

February 11

“When We Have Too Much”

Gideon and the Midianites

Scripture Focus: Judges 7:1-2

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2 The Lord said to Gideon, “You have too many men. I cannot deliver Midian into their hands, or Israel would boast against me, ‘My own strength has saved me.’

Special Music:

“Overflow”

Hope Worship / Alyssa Conley

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yvQX-fLqyPg>

# WHATCHA GOT?



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## **Judges 7:1-8**

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**2 The Lord said to Gideon, “You have too many men. I cannot deliver Midian into their hands, or Israel would boast against me, ‘My own strength has saved me.’**

**3 Now announce to the army, ‘Anyone who trembles with fear may turn back and leave Mount Gilead.’” So twenty-two thousand men left, while ten thousand remained.**

**4 But the Lord said to Gideon, “There are still too many men. Take them down to the water, and I will thin them out for you there. If I say, ‘This one shall go with you,’ he shall go; but if I say, ‘This one shall not go with you,’ he shall not go.”**

**5 So Gideon took the men down to the water. There the Lord told him, “Separate those who lap the water with their tongues as a dog laps from those who kneel down to drink.”**

**6 Three hundred of them drank from cupped hands, lapping like dogs. All the rest got down on their knees to drink.**

**7 The Lord said to Gideon, “With the three hundred men that lapped I will save you and give the Midianites into your hands. Let all the others go home.”**

**8 So Gideon sent the rest of the Israelites home but kept the three hundred, who took over the provisions and trumpets of the others.**

## **THE PURPOSE OF GIFTS**

**There was a man  
A miner by trade  
Who mined 'til he dropped  
Day after day**

**He mined for silver.  
He mined for gold.  
He mined for diamonds  
Until he grew old.**

**And he died alone along with his treasure**

**There was a girl  
Who had lots of money  
From selling her wares  
Of dark wine and honey.**

**Her coins and her dollars  
She wisely invested  
And grew her accounts  
Ne'er taking time to be rested**

**And she died with her riches unused.**

**There was a man  
A farmer by trade  
Who had a great year  
And never was swayed**

**To share his great fortune  
With his family and friends  
When he ran out of room  
He just built bigger bins**

**And when he died, his crops simply decayed.**

**There was a woman  
With unquestioned talent  
Who sang in the shower  
But was never quite valiant**

**To take to the stage  
And share her fine vocals  
With the people around her  
The strangers and locals**

**And when she passed, someone else sang at her funeral**

**What good is talent,  
Riches, or abundance  
If it all rots away  
In obscure encumbrance,**

**Stashed in a bank.  
Stored in the ground,  
Left in the shower  
Ne'er to be found,**

**Only to rot away, not changing a thing.**

**What good is our wealth  
If we choose to ignore  
The needs we could serve  
Outside of our doors.**

**Let's open our fists  
And realize our flaws  
And acknowledge our gifts  
Are given by God**

**The grave should ne'er be our benefactor.**

According to an article in Yahoo!finance on October 31, 2023, Elon Musk lost 41 billion dollars when Tesla stock took a sudden dip, and \$25 Billion with his acquisition of Twitter. That is 66 billion dollars. That's 'billion' with a 'B.' If you are anything like me, you find it difficult to wrap your mind around that kind of a staggering loss. A loss that didn't cause Musk to miss a step in his business dealings. I struggle with a 250-dollar electric bill. I can't begin to envision what it is like to have the wealth of Elon Musk.

If we put that 66 billion dollars into perspective, that amount would have provided fresh clean water for every single person on the planet for 6 years, and after the 6 years, all of the infrastructure would be in place to continue providing clean fresh water for the world. And, according to the world factbook of 2021, there are over 100 countries with a Gross Domestic Product value of under 66 billion dollars.

Elon Musk is just an obvious example of prodigious wealth. Taylor Swift is the first woman billionaire who is currently listed with over 1.1 billion dollars in assets. But she may miss the Super Bowl game where Travis Kelce will be playing because they can't find a place for her to park her private jet. I don't think I will ever have the same kinds of problems as the uber-rich, the Richard Bransoms, Mark Zuckerbergs, Jeff Bezoses, and Warren Buffets of the world. I sincerely doubt that any of the NFL teams are going to offer me a multi-million-dollar contract to play football. Age is not my friend, and I never had the kind of talent that they are looking for.

