

Series: God is the Hero of this Story: A Study Through Judges
Judges 17-18 – There Was No King in Israel Pt. 1 / Ryan Patty / 7.23.23

Scripture Reading: Exodus 20:1-6 CSB

I want you to think with me of a picture and a mirror, and how the two differ. A picture, we would say, captures a moment in time. My wife often sends me pictures of my kids that I absolutely love. Many of you have favorite pictures of kids or grandkids spread throughout the house. In my office is a picture of my wife and I on our wedding day. The irony is that I asked for three things for our wedding: no photographer, a baby blue tux, and for us to smash wedding cake in each other's faces. Suffice to say I got none of my requests... But I do love that picture.

So much joy can be seen in pictures, but in the same manner so can sadness. A picture can show the face of a loved one that passed away, it can make you think of a time before being widowed, of a time before losing that child. The picture captures a moment in time, life as it was that day. **Now think of the mirror.** The mirror simply reflects back reality. It shows you, you, as you really are. Warts and all. It shows us hair falling out or turning gray, wrinkles being mass-produced over the years, you can't hide from the mirror. It presents things exactly as they are.

We have been in the book of Judges for a few months now and come to our final two messages. This book is hard. It's raw, and shocking, and sin-filled in so many ways. And so this week's message and next week's message really serve to round out the last section of this book, chapters 17-21. In the previous section we saw the rise of individual judges, where the book gets its name, that would deliver God's people. We saw Barak and Debra, Gideon and Jephthah, and Samson to round them out. But in these last few chapters, things get even darker, particularly next week, and there is no more deliverer. There aren't any more judges. Sin will wreak havoc and the people will do what is right in their own eyes.

And so these last chapters are not a picture, but a mirror. Israel is not confronted with what *others* are or were like, they are directly confronted with what *they* are like. The writer of Judges is pulling no punches. Look! He demands

of them! Look at what you are like when you forsake God. Look at yourself in the mirror. So allow me to read our story. I'm going to read all of chapter 17 and parts of 18. Please follow along with me.

Judges 17 (CSB)

1 There was a man from the hill country of Ephraim named Micah. 2 He said to his mother, "The 1,100 pieces of silver taken from you, and that I heard you place a curse on—here's the silver. I took it." Then his mother said, "My son, may you be blessed by the Lord!" 3 He returned the 1,100 pieces of silver to his mother, and his mother said, "I personally consecrate the silver to the Lord for my son's benefit to make a carved image and a silver idol. I will give it back to you." 4 So he returned the silver to his mother, and she took five pounds of silver and gave it to a silversmith. He made it into a carved image and a silver idol, and it was in Micah's house.

5 This man Micah had a shrine, and he made an ephod and household idols, and installed one of his sons to be his priest. 6 In those days there was no king in Israel; everyone did whatever seemed right to him. 7 There was a young man, a Levite from Bethlehem in Judah, who was staying within the clan of Judah. 8 The man left the town of Bethlehem in Judah to stay wherever he could find a place. On his way he came to Micah's home in the hill country of Ephraim. 9 "Where do you come from?" Micah asked him. He answered him, "I am a Levite from Bethlehem in Judah, and I'm going to stay wherever I can find a place."

10 Micah replied, "Stay with me and be my father and priest, and I will give you four ounces of silver a year, along with your clothing and provisions." So the Levite went in 11 and agreed to stay with the man, and the young man became like one of his sons. 12 Micah consecrated the Levite, and the young man became his priest and lived in Micah's house. 13 Then Micah said, "Now I know that the Lord will be good to me, because a Levite has become my priest."

Judges 18:1-6; 18-29 (CSB)

In those days, there was no king in Israel, and the Danite tribe was looking for territory to occupy. Up to that time no territory had been captured by them among the tribes of Israel. 2 So the Danites sent out five brave men from all their clans, from Zorah and Eshtaol, to scout out the land and explore it. They told them, "Go and explore the land."

They came to the hill country of Ephraim as far as the home of Micah and spent the night there. 3 While they were near Micah's home, they recognized the accent of the young Levite. So they went over to him and asked, "Who brought you here? What are you doing in this place? What is keeping you here?"

4 He told them, "This is what Micah has done for me: He has hired me, and I became his priest." 5 Then they said to him, "Please inquire of God for us to determine if we will have a successful journey." 6 The priest told them, "Go in peace. The Lord is watching over the journey you are going on."

