**WHO ARE YOU BECOMING?
Text: Judges 6:11-24**

The scene is set in troubled times. The Israelites have, not for the first time, done evil in the eyes of the Lord (v1) and suffered the consequences – they have become subjects of another power, the Midianites (v2). The big picture view is that things aren’t as they should be; the situation is a messy one. Invasion, ruin, ravaged land, impoverishment are some of the words found in the first six verses of chapter six of Judges.

In each succeeding generation, the big picture remains: things aren’t as they should be, the situation is a messy one. The same issues are being faced in our own context, in this country, in Europe, and worldwide. And irrespective of the reasons for their distress, people need to be rescued, to be given hope, to be valued, to receive education and welfare.

Israel needs to be saved out of the hand of Midian (v14). So God chooses to step in, to intervene by calling on an individual, Gideon.

Gideon is a young man with apparently not a great deal to offer, from the weakest clan in Manasseh and the least of his family (v15). Gideon is discovered threshing wheat in a winepress to hide it from Midianites. Now we may not be intimately familiar with threshing wheat, or winepresses for that matter! Shredded Wheats perhaps, out of a box for breakfast! But if we were familiar with the activity, we would immediately realise that a winepress is not designed for threshing wheat. The size and shape are all wrong! It’s a bit like trying to get on the internet using a typewriter. Or more like using wrong work tool to get a job done, such as using a hammer to cut a piece of wood. The reality was, of course, that Gideon was not impressed with having to work so hard growing wheat, only for the Midianites to help themselves to everything he had – all his hard work for someone else’s benefit.

He was so frustrated and angry that he tried to do at least something, however awkward and pathetic it was, and he had to do so in hiding – in a winepress instead of in the open. There was a spark in Gideon showing that at least he wasn’t just going to shrug his shoulders and accept the mess as it it was. He had to do something! He was sufficiently challenged to act somehow, even if it seemed awkward and pathetic.

What is it that sparks such a challenge within us? What is it that stirs us to action, however limited and restricted we may feel our response to be?

In the midst of Gideon’s frustration and almost pointless rebellion, God speaks to him, **calls him**, and says, ‘The Lord is with you, mighty warrior!’ (v12). Mighty warrior indeed! Not exactly the way Gideon sees himself, or even seems to show himself to be. One commentator gives this story the title ‘Overwhelming Odds’. No wonder Gideon’s immediate response starts with the words: ‘Pardon me, my Lord …’ (v13).

God sees and recognises that discontent in our lives, that deep-down sense that something must be done about a wrong situation, even if we don’t quite know what to do or how to deal with it – a spark of a fighting spirit, however clumsily expressed. It’s the discontent of the one who is called, and for whom things are not resolved until the right response is made. Not only that, but God sees the one he calls for who he or she **can** be … a ‘mighty warrior’.

God sees within Gideon what is required for him to fulfil that calling. God calls him in order to release from within him the potential that God himself has placed there. We see this when God says to Gideon, ‘Go in the strength you have’ (v14). You see, it isn’t only about what Gideon is going to be; it starts with who he is – ‘Go in the strength you have’. In the same way, God has called you for who you already are. But the key qualifying factor for Gideon is that, going in the strength that he has, he finds himself sent by God (v14), and with God (vv12,16).

We remember the words of Jesus who said to his disciples: ‘“Peace be with you! As the Father has sent me, I am sending you*.*”And with that he breathed on them and said, "Receive the Holy Spirit.”’(John 20:21-22)

But for Gideon, it all seemed too far-fetched (does that also sound vaguely familiar?). He thought it was unreal. And so he challenges, he puts all that he has heard to the test (does that also sound vaguely familiar?). He shows this, firstly, in challenging God about what has happened to the people of Israel (v13). Then he points to his own sense of inadequacy (v15). And finally he demands a sign (v17).

Isn’t that a fascinating response, when Gideon says, ‘Give me a sign that it is really you talking to me.’ None of us has ever tried that one, have we? But this leads ultimately for Gideon to this final realisation that, all the way through, the warrior’s call has truly been a conversation between him and God, a continuous series of prayer exchanges. It brings him to his knees and leads him to build an altar to the Lord as an act of consecration (v24), as he submits to the warrior’s call and finds peace! And Gideon became indeed a great and mighty warrior – and, as they say, the rest is history!

**Conclusion**

Are you challenged by what’s going on in the world? Are you keen to make a difference? Is God calling you to be the difference, and to enable others to make a difference? Who are you becoming as you try to respond to what is on your heart? Are you called to go in the God-given strength within you?

Are you finding yourself challenging God about it? What is your consecration going to look like?