

Judges 2:16

“Show Me the Way”

“Show Me The Way” STYX, *Edge of the Century*

“Every night I say a prayer  
In the hopes that there’s a Heaven  
And every day I’m more confused  
As the saints turn into sinners

All the heroes and legends  
I knew as a child have fallen to idols of clay  
And I feel this empty place inside  
So afraid that I’ve lost my faith

Show me the way, show me the way  
Take me tonight, to the river  
And wash my illusions away  
Please show me the way.”

A generation rose up who did not know the Lord or the work which he had done for Israel (Judges 2:10). The people had turned to sinning. Israel rebelled against God’s commands. Israel’s children indulged and reveled in the sins which bound them in the chains of death. Like a young animal caught in a snare they struggled, squirmed and finally called out to God.

**“Then the Lord raised up judges, who saved them out of the power of those who plundered them”** (Judges 2:16).

This past week in our Disciple I Bible study we spend some time talking about the Judges of Israel. What we discovered is going to require some congregation participation this morning. (pause) Let’s start this way. Yes or no church, the judges of Israel were like Judge Judy on

TV? (Pause for response) **No.** The judges of Israel were heroes who stand above others because they are perfect or without sin. (pause) **Nope.** The judges of Israel were religious leaders like pastors and priests. (pause) **No.** The judges of Israel were flawed, charismatic – often military leaders who delivered Israel out of the hand of those who oppressed Israel. The judges were not super heroes like Batman. They were not super heroes of ethics, courage and character like Captain America. The judges were not heroes. They started out as the kinds of leaders Moses’s father-in-law instructed Moses to set over groups of 50’s and 100’s (Ex 18:13-23). However, in the period after the conquest and before the Lord appointed kings for Israel, the judges protected Israel from her enemies.

Things have not changed much today. Things are still pretty bad things going on in a lot of places. Just this last week a state trooper was shot by a guy who was trying to avoiding a speeding ticket. That’s the reason why our flags have been flying at half-staff. We have a raging opioid crisis in America. People are getting robbed, raped, and shot. Families are being ravaged by divorce, addiction and unemployment. There is a growing disconnect between the wealthy, the poor and the working poor. Too many people are doing what is right in their own eyes. Too many Christians are Biblically illiterate. Too many people do not know God. For far too many all they know about God is what they see from Christians, and too many Christians begin by telling people what they are against, what they hate, and what makes them scared. My sisters and brothers, where are this generations judges? Where are the people God is raising up to look our enemies in the eye and say, “You shall not pass!”<sup>1</sup> and this evil shall not continue!

<sup>1</sup> JRR Tolkein, *The Lord of the Rings: The Fellowship of the Ring*

**“For we are not contending against flesh and blood, but against the principalities, against the powers, against the world rulers of this present darkness, against the spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places”**

(Ephesians 6:12).

Brothers and sisters, we must understand the enemies we face today are not as easy to identify as the enemies Israel faced. The Apostle Paul explained the difference in his letter to the Ephesians. We do not need judges who will rise up to fight against people with different clothes, customs, or hair styles. We need judges who will rise up against the spiritual forces of

wickedness. I know this is October and we tend to think of the spiritual forces of wickedness as ghosts, goblins, and vampires, but these are not the evil in our world. The evil in our world takes the form of children in need of good and positive role models – not to mention safe homes with food, water and safe supportive guardians or parents. The evil in our world takes the form of domestic violence against women, and children. Did you know that October is domestic violence awareness month? I cannot wrap my head around how someone could verbally, or physically abuse their spouse or their children, no matter how angry, tired or worn down they become, and yet this evil exists.

Sisters and brothers the world needs judges who will stand and fight against evil in all its forms; racism, addiction, domestic violence, and crime. The children must be shown who God is, and the adults must be reminded of our responsibility to set an example for others to follow. It's not about being judgmental or holier than thou. It's about being who we are in Jesus Christ. **(pause)** Oh wait. **(pause)** Did y'all catch what just happened there? **(pause)** I stopped talking about looking for judges to fight for us. I started talking about who we are in Christ. **(pause)** Church, **(pause)** why did I shift away from looking for judges and start talking about what God is doing in our lives? **(pause)** I made that shift because there are no judges in the New Testament. **(pause & repeat)** The only person whom we could argue was a judge is the Lord, Jesus Christ.

Jesus Christ stood up to the spiritual forces of wickedness all the time. Jesus stood up to demons and cast them out. Jesus stood up to hypocrites, and set them straight. Jesus stood up to the proud, and gave them humility. Jesus lifted up the poor in spirit, raised Lazarus from the grave, and even conquered death. There is just one problem. Jesus Christ died. Jesus Christ is risen. Jesus Christ will come again. **(pause)** But until then Jesus has no hands and feet but ours. **(pause & repeat)** And here's the real kick in the head. Jesus has no bank account but ours.

What Jesus does have is the power of God the Holy Spirit. Holy Spirit is at work on everyone in this room right now. Through the Holy Spirit God is pushing, and urging. When you see children hurt or in pain is your heart broken? When you hear of people burned out of their homes, or talk to someone whose marriage was destroyed by infidelity or addiction does it break your heart? Does it make you angry? **(pause)** Guess what? **(pause)** Sin breaks God's heart too. Evil makes God mad too. **(pause)** Believe it or not God is sadder and angrier about the evil in this world than any person in this room. **(pause)** Why? **(pause)** Because God didn't make us this way. God knows what we could be. God knows what we are made to be. Only now, instead of raising up judges God is working through the Holy Spirit to raise up all of us. What are we gonna do? Are we just gonna sit and stew in our pews; or are we going to stand up with the judges of old, and ask the Holy Spirit to show us the way? Are we willing to get our hands dirty? God isn't asking us to be perfect. God is asking us to be willing to serve.

In the name of Jesus Christ,

Amen.