

Sermon – The Hesitant Warrior

June 24, 2018 – The Journey 9:30am/11am

Introduction

Good morning, church! It's a blessing to be back here at The Journey to speak this Sunday. My name is John-Michael Becker and I'm the son of Pete and Vicki Becker. I grew up in this area and attended this church from birth. I attended Virginia Tech and graduated with a degree in engineering back in May of 2005. That same year, after a long season of prayer and fasting, God sent me to South Korea to live in an orphanage there and serve the children. I lived in the orphanage for three years before moving out and getting my own apartment outside the home. I have continued so serve at the orphanage while also starting up some different ministries in the city. In August 2011 I married my wife Sky and we have been serving together since. We are full time missionaries in Seoul.

Over the years I started an NGO called Jerusalem Ministry that serves the orphans in the children's homes through camps, tutors, and other events.

I'm going to show you all a video of our last annual soccer camp. 40 boys were gathered from different orphanages around the city for our camp. This camp is one of the greatest highlights of the year for the boys because they are surrounded by our loving volunteers and feel safe around us. The boys come into the camp burdened by insecurities and fears, but through the love of the volunteers and the fun activities they all gradual relax, open up, laugh, and play with a lot of joy. Please enjoy the video...

Soccer camp video - <https://vimeo.com/234614799> (3:23)

Along with Jerusalem Ministry I also direct a scholarship and mentoring program called Oak Tree Project for the orphans who get into college. We started with just 4 students back in 2013 and we now have 25 students on scholarship this year, each with a committed mentor who calls them each week and meets with them once a month until the student graduates. Here is a picture from our last summer outing...

Slide 1 – Oak Tree Project group picture

Already 10 students have graduated through Oak Tree Project and many more will graduate this coming February. I've been personally blessed to witness kids that I've known since they were in 4th grade go through Oak Tree Project and graduate from college. They are now working good jobs and walking with God. Praise the Lord!

If you have any interest in the ministry work that we are doing in South Korea then please come and talk with me after service. If you would like to receive my prayer e-mail updates then please sign up for them in the foyer after service.

I'm now going to begin my sermon, "**The Hesitant Warrior**." This sermon will be continuing in the warrior series. Today I want to address why we can be hesitant with God and hesitant in doing His will.

To begin this message I'm going to have us look at Judges 6. This is the story of Gideon, one of the great leaders in the Bible. Before God appointed him to be leader, Gideon was a scared, insecure farmer. At this time in the Bible the nation of Israel had come out of Egypt and settled in the Promised Land, but they kept turning away from God. Because they chose not to worship God but instead go their own way, God removed His protection from them. A foreign nation called Midian invaded their land. Let me read Judges 6:1-6...

Judges 6:1-6 – The Israelites did evil in the eyes of the LORD, and for seven years he gave them into the hands of the Midianites. Because the power of Midian was so oppressive, the Israelites prepared shelters for themselves in mountain clefts, caves and strongholds. Whenever the Israelites planted their crops, the Midianites, Amalekites and other eastern peoples invaded the country. They camped on the land and ruined the crops all the way to Gaza and did not spare a living thing for Israel, neither sheep nor cattle nor donkeys. They came up with their livestock and their tents like swarms of locusts. It was impossible to count them or their camels; they invaded the land to ravage it. Midian so impoverished the Israelites that they cried out to the LORD for help.

God's answer to the Israelites' prayer for deliverance is to appoint Gideon, the fearful farmer, to become their leader...

Judges 6:10-17 – The angel of the LORD came and sat down under the oak in Ophrah that belonged to Joash the Abiezrite, where his son Gideon was threshing wheat in a winepress to keep it from the Midianites. When the angel of the LORD appeared to Gideon, he said, "The LORD is with you, **mighty warrior**." "Pardon me, my lord," Gideon replied, "but if the LORD is with us, why has all this happened to us? Where are all his wonders that our ancestors told us about when they said, 'Did not the LORD bring us up out of Egypt?' But now the LORD has abandoned us and given us into the hand of Midian." The LORD turned to him and said, "**Go in the strength you have and save Israel** out of Midian's hand. Am I not sending you?" "Pardon me, my lord," Gideon replied, "but how can I save Israel? My clan is the weakest in Manasseh, and I am the least in my family." The LORD answered, "I will be with you, and you will strike down all the Midianites, leaving none alive." Gideon replied, "If now I have found favor in your eyes, give me a sign that it is really you talking to me..."

