

# Kings Norton Baptist Church (Wharf Road Chapel)

*Sunday 9<sup>th</sup> August 2020 10 am*

Stand out - don't fall for the neighbour's gods!

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Welcome and new coronavirus instructions.

Opening prayer

Hymn MP 237 Holy Holy Holy  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JwuDSw-9cUQ>

Scripture Reading Ps 112

Prayer / testimony

Reading Judges 2:1-3:6

Hymn MP 987 Here is love

Sermon Stand out - don't adopt the neighbour's gods!



Hymn

*Retiring offering box by the door.*

Closing prayer MP 200 Great is thy Faithfulness

Close -----

Listen to today's sermon by clicking on the link at [www.knbc.org](http://www.knbc.org).

The audio file is [20\\_08\\_09.mp3](#) in the sermons directory

Accompanying [20\\_08\\_09\\_slides.pdf](#) slides (from Corel Draw of that name)

*Welcome, pray*

■ The Russian playwright and novelist Anton Chekhov wrote a series of short stories in the late C19th. They are to be commended. One is about a couple, a husband and wife. He is a doctor and she has an interest in art. He is steady while she flits around often away visiting fellow arty types. She comes home but never stays long. Her heart and mind take her away again to the company she prefers. There is the faithful husband and the unfaithful wife. He becomes ill and this prompts her to come home at least for a bit. Then he dies. Now she realizes just how kind he was and how faithful he had been to her - while she was so unfaithful to him - and she weeps. The story's title is the 'grasshopper'

She is the grasshopper. She is the one hopping here and there. Christians to can like grasshoppers', hopping here and there – as she was unfaithful, so we can be unfaithful - to the Lord, The Lord who has been so faithful to us. This is the message of the book of Judges so very applicable in our day.

It has a simple but key message for God's people, i.e. the 'church'. The focus this morning is on the 'church'.

Christ laid down his life for the church. He now faithfully sustains it by His Spirit. Will it remain faithful to him? "Will I remain faithful to Christ?" Will you remain faithful to Christ?

*A word regarding the background.*

After God's people entered the promised land under Joshua and before the days of the prophets from Samuel on, there is this period of Judges. From the death of Joshua 1:1 about 1360BC to Samson circa 1090BC (=250yrs) Things are fine while Joshua is alive 2:7 but when he died the people fell away. The passage we read is a summary of the whole book of 12 judges and showing how God's people repeatedly turned away from their Lord.

Jesus brought them into the land but instead of being faithful to Him and being distinct from those around - they joined in with them - and ended up becoming like them.

Often the book is explained under the following headings four *S's*.

1. **Sin:** The people fall into sin as they worship the false gods of the Canaanites.
2. **Servitude:** The people's sin brings on a period of servitude in which Israel becomes subject to people they once controlled.

3. **Supplication:** After a time in servitude, Israel cries out to God for relief from their sufferings.

4. **Salvation:** After their pleading God raises up a leader to save the people from the oppression they had come under.

Circle on screen - The recurring pattern in the book of Judges

### *Faithful God - unfaithful people*

God is faithful and true to his promises, let us be completely sure about that. He says you will no more break them than you can stop the sun to shine.

God made promises to his people: 2:1 **"I brought you up out of Egypt and led you into the land that I swore to give to your forefathers. I said, 'I will never break my covenant with you,** God is completely, utterly, fully faithful, He is true to his word. His love and faithfulness will never fail.

Therefore, He expects and requires faithfulness in return. God's people are to be faithful to him as a husband and wife are to be faithful to each other. Don't be unfaithful! To do so is to commit adultery. He goes on to say 2 **and you shall not make a covenant with the people of this land, but you shall break down their altars.' Yet you have disobeyed me. Why have you done this?** Yes quite why, how foolish to disobey such a good God! They had no reason to.

Map of promised land, explain the nations around 3,4

The Israelites where to live here. These other nations were some distance away, a bit like living in England and having neighbouring countries France and Holland. It is fairly easy to draw a line - and keep away from them.

