Message for THE LORD’S DAY MORNING, October 27, 2013
Christian Hope Church of Christ, Plymouth, North Carolina
by Reggie A. Braziel, Minister

The Battle Belongs to The Lord!
Judges 7:1-22 (NKJV)

Our scripture text this morning is found in the Book of Judges, chapter seven. And for now let’s read verses 1-8.

Judges 7:1-8 (New King James Version)

1Then Jerubbaal (that is, Gideon) and all the people who were with him rose early and encamped beside the well of Harod, so that the camp of the Midianites was on the north side of them by the hill of Moreh in the valley.

2 And the Lord said to Gideon, “The people who are with you are too many for Me to give the Midianites into their hands, lest Israel claim glory for itself against Me, saying, ‘My own hand has saved me.’

3 Now therefore, proclaim in the hearing of the people, saying, ‘Whoever is fearful and afraid, let him turn and depart at once from Mount Gilead.’” And twenty-two thousand of the people returned, and ten thousand remained.

4 But the Lord said to Gideon, “The people are still too many; bring them down to the water, and I will test them for you there. Then it will be, that of whom I say to you, ‘This one shall go with you,’ the same shall go with you; and of whomever I say to you, ‘This one shall not go with you,’ the same shall not go.”

5 So he brought the people down to the water. And the Lord said to Gideon, “Everyone who laps from the water with his tongue, as a dog laps, you shall set apart by himself; likewise everyone who gets down on his knees to drink.”

6 And the number of those who lapped, putting their hand to their mouth, was three hundred men; but all the rest of the people got down on their knees to drink water.

7 Then the Lord said to Gideon, “By the three hundred men who lapped I will save you, and deliver the Midianites into your hand. Let all the other people go, every man to his place.”

8 So the people took provisions and their trumpets in their hands. And he sent away all the rest of Israel, every man to his tent, and retained those three hundred men. Now the camp of Midian was below him in the valley.

PRAYER
**INTRODUCTION**

**GOD'S WAYS ARE NOT OUR WAYS!** We see this wonderful truth illustrated time and again throughout the Bible.

*God commanded Noah to build an ark out in the middle of a desert.

*God commanded Moses to lead the Israelites through the Red Sea rather than going around it.

*God sent a teenage boy with a slingshot to take down a giant.

*God sent Samson to take down 1,000 Philistines, armed with nothing but the jaw bone of a donkey.

*God commanded Elijah to have the servants soak the wood on the altar before He sent down fire from heaven and consumed it.

In our scripture text this morning we read the account of another time God demonstrated that His ways are not our ways.

The period of the judges in the Old Testament has been called “Israel's Dark Ages.” After the death of Joshua, the Israelites turned away from God and began to worship Baal. During this time of rebellion, the Israelites were attacked by a number of enemies, and because they were in a state of rebellion, GOD ALLOWED ISRAEL TO BE DEFEATED BY HER ENEMIES. (Do you think there's a WARNING SIGN there for America?)

One of their arch enemies during that period of time was the Midianites. We learn in Judges 6:3-6 that every year about the time the Israelite farmers were about to harvest their crops, the Midianites would attack destroying virtually all of their harvest. This went on for seven years in a row, leaving the Israelites impoverished.

But God in His mercy always leaves the door open for REPENTANCE!

After seven years of suffering at the hands of the Midianites, GOD raised up a JUDGE, a LEADER named GIDEON. Gideon was very reluctant to accept God’s call at first, saying, “O my LORD, how can I save Israel? Indeed my clan is the weakest in Manasseh, and I am the least in my father’s house.” (6:15)
God had GIDEON right where He wanted him. He didn't want GIDEON to trust in himself for victory, He wanted Gideon to trust in HIM.

6:16 The LORD said to him, “Surely I will be with you, and you shall defeat the Midianites as one man.”

Well let's take a closer look at how God brought about this wonderful victory.

First of all I would have you to notice...........

I. THE CURIOUS COMMAND (vs. 1-8)

1. As chapter seven opens it is time for the harvest. And sure enough, the Midianite troops have gathered just as they had the previous seven years to plunder and destroy the Israelites crops.

2. But this time is different. This time, the Israelites are prepared to put up a fight and stop the Midianites. Gideon had sent word throughout the land for every able bodied man to join with him to form an army.

Thirty two thousand Israelite men responded to the call. Now that sounds like a lot of soldiers. But we learn in verse 12 that the Midianite Army, along with their allies, were as numerous as locust, and their camels were without number, as the sand by the seashore.

We learn later in Judges 8:10 that this army consisted of 135,000 soldiers.

3. Now all the sudden Gideon's army of 32,000 doesn't look so big does it? In fact, when you do the math, you see the Midianite army outnumbered Gideon's army FOUR to ONE.

