

## Session 4

March 25, 2018

### OUR PEACE

Judges 6:11-16; 22-24

Both Old Testament prophets Ezekiel and Jeremiah ridiculed the prophets and priests who gave the people false hope by declaring “Peace, peace” ...when there was no peace. Yet how many of us today do the same thing? When someone greets us with “How are you?” we are quick to say “Fine,” even if life is far from fine. In a life Job declared to be “of few days and full of trouble” (Job 14:1), where is peace to be found?

Gideon’s story is one of victory, but it didn’t start out that way. Only after Gideon overcame fear and doubt was God able to show him a glimpse of what peace is all about.

**Peace is not found in fear (vv. 11-13).** Judges 6 begins with the statement that Israel “did what was evil in the sight of the Lord.” God’s response to this was seven years of oppression under the Midianites, a nation of people who, like Israel, began with Abraham. But through the years, they had lost their knowledge of God and ended up in pagan idolatry. Now God used them to bring His judgement against Israel. So harsh was their treatment, that the people of Israel found themselves fleeing to the mountains and hiding in caves. Together with neighboring tribes, the Midianites plundered the fields that Israel plowed and stole the crops that Israel produced. For this reason, we find young Gideon threshing wheat behind the shallow stone walls of a wine vat, in hopes that his meager gatherings would go unnoticed by the oppressing raiders. It is here that the Angel of the Lord appears to him with encouraging news: “The Lord is with you.” It should be noted that Gideon’s response (v. 13) shows no disrespect. Rather it shows defeat. Fear can be crippling. For seven years Gideon and his family looked over their shoulders wondering what would happen next. How can God be with us when we are so afraid that we have to beat out wheat in secret? Peace cannot be found when we live in fear.

**Peace is not found in doubt (vv. 14-16).** The extent of Gideon’s doubt is emphasized by the contrasting language. In verse 12, the Angel of the Lord calls Gideon a “mighty warrior,” and in verse 14, He calls upon Gideon’s “strength” to deliver his people. Yet Gideon does not see himself as God sees him. Like Moses, in his mind he was unqualified. Far from a strong and mighty warrior, he saw himself in the shadow of a “weak” family. And besides, he was the youngest son, who, like David, wasn’t a likely leader. If doubt is crippling, then self-doubt is the worst kind of crippling. How can we find peace when we see ourselves as weak and ineffective?

**Peace is found in God’s Presence (vv. 22-24).** In the interceding verses, Gideon asked for a sign. When he presented a cooked goat, bread, and broth to the Angel, it was consumed in fire. If there was any doubt about who this Angel was, it was quickly dispelled. Now Gideon’s fear is that he would be struck dead by the very One who called him! (v. 22). Only after Gideon realized who was calling him did the pieces fall into place. Why did Gideon now find peace? He had been with the Lord. It was the Lord who was sending him (v. 14), and the Lord who would be with him (v. 16).

The lessons for us are clear. God has a plan for each of us, but our fears and doubts often get in the way. It wasn’t God’s ability that Gideon doubted, but his own. Only when he realized it was the person of the Lord calling him, and the presence of the Lord surrounding him, was he able to move beyond his fear and get busy. And what was the very first thing he did? Worship the One who can replace fear with faith, and doubt with peace.