

When There Was No King

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[0 : 00] We are finishing up tonight our series, The Gospel According to Judges. So we've been working our way through the judges and here we are at the very end of the book. This is where the book ends.

So we read a portion of that, three chapters to cover tonight. We can't possibly do that in any detail. So I tried to read from a section that I thought would give the overarching view of the story that happens here.

There's a good chance that if you've been in the church your entire life you have never heard a sermon on Judges 19 and 21. John Calvin never preached it.

Charles Spurgeon never preached it. Mark Lloyd-Jones never preached it. So good chance that maybe you've not heard a sermon on this. For 16 chapters we have the stories of heroes, people who save, redeemers, judges.

That's what the word judge means in the book of judges. Warriors that save Israel from their idolatry that God sends. And we finished up a three-part series on Samson and then you come to this decline narrative.

[1 : 05] And in chapter 17 and 18 we start to learn about this decline of the priesthood. And in 19 to 21 the decline of the priesthood gets worse. And the book of Judges ends with what one commentator says is the premier horror story in the whole of the Bible.

And that's the story. There's an assault, a very horrible scene, a murder, and then a civil war that breaks out in response to it. And it's hard to read.

If you go through and read Judges 19 to 21 in the fool it's a very difficult passage to read through. What's missing here, unlike the rest of the book of Judges, is there is no judge.

There is no redeemer. There is nobody that comes in and saves the day that God sends to save here at the end of the passage. There's no hope at the end. The very last verse we read is everybody did what was right according to their own eyes, there was no king.

And so the story just ends in utter hopelessness and evil really at the end of the book. It's only sadness. One of the commentators talks about how the Hebrew throughout chapter 19 to 21 is really terse and stark and minimal.

[2 : 14] So there's not a lot of language. Even the way the grammar structure just comes across as bleak and sad. And that's exactly what I think comes across when we read it in English as well.

Let me say before we jump in, the Bible is so gritty sometimes and so real and recounting to us some of the horrors that have happened in world history.

And if this were a legend, if you were trying to promote religion based on legends, this is not something that you would ever include.

The only way that this is here is if it happened. It's history. It's historicity that we have. This is a very historical account, the book of Judges.

And it's also very, very highly crafted text, 19 to 21. So the commentators tell us that if you read carefully, one of the things you can find is it's probably the case that what happens in 19 to 21 isn't actually happening at the end of the era of the judges, but sometimes maybe in the middle.

[3 : 19] But it's being placed at the end of the book of Judges to make a point. So it's both historical and written, the book, overall, to make a point to tell us something.

There's a lot of finesse in the language and the text and the way that it was written. And I think that when you see that, one of the things you see is that there is symbol in every single section.

There are things being pointed to in other parts of the Bible throughout this horror story. It's full of idioms and understatement and foreshadowing. So let's look at it together briefly.

I think we learned here in the most broad sphere of the story that God pursues, that Israel or the priest lingers, that Sodom grows, and finally Rachel weeps. Okay? So those four things. First, God chases, God pursues. After 19 verses one to four is sort of the preface to the whole story.

[4 : 19] And in it, it is in the most surprising way about God's love. And we read in the New Testament from John the Apostle, God is love.

And right here in the first four verses of this story, that's exactly the message. That's the idea that's coming out. You say, well, hey, I read it with you. I don't see where you're getting that from. But look, this is what happened.

In verse one, we have that refrain, in Israel in those days, there was no king. It begins that way and it ends that way at the end of chapter 21, verse 25. There was no king.

Everybody's doing what's right in their own eyes. And then right after that, we learn about this priest. Now when it says there was no king, it's not only saying there was no monarch in the land, which is true.

But it's also saying that every single person in Israel at this time doesn't have the Lord as their king. It's talking about the heart. There was no monarch. David was yet to come to the throne.

[5 : 18] That'd be many hundreds of years later. But here we read and say there was no king. There was no king in the heart of humanity, in the heart of Israel either. They weren't serving the king, the real God.