**In truth, I don't really want their kind of problems. Most of us would have trouble learning what to do with this kind of money. USA Today tells us that 1/3 of all big-money lottery winners are broke within 3 to 5 years. They simply do not have the skill and talent to hang onto their newfound fortunes. That does not mean they are bad people. Many have good intentions. Many have good hearts. But the biggest problem with coming into big money is that there are so many people who want a share of that new wealth.**

**The average cost of the cheapest Super Bowl ticket this year, is \$6500. If you want to purchase one today, it will cost you over \$8600. I have no right to tell people how to spend their money, and I admit that if I had \$8600 to spend frivolously, I wouldn't be buying Super Bowl tickets. I just see the world a little different than most. There are so many ways I can lift and help other people if I had \$8600 lying around, much less \$66 Billion.**

**There is nothing wrong with having wealth. Money, in and of itself, is not good or evil. But money is a tool, a tool that can be used to help the many people struggling in this world. While I may not be a big fan of the business practices of Microsoft, I deeply admire the contributions of the Bill and Melinda Gates foundation and the way they have chosen to share their wealth. And while I am not fond of the way Elon Musk conducts himself, I admire his pledge to give away half of his fortune before he dies.**

**Let's face it. We can't take it with us. And while we want to make sure that our families are taken care of, there is a point where wealth accumulation passes our need for wealth accumulation. What do we do when we have too much of**

something, anything? When does our wealth and talent become something that stands in the way of our relationship with Christ? Just how much do we need to have before money becomes our idol instead of worshipping our Savior, when accumulating wealth is more important to us than giving back? Where is that tipping point that John Lennon discovered in 1966 when he said that “the Beatles are more popular than Jesus Christ” in an interview that caused such an outrage? How do we know when we have chosen wealth and fame over our purpose of serving our Creator? And, in the end, what does all of this have to do with Christianity as we struggle to be faithful givers? What do we do when God tells us that we have too much? Let me repeat that. What do we do when God tells us that we have too much? “But God, you blessed me with all this wealth and talent and now you are telling me that I have too much. I don’t understand!”

Today, we take a short look at Gideon. The story of Gideon can be found in the book of Judges, chapters 6 & 7. And just like the other judges of Israel at the time, Gideon was called by God to save Israel from certain doom. We read in Judges 6:33-36:

**33 Now all the Midianites, Amalekites, and other eastern nations joined forces and crossed over the Jordan and camped in the Valley of Jezreel.**

**34 Then the Spirit of the Lord came on Gideon, and he blew a trumpet, summoning the Abiezrites to follow him.**



**35 He sent messengers throughout Manasseh, calling them to arms, and also into Asher, Zebulun and Naphtali, so that they too went up to meet them.**

Israel had a real problem. The Midianites, Amalekites, as well as other countries, had decided to join together and drive out the Promised Land. We have to remember that the Israelites hadn't made any friends when they occupied that promised land. While it was one thing to occupy the land, it was entirely something else to hang onto it. That's where the Judges, including Gideon, came in. God called them up to lead the people and to protect the land that God had given to them.

So, here was Gideon facing a multi-national invasion force. And he was sure God was calling him to do something about it. The enemy had already crossed the Jordan and was camping in the valley of Jezreel. Gideon didn't have any time to turn anywhere but to God. As much as he wanted to do what God was asking, he really didn't have a whole lot of confidence in himself. But when he was absolutely sure about what God was asking, he sent out messengers to all the tribes and even some of the neighboring nations so that he would have an army at his disposal to fend off the invaders.

But that proved to be problematic also. After he had gathered his army and saw that the Israelites had a fighting chance, God spoke to him and said something I'm sure he didn't want to hear.

**2 The Lord said to Gideon, “You have too many men. I cannot deliver Midian into their hands, or Israel would boast against me, ‘My own strength has saved me.’**

“Oh, no, no, no, God. You don’t understand. I really have barely enough. As a matter of fact, I could use more. Maybe we can frighten them off just by our sheer numbers.” But that was exactly what God was trying to explain to Gideon. The victory that was to come must be an accomplishment of God so that other nations would know that God was protecting Israel. If Gideon had too many men, it might go to the Israelites’ heads and lead them to believe that really didn’t need God as long as they had enough firepower. You see, what God knows we need is not what we think we need. We want to believe that we can do it on our own, that we don’t need to bring God into the matter. We don’t want to disturb God when he is so busy doing other things. There’s simply no reason to bother the Creator of the universe. But the issue was never about the firepower that Gideon was wielding, but about the mercy of God as he protected his people. The other nations needed to understand that the strength of Israel was not in its warriors, but in their God.

