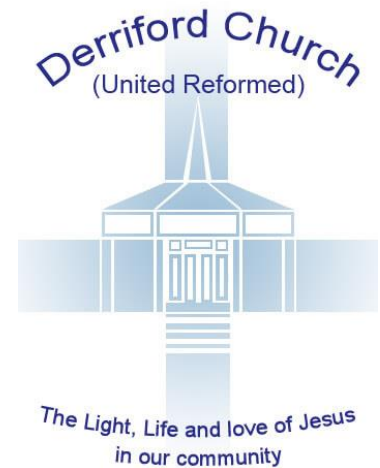


# NEWS SHEET

# DERRIFORD URC

THE LIGHT, LIFE AND LOVE OF JESUS IN OUR COMMUNITY



9<sup>TH</sup> MAY 2021



On Sunday at the end of our service, Raymonde asked a very important question. ***Why if God is so powerful does He allow the virus?*** You know I am pretty sure that Raymonde is not the only person who has asked this question. It is one that has been in the ether since the beginning of the pandemic. So, what is the answer?

I have been thinking more about this since Sunday and thought I would share my thoughts. Now, before I give my 'two-pennies worth' I want to say that it is my thoughts not necessarily God's! I love the story of Job; Job asks (or even demands) that God answers his questions on why he is suffering and in essence God does answer Job (although not his specific

questions) and basically says who are you to demand that I speak, I am God and you are not! In essence He says the same thing as Isaiah 55:

*God say, "For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways," declares the Lord. "As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts".*

God's understanding and plans are far above mine/ours. That aside, here are my thoughts. I think one of the reasons why God allows suffering, allows the pandemic, is to give Christians (the church) an opportunity to show God's love to the world. See we live in a fallen world; we live in a world that is not perfect, not the place that God designed for us. We were banished from that place a long time ago. The world we have to live in, since our banishment, is full of sin and like all sin it has consequences. Let's remember that illness and death is a normal part of life. Life expectancy today is 80-90 (if not longer), however a hundred years ago you were considered old at the age of 60!

You know this is by far not the first pandemic or major issue that has hit this world or even the church. A number of our New Testament letters talks about persecution of the Church and I am sure that our early Christian family asked the same question; why do you Lord, allow us, your people, to be persecuted?

I honestly believe that God allows the pandemic (and please note I say allows, not brings – It is ours, humanity’s fault) so that we can shine for God. Tom Wright says:

*“...when government funding is not enough and the health services are limited, the churches should be the ones to step up...”*

It is the churches opportunity to say to the World, in the name Jesus Christ, we are here for you. To love you, to care for you, to risk our lives for you. This is not the first pandemic, by any measure.

*When a plague struck a city in the second, third or fourth century, the Christians took this as a call to look after people and to nurse people. Any Christian doctor would say, "right, this is what I'm here for". Most people, especially the rich and respectable would take to the hills and get out of town fast, rather than be caught in this plague. Their attitude was 'leave that lot to die'. But the Christians would stay and nurse people. (Christianity Magazine, March 2020)*

So, the question is, I guess, how do we respond personally? And as church?

## Summary of Sunday’s Sermon/Service

### The Power of Gideon

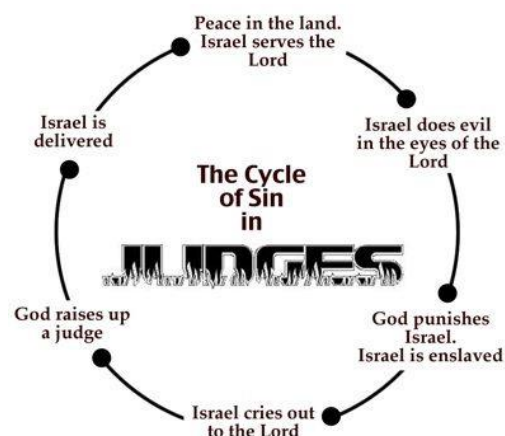
This sermon is called the Power of Gideon and is a two-part sermon, the conclusion will be on the 16<sup>th</sup> May. I have, as I often do, set you some homework. First is to read through Judges 6 to 8 (In-fact, if you are able, please read the whole book of Judges) and the second is to think (and perhaps to discuss with others) what is the Power of Gideon?