Nobody had a king. Everybody was their own king. They did what was right in their own eyes. That's the big idea. And so here's the priest. And it says here at the University that the priest, the Levite, he's a priest.

He takes for himself a wife. And the ESV translated says it took for himself a concubine from Bethlehem. But the word in Hebrew could be translated lots of different ways.

So it can just be he took for himself a wife, an Isha, a wife. We later learned that he treated her like property. But here it could just be read and I think it's helpful to say he took for himself a wife. Because what happens, she runs away, she leaves him, and he, after she leaves him, chases after her.

[6 : 19] And he goes and he pursues her. And it says that after months and months of this, he finds her and it says that he spoke words of kindness to her because he wanted her to come home. All right?

That's the preface to the story. A priest who's married to a woman who leaves him, runs away, and he pursues her and he chases her and he'll do anything he can to get her back.

He wants her to come home. And you know, if you think about it for just a moment, you read the rest of the Old Testament, that looks like the character of God.

So the whole Old Testament in some sense often frames God's relationship to us as his relentless pursuit of his bride. And he chases after her and he goes for her.

And you know, if you think about the whole book of Judges, the whole book of Judges is about God's relentless pursuit of his bride, his people, who are constantly running away from him and leaving him.

[7 : 15] And he refuses to not chase after them, to not go and get them, to not bring them home again. And the priest looks like that. He looks like that in this passage. C.S.

Lewis, I love what he says about the love of God. He says, the consuming fire himself, the love that made the worlds persistent as the artist's love for his work, despotic as a man's love for a dog, provident and venerable as a father's love for a child, jealous and extroval, exacting as a love of a man for his wife.

We get a parable and image here in this man's life of God's love and grace, the jealous husband that refuses to not go chase after his bride. Now if you're thinking about that, you might immediately jump in your mind if you know the Old Testament and the prophets to the book of Hosea, where Hosea marries a prostitute and she leaves him and over and over again he chases after her.

And he goes and he gets her and he wants to bring her home. And in Hosea there are three references to quote the abomination at Ghibia.

And the abomination at Ghibia in Hosea I think is referencing the story of the priest in this concubine, this woman. It's bringing this back up.

[8 : 39] Why? Because at first this priest looks like God, the one who loves us relentlessly, who will not let us go even when we run away. And then you read a chapter over and he is exactly the opposite of that.

So at first he looks like God, he looks like Hosea and then he becomes the anti-Hosea. He becomes everything that is against God and against the ways of the Lord and against the relentless pursuit of grace.

But before we move on to that I just want to say God says to us in the Old Testament and in the Gospel, just think about Luke 15, the father who pulls up his robe to run out to bring his prodigal son home.

God in the Gospel is the husband who comes to pursue his bride. He's the father who chases after his prodigal son. He's the one in Luke 13 where Jesus stands over the horizon from Bethany looking at Jerusalem and says, oh Jerusalem, weeping for her, how I long to gather you like a mother hen would gather her chicks under her wing.

He longs to gather us. He chases us. He pursues us. That's the love of God. And then for a moment the priest of God looks like that and then we see that he is actually the anti-Hosea.

[9 : 56] All right, so secondly, the priest lingers. Now we're going to come to the horror story in just a moment, but how does it move from this moment where the priest looks like the love of God pursuing his bride and that yet becomes the total opposite?

And I think there's a hint of why, how in this strange story that's hard maybe at first to make sense of, of just telling us that when he went to bring his wife home, the father in law, her father for five days in a row said, no, no, no, don't leave.

So that's what he read in verses three, four to eight. So the father, they're there. His wife has said, okay, I'll come home with you. But the father in law says, well, you know, it's late in the day.

It's dinner time. Just eat, stay here, spend the night. You can go tomorrow. And then tomorrow comes. And you know, by the time, then evening comes the next day and it happens five times.