So let me summarize these next few verses: the men return to their tribe and tell them that the land is great. It has everything they need. And even better the people inhabiting the land are peaceful, we can easily conquer them. Then they convince them a little more so finally 600 fighting men and their families go. And on the way the men tell them about the Levite at Micah's. Picking back up the story in verse 18.

18 When they entered Micah's house and took the carved image, the ephod, the household idols, and the silver idol, the priest said to them, "What are you doing?" 19 They told him, "Be quiet. Keep your mouth shut. Come with us and be a father and a priest to us. Is it better for you to be a priest for the house of one person or for you to be a priest for a tribe and family in Israel?" 20 So the priest was pleased and took the ephod, household idols, and carved image, and went with the people. 21 They prepared to leave, putting their dependents, livestock, and possessions in front of them.

22 After they were some distance from Micah's house, the men who were in the houses near it were mustered and caught up with the Danites. 23 They called to the Danites, who turned to face them, and said to Micah, "What's the matter with you that you mustered the men?" 24 He said, "You took the gods I had made and the priest, and went away. What do I have left? How can you say to me, 'What's the matter with you?'"

25 The Danites said to him, “Don’t raise your voice against us, or angry men will attack you, and you and your family will lose your lives.” 26 The Danites went on their way, and Micah turned to go back home, because he saw that they were stronger than he was.

27 After they had taken the gods Micah had made and the priest that belonged to him, they went to Laish, to a quiet and unsuspecting people. They killed them with their swords and burned the city. 28 There was no one to rescue them because it was far from Sidon and they had no alliance with anyone. It was in a valley that belonged to Beth-rehob. They rebuilt the city and lived in it. 29 They named the city Dan, after the name of their ancestor Dan, who was born to Israel. The city was formerly named Laish.

Throughout the study of Judges we have talked about how this book is spiraling downward. And In these last two weeks of Judges it will feel like we hit the bottom of the spiral, particularly next week. But I said before, the writer of Judges is holding up a mirror to Israel and allowing them to see what happens when they embrace life without their covenant God. And so we have some things to learn from this. Lest we think the mirror is only held up to Israel, we must see the mirror here being held up to us as well. Scripture confronts all of us in our sin, so throughout this morning I want you to fight the urge to look down on the people in the story, and instead allow God through His Spirit to show us where we in fact are like the people of this story.

So our main point this morning is very simple and straightforward: We need a righteous King. Israel needed one, and I want to explain in a bit what that means, and we need one. That’s the truth that confronts us from what is happening. Because without one, **false religion arises**. We create our own gods and we create ways in which we hope to get God to do our bidding.

So with the backdrop of needing a righteous king, I want us to see how false religion arises in the king’s absence. False religion (from clearly a different religion to simply false thoughts about God) was prevalent then and its prevalent now. 5 characteristics of a false religion from our section, and the first is this:

1. Rejection of God's Word

Undergirding the entirety of the apostasy prevalent throughout the book of Judges is what happens when a people reject their covenant God. Specifically the God who has revealed himself in both word and deed. Yet, here it is the rejection of His Word that we see. Let me just list some of the clear violations of God's commands in this short chapter.

- You have the 8th commandment being broken as a son steals from his mother
- You have the 5th commandment being broken as a son fails to honor his mother
- You have the 1st and 2nd commandments being broken as an idol is fashioned from the silver
- You have Deuteronomy 27:15 being broken as it says whoever sets up an idol is cursed, yet here the idol is seen as a form of blessing.
- And then he undermines God's designation of the Levites as priests and makes his own son his "priest."

So in the first 5 verses, there is a complete rejection of the Word of God, even though they try to appeal to the blessing of Yahweh as we will see.

The narrator of Judges wants us to see this before the huge statement of verse 6. They rejected God and His Word. They took what they like and put away the rest. They changed what they wanted. They fashioned their own gods in their own minds, and then fashioned idols that would represent those gods they wanted to worship.

And then in verse 6, we read: 6 In those days there was no king in Israel; everyone did whatever seemed right to him. Now throughout the book of Judges we have had parts of this statement, either the first half or the last half, but here at the beginning of chapter 17, and then at the very end of the book in chapter 21, are the only full two statements of this phrase. And if you are a student of the Scriptures, you might be thinking, why is the king so important? Weren't there bad kings in Israel? Yes, definitely. Wicked ones.