It is always important to get the background of any passage or story in the Bible. To read it in context. So today we are going to look at the context of the Gideon story.

Gideon is part of the book of Judges and Judges is a part of the story of Old Testament (the people of Israel). So let’s have a look at the book of Judges. Due to lack of space, we will have to leave the story of the Old Testament. If you would like, listen to the sermon as a whole on our website (link below).

The Book of Judges is an incredibly sad book. It is a book of circles, repeating errors over and over and over and over again. You see the Israelites had a problem, they were fine when they had a strong and faithful leadership but otherwise, they followed their own way (which was never God’s way!) and went downhill.

If you look at the picture to the right, you can see the cycle that the Judges goes through. It does this twelve times and each time God sends a judge to get them out of trouble.





Do remember that the judges in the Bible are not national judges, national leaders – they work in a small, very specific area within Israel. They are also not judges as we would think of the word judge. They are more military leaders. It is not until we get to Saul, the first king of Israel that we get a national leader, ruler.

When you read the story of Gideon, you can easily see the cycle of events.

So what was Gideon like? We know a fair bit about him; he was one of the most important with 3 chapters dedicated to him. He had another name Jerubbaal (which he was given after he destroyed the altar of Baal – a Canaanite God). He is called by God ‘mighty warrior’ (v12) and is told that the Lord is with him. He is a humble man. When he is told that

he is going to save the Israelites from the Midianites. He says:

*“Pardon me, my lord, but how can I save Israel? My clan is the weakest in Manasseh, and I am the least in my family.”*

He is a nobody. No real importance, but God says, don’t worry about that because I will be with you! That’s all you need! He is famous for testing God! Which is interesting and we will look at this some more on the 16<sup>th</sup>. And goes into battle with only 300 solders instead of 32,000! Again, we’ll look at this more on the 16<sup>th</sup>.

Like, I suspect, most people who lived then, he felt rejected by God. When the Angel says to him, ‘The Lord is with you’, Gideon replies:

*“Pardon me, my lord, 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.”*

Can you sense the feeling of rejection in his voice?

So how does this story so far speak to us today? Let’s asks ourselves a couple questions.

First, do we ever get ourselves locked in a cycle where we seem to get out of something only to fall back in it a few days/weeks/months/years later? The only way out is to do something specific. If we want something to change, then we need to change something. This is not just about negative things like sin, but it is also about improving where we are now! Being more faithful, being more loving, being more like Jesus. We need to be intentional in what we do. You know this is a Biblical principle. If we want to change something, if we want to improve, we must work at it. Paul talks about athletes in 1 Corinthians 9 and says we need to work hard like these people and of course that starts with prayer.

So the second thing this teaches us is sometime the world feels to us like Gideon's people felt about their world. That God had left them alone. That God had abandoned them. When we see so much hardship, so much pain, hunger, poverty; when we see people, governments and corporations moving away from the laws and ideals that God has laid down; when we hear stories upon stories about the church (at least in the West) shrinking and losing people hand over fist, which to be fair I don't believe, but we are discouraged. We're fed this story by the world and the church alike.

You know, I want to say, like Gideon and the time of Judges, God is still very much in control and we can trust Him that He is working in and through our time, our age as he did in 1200BC. He is still the all-powerful, mighty God.

And just in closing, I wonder if like Gideon, God is calling us to be part of the solution? Think and pray about it?

Sunday  
2nd May

Above is a summary of the sermon on Sunday, if you would like to listen to the whole service including, the sermon, the hymns and prayers you can find it on:

<http://www.derrifordchurch.co.uk/wp-admin/post.php?post=1025&action=edit>

**This coming Sunday morning's service** is being led by Phil Brewer and the theme is Elijah's Persistent Prayer and the reading is **1 Kings 18:41-46 and James 5:13-18**. Please do try to read it before coming on Sunday and if possible, you could also read 1 Kings chapters 17,18 & 19.

