

**Gideon –
“Signs”
Judges 6:33 – 40**

So this morning we find ourselves again in the Book of Judges.
If you're a part of Cromwell Presbyterian, tell the person next to you what we've been talking about over the last couple of weeks.
If you are a guest or visitor, again welcome to you this morning.
You can listen in to what people have to share.

We find this story which features in pretty much every children's Bible and crops up time and time again in Sunday school lessons – Gideon and the fleece.

So what's happening here?
Here's what I think: it seems that once the Israelite army assembles, Gideon suddenly becomes aware that they are vastly outnumbered by the Midianites and Amalekites.

So *all* the worries and fears and doubts of the past *well up* in Gideon.
He loses his nerve.
And he begins to second guess himself and more than that... he second guesses God.
So he asks for a sign, a sign from God.
As we heard and read, Gideon literally put out a fleece asking God to do the miraculous – making it wet when the ground is dry and dry when the ground is wet.

God does this and the story moves on.

So when people read this story, what do they think it's about?
Most people would say it's about guidance.
(And we actually talked about guidance a few weeks ago).

We have a God who communicates, who relates and connects.
And there are times when God, who relates to us personally, guides, leads and points the way.
You read Scripture and it's there.
And you talk people about their life stories and it's there as well.

Not only that, but does the Lord often confirm guidance?

Well it seems that in Scripture and in life experience, God often does that too.

Here Gideon is asked for not just one sign but two.

Now it's clear that when it comes to God's moral – right and wrongs – we don't need signs from God.

We have laid out in Scripture what right and wrong, good and evil.

We don't have to say, "If I'm not meant to steal from this shop, give me a sign."

But what about other circumstances and situations.

So what do you think?

"Is it okay to ask for signs from God?"

Yes?

No?

Maybe?

Tell the person next to you.

Let me tell you about Brock.

True story.

Brock had a friend by the name of Kelly.

She lived in Texas and he lived in Washington D.C. so their friendship was a long distance relationship. They talked occasionally over the phone, text and so on but it was strictly a non-romantic relationship.

Over time, as can happen, Brock began to have romantic feelings for Kelly and wondered what God had in mind for their future.

Then Kelly announced that she was going to come and visit.

So a week before the visit Brock asked for a clear sign from God.

He prayed that if God intended their relationship to become a serious one, he would see a deer sometime during the next week.

He was attending a retreat in the country at the time, where the possibility of encountering a deer was good.

The weekend passed, however, and Brock never spotted a deer.

So he returned home assuming his prayer for a sign hadn't been granted.

But then two days before Kelly was to arrive, however, as he was exiting a motorway and he looked across and he saw a deer (perhaps doe, a female deer 😊) standing just to the side of the off ramp.

Brock was so astonished that he pulled his car to the side of the road, stopped and stared at the animal, to be certain that his eyes weren't playing tricks on him. Sure enough, it was a deer – the first time he'd ever seen one in this built up, busy congested area.

So Brock was convinced he had received a sign from God. God must be telling him that pleasant things were ahead in his relationship with Kelly. So couldn't wait for Kelly to arrive.

So Kelly arrived and friendly but there was no electricity in the air. As much as she wanted to catch up with Brock, she also caught up with friends.

So Brock finally said to Kelly, "Hey we need to talk." He didn't mention the deer and he told her that he cared deeply for her and wondered if she was open to a serious relationship.

And of course Kelly, responded by saying... "Nope, not going to happen." She really had no romantic feelings for him at all.

So Brock asked her if she felt that at least the *possibility* of a romantic relationship at some point in their future.

Kelly responded that nope, their relationship could never be more than a friendship.

And that's the way it stayed.

And naturally Brock was crushed.

Not only was there the pain of rejection, difficult enough to deal with, but also the baffling experience with the deer.

So you have Gideon and then you have Brock –

"How do you align these stories that have two different outcomes?"

Have a chat about that for a few moments.

There is a difference between asking for a sign and one being given to us quite unexpectedly and out of the blue.

One weekend I was at home and a thought dropped into my mind (does this happen to you?) – "You should train to become an ordained minister".

