

Jesu Juva

“Our Gideon Fights For Us”  
Text: John 18:1-11 (Judges 6-7)

We think there is strength in numbers. And so we are always in search of more. More money so we will be financially secure. More friends so we will be socially secure. More muscles and health so we will be physically secure. More members so we will be ecclesiastically secure.

That’s why when the Lord told Gideon that he was the Lord’s chosen instrument to free Israel from the terrorizing Midianites, Gideon tried to muster as many men as he could. He was like us - a “strength in numbers” man. And he gathered 32,000 to fight. Not bad. But the Lord knew that Gideon was putting his faith in the wrong place - in numbers, not in God. And so God whittled down the force, to an astonishing little 300 men, and said: *“Now Gideon, its time to go fight. For now Gideon, you are strong.”* For now the Lord will fight for you.

That wasn’t easy for Gideon, and it isn’t easy for us. It isn’t easy when the Lord takes away from us in order to make us strong; in order to get us to put our faith in the right place. And so when he takes away our health, when he takes friends, when our money seems like it will not last, when our church struggles and members leave, when we seem so small and weak and our enemy seems so great and powerful . . . *Now, the Lord says, you are strong. For now the Lord will fight for you.* Watch and see.

And Gideon saw, for with just 300 men the army of the Midianites was thrown into complete confusion, and in their fear began slaying one another. And Gideon and his men didn’t have to fight at all. When the Lord fights for you, 300 men is more than enough.

And that is what we have seen this Lenten season, and we will see the rest of this week. For we too have an enemy that is terrorizing us: satan and his satanic crew. And they are a strong and fearsome enemy, more numerous than us, stronger than us, craftier than us, and, who in fact, have every advantage over us! Except for one thing: we have a Gideon who has come to fight for us. A Saviour. And if you think Gideon’s 300 men was an astonishingly small number for such a great battle, in Jesus we see God paring His fighting force all the way down . . . to one. And is this not what God told Gideon He would do? When He prophetically said: ***“I will be with you, and you shall strike the Midianites as one man.”***

That one man came and was born in Bethlehem to the virgin Mary. That one man went out into the desert to face off against the temptations of the devil. That one man fought the sin and evil in this world as He healed the sick, cast out demons, and raised the dead. And tonight, the beginning of the last and greatest battle: when that one man will go to the cross, to bear the crushing weight of the sin of the world, to fight the forces of hell, and to enter the captivity of the grave.

Against that one man came a band of soldiers, armed and ready for battle. Jesus could have had an army even larger than Gideon's. He would tell Peter: ***“Put your sword away . . . Do you think I cannot appeal to my Father, and he will at once send me more than twelve legions of angels?”*** (Matt 26:52-53) Yes, *ten thousand times ten thousand powerful shining spirits, faces ablaze with indignation, swords drawn and singing, mounted on steeds chomping at the bit and pawing the sky for release, to swoop and work a rescue that would have made even the largest earthly army seem like a twitch of the nose!* (Kenneth Korby) But no. Jesus didn't need them. Look at what He does by simply His Word! Their strength and number and weapons are nothing against Jesus as by simply a word they all draw back and fall to the ground!

But the soldiers were not the enemy here. So no, Peter, no swords please. And no need for legions of angels. Jesus allows Himself to be arrested, to be subjected to a mock trial, and to be crucified, to face the real enemy, alone, on the cross. And nailed to the cross, He fought for us. Nailed to the cross, He was strong for us. Strong enough to stay there and die for us, that in His death be the atonement of our sins; in His resurrection be the rending of our graves; and in His sacrifice be the defeat of satan, once and for all. A victory not just for a time, or a people, but for all time and all people.

So what Midianites are you facing in your life right now? What struggles of faith, what doubts and fears, what sins and foes seem to outnumber you, seem too big to handle, are wearing you down . . . Whatever it is, put your faith not in what you can do, or in the “more” you can muster - rely on your Gideon. Look to Him and His cross, which has won the battle for you. The One who fights for you has no match - in the heavens, on the earth, or under the earth. In Him you are strong. In Him you are forgiven. In Him you have the victory.

So enter the fray unafraid. Resist the devil and fear not his rage and spite. For are you weak? Are you alone? Are you outnumbered and unsure? Pared down and small and vulnerable? Good! *Now, the Lord says, you are strong. For now the Lord will fight for you.* Watch and see. Watch and see these next three days, until on the third day we sing praises to our conquering - and risen - King.

In the Name of the Father, and of the (+) Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.