

Judges: R-rated Redemption
“Conquering in Jesus’ Name?”
 Judges 1:1-7; 22-26; 33; and 2: 1-5

Thoughts to Shape and Spark Discussion:

*“The God of the Old Testament is arguably the most unpleasant character in all fiction; jealous and proud of it; a petty, unjust, unforgiving control-freak; a vindictive, bloodthirsty ethnic cleanser; a misogynistic, homophobic, racist, infanticidal, genocidal, filicidal, pestilential, megalomaniacal, sadomasochistic, capriciously malevolent bully.” – Richard Dawkins, *The God Delusion**

“If I profess with the loudest voice and clearest exposition every portion of the truth of God, except precisely that point which the world and the devil are at that moment attacking, then I am not confessing Christ, however boldly I may be professing him. Where the battle rages, there the loyalty of the soldier is proved; and to be steady on all the battlefield besides is mere flight and disgrace if he flinches at that point.” – Martin Luther

“You don’t always have to chop with the sword of truth. You can point with it, too.” – Anne Lamott

“. . . always being prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks for a reason for the hope that is in you; yet do it with gentleness and respect” – 1 Peter 3:15

Themes and Questions to Guide Reflection and Response:

- What from the Scripture passage or the sermon made an impression upon you? Are there lingering questions to be answered or rabbit trails to be followed for you?
- The sermon attempted to give a panorama of how to deal with “issues” in a Christ-honoring way:
 - What are the questions, the barriers, the places of resistance that make the Gospel unhearable and dismissable for our culture? For you?
 - What are the stakes involved with being able to address these questions? How does Luther’s quotation above inform the high stakes?
 - Why is it so pressing to understand the tension of the Principal/Theoretical arguments and the intensely personal nature of the issues?
 - How can we embrace both the message and the manner of Jesus? (cf. Anne Lamott above)
- Read Deuteronomy 7: 1-11.
 - What is at the heart of God’s command to devote the nations of Canaan to destruction?
 - Why is God reminding his covenant people that it is not their virtue nor their righteousness that is the basis for his using them as an instrument of justice?
- What are some of the “dead ends” that seek to relieve the tension and escape the friction altogether? Why don’t they achieve either?
- What are some of the “ways forward” for dealing with the Canaanites? What helped? What did not?
- One of the most basic points of confrontation in wrestling with the driving out of the Canaanites is God’s judgment.
 - If we can see from the Bible’s perspective it is not about race, not about imperialistic expansion, and not about using Israel justifying either of those by asking God’s permission or blessing to break His commandments, we are left to ask why God gets to judge and how he judges?
 - How does the cross give a way of escape from the judgment of God?
 - Why are believers not allowed to take up the sword of judgment in Jesus’ name?
 - How do we entrust ourselves and those around us to the just judgment of God and the tender mercy of God?