

SERMON OUTLINE

SERMON TITLE: Thorns in a Nation's Side

SERMON REFERENCE: Judges 9:8-15

LWF SERMON NUMBER: #1805

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1) INTRODUCTION

- a) This is the first parable given in the Bible.
 - i) The parable of the trees who wanted a king.
 - (1) Judges 9:8-15
- b) America is in a crisis, and the crisis concerns leadership.
 - i) We desperately need leadership.
 - ii) "If the gold rusts, then what shall the iron do?"
 - (1) If those who are supposed to be in areas of leadership do not lead, then what is going to happen?
- c) What we have here in the Word of God is the story of a pitiful politician and a nation in disarray.
- d) By and large, we get the kind of leadership we deserve.
 - i) It has been said that wicked rulers are God's reward for wicked people.
 - (1) This is not a quote from the Bible, but it is a Bible truth.
- e) What is the difference between a statesman and a politician?
 - i) A statesman works for the next generation.
 - ii) A politician works for the next election.
- f) In today's message, we will look at three steps in the decline of a nation:
 - i) The apostasy of an unthankful people
 - ii) The arrogance of an ungodly leader
 - iii) The apathy of uncommitted bystanders

2) THE APOSTASY OF AN UNTHANKFUL PEOPLE (JUDGES 8:33-34)

- a) Prior to this passage, Gideon won a victory.
 - i) The army blew trumpets, broke pitchers, held up the lanterns, and shouted, "*The sword of the Lord and of Gideon.*"
 - ii) God put the enemy camp in disarray.
 - iii) There was a mighty victory.
 - (1) One would have thought that the people would have been so grateful that they would never again go back on God.
 - iv) They turned to immorality.
 - v) God had given them a wonderful victory, and they forgot it.
 - vi) They had gone off into a fertility cult.
- b) The book of Judges is not just what God has said, it is what God is saying still today.
- c) People say that this could never happen in America.
 - i) We have prayed to God during times of national crisis.
 - (1) People went to the house of God to seek the face of God.
 - ii) As soon as it was over, rather than giving God the praise and the glory, it seemed as though the gates of Hell had been opened on us.
 - (1) The flood gates of filth were poured out onto this land.
 - (2) We became blatantly immoral.
 - (3) Sheer apostasy happened in America.
 - iii) Judges 8:33

- iv) The underlying theme of the book of Judges is Judges 17:6.
 - (1) *"In those days there was no King in Israel, and every man did that which was right in his own eyes."*
- v) There was no fixed standard of morality.
- d) Politicians today will stand up and talk about values, but whose values?
 - i) They don't know how to get a standard for values.
 - (1) It is morality by majority.
- e) We have gone from authority to relativism.
 - i) Everything is relative; there is no fixed standard.
 - ii) We have a government that is run by polls.
 - (1) Find out what people want, then give it back to them.
 - (2) Imagine Moses taking a poll in Egypt, or Martin Luther taking a poll at the reformation.
 - (a) That is not leadership.
- f) We have gone from truth to pragmatism.
 - i) No longer do we ask, "Is it true?"
 - ii) We ask, "Does it work?"
 - iii) People choose religion to produce health, wealth, and happiness.
 - (1) It is man-centered rather than God-centered.
- g) We have gone from revelation to feeling.
 - i) Psychology has replaced theology.
 - ii) Instead of theology, it is me-ology.
 - iii) Sin is no longer the enemy, but sorrow and sadness are the enemy.
 - iv) To feel good about yourself is the number one priority.
- h) We have gone from convictions to opinions.
 - i) Few people have convictions about anything, except their right to be happy.
- i) This is being played out in the government today.
 - i) In the 1960's, the courts ruled that it is unconstitutional for a student in a public school to pray out loud and for students to arrive at school early to hear a student volunteer read prayers.
 - (1) And yet, both the US House and Senate open with a daily prayer.
 - ii) The First Amendment says, "Congress shall make no law respecting the establishment of religion, or the free exercise thereof."
 - iii) When the first United States Congress passed the First Amendment and the Bill of rights, at the same time they passed the Northwest Ordinance.
 - (1) Historians tell us that it is among the four most important documents in our national history, along with the Articles of Confederation, the Declaration of Independence, and the Constitution.
 - (2) It says, "Religion, morality, and knowledge, being necessary to good government and the happiness of mankind, schools and means of education shall forever be encouraged."
 - (a) Religion, morality, and knowledge are necessary to good government.

