

Eyes to See

Key Verse: In those days Israel had no king; all the people did whatever seemed right in their own eyes. Judges 17:6 (NLT)

Text: Judges 13: 1-11, 24, 25

Background/Judges 2nd book in a collection of 12 books in Old Testament begins with Joshua and ends Esther. Scholars label these the *history* books.

You know how I feel about history!

- We get our history from historians, scholars and journalists.
- We record it in terms of politics and economics, human interest and environmental conditions.

Recorded History in the Bible is refreshingly different in approach.

The bible is no other book - inspired by the Holy Spirit ... God is included ... not excluded as he is in our main line history books

He's personally involved in history in the ordinary and extraordinary events of daily living

The Judges? Are regular people God called to step up and become leaders in the turbulent times they lived in.

Backdrop –What was it like during the days of the judges? Sex and violence, rape and massacre, brutality and deceit.

Sound familiar?

Some of the Judges were: Gideon, Sampson and Deborah.

WARNING – these judges aren't exactly role models. If you or I were interviewing for national leadership positions ... these people would never even make the list!!!!

But God has a completely different way of doing things

I hope this isn't a news flash but ... **God doesn't require good people to do good work.**

That should be encouraging ... because if God can use the messed up lives of these Judges for leadership – he can certainly work with us.

Let's consider one Judge ... the original super powered hero of Bible ... Sampson.

Judges 13: 1-11, 24, 25 NLT

¹Again the Israelites did evil in the LORD's sight, so the LORD handed them over to the Philistines, who oppressed them for forty years. (**Do you see the Pattern?**)

²In those days a man named Manoah from the tribe of Dan lived in the town of Zorah. His wife was unable to become pregnant, and they had no children. ³The angel of the LORD appeared to Manoah's wife and said, "Even though you have been unable to have children, you will soon become pregnant and give birth to a son. ⁴So be careful; you must not drink wine or any other alcoholic drink nor eat any forbidden food. ⁵You will become pregnant and give birth to a son, and his hair must never be cut. For he will be dedicated to God as a Nazirite from birth. He will begin to rescue Israel from the Philistines."

⁶The woman ran and told her husband, "A man of God appeared to me! He looked like one of God's angels, terrifying to see."

⁸Then Manoah prayed to the LORD, saying, "Lord, please let the man of God come back to us again and give us more instructions about this son who is to be born."⁹ God answered Manoah's prayer, and the angel of God appeared once again to his wife as she was sitting in the field. But her husband, Manoah, was not with her. ¹⁰So she quickly ran and told her husband, "The man who appeared to me the other day is here again!"

¹¹Manoah ran back with his wife and asked, "Are you the man who spoke to my wife the other day?"

"Yes," he replied, "I am." ...

²⁴When her son was born, she named him Samson. And the LORD blessed him as he grew up.

²⁵And the Spirit of the LORD began to stir him while he lived in Mahaneh-dan ...

What a beginning to Sampson's life –destined for great things – a can't miss protégé! Sampson was a Nazirite ordained by God before he was born

I. God gives us what we need to succeed for what he asks us to do ...
The question is what are we doing with what we've been given?

Parallels John the Baptist check out the similarities

[Luke 1:11-17](#)

¹¹While Zechariah was in the sanctuary, an angel of the Lord appeared to him, standing to the right of the incense altar. ¹²Zechariah was shaken and overwhelmed with fear when he saw him.

¹³But the angel said, "Don't be afraid, Zechariah! God has heard your prayer. Your wife, Elizabeth, will give you a son, and you are to name him John. ¹⁴You will have great joy and gladness, and many will rejoice at his birth, ¹⁵for he will be great in the eyes of the Lord. He must never touch wine or other alcoholic drinks. He will be filled with the Holy Spirit, even before his birth. ¹⁶And he will turn many Israelites to the Lord their God. ¹⁷He will be a man with the spirit and power of Elijah. He will prepare the people for the coming of the Lord. He

will turn the hearts of the fathers to their children, and he will cause those who are rebellious to accept the wisdom of the godly.”

Both John and Sampson started out with a similar promise and blessing

☆ Some people teach that when it comes to God’s plan, it doesn’t matter what we do as individuals, because His plan will come about no matter what.

