

Deborah- A Spiritual Mother



(image: marin interfaith council)

We take a breath and come into God's presence.

Holy Spirit draw us close and minister your grace to us. May we recognise your presence in our midst. **Amen.**

Almighty God, to whom all hearts are open, all desires known, and from whom no secrets are hidden: cleanse the thoughts of our hearts by the inspiration of your Holy Spirit, that we may perfectly love you, and worthily magnify your holy name; through Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

Bible Reading: Judges 2:10; Judges 4:1-10; Judges 5:6-7

After that whole generation had been gathered to their ancestors, another generation grew up who knew neither the LORD nor what he had done for Israel.

The Israelites again did what was evil in the sight of the Lord, after Ehud died. So the Lord sold them into the hand of King Jabin of Canaan, who reigned in Hazor; the commander of his army was Sisera, who lived in Harosheth-ha-goiim. Then the Israelites cried out to the Lord for help; for he had nine hundred chariots of iron, and had oppressed the Israelites cruelly twenty years.

At that time Deborah, a prophetess, wife of Lappidoth, was judging Israel. She used to sit under the palm of Deborah between Ramah and Bethel in the hill country of Ephraim; and the Israelites came up to her for judgment. She sent and summoned Barak son of Abinoam from Kedesh in Naphtali, and said to him, "The Lord, the God of Israel, commands you, 'Go, take position at Mount Tabor, bringing ten thousand from the tribe of Naphtali and the tribe of Zebulun. I will draw out Sisera, the general of Jabin's army, to meet you by the Wadi Kishon with his chariots and his troops; and I will give him into your hand.'" Barak said to her, 'If you will go with me, I will go; but if you will not go with me, I will not go.' And she said, 'I will surely go with you; nevertheless, the road on which you are going will not lead to your glory, for the Lord will sell Sisera into the hand of a woman.' Then Deborah got up and went with Barak to Kedesh. Barak summoned Zebulun and Naphtali to Kedesh; and ten thousand warriors went up behind him; and Deborah went up with him.

"In the days of Shamgar the son of Anath, in the days of Jael, the wide roads were empty. Travelers walked on the side roads. Country towns were empty. They were no more in Israel, until I, Deborah, came. I came as a mother in Israel."

Reflection

We don't read of many women prophets and leaders in the bible, many go undocumented and unappreciated I am sure. Deborah makes reference to how women are viewed when she tells how Barak he will receive no glory as the battle would be delivered into the hand of a woman. And what a woman! Deborah was called, anointed by God to be a judge, a prophet, a leader and spiritual mother of Israel.

The book of Judges follows again the highs and lows of peoples (the Israelites) relationship with God. We hear earlier in Judges that faith stories have not been passed on and there is now a generation who do not know of the mighty works that God had done.

We learn and grow from listening to personal stories, peoples experiences of the world, of God. It is why Remembrance is so important to us, it is why we celebrate Christmas and Easter and other faith festivals. All these things are done communally (usually) with each other. We have practices which keep the telling of our faith story going; The Eucharist, the Bible, the Creeds, the Lord's Prayer. In the repetition of these things we pass our faith story onto successive generations, and in sharing our personal testimonies, we show that we have an active living God, as well as a historical recording of God's faithful relationship with us.

Without their faith grounding they have gone astray. We read that when Ehud was dead, the children of Israel again did evil in the sight of the Lord, and they were handed over to their enemies. There was no village life, people were too afraid of the Canaanites to even walk on the roads. Then after twenty long years of cruelty and oppression they cry out to God for help.

And God raised up Deborah for them. As God's spokesperson and agent she guides and leads them once more to freedom and establishes for them forty years of peace. She receives a prophetic word from God and calls for Barak to tell him what God has told her, that God was going to lead them to victory. But Barak isn't that confident he doesn't want to go without her, and she doesn't hesitate from battle saying "I will surely go with you". A gentle, encouraging reply which doesn't put him down or question his strength or belief, just an understanding that he needed her spiritual strength to support him, and not the personal glory he would have achieved without her presence.

Deborah as spiritual mother, stood with Barak and strengthened his faith.

Standing alongside one another is so important. And recognising and asking for support is a strength on its own. We should always speak words of encouragement to people around us. As Christ's appointed to this time and place, it is for us to speak kindness, light and hope into a hurting world and seemingly impossible situations.

God uses God's people to fulfil God's plans. I wonder if you have considered that you are appointed to bring hope and light and the good news of Christ to at least your little corner of the world. God has a great plan to fulfil through each one of us - if we are open and willing. And he draws others alongside to help, support and encourage too. That is why we have Church – a body of God's people worshipping and serving together.