4. I'm sure Gideon didn't like those odds any better than you or I would have, but he was prepared to go into battle with what he had. So imagine what must have been going through Gideon's mind when GOD told him he had “too many soldiers.” (Read Verses 2, 3
v.2 And the LORD said to Gideon, “The people who are with you are too many for Me to give the Midianites into their hands, lest Israel claim glory for itself against Me, saying, ‘My own hand has saved me.’

v.3 Now therefore, proclaim in the hearing of the people, saying, “Whoever is fearful and afraid, let him turn and depart at once from Mount Gilead.” And twenty-two thousand of the people returned, and ten thousand remained.

5. Imagine this scene: Gideon stands before his troops. He clears his throat, and says, “Fellas, there’s 135,000 of them and 32,000 of us; we are outnumbered four to one. Now if any of you are afraid of those odds, you can go home.”

Before Gideon can say another word, he sees 22,000 men clad in sandals kicking up a cloud of dust as they scurry off to head home!

6. Gideon’s army has now shrunk by 2/3, from 32,000 to 10,000. Just like that, the Israelite army has gone from being outnumbered FOUR to ONE, to being outnumbered THIRTEEN to ONE.

7. But GOD wasn’t done leveling the playing field. In VERSES 4-7 God has Gideon put his army through a test. He commands Gideon to take his 10,000 troops down to the stream to get a drink of water.

He tells Gideon to watch closely how each man gets a drink. Those who bend down on their hands and knees and lap the water like a dog, send those men home.

Those who kneel down and cup the water to their mouth with their hands, keep those men. They will be your army..........better yet, THEY WOULD BE GOD’S ARMY!

You see, the manner in which the men drank the water revealed whether they were alert and prepared for battle or not. Those men who put their faces in the water and lapped it up like a dog weren’t alert and ready. The enemy could be upon them before they knew what hit them.

But those men who knelt and cupped the water to their mouths with their hands were alert and ready. They could drink water and still
be on the lookout for the enemy.

8. When all was said and done, 9,700 soldiers lapped water like a dog and were sent home. Only 300 men knelt and cupped the water to their mouths.

9. So Gideon’s army has now been shrunk from 10,000 to 300. His army is now outnumbered 450 to ONE

10. GOD LOVES THOSE KINDS OF ODDS!

Zechariah 4:6 (NKJV) says, “Not by MIGHT, nor by POWER, but BY MY SPIRIT says the LORD.”

11. You see, if it had been left up to Gideon, he would have marched into battle against the Midianites with his 32,000 men. Sixty four thousand men would have been even better. One hundred thirty five thousand would have been fantastic because then the odds would have been even.

12. But remember God’s ways are not man’s ways. God wanted Gideon and all of Israel to see His glory, His power, and His might, and the only way that could happen would be to send Gideon and his band of 300 into a battle they couldn’t humanly win. This battle wasn’t about MAN POWER........it was about GOD’S POWER!

In the next paragraph we see God display a wonderful act of kindness towards Gideon. Knowing that Gideon would now need some reassurance after having his army reduced from 32,000 to 300, God now gives Gideon A COMFORTING PROMISE. Let’s move on to VERSES 9-15.
9 It happened on the same night that the LORD said to him, “Arise, go down against the camp, for I have delivered it into your hand.

10 But if you are afraid to go down, go down to the camp with Purah your servant, and you shall hear what they say; and afterward your hands shall be strengthened to go down against the camp.” Then he went down with Purah his servant to the outpost of the armed men who were in the camp.

12 Now the Midianites and Amalekites, all the people of the East, were lying in the valley as numerous as locusts; and their camels were without number, as the sand by the seashore in multitude.

13 And when Gideon had come, there was a man telling a dream to his companion. He said, “I have had a dream: To my surprise, a loaf of barley bread tumbled into the camp of Midian; it came to a tent and struck it so that it fell and overturned, and the tent collapsed.”

14 Then his companion answered and said, “This is nothing else but the sword of Gideon the son of Joash, a man of Israel! Into his hand God has delivered Midian and the whole camp.”

15 And so it was, when Gideon heard the telling of the dream and its interpretation, that he worshiped. He returned to the camp of Israel, and said, “Arise, for the LORD has delivered the camp of Midian into your hand.”

1. After giving Gideon His “verbal promise” of victory, God now sends Gideon right to the very edge of the Midianite camp of all places, to get the reassurance he needs.

2. Picture in your mind what Gideon and his servant, Purah, must have seen when they looked over the crest of the hill into the valley where the Midianites were camped.

   There, as far as the eye can see, are 135,000 tents, one for each soldier. Circling this “sea of tents” are what appears to be mounds of dirt, but in reality it is the humped backs of hundreds of thousands of camels.
3. The mere sight of that encampment had to have struck fear in Gideon's heart.

