*Not the Leader You Expected: A series about the unlikely people God uses.*

**5/29 Gideon, The Unlikely Warrior—Deb**

In the midst of this Memorial Day weekend when we remember those who gave the ultimate sacrifice for their county, those most would call heroes, I am reminded of the controversy over a year ago the now presumed republican candidate for President Donald Trump began when talking about War Veteran John McCain who had been a prisoner of war, “(McCain’s) a war hero because he got captured. I like people who weren’t captured.”

Trump later clarified his statement that if a person was captured, they are a hero, it was the way he perceived McCain was not taking care of our veterans he was going after which leads me to wonder, what makes a hero? Who are the heroes in your life and why?

I would venture to guess that many people who ended up as heroes didn’t start that way or had no intention of being a hero much like the biblical character Gideon. It would be farfetched to describe Gideon as a hero when we first meet him, in fact it is almost funny the situation that is described for us in the biblical text.

According to the text Israel had once again stopped following God so God had allowed the Midianites to oppress them. Every time Israel went to plant seed and if any kind of harvest came in, the Midianites would swoop in and take all of the grain and food and any cattle or animals or anything of worth they could find so that the Israelites were having a hard time surviving.

So the Israelites cried to the Lord and part of the Lord’s response was to send an angel to a young man beating out grain in a wine press. Why, you might ask, was he beating out grain in a wine press? Because he was cowering in fear from the Midianites afraid of what they might do if they say he had grain to beat out.

It’s in this state of hiding and fear the angel appears to Gideon and greets him, “The Lord is with you might warrior?” Mighty warrior? A guy cowering in a wine press? By the stretch of whose imagination is he a mighty warrior? You wouldn’t know it by looking at him or by what he is doing. His response though, does give us a beginning insight into his character.

I’ve preached on it enough here for you to now know that the usual response when an angel appears to someone is fear, but not Gideon. Maybe God does know something about him we do not! He instantly goes on the offense and asked the angel, “where’s God?’’ Where’s the God of their past and all of the mighty deeds God has done?

Little does he know that God is now calling him to do those mighty deeds for the angel then commissions him to go in this might and deliver Israel at which point Gideon begins to back pedal. He begins to look at where he came from, the weakest clan of Manasseh, and he the weakest member of his family. To which the Lord responds, “I will go with you and you will strike down the Midianites!”

As the biblical story goes on we get to know Gideon a little better as he wants to make sure God is with him when he gives God the fleece test. You may have heard of Gideon’s fleece? Before he goes forward he wants to make sure God is with him so he outright asks God and in a sense, puts God to the test. He puts a fleece out on the threshing floor and tells God in the morning if there is dew on the fleece and the ground is dry, then I’ll know you will deliver Israel by my hand. So he gets up in the morning and that’s exactly what happened, there was dew on the fleece and the ground was dry. BUT, just to make sure he puts the fleece on the floor again and tells God, “OK, if you really want ME to go, tomorrow there will be dew on the ground and the fleece will be dry.” Guess what happened?

So Gideon prepared for his greatest victory and gathered 32,000 men to go against the Midianites, but God told him, that was too many soldiers. “When you rout the Midianites you’ll think you will have done it in your own strength,” so God helps Gideon filter his army to only 300 passionate warriors. God with the army of 300 led by the mighty warrior Gideon, won the day.

What are the battles you are fighting in your life? Are they relational, or financial, or health, or growing older, or addiction, or doubt, or fear, or uncertainty, or this little problem of a leaning tower in Pottstown? I can almost hear God smiling and saying, “Try me! Test me and see what mighty deed I can perform with you if you would only trust me!”

As we head into the final leg of our presidential race in the United States and as our search committee is in the midst of their interview stage for pastoral candidates, Marcia and I thought you might be interested to learn about the characteristics of the Leaders God called according to the biblical text. We are guessing they may not be at all what you expect, hence the title of our new sermon series, *Not the Leader You Expected: A series about the unlikely people God uses*.

God wants to do great things in your life. God wants to do great things in Pottstown at FBC, are we ready to trust God for our next steps? One of the things I find absolutely fascinating is that as the steering committee has been praying about it and doing their homework they’ve been led to put together a tower committee who is in the midst of putting together a “Go Fund Me” page which will tell about the plight of our tower and about the ministry and mission of First Baptist Church. It is the tower that is forcing us to go beyond our four walls and get the word out about our Family by Choice.

I am curious to see what God has next in store for FBC as the word gets out about our church and the ministry and mission we have. Who knows what other doors will open and who God will send our way. God is looking for people passionately ready to trust God to face whatever comes next. Are you ready to be one of them? Amen.