

Sermon series on the book of Judges: *God keeps his promises*

Jacob Haasnoot, 2016 (context: International Church in Kampala, Uganda)

#	Text	Topic	Focus & questions to consider
0			<p>God has promised Abraham a people, a land and a special covenant relationship (Gen. 12). The people and the land are there (Joshua) but what about the Covenant? Despite the sins of Israel, God is faithful and keeps his promises. At the same time: God wants his people to change, to return to Him. Same is true for us.</p> <p>The judges were ordinary people, with courage but also with sins. We don't want to make them into heroes but portray them as normal human beings that are in need of God's grace. God empowers them to be part of building his kingdom.</p> <p>Try to make a connection with the NT. <i>For no matter how many promises God has made, they are "Yes" in Christ.</i> (2Cor. 1:20)</p>
1	Judges 4	Deborah: a strong woman used by God	<p>Give brief introduction on the time of Judges. Show the common cycle of: apostasy > servitude > supplication > salvation (use simpler words). It was special at this time for God to choose a woman judge. Talk about the role of women in God's ministry.</p>
2	Judges 6:11-24	Gideon: God's calling for our lives	<p>God calls Gideon to be a deliver for his people Israel. But Gideon is not sure. He needs an extra sign. This shows that Gideon is not a spiritual hero but an ordinary person used by God. What is God's calling on our lives? Do we object or have reservations? Why is it important to work with God?</p>
3	Judges 7:1-7, 15-22	Gideon: God gives the victory	<p>It is not Gideon or his large army that will conquer the Midianites, it is God himself who gives the victory. Still, God involves Gideon and his smaller army. How do we look at victories in our lives and ministry? Do we take all the credit or do we give glory to God?</p>
4	Judges 11:30-40	Jephthah: Be careful what you promise to God	<p>Not an easy passage but good to consider. Explain the story well so that everybody gets it clearly. Bible scholars are not sure whether Jephthah actually sacrificed his daughter or not. We do know that God does not want human sacrifices. Jephthah should not have made that promise. OT is not always clear about the moral of the story. Here it seems to be an example of something we should NOT be doing. How does it apply to us? Do we make (empty) promises to God? How can we show our gratitude to God in a good way?</p>
5	Judges 13:1-8	Samson (1): How do we bring up our children?	<p>Story of the parents of Samson. God does a miracle and gives them a child. This child will be used by God in a special way. How do we look at our children? Do we prepare them to serve God (Prov. 22:6)? How can we do that? (Make sure to involve those who do not have children (yet) and also say something pastoral to parents who have tried their best but their children went in a different direction).</p>
6	Judges 14:1-20	Samson (2): How God fulfills His purpose	<p>When you read the story about Samson it becomes clear that he does what he wants (taking a Philistine woman). Although Samson was dedicated to God, he doesn't always make the right choices. Don't make Samson too spiritual! Still he was used by God. God works out His purpose for Israel, sometimes despite Samson. This should be an encouraging message for us now. Even if we make a mess (we shouldn't but stuff happens), God can work through and around it (because He sticks to his promises). Best though is to work with God.</p>

7	Judges 16:1-21, 27-30	Samson (3): How (not) to make right choices	It seems Samson's testosterone levels were pretty high... Women play an important role in this story. Don't blame the women though, blame Samson. He makes a lot of bad choices and still God continues to use him. Quite amazing. How do we make right choices? What is our compass in life? Connect this with a NT passage. Try not to make it a moralistic message, give the principles (most important one: stay close to Jesus).
8	Judges 19:1-4, 14-16, 20-30	The chapter we don't want to read...	Beware, this is a real tough one! This is the lowest point in the story. Sin rules. It would be easier just to skip this chapter but that would not be fair. It is a story about (the lack of hospitality) and uncontrolled sexual lust. It parallels the story of Sodom (Gen. 19). This is how the world would look like without God and his good laws. This message is about the brutal reality of sin and why we need Jesus. Don't only talk about "them" or "the world" but also about "us". This is a story that happened within Israel, not among the pagans!