

2nd Advent Service – Miraculous Children of the old Testament

Text: Judges 13

Theme: Samson – A Baby who was Consecrated to the Lord

Today's story is peculiar because it is the only story that I can think of in the Bible in which one of the main characters is not named. Sampson's mother is simply called the "wife of Manoah." The angel of the Lord appeared to her and told her that she would bear a son. Until this time she was not able to bear children. This son was to be a Nazarite his entire life long. The Nazarite law is in Number 6. It was a time when a man or woman would take a vow of consecration to the Lord. During that time the person was not allowed to cut their hair, drink anything that come from the grape, touch anything that is from the grapevine or touch a dead body. At the end of the time, they were to shave their head and offer sin, burnt, and fellowship offerings to the Lord. Most people would take these vows for a short period, but Samson was to be a Nazarite from the time that he was conceived. His mother was to abstain from these items even when she was expecting. Samson was a baby who was consecrated to the Lord his whole life long.

I. Samson was consecrated to the Lord, but he was not perfect.

The stories of Samson are interesting because he was not the most godly person. He never teaches or prays to God until the very last story. The stories about Samson are how he get in trouble with Philistine women, and then when they turn on him, he gets revenge on them. For instance, in the first story he tells his parents that he wants to marry a Philistine woman. His parents counsel against it, but they concede. There is turmoil at the wedding, and the woman is given to Samson's best friend. Samson took out his revenge on the Philistines. Because of that they killed his wife and her family. The Philistines then sent a delegation to Israel, and the Israelites turned Samson over to the Philistines. He ended up breaking through the ropes and killed 1,000 Philistines with the jawbone of a donkey. Later the Philistines tried to kill him while he was with a prostitute, but he ended up taking revenge on them. Finally, comes the story of Samson and Delilah in which she finds out that the key to his strength is his long hair. She cuts his hair, and he is powerless again his opponents. The first time that Samson prays is when he has been blinded and chained to the pillar of a Philistine temple where they were mocking him during one of their feasts. He prays, "*O Sovereign Lord, remember me. O God, please strengthen me just once more, and let me with one blow get revenge on the Philistines for my two eyes.*" He is able to pull down the temple and everyone inside, including Samson perishes. It says, "*Thus he killed many more [Philistines] when he died that while he lived.*" God used a very imperfect servant, who was consecrated to the Lord, during those 20 years when he was judge of Israel to delivered them from the Philistines.

II. It is the same story with all of God's people.

Israel was far from perfect. In Deuteronomy 7:6 Moses says, "*For you are a people holy to the LORD your God. The LORD your God has chosen you out of all the peoples on the face of the earth to be his people, his treasured possession.*" Israel was to be a people who were consecrated to God. He had chosen them to be the people through whom the Savior would come into the world. But like Samson, they often got themselves into a lot of needless trouble. Like Samson ran after foreign women, they often ran after foreign gods, and they followed the wicked practices of their

neighbors which God forbid. They were not the holy, consecrated people whom God called them to be. Yet, God was able to work through them. He forgave their sins, and used them to bring the Savior into the world.

As Christians we are also far from perfect. God has made us His people. In Holy Baptism we died to sin and were raised to a new life in Christ. In 1 Peter 2:9 Peter writes, *“But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light.”* In Romans 12:1 Paul writes, *“In view of God’s mercy offer you bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God—this is your spiritual act of worship. Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed.”* God has called you and me as His people. He has cleansed us of our sins. We belong to Him, and we are called to live good, kind, and compassionate lives, even forgiving each other as God has forgiven us in Christ. We are called to be the light of the world. Yet, so often like Samson, the Israelites or even the apostles whom Jesus called, we fall into the darkness of sin around us. God makes us His own people. He has made us holy. Yet, sin is always crouching at our door.

III. That is why it is so important that Christ has redeemed us from our sin.

There is an interesting character in our text. A mysterious man appears to Manoah and his wife to announce the birth of Samson. When Manoah asks what His name was, his answer is, *“It is beyond understanding.”* The word is also translated as “wonderful.” It is the same word as in Isaiah 9:6 where it says, *“For unto us a child is born, unto us a Son is given... and His name shall be called, ‘Wonderful.’* Manoah and his wife begged the man to eat with them, but He insisted that they offer a burnt offering to the Lord. When they did, He ascended into heaven in the flames and smoke. It was at that moment that they realized that they had seen God.

The Angel of the Lord in the Old Testament is Christ before His incarnation, who comes to save His people. His name is “Wonderful.” It’s beyond our understanding. Yet, He has come to this earth to redeem us from our sins. He is the one who was consecrated to the Lord also from birth, but who led a perfect life all the way to the cross to bear all of our sins. Because of His perfect sacrifice, even our imperfect works are good and pleasing to God, just as God accepted Manoah’s sacrifice that day.

The story of Samson has always been one of the best known stories in the Bible. It might be because it has the romance and violence that people often like in a compelling story. But it especially shows that even though we are unworthy servants of our Lord, he can still use us. None of us is perfect, but Christ has redeemed us from our sin, and He can and will use each of our lives for His glory and for the good of those around us. Amen

*Pastor Don Hougard
 Benediction Lutheran Church
 Milwaukee, WI
 December 12, 2019*