

Judges:

“Judges: R-rated Redemption”

Judges 1:1, 2: 11-13; 3:7; 17:6, and 21:25

Thoughts to Shape and Spark Discussion:

“Redemption is meaningless unless there is cause for it in the actual life we live, and for the last few centuries there has been operating in our culture the secular belief that there is no such cause . . . The novelist with Christian concerns will find in modern life distortions which are repugnant to him, and his problem will be to make these appear as distortions to an audience which is used to seeing them as natural; and he may be forced to take ever more violent means to get his vision across to this hostile audience . . . Writers who see by the light of their Christian faith will have, in these times, the sharpest eye for the grotesque, for the perverse, and for the unacceptable.... To the hard of hearing you shout, and for the almost-blind you draw large and startling figures.” – Flannery O’Connor

“If only there were evil people somewhere insidiously committing evil deeds and it were necessary only to separate them from the rest of us and destroy them! But the line dividing good and evil cuts through every human heart. And who is willing to destroy a piece of his own heart?” – Alexander Solzhenitsyn

“The saying is trustworthy and deserving of full acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am the foremost. But I received mercy for this reason, that in me, as the foremost, Jesus Christ might display his perfect patience as an example to those who were to believe in him for eternal life.” – 1 Timothy 1: 15-16

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 book of Judges seems to draw this direct contrast between what is “evil in the sight of the Lord” and what is “right in our own eyes”.
 - What is the effect of hearing that refrain over and over through the book?
 - Does it get lost on you? Does it get boring?
 - How do we digress from acknowledging certain things as “evil in the sight of the Lord” to not even factoring in God’s perspective – “right in our own eyes”?
 - How does O’Connor’s statement about “distortions” becoming “natural” factor in?
- O’Connor speaks of “large and startling figures” and needing to “shout” to get folks to see evil and sin in our midst and in our hearts.
 - Culturally, where do you see evil being seen as “natural” and normal?
 - Personally, where do you sense yourself “hard of hearing” and “almost-blind” to the reality of sin and evil in our world, in our hearts?
 - What have you/we learned to live with?
- The sermon asserted one theme of the book of Judges: “God relentlessly offers his grace to people who do not deserve it nor seek it nor even appreciate it after they have been saved by it.”
 - Do you really believe this? Live like this?
 - How is the relentlessness of God’s grace convincing you that God really is who he promises to be?