hagrites, Gebal and Ammon and Amalek, Philistia with the inhabitants of Tyre; Asshur also has joined them;

**C: they are the strong arm of the children of Lot.**

P: Do to them as you did to Midian, as to Sisera and Jabin at the river Kishon,

**C: who were destroyed at Endor, who became dung for the ground.**

P: Make their nobles like Oreb and Zeeb, all their princes like Zebah and Zalmunna,

**C: who said, "Let us take possession for ourselves of the pastures of God."**

P: O my God, make them like whirling dust,

**C: like chaff before the wind.**

P: As fire consumes the forest,

**C: as the flame sets the mountains ablaze,**

P: so may You pursue them with Your tempest

**C: and terrify them with Your hurricane!**

P: Fill their faces with shame,

**C: that they may seek your name, O LORD.**

P: Let them be put to shame and dismayed forever;

**C: let them perish in disgrace,**

P: that they may know that You alone,

**C: whose name is the LORD, are the Most High over all the earth.,**

**ALL: Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit; as it was in the beginning, is now, and will be forever. Amen.**

P: The Lord be with you,

**C: and also with you.**

### **Prayer of the Day:**

P: Let us pray... God Almighty, as You raised up Gideon to rally Your people against the Midianites, send us who would direct us to Your Son Christ Jesus Whom You sent to rescue us from the evil in our lives. We pray this in the name of Jesus, who lives and rules with You and Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

**C: Amen.**

### **First Reading:** Gideon: Judges 6:11-16, 7:15b-21,

R: Now the angel of the LORD came and sat under the terebinth at Ophrah, which belonged to Joash the Abiezrite, while his son Gideon was beating out wheat in the winepress to hide it from the Midianites. And the angel of the LORD appeared to him and said to him, "The LORD is with you, O mighty man of valor." And Gideon said to him, "Please, sir, if the LORD is with us, why then has all this happened to us? And where are all His wonderful deeds that our fathers recounted to us, saying, 'Did not the LORD bring us up from Egypt?' But now the LORD has forsaken us and given us into the hand of Midian." And the LORD turned to him and said, "Go in this might of yours and save Israel from the hand of Midian; do not I send you?" And he said to Him, "Please, LORD, how can I save Israel? Behold, my clan is the weakest in Manasseh, and I am the least in my father's house." And the LORD said to him, "But I will be with you, and you shall strike the Midianites as one man." ...

[Gideon] returned to the camp of Israel and said, "Arise, for the LORD has given the host of Midian into your hand." And he divided the 300 men into three companies and put trumpets

into the hands of all of them and empty jars, with torches inside the jars. And he said to them, “Look at me, and do likewise. When I come to the outskirts of the camp, do as I do. When I blow the trumpet, I and all who are with me, then blow the trumpets also on every side of all the camp and shout, ‘For the LORD and for Gideon.’”

So Gideon and the hundred men who were with him came to the outskirts of the camp at the beginning of the middle watch, when they had just set the watch. And they blew the trumpets and smashed the jars that were in their hands. Then the three companies blew the trumpets and broke the jars. They held in their left hands the torches, and in their right hands the trumpets to blow. And they cried out, “A sword for the LORD and for Gideon!” Every man stood in his place around the camp, and all the army ran. They cried out and fled.

R: O Lord, have mercy on us.

**C: Thanks be to God.**

### **Second Reading: Hebrews 11:32-34**

R: And what more shall I say? For time would fail me to tell of Gideon, Barak, Samson, Jephthah, of David and Samuel and the prophets— who through faith conquered kingdoms, enforced justice, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions, quenched the power of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, were made strong out of weakness, became mighty in war, put foreign armies to flight.

R: O Lord, have mercy on us.