So, God tells Gideon to make an announcement. If any of the soldiers are afraid, they can go home. They weren’t needed. Now these men had all answered the call when it came. They had suited up and were ready to rumble. And you would think that they had confidence in what they were doing. But twenty-two thousand men packed up and went home. How discouraging that must have been for Gideon to see 2/3 of his army walk away. He must have

thought there had to be a few that would leave, but twenty-two thousand? That was a huge chunk of his army, and he must have worried that God might not know what he was doing.

**4 But the Lord said to Gideon, “There are still too many men. Take them down to the water, and I will thin them out for you there. If I say, ‘This one shall go with you,’ he shall go; but if I say, ‘This one shall not go with you,’ he shall not go.”**

And Gideon had the men drink from the water. Those who cupped their hands to drink got to stay. And those who kneeled and put their face to the water were sent home, leaving Gideon with 300 men to face the huge army that the Midianites had gathered.

Sometimes, something we do or don't do may seem trivial to us, but we never know what others see when we do those things. We leave an impression on the people around us, positive or negative. It's like praying publicly in a restaurant thanking God for our food. Some people don't appreciate it when we do that. Others are doing the same thing and have no problem with it. And some are observing us to see if we are the kind of people we profess to be. But whether we do or do not pray in public, people are observing us and drawing conclusions about us. I don't say this as a condemnation or an accolade, but as a choice that we make that affects the way people see us.

Back to our story. Gideon now has 300 men left out of his one humongous army of 32,000. I'm sure he is a bit skeptical. But God gives him the plan. And

**with 300 men with torches and trumpets, God delivers the overwhelming army of the Midianites into their hands. No Israelite lives were lost. Most of the Midianite army flees but is waylaid by the men of Ephraim as Gideons 300 hundred soldiers chased them to Beth Barah.**

**What happens when we have too much? The big problem with having too much has nothing to do with what we can accomplish with all the blessings that God may lavish upon us. It is more about how God sees our hearts. As humans, we tend to rely on our own assets. We think we have the bases covered; that God has given us more than we need so that we can lead comfortable lives. Which then leads us to believe that we got there on our own. Let me just say here that God never promises us lives of comfort. Mostly because we get to believing that we are responsible for the blessings we receive. Hey, we worked the extra-long hours. Our spouses worked as well. We accumulate all that we have because of our hard work. We neglect our kids and household responsibilities as well as church so that we can focus on accumulating more. We play our cards right and God blesses us for being in the game. But the truth is something altogether different.**

**We forget that everything we have comes from God, not our hard work. The sacrifices we made along the way to gather up various assets were our choices. We think we are doing our part by following an Old Testament understanding of tithing. The Israelites were expected to give 10% of all their income to support the priests and the clergy. The Levites were descended from Aaron and were not given a piece of the pie when the Promised Land was divided**

up. Their duties were to perform the tasks of serving as God's representatives to the people.

But here's the thing, God doesn't need our 10%. He needs us. He needs our willingness to live exemplary lives. He needs to know that what he has given to us is going to be used to help others. To try and break it down into percentages is silly. There are plenty of people capable of giving far more than 10% and others who have to struggle to make ends meet.

I'm not telling anyone that they are not giving enough, and I am not telling anyone that they are giving too much. I'm telling you that what we have been given is to be used in the service of our Creator and his plan for our lives.

It is only human to believe that we never really have enough and struggle to accumulate more. But when we understand that all of what we have belongs to God, we can begin to understand the validity of his blessings. God gives us what we need to accomplish his will, not our own.

What do we do when we have too much? Well, let's take an example from Gideon. He felt he had enough of an army to get the job done. But God is not limited human understanding. Only by allowing God into the conversation regarding the assets he has blessed us with, will we ever be able to determine how he needs for us to use those gifts. I know it is difficult to let go. Gideon was facing a huge army, and God dwindled his assets down to just 300 men and still delivered Israel. Do we understand that he will do the same for us if we will just include him in our decisions?

**This week, let us take time to reflect on that. Let's not limit ourselves to our own interpretation of wealth, but allow God into our conversations about how to use the assets he has blessed us with. Let us open our hearts, minds, and souls to the possibility that maybe, just maybe, God has a better idea than ours on how our assets are to be used in a chaotic and troubled world.**

**God bless you all.**

**AMEN**

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