

Chapel Pointe – Morning Service
 Pastor Daniel L. Rundhaug
 Series: “Mirrored Image”
 © 08/01/2010

“Giving In... Getting Up” Judges 16:1-31

Introduction (Me):

Story of Melanie getting set up on a blind date with me... She didn't want to go. Her Mom made her...

Sometimes I wonder just how different life would be if at that point, Melanie's Mom didn't persuade her to go...

Tension (We):

What does tomorrow look like?

Life is built on each other – today's choices affect tomorrow's circumstances.

You're in the **job** you are today, because at some point in the past you sent in a résumé, filled out an application, had an interview and you were hired.

You're sitting next to your **spouse**, because at some point in time in the past you looked at that person and either asked him or her out, or accepted that invitation and that first date turned into the willingness to say “I do.”

In about four weeks, many of you will be heading to **college**, some for the first time, and you're going to this particular college because at some point, you looked at your grades, you looked at your ACT score, you looked at the financial assistance available, you looked at the distance away from home and you made a choice that this school is the best option for you and you're committing tens of thousands of dollars and four years of your life.

Some of you are **retired**, and the only way that was possible was by looking at what you had invested, looking at your expenses, and determining that there would be a point in time when you would be able to leave work and enjoy the rest of your life without the hassles of a boss.

Where we are in our spiritual life is accomplished the same way. You have the relationship with God you do today because of the choices you've made yesterday.

“Success doesn't just suddenly occur one day in someone's life. For that matter, neither does failure. Each is a process.” – John Maxwell, Today Matters, p. 19

Main Point: “Tomorrow's life is determined by today's decisions”

Contextualization (God):

Series: “Mirrored Image”

Series Review... #1 – “Can You Hear Me Now?”

... #2 – “Only One Degree Off”

Last Time... #3 – “Convenient Christianity”

Today... #4 – “Giving In... Getting Up”

“Dear Lord, So far today, I am doing all right. I have not gossiped, lost my temper, been greedy, grumpy, nasty, selfish or self-indulgent. I have not whined, cursed, or eaten any chocolate. However, I am going to get out of bed in a few minutes, and I will need a lot more help after that. Amen.” – Today Matters, p. 51

Text (God):**v. 1-3 – In Enemy Territory**

1. There’s a big gap in the life of Samson... about 20 years...
2. Samson let his gaze for a woman lead him into sin (v. 1)
3. The Philistine knew he was there and watched for an opportunity... (v. 2)
 - a. **Illustration: Movies where the bad guys are telling their victims what they’re going to do instead of just doing it. They wait so long they eventually miss their opportunity.**
4. Samson escaped and showed his power by taking the gates away... (v. 3)
 - a. Having your gates removed was a humiliating act, and pointed out the vulnerabilities of your city.

v. 4-22 – Samson’s Downfall

1. Again, Samson loved Delilah... (v. 4)
 - a. Samson continually played with fire in his relationships.
2. The Philistines bribed her to see Samson’s weakness (v. 5)
 - a. Bribed her with between several thousands and \$500,000.
 - b. Attempt #1 (v. 6-9)
 - c. Attempt #2 (v. 10-12)
 - d. Attempt #3 (v. 13-14)
 - e. Attempt #4 (v. 15-22)
 - 1) Samson allowed each new answer to get closer to the truth
 - 2) Samson didn’t see the danger in straying in a situation where his companions were not looking out for him
 - 3) Samson gave in to pressure and convenience and told her his source of strength
 - 4) Low Point (v. 20-21)
 - a) Samson returns to Gaza, this time in humiliation not victory...

v. 23-31 – Rising from the Ashes

1. Samson allowed the Philistines an opportunity to worship Dagon, their god, and to mock the true God (v. 23-24)
2. Samson is their entertainment and he sees an opportunity (v. 25)
 - a. Samson wants to be used again! (v. 25-28)