But the Lord says **"Because this nation has violated the covenant that I laid down for their forefathers and has not listened to me, 21 I will no longer drive out before them any of the nations Joshua left when he died. 22 I will use them to test Israel and see whether they will keep the way of the LORD and walk in it as their forefathers did."** Again 3:1 - and again 3:4 **They were left to test the Israelites to see whether they would obey the LORD's commands.**

Which are these nations that remained? **the Canaanites, Hittites, Amorites, Perizzites, Hivites and Jebusites** - and Where are these nations??

Point to the nations within the area they were going to inhabit 5,6,7,

So **The Israelites lived among**, they will be *cheek by jowl* as the saying goes. They're not miles away but next door, across the road, at work, etc

And who are they? They are the natives of Canaan. Worshippers of different gods. God's people, followers of Yahweh the one true Holy God were to live amidst wicked people, it would be a test! Would they morally distance? So what made these people tick? what was important to them? Who did they look to? If you leant over the fence and asked: "Which god do you look to?" the word was 'Baal'. Baal the supreme male divinity of the Phoenician and Canaanite nations, as Ashtoreth was their supreme female divinity.

The sun-god, under the general title of Baal, was the chief object of worship of the Canaanites. Each locality had its special Baal, or Baalim, or "lords." Baal the Fortune-bringer for Power is as naturally symbolized by the sun. In astral mythology they're associated with the planet Jupiter. So in different places the same god, or the god with the same function, had varying names: An inscription at Palmyra names him Baal Shemesh, "owner of the sun". Philo says his Phoenician title was Beelsamen "owner of the heavens."

In Moab some miles away to the east, Baal is identified with Molech.

At Tyre, Melkart 'lord of Tyre' is identified with the Greek God Hercules, And the Roman gods were renamed Greek god's!

Now I know you didn't come here this morning for a lecture on ancient near eastern deities. You rightly ask: "How does this affect me living in this modern world?" I've never leaned over the fence and asked my neighbour "which god do you worship!"

Bear with me a little longer..... it helps to see what these God's do...

Baal was a god of the weather and associated with thunder. He was a familiar name for the storm-god Hadad and personified the rain and fertility-forces of nature. His worship ensured the fertilization of the ground by regular rainfall. His worship was marked by the 'sacred marriage' and orgiastic rites operating as a form of magic.

Terrible immorality and evil formed part of their worship. The robed worshippers gashed themselves with knives at times to move him to pity and even sacrificed their sons and daughters to them. Child sacrifice was a regular feature of the religion of the Canaanites and the surrounding nations.

Do you know **The sacrifices of pagans are offered to demons?** Yes they are.

So God's people are keeping well away right? We must not catch anything from them! God's people must have run a mile - and surely put into practice

the principle found later in Ps1 - the Godly happy **man does not walk in the counsel of the wicked or stand in the way of sinners or sit in the seat of mockers.**

Would God's people see how terrible these practices were and be filled with dread? Avoid like the plague? And cling to their good God?

- Like holding firmly to the rail on a high suspension footbridge
- Like clinging to the wall when walking along a high up parapet

No - Sadly not, ... they intermarried with them. **6 They took their daughters in marriage and gave their own daughters to their sons, and served their gods.**

**Monarchies often intermarried - why? To unite countries. So intermarrying is a way to unite, join up with, and become one with, - and bring together.**

God had said: **“Make no treaty with them, ....“Do not intermarry with them. ... for they will turn your sons away from following me to serve other gods, and the LORD's anger will burn against you and will quickly destroy you.”** De

7:2-4 as Ex 34:10-16,

So in the NT in 2<sup>nd</sup> Cor 6:14 Christians are told 'do not intermarry' or join up with unbelievers for you will end up being lead away from God. x2

What happened? God's people had lost their clear vision. When considering a husband or wife for their children they didn't consider those around in terms of their spiritual state - but made decisions based on how nice they looked or how pleasant they were, or convenient, or just not think about it.

