

YOU ARE A FAITHFUL SERVANT OF THE LORD
Judges 13:6-24

David R. Clark

February 7, 2010

10-956EP
EP-5, c

⁶ Then the woman went to her husband and told him, "A man of God came to me. He looked like an angel of God, very awesome. I didn't ask him where he came from, and he didn't tell me his name." ⁷ But he said to me, 'You will conceive and give birth to a son. Now then, drink no wine or other fermented drink and do not eat anything unclean, because the boy will be a Nazirite of God from birth until the day of his death.' " ⁸ Then Manoah prayed to the LORD: "O Lord, I beg you, let the man of God you sent to us come again to teach us how to bring up the boy who is to be born." ⁹ God heard Manoah, and the angel of God came again to the woman while she was out in the field; but her husband Manoah was not with her. ¹⁰ The woman hurried to tell her husband, "He's here! The man who appeared to me the other day!" ¹¹ Manoah got up and followed his wife. When he came to the man, he said, "Are you the one who talked to my wife?" "I am," he said. ¹² So Manoah asked him, "When your words are fulfilled, what is to be the rule for the boy's life and work?" ¹³ The angel of the LORD answered, "Your wife must do all that I have told her. ¹⁴ She must not eat anything that comes from the grapevine, nor drink any wine or other fermented drink nor eat anything unclean. She must do everything I have commanded her." ¹⁵ Manoah said to the angel of the LORD, "We would like you to stay until we prepare a young goat for you." ¹⁶ The angel of the LORD replied, "Even though you detain me, I will not eat any of your food. But if you prepare a burnt offering, offer it to the LORD." (Manoah did not realize that it was the angel of the LORD.) ¹⁷ Then Manoah inquired of the angel of the LORD, "What is your name, so that we may honor you when your word comes true?" ¹⁸ He replied, "Why do you ask my name? It is beyond understanding." ¹⁹ Then Manoah took a young goat, together with the grain offering, and sacrificed it on a rock to the LORD. And the LORD did an amazing thing while Manoah and his wife watched: ²⁰ As the flame blazed up from the altar toward heaven, the angel of the LORD ascended in the flame. Seeing this, Manoah and his wife fell with their faces to the ground. ²¹ When the angel of the LORD did not show himself again to Manoah and his wife, Manoah realized that it was the angel of the LORD. ²² "We are doomed to die!" he said to his wife. "We have seen God!" ²³ But his wife answered, "If the LORD had meant to kill us, he would not have accepted a burnt offering and grain offering from our hands, nor shown us all these things or now told us this." ²⁴ The woman gave birth to a boy and named him Samson. He grew and the LORD blessed him,

Dear fellow servants of the Anointed One,

This story from Judges seem a little hard for us to relate to – at least at first glance. The Lord picked this unlikely family to be the one from which a powerful servant of the Lord would come. The Lord did so, not because of who they were, but because of who he is – as it is for you and me.

Unless someone here has a story they have not told me, I'm guessing that no angel appeared to your mother to tell her that you were going to become a child of God and a servant of the Lord. I know my mother never said anything like that to me. Considering we weren't part of any Christian church at the time, that shouldn't be a surprise.

As we study the Word this morning, I'd like you to consider what you have in common with these people, what it leads you to believe, and also what it leads you to do.

1

For Manoah and his wife this special visitor brought glad news. They had been childless and now they were going to have a son. But that son, would, in a sense, be a "special needs child." Their son was to be a Nazarite. Not only would there be some special things they would have to know to raise him, Manoah's wife was going to have live on a special diet during the pregnancy.