In Hebrews 11, Gideon is listed as one of the greatest men of faith. But reading this passage you would think Gideon is the weakest of all men. Here the angel of the Lord appears before him and commissions him to do great things, but rather than responding with faith or worship Gideon instead responds with doubt and insecurity. He is hesitant to respond. He demands a sign from the angel of the Lord in order to really believe him. And even after God gives Gideon a powerful sign that gives him an initial jolt of faith, Gideon continues to need more signs in order to walk out his faith.

Gideon was a hesitant warrior. Gideon had two reasons for being hesitant: **The first was his lack of faith in God being good. And the second was his lack of faith in himself being worthy.**

Let's look back at verse 13 to see Gideon's lack of faith in God being good...

Is God Really Good?

Judges 6:13 - "Pardon me, my lord," Gideon replied, "but if the LORD is with us, why has all this happened to us? Where are all his wonders that our ancestors told us about when they said, 'Did not the LORD bring us up out of Egypt?' But now the LORD has abandoned us and given us into the hand of Midian."

Before any of us can be raised up to be warriors for God. Before any of us can be strong in love and action. Before we can do anything for the Lord, or even simply believe in Him, we first must experience His goodness. We first must know that God is good. **We must believe that God is good and worth following.**

Think of soldiers with their officer. If a soldier has faith in his or her officer that the officer is good and worth following, that soldier will follow that officer into any battle with no hesitancy. There is a deep allegiance that is formed within.

For those of you who are working for companies, if you believe in your boss and in what the company is doing then you will likely fight through any difficulties and make sacrifices in order to stay with your company. You will keep at the job because you believe there is good in the company or at least there is good in your boss.

But for those of you don't have those type of feelings for your company or for your boss, then when work gets difficult and sacrifices are demanded feelings of hesitancy will quickly spring up within you. You'll likely consider quitting the job and looking for work elsewhere. You need to believe in the cause and you need to believe in who you are following, otherwise hesitancy will seize you quickly.

If you desire to be a warrior for God and make an impact here on earth, then you first need to know God's goodness and desire to follow His leading. The more you know His goodness, the more steadfast you will be in following Him. You won't be shaken by difficult times. You'll gladly make sacrifices. You'll go wherever He leads you.

For me personally, I experienced God's goodness in deep ways during my time at Virginia Tech. During my time in college I prayed and asked God to show Himself to me. I asked Him to show me His love. I prayed that I might experience Him. The following verses were prayers of mine that became truth within my spirit...

Psalm 34:8 – Taste and see the Lord is good; blessed is the man who takes refuge in Him.

Psalm 63:3 – Because your love is better than life my lips will praise you.

A prayer you will never regret is, "God, I want to taste and see that You are good. I want to experience your love that is better than life." God has answered this prayer to me time and time again in my life. I began to experience a love and a joy that truly are better than anything this world can offer. If you had asked me when I was 18 if I would be willing to be a missionary for God I would have told you, "Never." When I was 18 I had faith in God and knew enough of His

goodness to go to church and try not to sin. But after a few years of praying and asking to know His love and His goodness more, I found myself willing to go wherever God called me to go. I was willing to do anything for Him. And I still am. His love is truly better than life. There is no hesitancy. There is no regret. There is no sacrifice.

A soldier who has fought and died for his officer that he loves will never regret his sacrifice. God is greater than any earthly officer or leader. You will have no regret following Him.

But even after experiencing God's goodness, love, and power, hesitancy can still remain. Now our hesitancy is no longer in the one we are following, instead our hesitancy is found within us. Do we really believe we can be used by God? Gideon first questioned whether God was truly good. His next question was about himself...

Believing We are Worthy

Judges 6:15 – “Pardon me, my lord,” Gideon replied, “but how can I save Israel? My clan is the weakest in Manasseh, and I am the least in my family.”

Gideon's first reason to be hesitant was a lack of faith in God being good. His second reason to be hesitant was a lack of faith in himself being worthy. In the natural, Gideon was a nobody. He was hiding in a winepress because he was scared. He considered himself the least in his family. And he considered his family and his peers around him as the weakest in his tribe. In the natural he looked pathetic.