**C: Thanks be to God.**

### **Third Reading: Mark 5:1-13**

P: Jesus and the disciples came to the other side of the sea, to the country of the Gerasenes. And when Jesus had stepped out of the boat, immediately there met Him out of the tombs a man with an unclean spirit. He lived among the tombs. And no one could bind him anymore, not even with a chain, for he had often been bound with shackles and chains, but he wrenched the chains apart, and he broke the shackles in pieces. No one had the strength to subdue him. Night and day among the tombs and on the mountains he was always crying out and bruising himself with stones. And when he saw Jesus from afar, he ran and fell down before Him. And crying out with a loud voice, he said, “What have You to do with me, Jesus, Son of the Most High God? I adjure you by God, do not torment me.” For Jesus was saying to him, “Come out of the man, you unclean spirit!” And Jesus asked him, “What is your name?” He replied, “My name is Legion, for we are many.” And he begged Him earnestly not to send them out of the country. Now a great herd of pigs was feeding there on the hillside, and they begged Him, saying, “Send us to the pigs; let us enter them.” So He gave them permission. And the unclean spirits came out, and entered the pigs, and the herd, numbering about two thousand, rushed down the steep bank into the sea and were drowned in the sea.

P: In many and various ways, God spoke to His people of old by the prophets.

**C: But now in these last days, He has spoken to us by His Son.**

### **Children’s Message:**

**Sermon Hymn:** *“O Little Flock, Fear Not the Foe”* - Hymn #666

**Sermon:** *“Gideon”*

One of the common themes for people in the Bible is how long they have to wait. Abraham wasn't called by God until he was 70, and didn't receive his promised son, Isaac, until he was 100. Moses was a prince of Egypt for 40 years, and then a shepherd in the wilderness for another 40 before being called by God at the burning bush. Noah doesn't build the ark until he's quite old, and the flood doesn't come until he's 700.

The other common thread of all of these people is that they aren't who we'd think of to do the tasks they are set up to do. Noah wasn't a skilled shipbuilder that we know of, though as a common bumper sticker says, “Professionals built the Titanic. Amateurs built the ark.” If we were picking someone to be the father of a great nation, we'd pick someone who was young and fertile, not Abraham and Sarah, an old man and his wife who are both past child bearing years. If you wanted to pick someone to face down a king, you'd pick another king, not a stammering shepherd like Moses. Yet they are who God chose. They are who God used. By using them, God showed that the only way things could have succeeded were because it was really God in control.

That brings us to Gideon, who is a prime example of this. But first, some context. We heard last week about how the Israelites entered the Promised Land under Joshua, but failed to follow God's command to eliminate the people already living there, people who were worshipped fake gods with detestable practices. During the time of the judges, we see the price they paid for failing to follow God's command. The idols are within easy reach for the people to be tempted by, and the other peoples are right there to oppress the Israelites. The people went through cycles of sin, oppression, repentance and redemption.

When we first meet Gideon, he's in hiding. He's threshing wheat in the winepress to hide it from the Midianites, the people who have been stealing Israel's crops for the last seven years like a plague of locusts. When an angel appears to him and calls him a mighty man of valor, Gideon knows the angel must have come to the wrong person. He wonders how God can be with him given all that's happened. He wonders how he can be the one that God will use to save his people, because he's the least in his family, his clan is the least in his tribe, and he's not from one of the big tribes like Judah. He's like Steve Rogers before he becomes Captain America. If you needed a great military leader, he wouldn't be on the top of the list. He probably wouldn't even be on the list at all!

Even as he starts going on missions from God, he seems to not be the best choice. On his first mission, he tears down the pagan altars in his town, one of which was even built by his father, but he does so at night so no one knows he did it. When the townspeople wake up and see what happened, they demand his head, because he wasn't as sneaky as he thought. He's still in hiding, though, and his father refuses to give him up. In fact, he gets a new nickname, Jerubbaal, which means “Let Baal contend [against him]. If the fake god can't defend himself against Gideon, maybe he isn't that much of a god.

And then we get into his faith. For a man listed in the heroes of the faith chapter of Hebrews 11, he tests God a lot. When the angel first appears to him, he prepares a meal for it and only believes when fire springs up and consumes it. When he is about to embark on his mission to rout the Midianite army, he asks God for a sign not once but twice. The first time, he lays a fleece on the ground and says the he'll believe God if the fleece is wet but the ground is dry. After that happens, he asks God to do the reverse: keep the fleece dry while the ground is wet. Only after God gives him signs does he trust enough to go on the mission God gave him.

