

“I Am (Fill in the Blank)”

Intro:: about 3 mins

The scripture today comes from Judges 6. To give you a little background for the scripture—Israel had turned away from God again, and soon they were being attacked, raided, ransacked by the Midianite army. This army was brutal, pillaging the cities, destroying and stealing crops. The Israelites cry out for deliverance, and soon God shows up.

Judges 6

“¹¹Then the angel of the Lord came and sat beneath the great tree at Ophrah, which belonged to Joash of the clan of Abiezer. Gideon son of Joash was threshing wheat at the bottom of a winepress to hide the grain from the Midianites. ¹²The angel of the Lord appeared to him and said, ‘Mighty hero, the Lord is with you!’”

This whole setting is weird.

When you thresh wheat you need wind and an open space so the chaff (the unwanted unusable parts) would be taken away by the wind and the kernels would fall.

And yet, here is Gideon in this pit underground, little space and no wind.

Have you ever been scared? I mean really terrified? Do you ever look back and think, “I was a stupid teen?” My friends and I for a time used to go walking through graveyards late at night. We didn't drink, do drugs. One day we just decided it was creepy and we liked it.

::Graveyard story about fear:: about 3 mins

Gideon is hidden away threshing wheat in a coward's position because he is scared. And yet it says...

The angel of God appeared to him and said, **“God is with you, O mighty warrior!”**

Gideon probably looked to make sure no one else was there, because nothing about what he was doing screamed warrior. If anything it would scream coward.

Continuing in this “I Am” series, I felt called to title this “I Am _____”.

I want to talk to you about what God did in this very moment to Gideon and how it relates, specifically, to some of us in the room today. What God did here was call out something in Gideon that he didn't even realize was there. And I believe there are some things God is calling you, saying about you, things you have been longing for or longing to hear. But throughout our life, we have faced many struggles, hurts, lies, that keep us from seeing what God sees. So when, like Gideon, He calls us these things, **His view conflicts with ours**. It is when we understand and overcome these conflicts that we begin to understand, embrace, and awaken our true selves, our purpose.

If I could get across one point, if you only remember one thing today, it is that **God will always see past the lies, the traps, the past, the mistakes, and see who you really are.**

So to understand that let's look at some of these conflicts:

Conflict 1: Our current circumstances conflict with His end result

When God meets with Gideon and calls him a mighty warrior, Gideon is hidden away. The complete opposite of what a warrior would be doing.

Our first big conflict is the circumstances we currently find ourselves in. I mean, think about what God is calling Gideon, and where he is.

Isn't it a bit funny that while Gideon is in a posture of weakness, that is when God decides to show up? When he is looking weak, that is when God calls something out of Gideon greater than he is. And he argues with God... “Why don't You do something?” And God's response is, “I am... I am sending you.” He is equipping and calling Gideon to answer many people's prayers, but Gideon just doesn't see it yet.

Gideon is looking at his current circumstances, and God is saying to those that have been praying—including yourself—for intervention... “I am responding and sending you.”

We often look back at pictures from our past, or those facebook, “1 year ago memories,” and typically we are flooded with mostly positive emotion. Then what happens is we compare it with what we are currently feeling, or where we currently are. And often times it is not the best results. Because a lot of memories we see through the nostalgia lens.

But have you ever started a project and then it goes crazy. You decide to pick up painting, and all of the promise you had in your head, by the end, you’re like... “Wow, that was awful.”

Have you ever felt that spiritually or physically? Where you look back and say, “Wow, I started off so great, this relationship was perfect, this job was amazing, I was working on a great degree, that time with God was so powerful.” And then we compare to now, and we are lost saying, “How did it ever spin so out of control? It was going one way and got completely off track.”

Maybe you don't even recognize the person you are anymore.

Your current circumstances are never too far from God's rescue and intervention. And the best part is God is not limited by those, because He sees us beyond those circumstances.

Because in those current circumstances Gideon is cowering, and yet God is saying, “I am going to use you to answer prayers and free everyone.”

Conflict 2: Our past conflicts with His calling

Judges 6

“¹⁴Then the Lord turned to him and said, ‘Go with the strength you have, and rescue Israel from the Midianites. I am sending you!’ ¹⁵‘But Lord,’ Gideon replied, ‘how can I rescue Israel? My clan is the weakest in the whole tribe of Manasseh, and I am the least in my entire family!’”

Gideon’s first rebuttal is, “How can I do this? My clan is the weakest in the whole tribe.”

Our family past plays a big part in who we are often times. It’s no secret, hurts we suffer from our family and our past can, if not properly dealt with, continue to affect us through our whole life. And often times those past hurts go back generation after generation.

God calls Gideon something he has never heard and his first rebuttal is... “But do You know my family? Do You know my past.”