But the King had a role in leading and guiding the people. He had a role alongside the Levitical priests in pointing people to the Word of God. In light of Deuteronomy 17, where we see the stipulations and responsibilities for a king

given, he was to read from the copy of the law, all the days of his life so that his reign would be blessed by God. He was to be like the man of Psalm 1 who meditates on God's Word day and night.

His repeated refrain of there was no king in Israel isn't **servicing to highlight having a king just for the sake of having a king, but having a King who is after God's own heart, who leads the people as God would have them, who teaches them righteous living and shows them the way of Godliness.** Who doesn't allow them to keep living in their sin. So THAT, is the image that the writer of Judges is reflecting on. One who would be like the coming Davidic king. One who would lead the people of God with truth, and righteousness and justice.

So that refrain is heavy, because like the mirror being held up, the people look at themselves and see it. They have rejected God's Word, they don't know God's Word, violating God's commands is just the air they breathe. And the writer is saying look at what that gives you. Look at what you've sown and now are reaping.

Now friends, apart from the grace of God we are the same. In our sin, we all reject God's Word. We reject what we know to be true. We naturally don't want to do the things that God commands. That is why Jesus is so adamant to Nicodemus in John 3 that he must be born again, must be born supernaturally. We need this heart of stone removed and replaced by a heart of flesh. We need to be saved. And what these last chapters of Judges show us is that, in part, we need to be saved from ourselves. Our sinful selves. A rejection of God's Word is what we see in any form of false religion. Which brings us to our second characteristic:

2. Pragmatism

First we have the rejection God's Word. And our second is that a false religion is shaped by pragmatism. What is pragmatism? Pragmatism in a simple description is the thought that if it works its right. Or if it works, then its good. The ends justify the means. The results confirm the methods. It's in many ways results based.

In our story we see pragmatism on full display. It's undergirding their behavior. Micah is a well off man. It's clear from the compound he has and the amount of silver he is able to easily steal. He hears that his mother has cursed the thief, so alright then, I'll go ahead and return it. Mommy even blesses him! Surely his stealing wasn't that bad.

Then he wants access to God or various gods, alright I'll go ahead and make idols and have an idol room. And lo and behold look who comes to my door! A levite! God is surely blessing me.

And the Levite goes and wanders searching for a place to reside. And lo and behold here is a well-off man willing to pay me ten shekels (that's four ounces of silver) and a suit of clothes and provide me with my food. Sure he has some household idols, but, hey, I'm taken care of. And the Danites are the same, since the Ammorites were still in their land and they couldn't drive them out like God had commanded, or even better turn to God and watch how he would drive them out, then lo and behold we must go and attack this peaceful town and take it for ourselves. We conquered them. It works.

Pragmatism has no thought for what God nor His Word has said. It simply says, I feel good, this works, I feel blessed so God is blessing me. Success is measured by the eyes. Results are what matter! But the pragmatist would do well to look at the examples held up in Scripture. Of Isaiah who was called to preach to a people that would not listen (the results were bad, they didn't listen). Or Jeremiah, the weeping prophet, who prophesied to a Judah that they would be defeated by the Babylonians and taken into exile. He was not popular with Judah. The crowds did not like him. Or even our Lord Jesus, who always taught that what appears to the eye, external holiness, is not what matters, but rather the heart. Jesus' message was so popular with the crowds that they chanted they would rather have Barabbas than him.

No, pragmatism (results driven means) isn't championed in the Bible. But faithfulness is, whether it brings crowds or not.

Do you see the connection to what has happened in the church today? From worship that is strictly driven by emotion to sermons that are little more than self-help Ted-talks, pragmatism has infected the American church. The driving question of so many churches is "how can we get more butts in the seats? How can worship feel more real? How can we entertain the kids? What's the one program we are missing that will just take our church to the next level?" And so they gear everything around those goals and those outcomes. The pursuit is for those things, rather than, How is God glorified? What is happening when his saints assemble? How can fathers and mothers disciple

their kids faithfully? How should God be worshiped? What does it mean to follow him with others? What is the church? How is it shaped? How is it led? How can my life be used for the glory of God. Pragmatism ultimately supplants God with what makes us happy and feels good.

And notice even Micah's statement in verse 13 - 13 Then Micah said, "Now I know that the Lord will be good to me, because a Levite has become my priest." Let's ignore the idols, ignore the buying of a priest for your own gain, ignore you somehow trying to ordain him rather than his ordination coming from God, now *I KNOW* that the Lord will be good to me.