   But as instructed by the LORD, Gideon made his way closer to the camp. In fact, he got so close he could actually hear a conversation going on between two Midianite soldiers.

   One soldier says to the other soldier, “I had this really strange dream. There was this huge loaf of barley bread that came tumbling down the hill into our camp and completely flattened our camp.”

   The other soldier says, “Your dream can only mean one thing! Gideon and his army are going to massacre our army.”

4. Now I want you to notice Gideon’s response to what he had just heard. He didn’t let out a big “Whoooooo hooooooool nor did he and Purah give each other “high fives.”

   Verse 15 says, “And so it was, when Gideon heard the telling of the dream and its interpretation, that he WORSHIPPED.

5. After hearing that conversation between those two soldiers, Gideon became keenly aware that this wasn't going to be a battle with his 300 versus the Midianite’s 135,000. This was a battle between almighty God and the Midianites, and his band of 300 was just the channel through whom God would win the victory.

6. Gideon was so overwhelmed with God’s goodness and mercy, all he could do was fall to his knees in worship.

   After a time of worship, a confident and rejuvenated Gideon returns to his camp to ready his army for THE CERTAIN VICTORY. Let’s move on to......
III. THE CERTAIN VICTORY (vs. 16-22)

Judges 7:16-22 (NKJV)

16 Then he divided the three hundred men into three companies, and he put a trumpet into every man’s hand, with empty pitchers, and torches inside the pitchers.

17 And he said to them, “Look at me and do likewise; watch, and when I come to the edge of the camp you shall do as I do:

18 When I blow the trumpet, I and all who are with me, then you also blow the trumpets on every side of the whole camp, and say, ‘The sword of the LORD and of Gideon!’”

19 So Gideon and the hundred men who were with him came to the outpost of the camp at the beginning of the middle watch, just as they had posted the watch; and they blew the trumpets and broke the pitchers that were in their hands.

20 Then the three companies blew the trumpets and broke the pitchers—they held the torches in their left hands and the trumpets in their right hands for blowing—and they cried, “The sword of the LORD and of Gideon!”

21 And every man stood in his place all around the camp; and the whole army ran and cried out and fled.

22 When the three hundred blew the trumpets, the LORD set every man’s sword against his companion throughout the whole camp; and the army fled to Beth Acacia, toward Zererah, as far as the border of Abel Meholah, by Tabbath.

1. Here we see once again, GOD’S WAYS are not our WAYS.

2. Our military today relies on the most sophisticated, most technologically advanced weaponry they can get their hands on. Gideon and his band of 300 were armed with CLAY JARS......A TORCH.....and A TRUMPET.

Notice, not a single soldier questioned Gideon about the weapons that were placed in their hands, not one. Because Gideon is acting on faith, his men now follow his example.
3. When you consider the battle strategy God gave to Gideon that night you can truly appreciate the wisdom of God.

* Rather than keeping all 300 men together as a unit, God had Gideon divide them into three regiments of 100 soldiers each and had them attack the camp from different directions, giving the Midianites the sense that they were completely surrounded.

* God had them attack at the beginning of “the middle watch” just as the guards were changing posts. The “middle watch” was at 10 PM, which means the Midianite army is asleep........the guards who are going “off duty” are tired and ready to go to bed........and the guards who are coming “on duty” aren’t fully awake yet.

* At just the precise moment, GIDEON gives the signal......."Every soldier blows his trumpet and breaks his clay pitcher revealing the light of the torches inside and they shouted , “The sword of the LORD and of Gideon.”

The half-awake, dazed Midianite soldiers stagger out of their tents in a state of total confusion and chaos. Through half-awake eyes they see “the torches of the enemy soldiers” from three different directions. They don’t realize it is an army of just 300 men ........for all they know its an army of 300,000.

* Then Gideon’s men let out a second sounding of the trumpet, and by this time God had thrown the Midianite soldiers into such a state of confusion they didn’t know who was “friend” and who was “foe.” They start swinging their swords madly striking anyone or anything that comes near, not realizing they are killing each
other.

* And the whole time this is going on, Gideon's army is standing back watching the mighty hand of God at work! Before that night was through 120,000 of the 135,000 men in the Midianite camp that night were dead.

4. GOD had given Gideon and his band of 300 the victory! THE BATTLE BELONGED TO THE LORD!

CONCLUSION

Perhaps right now you have “a Midianite army” to contend with in your own life. Perhaps you are in a battle at home or at work or in your personal life where you feel that “the odds are overwhelmingly stacked against you” and there’s no way you can win the battle.

If there is one thing we can learn from GIDEON this morning it is this: When we put all of our FAITH and TRUST in the LORD instead of ourselves, GOD GIVES US THE VICTORY!

THE BATTLE BELONGS TO THE LORD!!!