And we can tell that he wants to leave in the story, but the priest just can't quite get himself to leave until after the fifth day. There's this real sense that he lingers and that the father in law gets him to linger over and over and over again.

[11 : 08] Now this is a highly crafted text and a historical text. And one of the things we see is first the priest looks like the God of the book of judges who continues to come after his people no matter what idol they chase, who loves them all the way to the point of coming and sending a redeemer over and over again, 12 times.

And then the priest lingers. And all of a sudden we see that there's a transition where the priest now looks like the people of Israel throughout the book of judges who every time they come, they see that idol, they're canonized.

They see something that they want that they lust after an idol and they lingers. They say, I know that God has told me not to pursue this thing, but you know, I don't, I'm not so sure.

And they stick around too long. And then they cry out to the Lord and say, we want you to save us. But then a redeemer comes and eventually they walk right back to the God that they were chasing.

And there's this theme in the book of judges where every single time Israel seems to keep just walking right back to the God that they've just been freed from, they linger. And you can think about stories that have already happened in the Old Testament where God's people linger.

[12 : 22] So I think there's a real connection here to the Sodom and Gomorrah story over and over again where Lot is told by the angels, get out of the city, get your family out of the city. This place is evil.

A lot of the same things actually happened in Sodom and Gomorrah that are going to happen in the story that we're about to look at. And it says, but Lot lingered. And you can think about the people of Israel crossing the Red Sea right after they crossed the Red Sea and they say, whoa, we miss Egypt.

You know, Egypt was so much better. There was good food. And we had it. Yeah, sure, we were working hard, but we had it a lot better in Egypt. And they actually wanted the idol that they had been set free from over and over and over again.

There's this narrative of lingering. The priests looked like God. And now the priest looks like Israel across the book of judges. And I think what's happening there is they're trying the author here is trying to take us a step towards understanding the true nature of evil because we're about to think

about evil, a horror story, real evil.

And one of the things that judges continues to make us wrestle with is the nature of evil. What is it that draws us into sin? What is it that makes humans evil?

[13 : 36] And we're going to see in just a moment. And very next story, humans can do terrible things, very terrible things. And in the 20th century, it became a really common thing to talk about environment being the primary way that we assess how evil arises in people.

So 20th century psychology, 20th century criminal psychology in particular talks a lot about how its environment that creates criminality and evil.

And so a way a person was raised, what they weren't given, the environment that they were raised in. And we've seen that that's very real. That's very true in so many ways. And one of the things that the book of judges wants to come, I think, and say to us is that while that is true, that environment really does matter.

We know that sometimes people who are loved really well and grew up in great homes and all those sorts of things can find themselves doing really terrible things. And psychology doesn't really get to the bottom of the nature of evil, of what's wrong with us.

And I think one of the messages here is that secondary circumstances do not cause evil, they enhance evil. Secondary circumstances are not the cause of our evil, but they can enhance it or diminish it.

[14 : 52] And instead, the cause of evil is that we linger. What I mean by that is throughout the whole book of judges, we keep, the Israelites run back to the idols they've been freed from and the priest sticks around too long in this location.

And it takes you all the way back to the Garden of Eden where lingering looks something like the serpent coming and saying, well, did God really say?

And Adam and Eve being slowly convinced, you know, I know that God has told me the way to live, I know that God made me, I know that God loves me, I know that, but I'm not totally sure that God's got my best interests at heart.

I'm not actually sure. And lingering, the heart of evil is when there is no king, you just become your own king.

You just live according to your own desires. When every human being just does whatever they want to do, we linger, we say, you know, I know God made me, I know God loves me, I know God has set the good path for my life and told me how to live.

[15 : 55] And at the same time, I'm not really that sure that God has my deepest interest, you know, I've got to look out for myself. I've got to be number one. Who's going to love me and take care of me if I don't do it?

