

Sermon Title: Faith GREATER than our Fears Passage: Judges 7
Pastor Eric Klippenstein- June 21/26

A. History & Background

- Judges 6:3 says "**During the time of the Judges**, "the Midianites, Amalekites and other eastern peoples invaded the country and plundered the land"
 - For seven years (Judges 6:6) "... Israel was reduced to starvation by the Midianites, and the Israelites cried out to the Lord for help."
 - So God answered their cries by raising up Gideon to be their deliverer.
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B. Against all odds:

Judges 7:1 (NLT) So Jerub-baal (that is, Gideon) and his army **got up early** and went as far as the spring of Harod. The armies of Midian were camped north of them in the valley near the hill of Moreh. **2** The Lord said to Gideon, "**You have too many** warriors with you. If I let all of you fight the Midianites, the Israelites will boast to me that they saved themselves by their own strength. **3** Therefore, tell the people, 'Whoever is timid or afraid may leave this mountain and go home.' " So 22,000 of them went home, leaving only 10,000 who were willing to fight.

- God tells Gideon (v3) to release all **those who were afraid**,
- God does not pretend that fear is imaginary ... fear is part of being human, and he allows those who are afraid to go home.

4 But the Lord told Gideon, "There are **STILL too many!** Bring them down to the spring, and I will test them to determine who will go with you and who will not."

- And God narrowed these down (v5-6) on the basis of how they drank water ... and by the time they were done, Gideon was left with an army of 300 men ...

7 The Lord told Gideon, "**With these 300 men I will rescue you and give you victory over the Midianites.** Send all the others home." **8** So Gideon collected the provisions and rams' horns of the other warriors and sent them home. But he kept the 300 men with him. The Midianite camp was in the valley just below Gideon.

- The Israelites had no specialized weapons, nothing that would make up for the imbalance between the size of the enemy, and their own small group of warriors.
- In life it seems that getting to the place of the IMPOSSIBLE, is exactly where we sometimes need to be in order to:
 - loosen our grip on control
 - loosen our grip on comfort
 - loosen our grip on certainty
 - loosen our grip on self-reliance

As we continue reading ... we find out that God doesn't just give Gideon the assignment and then leave him alone to face his fears:

9 That night the Lord said, “Get up! Go down into the Midianite camp, for I have given you victory over them! **10** But if you are afraid to attack, go down to the camp with your servant Purah. **11** **Listen to what the Midianites are saying, and you will be greatly encouraged ...**

- God provides many ways in which He will strengthen us in our fears.
- God wants to remind us that He has not left us alone to face our fears.

(God continues speaking ...and He says) **THEN** you will be eager to attack.” So Gideon took Purah and went down to the edge of the enemy camp. **12** **The armies of Midian, Amalek, and the people of the east had settled in the valley like a swarm of locusts. Their camels were like grains of sand on the seashore—too many to count!** **13** Gideon crept up just as a man was telling his companion about a dream. The man said, “I had this dream, and in my dream a **loaf of barley bread** came tumbling down into the Midianite camp. It hit a tent, turned it over, and knocked it flat!” **14** His companion answered, “Your dream can mean only one thing—**God has given Gideon son of Joash, the Israelite, victory over Midian and all its allies!**” **15** When Gideon heard the dream and its interpretation, **he bowed in worship before the Lord ...**

- The enemy soldiers also immediately understood the meaning of that dream ... this dream told them that Gideon was going to be victorious.

Then (Gideon) returned to the Israelite camp and shouted, “Get up! For the Lord has given you victory over the Midianite hordes!” **16** He divided the 300 men into three groups and gave each man a **ram’s horn and a clay jar with a torch** in it **17** Then he said to them, “Keep your eyes on me. When I come to the edge of the camp, do just as I do. **18** **As soon as I and those with me blow the rams’ horns, blow your horns, too, all around the entire camp, and shout, ‘For the Lord and for Gideon!’** ”

- But Gideon **was no longer depending on the strength of his army**, or his strategies to lead them to victory. He was now confident that God would fulfill his promise to him, **even if** he didn’t understand how this might possibly happen.