But if there was ever an example of how a person’s choices make a difference it’s absolutely obvious in the lives of these two men...

- Both were anointed even before conception.
- Both had mothers who unable to conceive and who received an angelic announcement
- Both were Nazirite
- Both lived in challenging times
- Both were stirred by the Holy Spirit as young men
- Both were called to be leaders in the challenging times in which they lived

But that’s where the similarities end – We know what John accomplished but what about Sampson?

Personal ...In our master bathroom Jen has a plaque hanging that reads ... ***Its not what you look at that matters but what you see!***

There are moments in our lives when we see what we want to see and block out the rest – times when we hear what we want to hear and turn a deaf ear to the truth

Neighbors – I’ve been moved to start praying for the people who live around me ... praying that God would help me reach out to them – share friendship with them and our experience with God

It seems to be working we have had some break through but one neighbor in particular I have had great trouble consistently praying for ... yet God has been trying to show me that he is the one who needs Him most!

III. Hearing God’s voice vs. obeying God’s voice are two different things!

God chose Sampson empowered to be a warrior – superhero, a deliverer in the troubled times
Some of Sampson’s feats with his Super strength:

- Ripped a young lion who attacked him in half with nothing but his bare hands
- Killed an entire Philistine company 1,000 men all by himself the jaw bone of a donkey
- For sport ripped out the city posts and doors bolts and all from Gaza carrying them for miles

⇒ Sampson destroyed thousands of enemy Philistines ... but his life choices were motivated by self indulgence not God’s leadership

He killed for personal revenge and satisfaction, endangering his own countrymen

His life was a train wreck - he misused God's gift – making his own life miserable and creating more misery for his own people

Involved in meaningless sexual relationships searching for what God had already given him!

His mistakes finally caught up to him when the beautiful but deadly Delilah –betrayed him ... his eyes were gouged out ... turned into a slave and he became the butt of his enemies joke –

His final scene of his life he cried out to God but not in repentance but for personal revenge ! killed 3,000 Philistines in the temple of their god Dagon pushing the apart the supporting posts and collapsing the building

Judges 16: 28-30

²⁸ Then Samson prayed to the LORD, “Sovereign LORD, remember me again. O God, please strengthen me just one more time. With one blow let me pay back the Philistines for the loss of my two eyes.” ²⁹ Then Samson put his hands on the two center pillars that held up the temple. Pushing against them with both hands, ³⁰ he prayed, “Let me die with the Philistines.” And the temple crashed down on the Philistine rulers and all the people. So he killed more people when he died than he had during his entire lifetime.

☆ **To some degree**, Sampson did what God had called him to do ... but you can't help but wonder what might have accomplished If only...

What if he had sought the Lord rather than his own pleasure? What if he had listened to God voice instead of just hearing it?

II. What has God asked you to do?

If you don't know the answer to that question – you're hearing but not listening!

Every generation faces some kind of crisis ... we're facing one of epic proportions

God still works the same way he calls flawed people to step up to the plate as leaders for him –to stem in some way the rising tide of their time.

Edmund Burke .. Irish philosopher – father of modern day conservatism

- The only thing necessary for the triumph of evil is for good men to do nothing.
- Whenever a separation is made between liberty and justice, neither, in my opinion, is safe

How much influence can one person make?

- In 1645, one vote gave Oliver Cromwell control of England.
- In 1649, one vote caused Charles I of England to be executed
- In 1845, one vote brought Texas into the Union
- In 1868, one vote saved President Andrew Johnson from impeachment
- In 1876, one vote gave Rutherford B. Hayes the United States Presidency.
- In 1923, one vote gave Adolf Hitler control of the Nazi party
- And just recently by one vote – a 5- 4 ruling the supreme court redefined marriage declaring its no longer one man and one woman.

Yesterday driving by St Paul and Peter catholic church in Manorville Jen and I saw this posted sign. *Is your prayer life a steering wheel or a spare tire?*

Proverbs 4:23 (NLT) “Guard your heart above all else, for it determines the course of your life.”
What is your heart telling you this morning?

Are you fulfilling your call – exerting the influence and leadership he has called you to have you decided to block out that voice and leave it up to someone else?