And throughout the book of Judges, that's really the story is that we just let our desires carry us into anything because there is no king in our hearts. We are the king of our hearts. That's the heart of Judges. That's the truth about canonization, about the embrace of evil.

It's a thousand million little decisions to be the king of our own lives. That's the message of the story, I think. Sinclair Ferguson, he tells a story that I think really gets us across about what we think about God and the heart of hearts and the deepest of our hearts as human beings.

He says, imagine that it's Christmas time and you take a dad, takes a little boy to the toy superstore.

He walks through the store with a little boy and he says, listen son, you see that toy right there? And he says, oh yeah, I see it dad. And he says, do you want that?

[17 : 01] You know I want that toy. And he takes it to the next aisle and says, do you see that toy there? Oh yeah, I see it. Do you want that dad? You know I want that toy.

And every aisle he takes him, he points out the greatest thing on the aisle and he shows it to him and the boy says, oh, I want it. And the dad brings him to the front of the store and says, listen, the reason I brought you here today is to tell you I am not getting you a single thing from this store. I am not getting you a single thing for Christmas at all. You won't get any toys. And Sinclair says, you know, in the heart of hearts, that's what we think about God. The father who exists to restrict us and to not have our interests and to not want greatness for us, not life for us, that's what we think. And so he says, you know, I know God said all this stuff and I know he made me, but I really don't know. And I feel like I would be better in control of my life than he will be.

And so we linger around the tree of the knowledge of good and evil a little too long until we take and we eat. And I think that's what's happening to the priest here. He stayed. Like so many have lingered around idolatry and eventually it captures them.

[18:15] And so the nature of evil is that utter evil, the heart type story that we were about to read about comes about in a thousand small ways. So third, Sodom grows.

Now here's the story. We read the summary of the horror story in chapter 20, when the priest recounts it. And so you can go back later and read the details of exactly what takes place. But just to say that eventually the priest takes his wife, who is now definitively as the ESV translates it, concubine property to him clearly.

And they go to Ramagibya, these two towns that are connected to one another, Ramagibya. And they stay there and a man says, don't stay out in the town square. It's a dangerous place. Come into my home. And so he's there. He's in the home and in the middle of the night. Stay similar to the Sodom and Gomorrah story. The men of the city come and they try to take the man and his family and assault them.

[19:15] And the owner of the home pushes the priest's wife out of the door. And she is assaulted and murdered throughout the course of the night, eventually murdered on the doorstep of the door.

And so it's a true horror story. She becomes an absolute victim of such a terrible event. And what we see is that the priest allows this to take place.

So he's not the one that pushes her out the door. The man's home, it's the man's home that pushes her and he watches it all take place. A few things that then I think the narrator is trying to get us to see here.

One is that there's three great crimes at least that occur here. There's sexual assault and there's murder. These are the first two, the very visible and obvious first two.

And when you look at the literary craft, especially the Hebrew text as the commentators talk about, one of the things that jumps out is the text never tells you what to think. And instead it gives you, it doesn't give you any gory details.

[20:16] Instead it gives you very terse language, very stark verbs. It's very short. And I think that leaves a sense of utter sadness in the passage.

And one commentator says, if ever a human being endured a night of utter horror, it was she. That night must have seemed as the dark pit of hell itself.

We see here in this moment that she is no wife of his, he treats her like property. And remember, this is not chronologically at the end of the book of Judges, it happens somewhere during the time of the judges.

But it's being placed here at the very end of the book of Judges to say that this event is the height of evil. It's at the end to say that we've reached ultimate evil in this book and amongst this community. It's the end of a down spiral of humanity that takes place here. Let me say about this, just one thing very briefly. In the Bible, the God of the Bible, steps in in Genesis chapter two, in Proverbs chapter 12, and in 1 Corinthians 11 verse seven, and says the same thing three times.

[21:29] And all those passages, God says that woman is the crown or glory of creation and the crown or glory of mankind, of humans.