Then we see God at work in weird ways. Gideon is able to raise an army of 32000 men to lead into battle. It sounds like a lot, but they were still vastly outnumbered by a Midianite army that was as numerous as sand on the seashore. But then God has him shrink it. First, Gideon says that anyone who is afraid can leave, and 22000 of them take that offer. But 10000 is still too much. So God has Gideon send his men down to the river to drink. Those who lap the water like a dog, 300 of them, get to stay. The rest get sent home. With only 1% of the original army, Gideon is sent.

God uses Gideon and his 300 men to defeat a Midianite army. Gideon does it not through superior numbers or superior firepower. They use trumpets and break clay pots to create confusion and surprise, and the army is defeated, and Israel is rescued. Gideon is able to do what he does because God was with him. Because of the strange way it happened, there was no doubt that God gave the victory.

Gideon frees the people of Israel. His faith allowed God to do many miraculous things through him. Yet it wasn't enough. Israel was in peace during the 40 years of Gideon's life after he defeated the Midianites, but after he dies, the people go right back to where they were, chasing after false gods. The cycle would continue.

And so, in regard to their enemies, Israel always seemed to live between the now and the not yet. That was their story. In the book of Judges we read that when their enemies oppressed them because of their "spiritual adultery," they were forced to turn to God who sent the enemies in the first place, and look to the future for their hope. When God sent his judge, his redeemer who fought and defeated their enemies, the future hope became present reality for Israel. God revealed that he was still their God and all eyes could see it. The victory was visible and overwhelming and done in such a way that it came not through military might or superior strategy or terrific tactics. The victories came in such a way that only God could have given it. Yes, God still loved, and would always love, his Israel. And yet, the glorious victories never seemed to last too long. Israel's enemies always seemed to loom just over the horizon.

One other interesting note is where Gideon defeats the Midianites. He does so in the north of Israel, in the part that not only was the land given to Manassah, but to the tribes of Zebulun and Naphtali. Those were the two northernmost tribes of Israel, as far away from Jerusalem as you could get and still be in the nation of Israel. That, of course placed them in a very precarious position. First of all, it meant that they were the ones who were most exposed to other nations, most easily able to be caught up in the culture of those other nations. Secondly, it also meant

that they were the ones most likely to be caught when invaders came. And when the Assyrians came and invaded the northern kingdom for the first time in 738 B.C., those in Zebulun and Naphtali were the first to be caught, taken into exile. It was the first place where the light of God's people was replaced by darkness.

Yet, Jesus begins his ministry in that place, where the darkness first fell. As Isaiah prophesied, "The people walking in darkness have seen a great light; on those living in the land of the shadow of death a light has dawned." The Light of the World would come and shine in the land that kept falling under darkness. Jesus would come to redeem not just Israel but the whole world. He came to redeem the world not from an invading army but from sin, death, and the power of the devil. And unlike Gideon or Sampson or any of the other judges, the redemption earned by Jesus was done once and for all.

We have in our church some men who have taken on the name of Gideon as they share God's Word with people throughout the world. The Gideons International website describes why they chose this man as follows: "Gideon was a man who was willing to do exactly what God wanted him to do, regardless of his own judgment as to the plans or results. Humility, faith, and obedience were his great elements of character. This is the standard that The Gideons International is trying to establish in all its members, each man to be ready to do God's will at any time, at any place, and in any way that the Holy Spirit leads."

That's what we can learn from Gideon, as well. God doesn't choose the strongest or the best, but the weakest and the worst. God's plans don't always make sense, even to those he uses. God will do things in such a way that there is no other explanation except for God did it. That's something to look forward to. That's a God to hope in. That's a God to trust, no matter what.

### **Responses on Leadership:**

#### Leaders? – Our Confession

P: Sometimes like Moses, we feel unqualified to lead.