So the common thinking today is if it works, then it is blessed by God! But at the sake of divorcing worship of God from the revelation of God in His Word, pragmatism misses the mark entirely. Micah and the Levite and the Danites were all coming to God in a pragmatic way. From fashioning an idol that might help them, to hiring a priest to get God on their side, **they are interpreting events in their own way, as a blessing from God, rather than through the lens of God's Word and what he has commanded.**

These people have set agendas for themselves which are achieved and they see it as a blessing from God! Not realizing it is showing their sinfulness all the more. It is true then and it is true now, that God does not stifle every corrupt thought and scheme of the human heart. We must interpret these things through His Word, by the Spirit, and in the wisdom of community.

And so how do we see this in our own lives? Pragmatism creeps in when things are going well. We turn a blind-eye to the little areas of sin. We aren't in the midst of discipline or suffering so it's easier to just think everything is fine.

Let me ask you this question: Is God the means, or the end for you? The means or the end? Is he the means of you getting things, feeling that comfort, worshiping him for what he provides (that's the means), or is he the end goal of your life? For the Levite the means was some food in his belly, a nice little stipend, and some clothes. What are you tempted to use God for in your own life?

Or is God the end goal? Knowing God, fellowshiping with Him, bringing glory to him in all things. First question in the Westminster catechism: What is the chief end of man? What is the goal of every single life in here? To glorify God and enjoy him forever. May the glory of God be the end of all of our lives. Pragmatism says the opposite. It doesn't matter how God reveals himself, go based on what you feel and what looks like is working.

May we heed the warning of pragmatism here.

3. Syncretism

While we are continuing with the \$5 dollar words, let me explain syncretism. While pragmatism says the results justify the means, syncretism is a blending of religions. No King to teach righteousness, therefore the covenant people of God start to mix their faith in Yahweh with other faiths.

Syncretism, in allowing other religious thoughts and practices in the faith, is a slap in the face of God. It says that what God has revealed and what he has commanded are either not enough or are wrong. He is not sufficient, he is not all powerful. We must have other things in our lives that guide us as well. We get bored with God, we want to add in other items of worship.

Now sure we don't do this explicitly or purposefully, **But syncretism is slippery, it slides in when we least expect it.** We try to manipulate God in various ways. Or we try to think specific actions are what save us. From the lie that all roads lead to heaven, to the lie that doing more good works than bad things will save you, from the lie that walking down the aisle during the altar call is the guarantee of your salvation, all of these things seek to add to what Christianity is.

Syncretism in the church today is tricky. It comes in at times under the veil of sincere Christianity. They blend in emotionalism or pietism, they blend in something other than faith in the finished work of Christ. Rather than Micah having faith in the promises of God and seeking to follow God faithfully, he had faith in his idols and the fact that he had a priest. False religion today is just the same. Faith in the finished work of Christ is not enough. It's not simply to the cross I cling, it's simply to the cross and something else. It's Jesus plus something as the answer.

You see we are worshipful people. Augustine famously wrote, “our hearts are restless until they find their rest in you.” So being created as worshipful people, when our hearts are not resting in Christ, our appetites take His place. We seek to be ruled by our wants or our desires, and allow other thoughts and practices into the faith. We become syncretistic, hoping to find guidance, help, deliverance in something other than God, just as Micah did with his idols. We create our own gods and place our faith in them. Notice even that little statement that Micah makes when he is chasing after the Levite and the Danites after they robbed him. **Why did you take the gods I made?** (well at least he knows the truths about his so-called gods) What god of worship can be made? Syncretism blinds us to the foolishness of sin.

False religion, a false Christianity today, seeks to add to what God has said is sufficient. It’s the lie of satan in the garden still echoing out today, “surely God didn’t say...” Surely sexual ethics today have to be understood differently. Surely he did not mean that you truly cannot do anything to save yourself. Surely Christ did not mean that it is truly finished when he said *it is finished*. Surely you can’t be saved by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone. Surely, surely, surely.

Beware the slipperiness of syncretism, the lie of satan, that something else must be added to what God has said.

4. Faithless Priests

Now I’m using priest here as the Levite was serving as a priest, but understand it to be a pastor or leader today who is actually a wolf in sheep's clothing. Notice once more some of these interactions with the Levite.