And so in the creation story, we have this wonderful picture where God creates Adam, but then he says, but it's not yet very good. And then he creates Eve. And when Eve comes, the language is at last bone about bones, flesh and flesh.

So there's this real image in the creation that woman Eve is the pinnacle of the creation story. And it's not surprising at all that Proverbs chapter 12 says that woman is the crown of mankind, of humankind.

Or Paul says in 1 Corinthians 11 that a woman is the glory of man, that she is the pinnacle creature, pinnacle of creation. And that's why in the New Testament, when the new and better Adam, the true groom, comes to save his bride, he says that the whole church is the bride of Christ, all of us. And so even the images and metaphors of salvation are cast in this pinnacle image of a bride, a groom coming for his bride.

[22:39] And that means that what happens in this horror story at the very end of the book of Judges to say that this is pinnacle evil is the exact reversal of creation order.

It's complete flipping on its head of what should be. Where we see in the beginning in the creation story of Genesis two and three that God made Adam the, what was Adam, the priest.

And he was given the pinnacle of creation, his bride. And he was told, guard and protect and care for the garden, love your wife, build creation order in the way that God's made it. And we see in Adam a man who set while she was tempted by the serpent and did absolutely nothing. We learn in Genesis three that Adam was with her as Eve was tempted by Satan. And we read about a man in this story who sat in the home and watched this happen to his wife and did absolutely nothing. And you see this is the utter reversal of all creation order.

[23 : 41] This is the height of evil. This is everything that should not be and God hates it. That's the point. It's here. It's descriptive, not prescriptive. It's saying to us prescriptively, God hates it. That's why it's at the very end of the height of evil in the book of Judges. And it's no coincidence. It's no coincidence that this is a young girl, this woman he marries is, she's from Bethlehem. She's a young girl, Bethlehem. And she draws us to think of Eve and Mary and all that God will do with a better priest pursuing the true bride.

She enters into the pain like the pit of hell on this night. And the question I think, and we'll move on, is just to say, does God care? And the answer is absolutely yes. And in Hebrews four verse 12, we have, I'll just leave you with this phrase, Hebrews four verse 12, so important. Hebrews Christ, we're told, is the better priest who sympathizes with our weaknesses, with our struggles, with our sufferings, with the evil that people experience in this world.

[24 : 48] So many people, and probably people in this room have experienced some horrible things in this life. And just to say that the word sympathize in our English is not strong enough, what it says in Hebrews four 12.

In Hebrews four 12, it says that Jesus sympathizes with those who suffer evil, who walk through the pain of this life, and sympathize. It means more literally to suffer with. Not just somebody who says, oh, wow, I'm sorry that that happened. No, it says that Jesus Christ suffers with, meaning that the God of all creation who does not change became, became human, and as a human being, he suffers with us. He feels the pain. He knows what it's like to experience such great evil. He suffers with us. That's the promise of the gospel that our Savior has suffered and suffers, knows the heart of the sufferer to the uttermost.

But what the narrator focused on, and we'll move to the final thing, what the narrator focused on here is one particular evil, I think, above all others. And I think the evil that's being highlighted across these three chapters is very particularly the passivity of the priest.

[26 : 07] So I think above anything else, the narrator is trying to bring that out. And the reason for that, just to make it simple and to reiterate, is that that's because this man is like Adam, watching his bride be taken.

And just like Eve was overtaken by Satan, so this priest stands utterly passive, doing absolutely nothing. And you've got to ask the question when you see such a horror story of a man who stands aside and does nothing, what should he have done? And the answer, I think, is pretty clear. He should have stood against evil. He should have fought for his bride. He should have gone down to death for her. He should have walked out and gone and fought to the death for her.

And this priest who does not look like God anymore did not, but we have a better priest who came into this world to go toe to toe with every single evil, every single injustice, and to fight to the death, to die, to win by losing, a better priest to redeem his true bride.

