

PARABLE OF THE TREES

JUDGES 9:8-15

Text:

Introduction:

Here is the first parable in the Bible. This passage shows us 3 steps in the decline of a nation.

1. THE APOSTASY OF AN UNTHANKFUL PEOPLE (SEE JUDGES 8:33-34)

God had given Gideon a great victory w/ just 300 men, trumpets and torches and clay pitchers. You'd think Israel would be so grateful that they would never again turn against God.

Judges 8:33-34

³³ And it came to pass, as soon as Gideon was dead, that the children of Israel turned again, and went a whoring after Baalim, and made Baalberith their god. ³⁴ And the children of Israel remembered not the LORD their God, who had delivered them out of the hands of all their enemies on every side:

The latter was a god of fertility. They were literally worshipping sexual things.

They remembered not the Lord – what a sad verse.

We in America have enjoyed God given victory in the Revolutionary War, as well as in WWII. There's so much that almost went wrong. You don't know how close we came to speaking German, or being reclaimed by England.

And how do we thank God?

We have removed His influence out of all virtually all public forums.

Illustration:

5 years after establishing the Massachusetts Bay Colony in 1647 the Puritans started the first public school system in America.

They had 3 requirements:

- One qualified teacher for every 50 households
- One school in every town of more than 100 families
- The Bible must be used as the center of the curriculum

88 of the first 100 colleges organized in America were founded in order to promote the gospel of Jesus Christ. And all but 1 prior to the Revolutionary War was

established by the church. Places like Harvard, Yale, Princeton, and many others were founded primarily to train ministers and to evangelize the eastern seaboard.

The first building ever erected on the campus of the University of Pennsylvania was put there to accommodate the crowds coming to hear the preaching of Evangelist George Whitfield. His statue stands outside of it today.

We have a Godly Christian heritage and I could go on and on with story after story, but the main point is that we see that we have reacted just like Israel did...God has given us victory and been on our side but we turn on Him. We are blatantly immoral and apostate.

No wonder the apostasy permeates our government...because it permeates virtually every mainline denomination today!

Illustration:

The Re-imagining God conference of 1993

In Minneapolis-St. Paul 2,200 people from 49 states, representing most mainline denominations got together. 1/3rd of the attendees were clergy.

Here's how Christianity Today reported it:

"The central task of conference participants was to re imagine God. There was little room for the triune God of Christianity. One pastor drew whoops and applause when she noted that 'we have done nothing in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.' Another scoffed at the idea of Christ's atonement saying, 'I don't think we need folks hanging on crosses and blood dripping and weird stuff like that.' 'We just need to listen to the god within us.'"

The deity of the conference was 'Sophia'. She is the suppressed part of the Biblical tradition and the female face of the human psyche. They prayed to her, naming her as our maker, creator god, mother, and guide. They talked about how Sophia is god in all of us, deep in our hearts.

The Christianity Today article then said, "Whether they realized it or not, the conference participants were worshiping themselves."

These people may have been on the fringe of their denominations, but it points out very clearly the major doctrinal apostasy going on in America today which never would have been tolerated in early Christian America.

Today we have gone from Theology to Me-ology, man centered religion.

The goal of modern religion is to feel good about yourself. We've moved from convictions to opinions.

It was once said, "America is great because America is Godly...and when America ceases to be Godly, she will cease to be great!"

To whom much is given, much is required. No nation has been given a Godly start like America, and so God holds us to a higher standard.

When will we wake up? The liberal left is eating away at our Christian heritage one bite at a time, while we just keep our head down at the table, not doing anything to stop it.

We've been brainwashed into thinking there really is a separation of church and state. And we allow them to silence us and push us into a corner.

Quote:

The late Jack Kemp said, "When gradeschoolers are encouraged to learn and read about condoms but forbidden to read the 10 Commandments on the wall something is vitally wrong with education in America. This is a double standard that undermines all standards. Our children need to learn less about the mechanics of sex and more about the meaning of character. When we accept the disintegration of

religious freedom we compromise the means of our deliverance. Today while two or three are gathered together in His name there are also is the ACLU in their midst. We believe in a free church and a free state. But that means freedom of religion, not freedom from religion. We as a nation were conceived in faith, founded in faith, and prospered in faith."

There are 4 effects of apostasy on American culture:

- Has normalized that which is abnormal
- Has desensitized us to that which should shock us

Jeremiah 6:15

¹⁵ Were they ashamed when they had committed abomination? nay, they were not at all ashamed, neither could they blush: therefore they shall fall among them that fall: at the time *that* I visit them they shall be cast down, saith the LORD.