### This week's Notices...



- **Tuesday:** Prayers on Zoom (9:15am)
- **Tuesday / Wednesday:**  
World of Jesus (7pm)
- **Sunday Service (10:30pm)**  
*Both on Zoom and in Person*
- **Hall Preparation for Hiring Out**
  - Please remove any personal items
  - by the 10th May

Notices

## Prayer Pointers...

**Praise:** Every path of the Lord is one of mercy and truth for those who cling to His promise and written instructions. Ps 25:10

**Church:** Soon we will be opening our church to new groups, let's remind ourselves of all the prayer that has gone on over the years, and pray that the Spirit-soaked atmosphere of the church itself will be enough to bless those who are venturing inside the walls for the first time.

**Local:** North Plymouth seems to be getting busier every week. Keep your eyes peeled for new developments and pray into them that they will be beneficial for the community and not just for the planners and developers.

**National:** As most of you are aware this pandemic has caused many people who aren't usually fearful to fear, resulting for some in mental health breakdown. Claim God's promise that "He is able to do immeasurably more than we could ever ask or imagine."

Any prayer requests please text / email Lucy on:  
[lucyparker59@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:lucyparker59@yahoo.co.uk) / 07503 003250

## Future Events...

**Feast of Fun** The next Feast of Fun will be on **Tuesday 1<sup>st</sup> June**. Let Helen know if you can help. I am sure she will be ringing around in a few weeks.

**Derriford Film Club** our next film is on the 1<sup>st</sup> June at 7pm **Pay it Forward**. Future dates 6<sup>th</sup> July and 3<sup>rd</sup> August. If you would like to watch the trailer:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qfW0wCV9iFI>

**Nooma.** Nooma will start again once we have finished The World of Jesus in June. The next date for your diary is: **15th June 2021**.

## Other Church stuff...

### Church Hall.

As the hall is currently out of action the Deacons ask that all members who do not need to access the building, please return their keys. Please hand them to one of the Deacons. Thank you.

One last thing. The Deacons will be getting the Church ready for hiring so if anyone has any personal items in the building can they please remove them by 10 May as we will be hiring a disposal firm to take the "rubbish" away. Thank you again.



## **Mayflower Celebration, Worship event on the Hoe (11<sup>th</sup> July 10:30am).**

Exciting news. On the 11<sup>th</sup> July there is a Plymouth wide service on the Hoe to celebrate the 400 years since the Mayflower. It starts at 10:30am and more exciting news, we have been loaned a minibus by Plymouth College which will enable us to take people to the Hoe for the service! Isn't that great? We have 16 spaces, let me know if you would like to book a space?

Also, in the afternoon there are all sorts of things going on, again to celebrating the Mayflower. More details on:

<https://www.mayflower400uk.org/news/2021/april/book-now-to-see-plymouths-spectacular-international-mayflower-commemoration-event-this-july/>

Please note, if you want to go in the afternoon you will need to book a place (see website above).

**Literacy in a Box.** We have a new organisation using the church to pack literacy items for schools in Zambia. They are doing their first pack event next week and will then do two or three more each year. If you would like to know more about this exciting project, please watch their video on YouTube:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6yQliYkPnCQ>

**Prayer and reading list updating.** We are looking to build up our lists of people within the fellowship who would be prepared to read the scriptures or lead us with our prayers of intercession in church. Please let me know which, or both, you'd like to do! We are going to be looking at some simple (and fun) training to help if you have not done it before.

**Overseas Mission.** I am still looking for ideas for overseas missions that we could support. Have you got any? It would be nice if they were fairly small, so we could help make a difference.

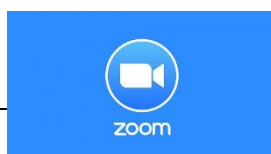
Well God bless you all, hope to see you on Sunday at our worship service either in person or on Zoom.

Mark

### **My (Mark) Contact details:**

Phone: 07851595578

Email: mark.woodhouse44@gmail.com



**Our Zoom meeting.**

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/83803659404>