And that means that we're left at the end of the book of Judges with a book that leaves you in hopelessness, but leaves you in immense longing, immense longing for a priest who would give himself to death for the sake of his bride, for a king.

[27 : 28] In this day, there was no king in Israel. And so we're left longing for a better king, a true king, a time when there will be a king, a king who will bring justice. And evil like this will be wiped away.

There will be healing in his wings. Finally, fourthly, Rachel Weeps. If we look at the overall overarching story and we think about the civil war that breaks out, which is the whole of the last two chapters, is about the civil war that breaks out because of this event, there's something really interesting that takes place. Just highlight that very quickly. This event looks a lot like Sodom and Gomorrah. And it also looks a lot like the Rachel and Jacob story, in a way.

So if you think back to the book of Genesis, Isaac had a son, Jacob, whose name would be Israel. He would be the father of the 12 tribes of Israel.

And Isaac, Jacob, sorry, went out to find his wife, Rachel. And when he found his wife, Rachel, the father-in-law said, well, no, no, no, don't leave.

[28 : 34] Stay, layman. And layman told Rachel and Jacob, you know, if you really want to be mayor, if you really want to have Rachel, you've got to stay.

And lingered and lingered and lingered and it took forever. And then when they finally did leave, where did Rachel go? Rachel went, Rachel and Jacob, they went to Ramah.

And when the priest and his wife leave, they go to Ramah Ghibiel. And there, Rachel gives birth to Benjamin and she dies.

And here, this woman goes to Ramah and she dies at the hand of Benjamin. The Benjaminites are the one that kill her.

And then we have this very famous verse. You may know about it from Jeremiah 31 and Matthew 2. A voice is heard in Ramah, mourning and great weeping, Rachel weeping for her children and refusing to be comforted because they are no more.

[29 : 34] Now that verse has lots of meanings. The depth of Rachel's weeping across the whole Bible, so many layers. But I think it begins here where Rachel, in a metaphorical sense, weeps from the grave for her Benjamin, the tribe of her son who has committed this great evil against this woman.

And when you read chapter 20, verse 20 to 25, one of the things that you think, we read it, it's about the Civil War, Israel gathers together all the tribes and takes up arms against Benjamin and says, you know, Benjamin, bring us the evil men that did this.

They must be judged. They must be condemned to death. And what happens instead is sort of the opposite of what you would expect. Israel goes to battle against Benjamin and Benjamin several times in a row wins.

And you think, surely God is going to bring Benjamin to judgment. God is going to destroy these evil men of Benjamin that did this evil thing at the hands of the Israelites and the priests, you know, taking and saying, we've got to go do this.

This is what happened. And instead that doesn't happen. The Israelites lose in the Civil War, at least at the beginning. And I think the reason for that is the pronouncement at the end of this book is being made.

[30 : 47] That when you look around and you say, well, who are the good guys? Where are the good guys? Is it Israel? And God is saying, no. Is it Benjamin? No.

Is it the priest? Is it the priesthood? The Levites? No. There are no good guys. Everybody has run away from the Lord. There is no king in Israel. It feels utterly hopeless.

And for that reason, he takes her body and puts it into 12 pieces and sends it across all of Israel wide because Rachel's weeping in her grave saying the sons of Jacob, Israel, the 12 tribes, they're no more.

They're destroyed. They've lost everything. They don't follow the Lord. None of them do. There is no hope. Nobody is pursuing God. There's no good guy at the end of the story.

So let me close with this. What's wrong with the world? And there is such a thing as maximized evil. We just read about it. Utter horror.

[31 : 44] The climax of evil in the book of Judges. We've seen it here. Evil to the max. But oftentimes our culture wants us to think about a spectrum of people. There's good people and there's bad people.

There's really evil people and there's normal people, the good people. And the Bible comes in and destroys that and cuts through that and says the truth about the human heart is that it is wicked continually, that we are born in an equity.