A Nazarite did not eat anything ceremonially unclean, but the two things that really set them apart was that they never cut their hair – a public sign that they were set apart for the Lord – and they did not drink fermented beverages. In a land where most of their water was from cisterns, they would "sanitize" it by mixing water with wine. The alcohol in the wine would make the water safe. A Nazarite would never drink wine and so would be set apart not only by his appearance, but also by his diet. In doing this, Manoah and his wife equipped their son through special training to be a faithful servant of the Lord. (6-14)

You and I do something similar to that. We also set apart ourselves and our children for the Lord even before birth as we pray for this child. When the child is born we sprinkle water on it in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit to continue to set it apart. We also recognize that baptism needs to be followed up by continued training. It's why we have Sunday School and our Lutheran Elementary School, our teen classes, and our Bible classes. To the rest of the world, undergoing a one time ceremony is something understandable. But, to continue to train and learn is something that sets us apart. It is our form of a Nazarite vow.

But there is even more. You and I see part of our training to be praying for ourselves and for others. We dress in modest ways. We order our lives in special ways. All of these things are ways that we set ourselves apart in our communities and when we do, we profess our faith publicly. We profess that special training is necessary for a faithful servant of the Lord.

2

This news was so great for Manoah and his wife, that they responded in the normal Middle Eastern way. They invited the bearer of this good news, this stranger, to their table, something that was part of being polite. But they also recognized that this man had a special calling from the Lord and their invitation honors that position.

Manoah didn't realize that this man was an angel, and not just any angel, but the angel of the Lord. This was the Lord himself taking on a human form to bless Manoah and his wife. The angel refused to eat anything, but did allow the meal to be offered to the Lord.

Manoah and his wife did just as the angel had encouraged them and not only made an offering of a young goat, but also some grain. They publicly professed their faith and thanks to the Lord through these offerings. These faithful servants of the Lord were primed by honoring the Lord. (15-20)

When you and I show hospitality to those who are not our friends and relatives, we do the same thing, we publicly profess our faith in the Lord. When we go out of our way to greet those we do not know first, we honor the Lord. When we welcome new members, when we congratulate those who are married, or have children or when we express our sympathy and support to those who have lost a love one, you and I are professing our faith and honoring our Lord. By so doing we show we put our Lord and others before ourselves.

It is nothing more than what our Savior did for us. His sacrifice to the Lord was for all of our selfishness, including those times when we were so intent on our own family and friends, that we did not clearly profess our faith to others by being hospitable. His resurrection was for you and me so that God could clearly announce to us that our salvation had been fully won for us. That makes these opportunities ways for us as thankful and faithful servants of the Lord primed to honor our Lord.

3

For Manoah and his wife, what happened next was beyond their wildest dreams. The angel of the Lord ascended into heaven on the flame of their sacrifice. It caused them to realize that this was not just a prophet, or just an angel, but the angel of the Lord. It was the Lord himself.

What would you do if you saw God? That's a question all of us will get to answer one day. For Manoah and his wife, it meant a confession of their unworthiness to stand before their Lord. Every failing they had came to the forefront of their minds. But God was not there to condemn them. He was there to direct them. As servants of the Lord, they were readied to follow God's direction. (21-23)

Isn't that where you and I find ourselves on a day like this? We come before our God as filthy sinners who deserve an eternal life sentence in an everlasting jail cell. But our Lord offers the words of forgiveness and assurance for Jesus' sake in the mouth of a properly called servant of the Lord. Christ's blood and righteousness become our rallying cry and you and I are prepared, reading to follow God's directions. We live for him. We serve him. It's about everything and everyone in our lives from our spouses, our children, our abilities, our material goods. They are all for his use. As God's faithful servants we are readied to follow his direction.

I purposely left off the last verse in this section. I'd like to read it for you now. ²¹
When the angel of the LORD did not show himself again to Manoah and his wife, Manoah realized that it was the angel of the LORD. ²² "We are doomed to die!" he said to his wife. "We have seen God!" ²³ But his wife answered, "If the LORD had meant to kill us, he would not have accepted a burnt offering and grain offering from our hands, nor shown us all these things or now told us this." ²⁴ The woman gave birth to a boy and named him Samson. He grew and the LORD blessed him.

God has already blessed you in the same exact way. Follow him. You are a faithful servant of the Lord. Amen.