Often times a huge conflict is we cannot see past our past. We believe the lies of “this is my past and this is what I will be.” So instead of leaning into what God is saying, we believe the lies, the addictions, the strongholds we have seen in our family. We believe this is all we will ever be, it is engrained into us. Some of us are the worst of our parents, and grandparents, because we felt that is all I will ever be. I can't escape that. So we continue in the same cycle, and our kids will continue in the same cycle, and their kids.

To some of you, God is saying, “Today is the day the cycle is broken.” With His help you are the one who decides today: THIS HAS TO STOP.

Jumping back to the scripture:

“¹⁵‘But Lord,’ Gideon replied, ‘how can I rescue Israel? My clan is the weakest in the whole tribe of Manasseh, and I am the least in my entire family!’”

Conflict 3: Our view of ourselves conflicts with the Creator’s masterpiece

Gideon’s second rebuttal is directed at what he knows about himself. “You think I’m a mighty warrior, but I am the smallest and weakest... I am the least.” And if he knew it, you can be sure others knew it as well. I’m sure a lot of people would not let him forget this. If you have a younger sibling who you fought with as much as I did mine, you know that. I would remind my brother in every fight I was faster, and stronger than he was.

And for many of us this is the trap we live in, on a constant basis. The labels. Some we put on ourselves, others are put on us by people throughout our lives. But these labels stick to us, and when God calls us, we can't see past these labels. “I am a liar, deceiver, backstabber, failure, unloveable, unwanted, a cheat, ugly, and on and on.”

Some of us wear these labels with pain and hurt trying to hide and escape them. And, for some of us this pride rises up and says, “If you think this is who I am, I will wear this label with pride.” And, so without shame we lean into these labels we were never meant to wear.

And who would know what we were meant to wear and be? God is our Creator; He designed each and every one of us. Before we were born, He had a plan and purpose for us.

Ephesians 2:10 says: **“For we are God’s masterpiece. He has created us anew in Christ Jesus, so we can do the good things He planned for us long ago.”**

::Image of mona lisa::

We recently got to see the Mona Lisa up close. What is amazing is the hoardes of people, the millions who flock to see this painting. In fact when it came to the States in the 60’s, it traveled on a ship all by itself. It was guarded around the clock. For a small painting.

You can knitpick it all you want, but in the end your view doesn’t matter: it’s a masterpiece... what you say about it, posts you leave online about it, doesn’t change Leonardo da Vinci’s view, his work. He created a masterpiece. Your views don’t matter.

We are God’s masterpieces, and yet we allow the posts, and comments, and labels of others to affect the way we view ourselves. When the Creator Jesus says don’t let those labels become who you are. Instead, we choose to believe the lies of the enemy, others, or our broken view of ourselves instead of the Creator.

Pull out your... “Hello, my name is” card.

The best part is you can put whatever you want there. In the same way I believe today God wants to write a name, a new purpose on yours.

Like us, this is the conflict Gideon faces as God calls him something he has probably never heard.

And after all the rebuttals God's answer is:

“¹⁶ The Lord said to him, ‘I will be with you. And you will destroy the Midianites as if you were fighting against one man.’”

Today, again, it is important that you know: **God sees beyond the lies, traps, past, and labels, and sees the real you. And, like He called Gideon’s true self out, I believe today God is wanting to call the real you out!**

See, some of us have been held hostage by these lies of our circumstances, our past, or our labels. And God is saying, “You are made for so much more than you are settling on being.”

God called Gideon what He knew he was, not what others said he was.

We need to stop worrying so much about what people say about us, being careful to make sure we please everyone, and start caring more about what God says and thinks about us.

On top of that, **God called Gideon something he probably never heard.**

There are things you have been craving to hear, to have called and said about you... and, it sends us out trying to find those things in addictions, in people, in pleasures. We want acceptance, pride, love, joy, fulfillment. And so we settle, and chase after these things that will never complete us.

I spent so much of my life pushing myself, a helper, always doing more than I should because in the end I just wanted to hear that, “I'm proud of you.” Yet God was saying that to me, “I'm proud of you, My son.” But I couldn't hear Him beyond my own conflicts and lies.

The key is embracing what God is calling us... and, the only way for that to happen is to remove the lies of the conflicts.

Today, I believe God is saying, “You know you are not where you should be, and you don't know how to get to where you should be. I want to guide you. Don't let your circumstances rule you.”

Your past doesn't need to define who you are, and today God wants to break that cycle. And, maybe you are saying, “The biggest conflict is me.” Today, God is saying, “Take off all of those false labels and listen to who I say you are, who I have called you to be.”

Because there is the mighty warrior in all of us. There is the blank in front of all we are that God is wanting to call out and reveal to us. **What is He calling out of you? Who is He calling you to be?**