Jeremiah 8:12

¹² Were they ashamed when they had committed abomination? nay, they were not at all ashamed, neither could they blush: therefore shall they fall among them that fall: in the time of their visitation they shall be cast down, saith the LORD.

We've forgotten how to blush. Nothing embarrasses us anymore. Show me humor that isn't filthy. Show me advertising that you can show your kids.

- Has legitimized that would should be illegitimate

Homosexuality has gone from being a sin to being a sickness to being socially accepted.

- Has stigmatized anything good and Godly

Historically, God has given America victory, but we turn our backs on Him.

Notice not only the Apostasy of an Unthankful People but also:

2. THE ARROGANCE OF AN UNGODLY LEADER (JUDGES 9:1-4)

Judges 9:1-4

¹ And Abimelech the son of Jerubbaal went to Shechem unto his mother's brethren, and communed with them, and with all the family of the house of his mother's father, saying, ² Speak, I pray you, in the ears of all the men of Shechem, Whether *is* better for you, either that all the sons of Jerubbaal, *which are* threescore and ten persons, reign over you, or that one reign over you? remember also that I *am* your bone and your flesh. ³ And his mother's brethren spake of him in the ears of all the men of Shechem all these words: and their hearts inclined to follow Abimelech; for they said, He *is* our brother. ⁴ And they gave him threescore and ten *pieces* of silver out of the house of Baalberith, wherewith Abimelech hired vain and light persons, which followed him.

Chapter 9:1-4 tells us about Abimelech. To sum it up, he says, "Should we have many leaders or just one?" He is nominating himself, knowing they will go along

with it. He takes power from the people and places it all on himself. Sound familiar?

A. He Bought His Brethern (vs. 4)

Judges 9:4

⁴ And they gave him threescore and ten *pieces* of silver out of the house of Baalberith, wherewith Abimelech hired vain and light persons, which followed him.

B. He Built Upon Blood (vs. 5)

Judges 9:5

⁵ And he went unto his father's house at Ophrah, and slew his brethren the sons of Jerubbaal, *being* threescore and ten persons, upon one stone: notwithstanding yet Jotham the youngest son of Jerubbaal was left; for he hid himself.

Today it is the blood of innocent babies. America used to be built on blood of heroes.

If the Vietnam Memorial, which is 500 ft. long, had on it the names of our innocent blood, (aborted babies) it would stretch for 60 miles!

Without stuttering or stammering I say again that the moment you hear a politician state that he stands for a woman's right to choose you ought to automatically cross them off your list! It is the central issue of our day...and the one I expect America to be judged harshly for.

C. He Basked in Blasphemy (vs. 6)

Judges 9:6

⁶ And all the men of Shechem gathered together, and all the house of Millo, and went, and made Abimelech king, by the plain of the pillar that *was* in Shechem.

That pillar was the place where God made His covenant with Abraham...a holy place! Abimelech is trying to have it both ways, and has his inauguration at a holy site, making a farce of the God he rejected in practice.

I'm tired of seeing our leaders who stand for such moral debauchery walking out of their photo op churches holding their Bibles?

They say they are Christians but their life says otherwise.

Not only do we see the Apostasy of an Unthankful People and the Arrogance of an Ungodly Leader but also:

3. THE APATHY OF AN UNCOMMITTED PEOPLE (JUDGES 9:8-15)

Judges 9:8-15

⁸ The trees went forth *on a time* to anoint a king over them; and they said unto the olive tree, Reign thou over us. ⁹ But the olive tree said unto them, Should I leave my fatness, wherewith by me they honour God and man, and go to be promoted over the trees?

¹⁰ And the trees said to the fig tree, Come thou, *and* reign over us.

¹¹ But the fig tree said unto them, Should I forsake my sweetness, and my good fruit, and go to be promoted over the trees? ¹² Then said the trees unto the vine, Come thou, *and* reign over us. ¹³ And the vine said unto them, Should I leave my wine, which cheereth God and man, and go to be promoted over the trees? ¹⁴ Then said all the trees unto the bramble, Come thou, *and* reign over us. ¹⁵ And the bramble said unto the trees, If in truth ye anoint me king over you, *then* come *and* put your trust in my shadow: and if not, let fire come out of the bramble, and devour the cedars of Lebanon.

Here's the parable of the trees in a nutshell: Each of the trees said "No, I don't want to lead, let someone else." So the people turned to the bramble bush for leadership and the bush agreed, and said, "You can rest under my shade."

The irony is; it has no shade!

So when all the other trees forsook the call of duty, the people settled for what they got.

Close:

Quote:

Edmund Burke once said, "All that is necessary for the triumph of evil is for good men to do nothing."

The theme of Judges is that God would rather forgive than judge. For that to happen Christians will need to rise up from their apathy.