

Week 19

Judges / שְׁפֵטִים / Sho-phet-im = Judges
Ruth / רוּת / Ruth = Ruth

We are considering these two very different books together because they represent the same general time period – which is full of insecurity. 1350-1000 BCE – The 350 years leading up to the monarchy. In the Hebrew Bible, Judges is categorized as one of the former prophets (*Nabi'im*) and Ruth as one of the writings (*Ketuvim*) in the Hebrew Bible. Christians categorize them both as historical pieces.

If Joshua is a book of success, **Judges** is a book of failure. At the beginning you see a cycle 1) Israel is unfaithful 2) God withdraws his protection 3) Israel serves an oppressor 4) Israel turns back to God in prayer – cries out 5) The Lord raises up a judge/deliverer 6) The Spirit of the Lord is given to the judge 7) The oppressor is subdued. 7) Peace in the land. Rinse and repeat.

Two phrases are repeated through the book: The first repetition characterized the first portion of the book; the second repetition characterizes the end of the book: 1) “The Israelites did what was evil in the sight of the Lord”¹ 2) “...all the people did what was right in their own eyes”². Though our world is nothing like theirs, it does seem the concept of an ultimate/objective truth has disappeared in our world, and more and more society just does what is right in its own eyes. In that sense, our two worlds find common ground. One important notable characteristic of the book of Judges is the role/leadership of women – chief among them is Deborah.

If Judges is a story of sin, **Ruth** is a story of grace. A story of boldness, kindness, and most of all love. The relationship that Ruth has with Naomi, along with Jonathan’s deep loving commitment to David are the two preeminent examples of sacrificial love in the OT.

Sunday, Feb 27

Judges 1³ - A Pattern of Rebellion

For Reflection: Quite the 7-fold pattern of disobedience, or possibly just failure or fear or desire or laziness. (19,21,27, 29, 30, 31 and 33). *When have you had a better idea about what to do in a particular situation? How did it go?*

Lagniappe: Acts 1:8

Monday, Feb 28

Judges 4 – A Preference for the Unexpected

¹ 2:11, 3:7, 3:12, 4:1 6:1, 10:6 and 13:1

² 17:6, 18:1, 19:1 and 21:25 (21:25 are the last words of the book of Judges)

³ The command had always been to completely possess the land. (Numbers 33:50-56). More literally, the promise had always been that God will drive out the former inhabitants of the land. (Deuteronomy 11:13-21)

For Reflection: Throughout Judges you see God's preference for the unexpected to deliver Israel. Deborah gets a prose chapter (4) and a poetic chapter (5). She is the only Judge in the book of Judges who is a prophet.⁴ Who are the Deborah's in your life, women of confident faith.

Lagniappe: 2 Corinthians 12:9

- Tuesday, Mar 1** Judges 6 – A Minority Opinion/Perception?
For Reflection: We see this preference again (compare 12 with 15) *Where do you think of yourself as inadequate, what does God think of you O mighty warrior?*
Langiappe: Matthew 5:13-16
- Wednesday, Mar 2** Judges 9 – Depravity #1
For Reflection: Cynicism Warning: sometimes when I read the parable of the trees, I think of our current political choices. God intended to be King of the People (A Theocracy), but the people were always drawn to a Monarchy (8:22-23). But Abimelech had better ideas, and ruthlessly implemented them. Abimelech is not a Judge or a King. He is a false King, a vicious pretender. *Who are the false Kings in your life?*
Lagniappe: Matthew 6:24
- Thursday, Mar 3** Judges 19 – Depravity #2
For Reflection: I almost didn't use this chapter, we often deny or turn away from our capacity for evil. This is definitely one of the R rated chapters of the Bible. *When have you been surprised by the virulence of sin in your own life?* I suspect the spiritual practice of confession is under-utilized in the lives of believers today.
Lagniappe: 1 John 1:8-9
- Friday, Mar 4** Ruth 1 – Sacrificial love
For Reflection: In this chapter we see three very different responses to crisis: Orpah, Naomi and Ruth. *What does Ruth risk in her decision to remain with Naomi? When has love/duty called you to risk?*
Lagniappe: Matthew 26:33-35
- Saturday, Mar 5** Ruth 2:1-13, 3:1-13, 4:13-22
For Reflection: *Who in need will you notice this week (2:10)? Whose advice do you trust? God has not left you without a redeemer either. How can you thank God, today?*
Lagniappe: Matthew 1:20-21

⁴ Samuel, who is also a Judge and Prophet doesn't show up until 1 Samuel.