And the book of Judges, I think, calls us at the end to just take a look at ourselves and know ourselves and look at our own heart and say that the true nature of evil, the true nature of evil is when we say, I know God made me, but I'm not really sure he has my best interest at heart.

And we become our own kings. And that's the bottom, at the bottom, the root of the nature of evil. Hannah Arendt, one of the very famous philosophers from the 20th century, she wrote a book called the banality of evil.

You may have heard of this. She wrote it while she observed the trial of Adolf Eichmann. I mentioned this on a Wednesday night a couple of months ago, I think. But Adolf Eichmann was the creator of the Nazi death camps.

[32 : 56] He was one of the main architects of the death camps under the Nazi regime. And Hannah Arendt wrote this book and it really shocked a lot of people because it's called the banality of evil because her thesis in the book is that when she studied Eichmann and other figures like that at the end of World War II that had run the architects of the Nazi death camps and things like that, she said that she found them all to be very quote, run of the mill.

And she said that the evil of Eichmann, she writes about in the book, was thousands of small choices, commonplace, little sins, mostly complacency.

She said that a lot of it was Eichmann seeking a promotion. He just wanted to rise up the ladder in the culture that he lived in. Little idols stacked on top of little idols, stacked on top of little idols, lingering until one day utter evil was normalized very slowly.

And 22 years later, well after she wrote this book, Mike Wallace, on 60 Minutes, one of the famous television interviewers in the U.S. interviewed Yehiel de Neur.

Yehiel de Neur was one of the witnesses against Eichmann at the trials in Nuremberg. And Yehiel de Neur, when he walked into the courtroom, when he saw Eichmann, he passed out.

[34 : 21] He fainted. And 22 years later, Mike Wallace is asking Yehiel de Neur, what went through your mind? What caused you to pass out when you saw Adolf Eichmann? Was it hatred?

Was it fear? Was it because you stared into the face of utter evil? And Yehiel de Neur startled Mike Wallace and the American viewers. Immensely, he said, no, no, no, no. Here's what overwhelmed me.

I came in, I looked at Eichmann, and I realized this is not a demon. This is not a superhuman. This is someone just like me. And if he's capable of doing this, so am I.

And Yehiel de Neur said very famously, Eichmann is in all of us. And he faced himself. And he says that he's pointing, you know, he understood the Old Testament and the Old Testament comes and teaches that sin is at the base of every human heart.

Because we say there is no king, I want to be my own king. And the heart of humanity is continually evil. And the nature of evil is to reject the king. It's unbelief.

[35 : 23] It's unbelief. The problem of evil is us. And Christianity does not offer a philosophy, a therapy. It offers a person.

Jesus Christ, the true and better priest, the better Hosea, the real king, the God who chases and pursues and will not leave us until he saves us, until he redeems us, until he shows us mercy.

So let me say this. There is so much to say in every individual case of anybody who has experienced utter evil in their life, maximized evil. So much to say.

And tonight I just want to say that no matter what we have done, no matter what has been done to us, there is eternal hope in the priest who died for his bride.

There is healing in his wings. Let's pray. Father, we come to you to recognize the power of your holy word. And we see in the book of Judges that even in the midst of such horror, there is the message of the gospel that we have a true high priest, a true king, and a true husband who would not leave us in the midst of a culture of evil, a society of evil, or with our own heart full of sin, but who came to save, who came to redeem, who came to rescue his bride.

[36 : 48] So we just ask now that you would renew us in that we just sit for a moment in the sadness of this world and we look out and we lament the horrors that people experience and we recognize the pain and the truth that there really is evil.

There really is deep sin that wounds. And we look to you, Lord Jesus, tonight for some measure of healing in this life and for utter and utmost healing in the life that is to come.

So we take hope tonight, we pray for those who need tonight to take hope and glorification and resting in the fact that one day justice will be done and healing will be given under the wings of Christ.

And so we ask, Lord, that you would comfort us with that hope and help us to rest in that and we pray that in Jesus' name. Amen.