- b. **Illustration: People who come out of retirement – Joe Gibbs coming out of retirement to coach the Washington Redskins again. Compare that action with his book, “Racing to Win.”**
 - c. **Illustration: Brett Favre’s inability to commit to retirement – unfinished business...**
3. Samson asks for God to use him. Will He?
- a. Violated his commitment to God (Nazirite Vow)
 - b. Had sex outside of marriage
 - c. Didn’t see a big deal with little sins
 - d. Took credit for God’s actions
 - e. Only called on God when it was convenient
 - f. Allowed himself to be entrapped because he was focused on his pleasure
 - g. Do you see yourself in any of those situations?
4. Samson, by faith, reached the pillars and said, “God use me again!” And... He did!
- a. Samson brings down the temple (v. 29-30)
 - 1) Two pillars supported the roof of the temple – Cedar Wood – 1 foot in diameter
 - 2) They rested on stone bases, and held in place by the weight of the roof
 - 3) They were about 7 feet apart, so a large man could span the distance with his arms extended
 - 4) “The moment one definitely commits oneself, then Providence moves too. All sorts of things occur to help one that would never otherwise have occurred. A whole stream of events issue from the decision, raising in one’s favor all manner of unforeseen incidents and meetings and material assistance which no man could have dreamed would come his way.” – William H. Murray, Today Matters, p. 164
 - b. The ending – sin still has consequences... Samson died... (v. 31)
 - 1) “The only thing that walks back from the tomb with the mourners and refuses to be buried is the character of a man.” – John Maxwell, 21 Laws, p. 62

Application (You) “What do they need to do?”: Are you going to give in or get up?

Your tomorrow depends on how you answer that today!

For some of us, we feel like Samson in this fourth image – we knew what it was like to have a strong relationship with God, but because of one wrong decision after another, we feel as low as Samson did in verse 21. We look at our life, and we wonder if God could ever take our broken pieces, filled with bad choices, and still do something amazing in our lives.

- Whether we’re one degree off...
- Whether we’re convenient Christians...
- Whether we’ve fully given in to sin...
- Ultimately, feel distance from God

We’re like Samson, wondering if God can use us again. Even though we’ve messed up... can God still use us?

“Where there is no faith in the future, there is no power in the present.”

For others, you’re sitting here, and you know that you’ve never had God in your life. You’ve admitted to Him that you’re a sinner and asked Him to forgive you of all your bad choices in life. In fact, you may be in a similar position as Samson as well, wondering whether God could even forgive you for what you’ve done.

God knew how bad we were, and how good of a sacrifice we were going to need, He already sent His Son, whether you accept His forgiveness or not, God's action is already done...

It ultimately doesn't matter how bad you have been – Samson was pretty bad – God never says, “I give up!”

Main Point: “Tomorrow’s life is determined by today’s decisions”

Inspiration (We) “Why do they need to do it?”:

We've probably all seen our image in the life of Samson. For some of you, that image was an affirmation of where you're at in your relationship with God. You saw yourself clearly in Image #1, and you're living your life with your ear toward the leading of the Spirit.

For others, some of you, the image was not quite so encouraging. Whether you found yourself thinking it's okay to be only one degree off, Samson shows us that starting one degree off doesn't stay there, but it keeps you moving off course farther and farther.

Or you saw yourself in Image #3, living a life of convenient Christianity. And it felt okay, until you realized that you're settling for something less than God's best for you. No one would purposely settle for mediocrity, and yet, that's what many of us do in our spiritual lives.

Finally, maybe you've been waiting these four weeks to see yourself, wondering when an image would hit you, and you know this week, this image of Samson is you. You look at your life, and you see a shattered mirror, and you wonder if there's any hope of seeing a positive reflection. Hopefully you've seen from Samson's life today, that we're never too far gone from God's ability to use us.

Wherever you see yourself in these images, we'd like to offer you an opportunity to come forward, and commit to God, that whatever image you find yourself in, that you want God to do an amazing work in your life, that direct you to, or keep you in Image #1 where God's best can be demonstrated in your life.

There is something powerful about physically getting out of your seat and coming to the front in a show of commitment to God, that you want His best in your life. If the Mirrored Image is something that's challenged you, let me give you one more challenge, come forward and grab this mirror as a reminder that your reflection is being changed and developed each day of your life and how you live today determines what your tomorrow looks like... What do you want your Mirrored Image to look like?

Finally, some of you may be here today, and you know that you need to feel the forgiveness of God in your life, and you need to accept Him as your personal Savior. As the band plays and people are coming forward to grab their mirror, if you're someone who needs to accept the salvation offered through Christ this morning, there are some individuals standing in the back that would love to talk to you about the gift of salvation that God is offering to you freely today. The lights will be down, you won't have a spotlight on, and today, you have an opportunity to experience a life-changing event if you choose.

“That’s What Faith Can Do” / Response Element // Prayer / Closing Comments

Mighty to Save