

Recovering a Will for Adventure and Spiritual Achievement
David Jahnke, based on Judges 4 May 22, 2016

So Deborah led and later on a foreigner named Jael helped the Israelites to overcome evil oppression and death by two women:

Today we honor a group of women-- Nancy, Dee, Lynne and Libby -- who have risen up out of trials and had a tremendous impact for the good in this world. They and all the preschool and Sunday School teachers have devoted themselves to our church's and community's children. The earliest years are the most important when it comes to a child's development not only in the home but at school as well. My sermons is about taking the battle to evil and there is probably no more important vocation in this regard than yours.

I would like to first invite director Nancy Bantz, retiring teacher Dee Vasnelis and a pillar of our church C.E. program for decades Libby Andrews forward... We miss Lynne Tanguy who had her daughter's graduation today. And I present these flowers as small tokens of our gratitude.

And if all of the other Sunday School and preschool teacher would come forward for a prayer as well. Thank you all so much for all of the knowledge, wisdom and love you have shared with our children.

Let's please give them a big hand...and let us pray.

This homily was originally going to lift up women who like Deborah attend to God's Word, teach and make good judgments and lead us into battle against evil. It does a little but it also morphed into a call to men. I met with a young father who will not live to father to his two very young sons. I got to thinking about other youngsters without dads or absentee ones. And I felt I had to take this chance to speak to young fathers here to live with a greater passion and love for our own children, yes! But our obligation is not just to ours but to others we can impact as well. Another part of the urgency and call to action was a documentary on the horrors if Isis.

But first I want to talk about documentary about the history of rock-climbing in Yosemite National Park. It developed in the 50s and 60s as part of the counter-cultural beatnik and hippie movements. The free-spirited nature of this was in part a rejection of what had been happened to the Spirit of the American Man after World War II. We have largely lost our Spirit. We need a break from adventure after battling the evils of the third reich. But this break has kept on...we

our spirits have become domesticated and we have over the decades continued this trend, gradually losing our spirit of adventure.

Now this has coincided, however, with the rising up of women into the world, thanks be to God. This Pentecostal rising up and sending out goes as far back as 900 b.c. with Deborah and Jael.

These two were not afraid of anything. Deborah was a prophet and a judge which meant she was on top of both the religious and political worlds. And she told her general Barak that it was time to raise an army of 10,000 to end the enslavement of her people. Barak would not get any glory, however, and instead the glory would go to Queen Jael. After Barak had the Caananites on the run, their general was welcomed by Jael into her tent. She told him to rest and then killed him.

Strong women have been following Deborah and Jael's lead ever since; in religion, in politics and now in the military as well.

One of the pioneers in rock-climbing was a woman named Lynn Hill, who not only hung with the boys, she became the first person, male or female, to free climb the nose of a 3000 foot high very steep cliff in Yosemite called El Capitan. That's about two and half empire state buildings...

But why climb rocks? Primarily to push one's mind, spirit and body to the limits of what they can achieve. It is about the development of great focus in your mind, great strength in your body and great courage in your spirit.

We have huge mountains to climb as well. And we need to recover a Spirit of adventure and risk-taking. True love demands risk. Our God will not leave us alone to just grow our families and our bank accounts. He calls us to focus our minds and use all of our strength to bear his Love for the whole world and children everywhere. Jesus called such love for God and neighbor-- with all of our heart soul, mind and strength-- the most important commandment.

On Thursday, I saw a few of our preschool graduates leading our community in love and justice through their 7th grade services learning projects. Of the dozen good ones I saw in my son's room, let me note a few: 1. two boys raising awareness about hunger and collecting food for hungry children in our state. 2. Girls fighting for equal pay for equal work; 3. football players exploring concussions in their sport and calling on officials to improve football padding and helmets. These are big issues calling for attention and they are trying to get the attention of the powerful.

Now when it comes to children and pastors with assignments; this is a simpler matter; it is part of our work after all! But when you are working 60-80 hours a week, including a commute, like many of you, it is a different story. I am guessing that even the enslaved Israelites were not working as hard as many do in this part of the world. And Deborah liberated her people from enslavement.

Through our companies and your work and your salary, you are doing good Kingdom work. But many of you have excessive burdens placed on you. And God wants to liberate you from them because your work and salary and company do not own you and must not enslave you. Do not be afraid of the consequences of taking a just stand. Do not be intimidated. Make time for God, family and yourself and use your influence to try and better line your company or business' work up with the ways of God's Kingdom.

Remember that Jesus' sent the disciples out into the world to heal and feed and free people from evil and they are our example. There is so much evil to address.

Check out the new Frontline documentary on the rise of Isis and how the blunders of both the Bush and the Obama administrations contributed to their eventual reign of terror. Jesus told the disciples to as wise as serpents or as innocent as doves but we were neither. We rushed into war and then we rushed out of it. And we now have evil on the loose in Iraq and Syria.

But when evil has been on the loose throughout history, American men and women have sacrificed a great deal to counteract it. That is what we will celebrate next Memorial Day weekend. So what will our generation sacrifice for the good of all? We may not be drafted or go to war and in fact, more war is probably not the answer. The battle is always within— it's a matter of the spirit of lost souls and a matter of education. And God is calling us to sacrifice—to offer up our time, talents and treasures in order to further his salvation in this world.

I am sure you have heard that God loves you and yours always, no matter what, just as you love your children. But because God loves his children everywhere, God will not accept either complicity or complacency regarding horrible things happening to his children around our world.

And I wish I had concrete answers to complicated problems. But I believe we are smarter than ever when it comes to problems we face and better than ever when it comes to relating to different peoples with whom we share these problems; better at least internationally and inter-ethnically, if not domestically when it comes to politics.

But this critical question that remains—if God has blessed with the the mind and hearts; the intelligence and the morality to carry out this mission-- can we find the will to engage in the very difficult battle ahead? Will we find the courage needed?

Deborah allied herself with a former adversary in the Kenite Queen Jael. It is time to better engage American Muslims as friends and allies and join them in engaging their fellow Muslims around the world. The violent radicalism in the present is the result of a fundamentalist Islamic movement called Wahhabism which started in the late 19th century. But I believe a peaceful counter-revolution to is emerging within Islam, thanks be to God. And we must encourage and should join it.

Because this is part of the Pentecost Spirit of God spreading over all the earth. So three charges in conclusion: 1. join this spiritual movement and be more active in society, breaking down barriers and building friendships with South Asian and middle eastern peoples around you. 2. With them, pursue truth and love and peace rigorously for the sake of all our children's futures. And 3. be prepared to make sacrifices as the 10,000 Israelite soldiers were willing to do as well as so many millions more who have come before us. Do it all joyfully, remembering that God, Life and Goodness prevail...through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.