9 “Where do you come from?” Micah asked him. He answered him, “I am a Levite from Bethlehem in Judah, and I’m going to stay wherever I can find a place.” 10 Micah replied, “Stay with me and be my father and priest, and I will give you four ounces of silver a year, along with your clothing and provisions.” So the Levite went in 11 and agreed to stay with the man, and the young man became like one of his sons. 12 Micah consecrated the Levite, and the young man became his priest and lived in Micah’s house. 13 Then Micah said, “Now I know that the Lord will be good to me, because a Levite has become my priest.”

Supposing to be a servant of God, this man is a servant of himself.. The Levites were given the responsibility of spiritual leadership of the nation. They were to point God's people to righteousness as well. But he forsakes his responsibility. One would hope that in a nation gone astray, chasing and whoring after idols, that at least the priests would remain faithful. But alas, we have the priest facilitating the worship of an idol.

- This would be like me getting up here and telling you that praising Allah, or praying to some Hindu god, or listening to the teachings of Joseph Smith are okay. "Let me as one of your pastors help you in that endeavor!" Maybe now we can begin to imagine the horror of a priest forsaking the covenant God to facilitate worship of a lifeless idol. God forbid I or any other pastor here start to encourage you in your pursuit of false gods and false prophets.

But rather than call Micah to repentance, here, this priest, serves himself. So he leaves and winds up at Micah's house.

And when he gets there, he should confront everything wrong Micah is doing. He should tell him the commands of God he is breaking, he should show him what repentance looks like. He should be about the business of God! Yet, he is about the business of himself. The business of his stomach and his bank account. He is a sellout to the ministry. Really what we see here is an OT version of the prosperity Gospel. Micah pays for his priest, he pays for his access to God. And both sides are at fault. Micah thought he could buy God, and the priest thought he could sell him.

So practically, this is an issue in churches today, from both sides. From the church and from the pastor. I have friends in ministry who have been told, "you know who pays your salary." (the idea of, get in line, we don't like what you are saying or doing) Or other acquaintances where its been said "well pastor if you do that then people are going to leave and it's going to affect the church budget or your salary." (As if a pastor's faithfulness to God and His Word should ever be swayed by money). In those moments the church is behaving like Micah, trying to buy God. Praise God that that doesn't happen here. But let me speak to the otherside.

My denominational background is one in which many try to climb the ladder of success in the church. You go from one church to another, slightly changing positions each time, until you work your way to the biggest church and the highest position and therefore the bigger paycheck. May this sell-out of a Levite be a warning to all in ministry and

who aspire to it: Financial prosperity and comfort is never the goal of ministry. God calls one to ministry and a church affirms it, and praise God for churches, like CCC, who seek to honor those who labor over the Word. That's a sign of health. But this priest in our story sought out comfort, sought out the good paycheck, apart from God. There is a difference in seeking to provide well for your family and seeking to live high on the hog, and clearly he is confused.

How do I know this? Look at how he acts when the Danites come to town.

18 When they entered Micah's house and took the carved image, the ephod, the household idols, and the silver idol, the priest said to them, "What are you doing?" 19 They told him, "Be quiet. Keep your mouth shut. Come with us and be a father and a priest to us. Is it better for you to be a priest for the house of one person or for you to be a priest for a tribe and family in Israel?" 20 So the priest was pleased and took the ephod, household idols, and carved image, and went with the people.

So he was pleased. He has a bigger and better opportunity. From priest to a family compound to priest to a whole tribe! *God's blessings just never end!* Presented with a greater opportunity, he was pleased to forsake the man, who even in sin, had cared for him and took him in as a son.

Too often, churches and pastors can pride themselves on their size, looking down at smaller faithful churches who are doing the Lord's work. Is it better to be a pastor of the smaller church, or the megachurch? That's what the Danites were getting at with the Levite, and that's the sad state of affairs that our churches are judged off today. Pragmatism enters in. They are big! Clearly what they are doing must be working.

CCC, God has given us growth, and we praise Him for that. But God forbid we lose sight of what marks us as a faithful and healthy church. Fidelity to the Gospel once for all delivered to the saints, a love of God and a love of neighbor, a desire to grow in the grace of and knowledge of Jesus Christ. **May we continue to love and serve alongside our brothers and sisters from other Gospel-preaching congregations, never judging by the size, but judging by the content of their message and the fruit of their witness.**

But apart from ministry applications, the vast majority of you work outside the church. How are you handling that inner desire, **that inner requirement for greater recognition**, for that promotion, for moving onto bigger and better things? Desire for a promotion isn't in and of itself sinful, but question your heart, and your motivations.