But how did God initially greet him? Let's look back at Judges 6:12...

Judges 6:12 When the angel of the LORD appeared to Gideon, he said, “The LORD is with you, **mighty warrior**.”

Gideon had done nothing in his life up to that point. He was hiding in a winepress out of fear of being noticed by the Midianites. And yet God called him a “mighty warrior.”

We worship a God who is the alpha and the omega, the beginning and the end. God knows the end from the beginning. God formed us in our mother's womb and has already written down all the days of our life. God doesn't wait until we achieve things to speak identity over us. Rather, God already knows who we truly are. We aren't meant to be defined by our family background or by our job or our education. We're meant to be defined by Him. Our identity is meant to be found completely in Him.

I have some bad news for you all: we are all a bunch of failures. But I have some good news for you all as well: God loves failures. God came to save the lost, the hurting, and the weak. God delights in those who lay down their earthly identities and choose to take on their heavenly identity. God delights in those who acknowledge they need God's grace.

Matthew 5:3 – Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

God is the God of the broken. God delights in the orphan, the widow, the poor, and the weak. Why? Because the oppressed and the broken of this world are those who are the most hungry for God. Their worth is not found in their worldly identity. Their worth is found in God. They know they need Him.

When we acknowledge our brokenness before God then He is able to transform us. God delights in the broken because they find their worth fully in Him.

Gideon came from a weak family that did not fear God. Gideon was initially insecure and filled with fear. But as he began to believe in God and take on the identity God was speaking over him, Gideon was able to overcome a great army with only 300 men. Gideon's faith was no longer in his natural body. His faith was in God and the identity God had spoken into him. He was no longer a weak, broken man. He was made whole and strong through God.

Colossians 1:27 – Christ in you, the hope of glory.

To overcome our hesitancy in life we need to first ask that we may experience God's goodness. Once we've tasted and seen that He is good, then we need to ask Him to transform us. We need to ask Him to reveal Himself within us. Make this your prayer, *"God, I acknowledge I need you. Reveal my true identity in you."*

God's Vision for North Korea

I've now been serving the orphans of Korea for 12 and a half years. Over the years God has given a vision to me and my staff. We believe that in time North Korea will open up and that God will send us into the country to serve the orphans there. And we believe that the orphans we have been serving in South Korea will follow us there. The kids we have served in South Korea, like those you saw in the soccer camp video, have experienced love through my staff and me. They know they can trust us. Like a soldier who has allegiance to his officer, many of these kids have allegiance to us. They don't have family who has loved them. Instead they have us, and because they've experienced our love they want to follow us. We believe that these orphans from South Korea will be used by God in powerful ways for the orphans in North Korea. God loves to use the broken, because they acknowledge they need Him.

And as for the orphans in North Korea, the vision isn't just to feed, clothe, and shelter them. The vision is to see these orphans experience God in ways that we never have. The children of North Korea do not have access to the internet or many material things. They haven't experienced many great things in life. So for them, I believe when they taste and see that God is good they will be ready to do anything for God. There will be no temptations of this world holding them back.

God delights to reveal His glory through the broken. God delights to choose the shepherds, the fishermen, the zealots, the tax collectors, the orphans. God loves to use the lowly because their identity is not found in themselves but rather in God. So my staff and I believe that God is going to pour out His Spirit upon the orphans of Korea. God will make the weak strong. God will make the uneducated wise. God will make the rejected His family.

This is my greatest motivation to continue to serve in South Korea. I will follow God wherever He leads me because I know His goodness. And I know I am able to do whatever He asks of me not because I'm some gifted person, but rather because Christ lives within me. He is the hope of glory. I can do all things through Him who gives me strength.

Conclusion

I want to conclude this message by telling you that just as God has a vision for the orphans of Korea and God has a vision for my life, God also has a vision for yours. And just as God called a fearful and insecure Gideon, "Mighty warrior," so does God also speak great things over you. You were made in the image of God. You were made for His glory. God has a beautiful plan for your life.

Ask God to reveal His goodness to you. And ask God to reveal who He has made you to be. The next time you are hesitant consider who you're looking to and who you're getting your identity from. As you walk with Him, you will soon experience a courage and a joy within you like never before.

****Pray****