**C: Who am I, that I should go to Pharaoh and bring the Israelites out of Egypt? (Exodus 3:11)**

P: Sometimes like Gideon, we are hesitant to lead.

**C: How can I save Israel? My clan is the weakest in Manasseh, and I am the least in my family. (Judges 6:15)**

P: Sometimes like David, we are too guilty to lead.

**C: For I know my transgressions, and my sin is always before me. Against You, You only have I sinned and done what is evil in your sight. (Psalm 51:3-4)**

P: Sometimes like Jonah, our own stubbornness gets in the way of leadership.

**C: But Jonah ran away from the Lord and headed for Tarshish. (Jonah 1:3)**

P: Sometimes like Elijah, we are too discouraged to lead.

**C: I have had enough, Lord, take my life; I am no better than my ancestors.** (1 Kings 19:4)

P: Sometimes like Isaiah, we are too unworthy to lead.

**C: “Woe to me! I am ruined. I am a man of unclean lips, and I live among a people of unclean lips.** (Isaiah 6:5)

P: Sometimes like Peter, we are too brash or too self confident to lead.

**C: Even if I have to die with you, I will never disown you.** (Matthew 26:35)

P: Sometimes like Thomas, we are too doubtful to lead.

**C: Unless I see the nail marks in his hands and put my finger where the nails were, and put my hand into his side, I will not believe it.** (John 20:25)

P: Sometimes like Paul, there is NO REASON why we should be leaders.

**C: Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am the worst.** (1 Timothy 1:15)

Leaders! God’s Affirmation.

P: But like Moses, we are called by One greater than ourselves.

**C: I AM WHO I AM. I AM has sent me to you.** (Exodus 3:14)

P: But like Gideon, God compensates for our weaknesses.

**C: I will be with you.** (Judges 6:16)

P: But like David, we too are forgiven.

**C: Cleanse me with hyssop, and I will be clean; wash me, and I will be whiter than snow.** (Psalm 51:7)

P: But like Jonah, we are confronted with a gracious God.

**C: You are a gracious and compassionate God, slow to anger and abounding in love.** (Jonah 4:2)

P: But like Elijah, God comes in His glory and reveals Himself to us.

**C: Go out and stand on the mountain in the presence of the LORD, for the LORD is about to pass by.** (1 Kings 19:11)

P: But like Isaiah, we are touched by God’s grace.

**C: See this has touched your lips; your guilt is taken away and your sin atoned for.** (Isaiah 6:7)

P: But like Peter, we are remolded and recalled.

**C: Feed My lambs.** (John 21:15)

P: But like Thomas, we are convinced of the resurrection.

**C: Peace be with you. Put your finger here; see My hands. Reach out your hand and put it into My side. Stop doubting and believe.** (John 20:26-27)

P: But like Paul, we are God's people and chosen to be leaders, only by grace.

**C: For that very reason I was shown mercy so that in me, the worst of sinners, Christ Jesus might display His unlimited patience as an example for those who would believe in Him and receive eternal life.** (1 Timothy 1:16)

**All: Now to the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only God, be honor and glory forever and ever. Amen.**

### **Prayer of the Church**

P: Lord in Your mercy,

**C: hear our prayer.**

### **Lord's Prayer**

### **Closing Prayers:**

P: Almighty God, merciful Father, who created and completed all things, on this day when the work of our calling begins anew, we implore You to create its beginning, direct its continuance, and bless its end, that our doings may be preserved from sin, our life sanctified, and our work this day be well pleasing to You; through Jesus Christ, our Lord.

**C: Amen.**

**All: I thank You, my heavenly Father, through Jesus Christ, Your dear Son, that You have kept me this night from all harm and danger; and I pray that You would keep me this day also from sin and every evil, that all my doings and life may please You. For into Your hands I commend myself, my body and soul, and all things. Let Your holy angel be with me, that the evil foe may have no power over me. Amen.**

**Blessing:** (Pastor)

**C: Amen.**

**Closing Hymn:** *"Lord, Keep Us Steadfast In Your Word"* - Hymn # 655

### **Postlude**