So I shared this with Kay. We prayed about it and told no one else. Later that weekend, on Sunday evening, someone from church called after being away for weekend. We chatted about how the weekend was and then they paused and said, "Reece, we really think you should train to become and ordained minister". They short comment changed to course of my life.

A friend of mine who had spent decades on the missions was given what seemed to be God given vivid dream. In the dream he was on beach watching others fishing and bringing in such huge fish that he raced to his car to get his fishing rod, excited at the prospect joining them. As he searched his gear there was no rod, instead there were two sharp knives. In his dream he was not to be a fisherman but to be filleter. His job was to prepare the freshly caught fish. He awoke and immediately understood the dream. No longer was he to give most of his time to the streets fishing for the lost and needy. Rather he was to devote more time disciplining, mentoring and teaching the 'fish' (souls) that had been brought into the Kingdom.

So we do have a God who acts in that way.

Gideon's story though is *not* about seeking guidance. He's already knows what he is to do. It wasn't a lack of information, it was a lack of obedience.

Yahweh has already told Gideon, "Go in the strength you have and save Israel out of Midian's hand. Am I not sending you?" (Judges 6:14) Gideon is then imbued with the Spirit and summoned the tribes to war.

So in asking God to prove himself with the fleece, Gideon knows that he sailing close to the wind.

Why?

Deuteronomy 6 states, "Do not put the Lord your God to the test." Gideon was needlessly asking God to prove Himself to Gideon when had already done this multiple times.

So he says:

"Do not be *angry* with me. Let me make just one more request. Allow me one more test with the fleece..."

Gideon didn't believe that God would keep His promise; more than God's ability it was God's character that he was unsure of.

The fleece was not an act of faith but actually of distrust.

So Gideon is not the hero of the story.

The message is not, "Do what Gideon did".

The message is, "Look at how gracious God was".

Despite Gideon's inability to keep trusting God, *God accommodates Gideon's request.*

Yahweh acquiesces to Gideon's appeal.

So we do have a God who condescends.

Who accommodates.

Who meets us where we are at *with what we need.*

He does so because he loves us individually and uniquely.

What that also means is how God acts sometimes does not mean he will do so on another.

What God does sometimes he doesn't do all the time.

How God acted with Gideon's need for a sign does not mean he will do the same for us.

You may be thinking, well if that's the case, how do we know if God is going to be consistent?

For one, there are some areas that God has promised to all people, in all times and all places if we trust in him.

We have the promise forgiveness, of pardon.

We have the promise of heaven. We have the guidance of His Word.

We also know that God always acts in accordance to His *character.*

God actions towards are always in accordance to his character and for our best.

And the message of Scripture is that God meets us as we are and then *He begins to change us, mould us, shape us, take us from where we are to where He wants us to be.*

I mean, Gideon is later mentioned in Scripture where?

Hebrews 11 where his name is alongside King David and Moses and Abraham as a hero of faith, someone who trusted God.

Now some of you are thinking, what about poor heartbroken Brock???

(Well Brock's been in therapy for several years now 😊).

In Brock's case it was like God was weaning him off a practice that was actually detrimental to his faith.

It was like his trust of God was reliant on signs and not relationship.

So this is where I am up to: seeking signs – imposing or prescribing how God should lead – is so often a diversion from responsible decision-making.

Jesus seemed to have low view of sign-seeking. The last time of sign-seeking found in Scripture is in Acts chapter 1.¹

After that the Holy Spirit is poured out on all the believers.

Seeking signs is unnecessary because we have been Scripture, we have the gift of the Spirit, we have access to God's in prayer and we have the wise council of others.

Brock even said, "I realize now that I was dictating to God how he should reveal his will to me."

Brock still follows Jesus today but his faith actually deeper.

He would say that God still meets with him where he is at.

God meet Gideon in his place of doubt, fear, worry and unbelief.

And I don't about you but at times we are Gideon.

In those times when life isn't going well, when our faith isn't strong, when our trust in God is tenuous, we can falter and yet God still meets us where we are at.

In His grace and love for you and me, he meets in our of need.

Where are you at this morning?

¹ Acts 1:15 – 26.