Seek to confess the moments of sinful covetousness, and seek to guard against the allure of the next position and the bigger paycheck. Maybe God is showing you grace in allowing you to be passed over for that promotion? Maybe he's protecting you? Or Maybe that job with the pay bump is for you? Or maybe the sacrifices of time away from your family and your church family are not worth it at all. Learn from this unfaithful priest who was willing to sacrifice everything for comfort and a better position. Last characteristic:

5. From the One to the Many

In the absence of a righteous king, false religion arises. That was true then, and it is true now. And in these characteristics of a false religion, we see how it spreads as well. Often from smaller numbers to greater, or here in our story, from the one to the many.

So the Levite is "captured" by the Danites, and then notice this at the end of chapter 18.

30 The Danites set up the carved image for themselves. Jonathan son of Gershom, son of Moses, and his sons were priests for the Danite tribe until the time of the exile from the land. 31 So they set up for themselves Micah's carved image that he had made, and it was there as long as the house of God was in Shiloh.

Here is what the writer of Judges has been holding out on us. Who is this Levite? Well, Israel. Remember your faithful leader, Moses? The one God used to deliver you from the bondage of slavery? The friend of God who was able to have the Lord's presence pass before him. You have forgotten your God so much that look at what his grandson (or some understand it to be possibly a further off grandson) look at what he has done. Look at what you have allowed. Look in the mirror Israel! What would Moses say to you? What would God say to you?! The shock was meant to direct Israel back to their God. The covenant keeping God who seeks to call them back to himself, but to whom Israel wants no committed relationship with.

But our last point this morning is “from the one to the many.” Look with me what happens when this Levite goes with the tribe of Dan. The idolatry, the spiritual prostitution spreads to the many. Depending on which exile this is talking about, this idolatry, started by the captured Levite, infected the tribe of Dan for hundreds of years. Day after day, year after year of idol worship taking place by one of the tribes of Israel. Hundreds of years these idols are set up for this tribe.

False religion does not like to stay small. Like a cancer, it wants to spread, to infect, to lead people astray. This is why Paul is so adamant in Ephesians 6 about the importance of our spiritual armor – because we are engaged in spiritual warfare day after day! Apart from the grace of God, we would constantly be led astray. And so that temptation is there, both in the church and outside the church, to add or take away something from the Gospel, something from God’s Word. Unless we are on guard, it so easily creeps in, spreading from the one to the many.

Application

And so in closing, in this passage, we like Israel are confronted with a mirror. Confronted with how we in our sin want to rule ourselves. For the unbeliever here this morning, apart from the reign of Jesus Christ in your life as the righteous King you are the same as Israel here, living in sin, syncretistic in your beliefs, and pragmatic about what works in life. Whatever God you throw your prayer up to that might listen is fine with you. And if it’s not a god you believe in then it’s just yourself or other humans. **Atheists are still worshippers, just of humans.** They are humanists. Apart from God, You are living like Israel here, just doing whatever is right in your own eyes.

But my friend, the loving thing to tell you this morning is that that is wrong. Infinitely wrong. That is not how God intended you to live, and so his love and his wrath are revealed to us through His Word. His love in that he sent His Son Jesus to die for all those who would trust in Him. That he took our punishment and our place willingly, so that we might be forgiven and have eternal life. That call for you to trust in him is held out to you this morning (believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and you will be saved).

But his wrath is evident as well. He will not let sin go unpunished, he will not abide the worship of another, and eternal hell is eternally real. You need a righteous king, and that King is Jesus Christ. May God through His Spirit open your eyes to see and your heart to believe this morning.

And to my brothers and sisters in Christ, notice the signs of both personal and corporate embracing of a false religion. Recognize how just a small rejection of God's Word in one area leads so easily to pragmatism and syncretism in a whole host of other areas. By God's Spirit, recognize as well where you are prone to succumbing to these false thoughts in your own life. The author of Judges is telling the people, you need a righteous king! Praise God that we know this king!

So this story in God's providence, is meant to hold up a mirror to the reader. This is a story of an unfaithful priest and a people who had no king. It's highlighting the promise that began in Genesis and is picked up throughout the Scriptures: that Israel needs a faithful priest and a righteous king. They need the priest-king to lead them, and praise God we by faith are united to that faithful priest-King, Jesus Christ, our messiah. So while the mirror is held up for us to see how we truly are in our sin, it does not stay there. It is taken away as we behold the cross, and as we look to him we see our forgiveness, our savior, our priest, and our righteous king. By faith we know him and love him. Let us pray.