- j) Not only has the religion become apostate and the revisionists remodeled our Constitution, but the media moguls are also systematically seducing our children.
 - i) They have normalized that which is abnormal and subnormal.
 - (1) A physical, intimate relationship between unmarried couples is seen as normal.
 - (2) Profanity and filth are known as polite conversation.
 - ii) They have desensitized us.
 - (1) Things don't shock us anymore.
 - (2) What used to amaze us now amuses us.
 - (3) We have a generation today that doesn't know how to blush or flinch.
 - iii) They legitimatized the illegitimate.
 - (1) Sexual perversion has gone from a sin to a sickness to a socially accepted practice.
 - (2) They have legitimatized the things that God calls sin.
 - iv) They have stigmatized that which is good, decent, and godly.
 - (1) The word "virgin" is a word to be laughed at.
 - (2) Monogamous marriage is a joke.
 - (3) Those who stand up for Bible truth are called a part of the radical religious right.
 - (4) Those who stand up for what is right are now no longer tolerated.
 - (a) They are stigmatized.
 - (b) They are looked upon as a threat to society.
 - (5) Isaiah 5:20
 - k) A former congressman once said the following:
 - i) When children grow up in homes without a father's discipline and love and without a mother's nurture and comfort, we consign a young generation to problems they have not created and do not deserve.
 - ii) America without a foundation of stable families is an America built on shifting sand.
 - iii) When we accept the denigration of religious freedom, we compromise the means of our deliverance.
 - iv) We believe in a free church and a free state, but that freedom of religion does not mean freedom from religion.
 - v) We, as a nation, were conceived in faith, founded on faith, and prospered through faith.
 - l) Judges 8:33-34
- 3) THE ARROGANCE OF AN UNGODLY LEADER (JUDGES 9:1-6)
- a) There arose an ungodly leader named Abimelech.
 - b) Judges 9:1-2
 - i) Abimelech was a bramble; he was a thorn bush.
 - ii) He had an unholy ambition to lead the country.
 - c) Abimelech built a coalition.

- i) Judges 9:1-2
 - ii) He went to his friends back where he was raised.
 - (1) He told them that he was one of them.
 - d) Abimelech bought his constituents.
 - i) Judges 9:3-4
 - (1) Baalberith was the god of sexual immorality.
 - (2) This was a slap in the face of the God of Israel because the money came from the house of Baalberith.
 - ii) Sometimes, an election can be bought.
 - e) Abimelech brutalized his competition.
 - i) Judges 9:5
 - ii) He was a bloody man.
 - iii) In today's world, governments can still be built on blood; the blood of innocent little babies.
 - (1) Habakkuk 2:12
 - (2) If we were to build a memorial for the little babies who have died since Roe vs. Wade, it would have millions of names on it.
 - (3) Many people have done things unknowingly, unwittingly, and out of fear or ignorance.
 - (a) There is a God of grace and forgiveness.
 - (4) Someone needs to speak up for the unborn.
 - f) Abimelech had himself inaugurated with a show of religion.
 - i) Judges 9:6
 - (1) Some translations say, "*By the great tree that is in Shechem.*"
 - (a) Possibly the location where God spoke to Abraham and gave him the covenant.
 - (2) There in that place, he tried to associate himself with things that were good and holy, and he made a farce of the whole thing.
- 4) THE APATHY OF UNCOMMITTED BYSTANDERS (JUDGES 9:7-15)
- a) Judges 9:7
 - i) There was a prophet named Jotham.
 - ii) Listen to God's Word if you want God to listen to your word.
 - (1) Proverbs 28:9
 - b) Judges 9:8-15
 - i) Jotham told a parable about trees that wanted a king.
 - (1) The trees asked the olive tree to reign over them.
 - (a) But the olive tree was too busy producing fatness.
 - (i) The oil of the olive is a national necessity.
 - (2) The trees asked the fig tree to reign over them.
 - (a) But the fig tree was too busy producing figs with their sweetness.
 - (i) That may not be a necessity, but it is a nicety.
 - (3) The trees then asked the vine to rule over them.

- (a) The vine was too busy producing wine to cheer the heart of man and God.
 - (i) That was a luxury.
- (4) They were all so busy with their necessities, their niceties, and their luxuries, that the trees went to the bramble.
 - (a) The bramble was glad to rule over them.
 - (b) The bramble has no fruit, shade, nor lumber.
 - (c) The bramble rips, shreds, chokes, clings, and grows.
 - (i) It is very hard to root out.
- (5) They all fled their responsibilities and let the bramble rule.
- c) Edmund Burke: "All that is necessary for the triumph of evil is for good men to do nothing."

5) CONCLUSION

- a) The book of Judges shows that God had rather forgive than judge.
 - i) He is a God of mercy.
- b) We must disabuse ourselves of the idea that there can be no revival and no restoration.
 - i) There can be, and we dare not lose hope.
- c) Do you know Jesus personally? If not, you can pray to Him today by asking Him to come into your life.
- d) Call upon Jesus today. Repent (turn) from your sins, and turn to Jesus. Ask Him to forgive you of your sins, and acknowledge Him as Lord of your life.
 - i) Romans 3:23
 - ii) Romans 10:9-10
 - iii) Romans 10:13
 - iv) Acts 16:31
 - v) John 3:16