**Don't do it. Those Israelites failed the test. Let us not do the same and fail.**

Don't forget the Lord, don't dishonour the One who called you to holiness.

Their hearts had gone astray so their worship had become hollow words. 3:7 **The Israelites did evil in the eyes of the LORD; they forgot the LORD their God and served the Baals and the Asherahs.”** Again v11 12 **They forsook the LORD, the God of their fathers, who had brought them out of Egypt. They followed and worshipped various gods of the peoples around them.** Again v13 17 **Yet they would not listen to their judges but prostituted themselves to other gods and worshipped them.** 20 God says they violated the covenant that I laid down for their forefathers and have not listened to me.

Through these nations Gods people were seduced to the worship of a vile god: **“They (the Israelites) built the high places of Baal in order to burn their sons in the fire as whole burnt offerings to Baal, something that I had not commanded or spoken of and that had never even come into my heart.”** Jer 19:5

✚ **God hated it. He still hates it! How could God's people be so drawn?**

Why would God's people be so unfaithful? - And be involved in such evil?

In those days in Canaan, if they looked over the garden fence and all seemed to be going well with your neighbour, they were prospering, their crops were growing well, there's a fat car in the drive. They seemed to have few troubles, how is that? The answer would come back “Well you see if you just come to the Baal Temple and bow down and ask him, he will help you”.

- Ever asked your neighbours about their gods? No we tend not to! But if things seem to be going well with them we may ask how they managed it?

We don't think about our neighbours as pagan or heathen, we think of them as fellow Brummies, workmates, or wherever, after all they don't bow down to idols of wood and stone do they?

The Caananites worshipped idols. So what is an idol? It is something set up in the place of God. God is there - but we put something in front, this other 'thing' looms so large so that God is obscured.

No not idols of wood and stone, not usually in our country. Today many have replaced God with - themselves. I am in front, I am in the centre now!

Adam and Eve's essential sin was one of idolatry, - there's another way better than God's way - I will substitute God's way for this way, - my way.

So although God is the one who promises to supply all I need, instead of looking to him - I look to something else. In those days that something else was Baal, or Ashteroth but today it's me, my success, my health, my .....

Those around think “This is not God's world where he is the source and one to be thanked and honoured, no it is my world, it is my life, I can create my world and make my way in it. I make my rules and others are there for me.

Because their lives depended upon the rain that fed the crops, God's people instead of trusting the Lord would say OK why not follow Baal he has helped them. Here's the way for a better life for me, - it works for them.

- The TV constantly presents a picture of everyone's efforts at making life work, looking after ourselves in this life, making the best of it. That's normal right!
- So to adverts: “Live life to your hearts content”, “Invest in pleasure”, “enjoy your body”, “Love Money? Have more”, “Live life on your own terms”.

**Life is about me, & for me to be happy I need others to give me what I want**

The government will fix it. It's just incredible how much money is floating around.

- We were in Torquay last week and went out for a lunchtime meal. We were told to order through this App (Round). Without realizing it the government gave us a discount for the food, all automatic. Incredible. When in the history of the world did governments give so much money away?
- The furlough scheme has already reached £31 billion. =£31,000,000,000

To make my life happy I need things to go well, a full range of services to look after me, so I can enjoy my leisure and enjoy my entertainment.

That was the seventies dream, the postwar dream, it has always been the dream, be prosperous so you will be able to have time to enjoy your leisure.

The worldly person finds his satisfaction through the accumulation of things, unnecessary things, when I need a lift I go shopping, when at home it's endless entertainment. A full life is a life of leisure and fun. People treat the world is one big adventure playground. Nothing is to be taken seriously.

- Boy with a T shirt that said "I paused the game so I could be here"

I won't upset things by thinking of important subjects such as life and death, beginnings and end, that God might actually be there and this might be his world not mine and I will one day have to account for my actions. No these thoughts are too troublesome. This is how the worldly man or woman thinks

- The world makes up its own rules. It is like a tailor who makes the suit to fit. So the worldly man or woman tailors the rules to fit them in all their distortions and made to please the person. Everything to is be a good fit for me.