Let us rise like Deborah!

Amen.

A Feel-Good Faith Story - The Empty Chair from atimetolaugh.org

A woman asked her minister to come and pray with her elderly father Bob. When the minister arrived, he found Bob lying in bed with his head propped up on two pillows. An empty chair sat beside his bed. The minister assumed that the old fellow had been informed of his visit. "I guess you were expecting me," he said.

The Empty Chair.

"No. I was not expecting you," said Bob. "Who are you?"

"I'm the new minister at your church," he replied. "When I saw the empty chair, I figured you knew I was going to show up."

"Oh yeah, the chair," said the bedridden man. "Would you mind closing the door?"

Puzzled, the minister shut the door.

"I have never told anyone this, not even my daughter," said the man. "But all of my life I have never known how to pray. At church I used to hear the pastor talk about prayer, but it went right over my head. I abandoned any attempt at prayer," the old man continued, "until one day about four years ago my best friend said to me, 'Bob, prayer is just a simple matter of having a conversation with Jesus.'"

'Here is what I suggest. Sit down in a chair; place an empty chair in front of you, and in faith see Jesus on the chair. It's not spooky because he promised, 'I'll be with you always.' Then just speak to him and listen in the same way you're doing with me right now.'

So, I tried it and I've liked it so much that I do it a couple of hours every day. I'm careful though. If my daughter saw me talking to an empty chair she'd think something was wrong."

The minister was deeply moved by the story and encouraged Bob to continue chatting to Jesus on the chair. Then he prayed with him, anointed him with oil, and returned to the church.

Two nights later the daughter called to tell the him that her daddy had died that afternoon.

"Did he die in peace?" he asked.

"Yes, when I left the house about two o'clock, he called me over to his bedside, told me he loved me and kissed me on the cheek. When I got back an hour later he had died, with his head rested on that empty chair beside his bed.



Worship Hymns

Colours of Day – Lucy Gibson attached

Glorious Things of Thee Are Spoken with lyrics - John Wesley Slider:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3_CHF4gRyfI&ab_channel=JohnWesleySlider

Shout to the North with lyrics - Francis Justine:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ctc3GqWaV3U&ab_channel=francisjustine

How Great Thou Art with lyrics - The Royal British Legion at the Albert Hall:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HFuqPocvj-s&ab_channel=donedw

Prayers of Intercession

Almighty God,

Creator of all, we praise you.

We thank you for all your seen and unseen blessings to us.

Your faithfulness and care through-out all generations, times and seasons.

Help us to tell and pass on our faith stories and experience of your faithfulness.

Lord hear us: **Lord graciously hear us.**

We pray for our world and its leaders;

For healing against the pandemic and other diseases.

We thank-you for the development of vaccines and treatments which bring hope.

We lift to you all areas of the world struggling to cope with infections, and for those medical staff and carers who are overwhelmed.

As we seek to move forward beyond lockdown, may we do so with care for one another and for your creation.

Lord hear us: **Lord graciously hear us.**

We pray for those who have lost their jobs and livelihoods.

For those fearful of the future.

For our children and young people in all the uncertainty.

For the vulnerable, the homeless and hungry.

For those whose homes are not safe places to be.

Lord hear us: **Lord graciously hear us.**

We pray for one another and those we hold dear.

For those who await treatment.

For those in recovery.

For those who are unwell.

For those who are depressed and anxious.

For those who feel alone.

We ask that your healing, hope and peace surrounds them.

We commend to you the recently departed, and all those whom we have loved.

Give comfort to those who grieve, and the reassurance of life eternal.

Lord hear us: **Lord graciously hear us.**

We take a moment to lift the prayers of our own hearts before God...

We commend ourselves and the whole of creation to your unending love.

Joining all our prayers together we say the prayer our saviour taught us:

**Our Father, who art in heaven;
hallowed be thy name;**

**thy kingdom come; thy will be done;
on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread.
And forgive us our trespasses,
As we forgive them that trespass against us.
And lead us not into temptation;
but deliver us from evil.
For thine is the kingdom, the power, and the glory,
for ever and ever. Amen.**

Blessing

The light of God surround us.

The love of God enfold us.

The power of God protect us.

And the blessing of God Almighty

Father, Son and Holy Spirit,

be with you and those whom you love always. **Amen.**

Go in peace to love and serve the Lord: **In the name of Christ. Amen.**