19 It was just after midnight, after the changing of the guard, when Gideon and the 100 men with him reached the edge of the Midianite camp. Suddenly, they blew the rams’ horns and broke their clay jars. **20** Then all three groups blew their horns and broke their jars. They held the blazing torches in their left hands and the horns in their right hands, and they all shouted, **“A sword for the Lord and for Gideon!”**

- **Gideon and his men committed they were exposed**
- God didn’t give the luxury of remaining in hiding and then watching God do the work from a place of safety ... **God called them to participate in what he was going to do.**

21 **Each man stood at his position around the camp and watched** as all the Midianites rushed around in a panic, shouting as they ran to escape. **22** When the 300 Israelites blew their rams’ horns, **the Lord caused the warriors in the camp to fight against each other with their swords.** Those who were not killed fled to places far away ...

- The battle was over. A well-equipped army of 135,000 had just been sent running in fear by a small group of only 300 men with torches & lanterns .. **AND an all powerful God"**

C. Good for Gideon, but what about me?

I don't expect that God will ask you or I to lead a revolt against an occupying enemy force ... yet I can almost guarantee that each one of us will come up against situations that cause us to become fearful. Some of these are valid and real fears; others are based on fake-news, and still others are at best guesses as to what might happen.

These fears can come from:

- Health concerns, Global unrest & uncertainty, Negative social media posts, Changing political landscape, Changes in moral values, Stresses & uncertainty in close relationships, Financial or economic concerns

Each situation causes fear to rise up because we do not know how these situations will turn out .. and yet we recognize that we are unable to control the outcome. In these situations, we are no different than Gideon, where the outcome does not look favorable for us.

FEAR begins the moment we focus on the things we cannot control and that we do not have the ability to manage ... **FAITH begins the moment** I shift my focus **away** from my fears to God who is very present amid those circumstances.

What I **choose** to focus on, and it may need to be a deliberate choice, THAT will determine whether I am moving towards or away from fear.

Matthew 16:24–26 (NLT) — 24 Then Jesus said to his disciples, “If any of you wants to be my follower, you must give up your own way, take up your cross, and follow me. **25** If you try to hang on to your life, you will lose it. But if you give up your life for my sake, you will save it. **26** And what do you benefit if you gain the whole world but lose your own soul? Is anything worth more than your soul?”

When I willingly give up my life for the sake of Jesus Christ, I have **NOTHING** to lose, and I have **NOTHING** to fear ... but I have **EVERYTHING** to gain!

The reality is that:

- **Some have a strong faith in God and they do experience tremendous victories,**
- **Others have an equally strong faith, and yet things do not end in victory for them** (*in terms of how we would define “victory”*)

Hebrews describes this so well ...:

- **(Hebrews 11:33-34) Some ...** overthrew kingdoms, ruled with justice, and received what God had promised them, shut the mouths of lions, quenched the flames of fire, and escaped death by the edge of the sword

- **(Hebrews 11:36-38) But others** ...were jeered at, backs were cut open with whips, were chained in prisons, died by stoning, were sawed in half, were killed with the sword ...
- **Hebrews 11:39 All these people** earned a good reputation because of their faith, **yet none of them received all that God had promised**

What the people were experiencing was not an indication of their faith, whether they seemed to be “winning”, or seemed to be “losing”, ALL were recognized as being faithful WHILE THEY AWAIT the fulfilment of God’s ultimate promise to them.

The purpose of my faith is something so much greater than giving me a “good and nice life here and now”.

Our lives here are incredibly short ... **Psalm 39:5 (NLT) — 5** You have made my life no longer than the width of my hand. My entire lifetime is just a moment to you; at best, each of us is but a breath.”

For this reason, Jesus says:

Matthew 6:19–21 (NLT) — 19 “Don’t store up treasures here on earth, where moths eat them and rust destroys them, and where thieves break in and steal. **20** Store your treasures in heaven, where moths and rust cannot destroy, and thieves do not break in and steal. **21** Wherever your treasure is, there the desires of your heart will also be.

I have **NO FEAR** of loss when I am storing up my treasures for eternity.

When we shift our focus from the **object of our Fear** to the **object of our Faith, who is Jesus**, that moves **us towards a Faith that is GREATER** than our Fear.