As a Christian the more TV you watch the more it's values of a world without God become your values. You won't notice it, but what will happen is that you will become less Biblical in your outlook and more worldly, the love for God will grow cold, so to your love for His people. Your heart will be drawn and your time given to godless things, you will pray less and trust him less.

No - instead they blended in. 8,9,10, Even to the point of being invisible, indistinguishable. No different. 11

Do you know Christian you are to **love the Lord your God and serve him only!**

- ✚ God's people in becoming unfaithful to him, - became unholy

### *Holy God – unholy people*

God is Holy, He is NOT x2 like the god's of the nations around, **You must not worship the LORD your God in their way**. De 12:4, again a little later we read **You must not worship the LORD your God in their way, because in worshipping their gods, they do all kinds of detestable things the LORD hates. They even burn their sons and daughters in the fire as sacrifices to their gods.**

De 12:31

We don't hold babies out before pagan gods, but are you and I dulled to the horror of 200K young lives aborted in England every year! 98% of them because of inconvenience It didn't suit the mother ...

- As early as the C18<sup>th</sup> John Wesley, founder of Methodism, had warned of this compliance. 'What one generation tolerates the next generation will embrace.'

How much are you as a professing Christian adapting to the moral values of the culture around? – and unwittingly bowing down before the gods of self.

**You may not seek it's values but it's values seek to find a home with you.**

- James Dobson of Focus on the Family in his retirement speech 10 years ago said many / or all of the battles had been / were being lost.

✚ **This is our day, your day, the battle for Gods kingdom is on our hands.**

Beware of Entertainment not prayerfulness, acquiring instead of giving, {giving stats} eating too much, laziness, little self-control, prioritising leisure pursuits over the Kingdom work. Lowering of moral standards in the church. Etc. etc

The church is failing to confront these sins - partly from fear of upsetting people and partly because they just don't see them as so wrong any more.

As a follower of the true God do you stand out? Are you distinct, can people see clearly you are not like others? You are not like the rest on your street?

- One preacher here challenged us "If you were arrested today and charged with 'being a Christian' would the police find enough evidence to convict you?"

God's calls his people to holiness, despite the proximity to those who serve other gods we are not to join in or mix in Holiness means separate, distinct

The consequences - **13 They provoked the LORD to anger** (and) God was angry, and God *is* angry today. No wonder we feel weak, empty and miserable – he has handed us over.

Love the world? Then see how it helps you!

God brought trouble on his people. Then they would see & turn

#### ✚ The cross of Christ

You want prosperity? True riches are found in Christ – Will you above all be obedient to the will of God? Then you will have all you need in this life.

*God is faithful – love overcomes His anger as he stays true to he promises*

“ **Then they got rid of the foreign gods among them and served the LORD.**

**And he could bear Israel’s misery no longer.”** Jud 10:16

#### ✚ How quick the Lord is to respond when we come with repentant hearts

Repentance is the answer, a turn around is the answer, it always is. And a gracious God, will receive you. Turn and you will find that true.

We as the people of God must stand firm and remained as pockets of righteousness among those around with their evil practices. 11,12,13,14

And that is why we as God’s Holy people are to be as **stars shining stars in the universe**, bright points against the darkness

- No more acting like a grasshopper, but steady and faithful to the Lord - who in turn is always faithful to you and I.

Christian – stand against the godless demoralizing effects of the world around.

The way to protect against hopping around, or merging into the background is to be active for the Lord, active in gospel sharing, (join me on Wednesdays) do this and you will keep the distinction between Christians and non believers sharp.

We must stand out, stand up, be different be distinct

- Like the fish that goes against the flow. Which fish always goes with the flow? Dead ones, dead ones they only go one way, the way all are going in. - It is only those who are alive work against it, it takes effort but we can, Gods spirit in his people is our very able strength.

So as Gods people I urge you resist the subtle pull of the world. Stand up, stand firm, stand out. May the Lord strengthen you and I to the task. Amen

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*END*