

Day 18 – Feb. 22

I am SO glad to be finishing with Joshua and Judges. I know they are the Word of God, but man are they depressing and confusing! Today's reading, without any context of the last two weeks' reading, would make no sense in a Christian context. And this is how far too many people read the bible today. No wonder we never preach on, study, or suggest this part of scripture!

However, we DO have context, and so we read this in the context of both the book of Judges and in the context of the history of the Jews. And what we find is that these stories complete the final degradation of God's people. Remember the slinky example from the beginning of Judges, the idea that not only are these stories circular repeats of the same themes, but that those circles are spiraling down into corruption, like a slinky spiraling down into a sewer. From the earlier Judges who were mighty warriors and faithful to God, to Samson who was used by God in spite of his own corruption, we have watched the slinky spiral down. And today we reach the end of the slinky, buried in muck.

It begins with a man and his concubine left in the town square by an inhospitable community. This was a sin not only by the individual who left them out there for the night, but by the whole community. This compounds as the men come to attack and rape the honored guest. Instead given the concubine, they use her all night and kill her in their lust. This horror cannot be kept silent, so the man chops up his concubine and sends parts of her to each tribe as a call-to-arms. "Enough!" he says. And for the first time in a long time, the people unite in one action. But the action is the destruction of one of their own tribes. And the final solution after that tribe is nearly wiped out is for them to go and, with the blessing of the community, steal wives from their brothers. Corruption upon corruption, evil upon evil, death upon death.

The OT view of God's sovereignty is deeply challenged by this account. If God is in charge of everything, and all that happens, from the rains to the crops, is God's will, how can we justify this? Do we just write it off as "our God is mysterious"? Do we say, "This was against God's will and broke His heart"? Do we say, "This was God's will and we simply must obey even if we don't understand"? No person under 30 who is actually using their mind and heart could accept these answers. And so the only solution for us is to ask the hard questions that the bible doesn't answer here. We must sit with the confusion, cry out to God for answers, and then wait upon the Lord. Oh and one more thing... keep reading. Redemption of this corrupt world, even within God's own people, is coming.