



Stranger Than Fiction

Judges 19:22-25; 30; 20:1; 21:25

Message from Pastor Martin Hawley

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Bottom Line: What you think is good for you is not only not good for you - it's not good for anybody.

Introduction:

Today, we're going to study one of the strangest stories in all ancient literature. The narratives in Judges take place between the time Israel settled in the land known as the Promised Land and the establishment of Israel as a kingdom.

For 330 years (1380-1050 BC), Israel was a **commonwealth** of tribes that had a common ancestry and religious beliefs. But, they had no king.

They were a lot like you and me. They didn't like being told what to do. So, for 300 years, there was a cycle:

Disobedience → Disaster → Deliverance

This is a cycle we've all experienced, Christian or not.

The final episode in the Book of Judges is so graphic that I'm not going to read some of it out of sensitivity to those who didn't send your kids to Kid's Club.

Story from Judges 19-21

The last verse in the book of Judges – Judges 21:25 (NASB), says “In those days there was no king in Israel; everyone did what was **right** in his own eyes.”

All the people in the story did what they were convinced was right.

And who are you to tell them any different?

Everybody did what they thought was right individually but, collectively, it was so wrong!

There's a streak of that in all of us.

The unstated part of the American Dream: We have the freedom to do **what** we want, **when** we want, with **whom** we want, and **nobody** can tell us what to do.

With one **civilized** American caveat: as long as it doesn't **hurt** anybody.

There are a few problems with this:

Only the super-rich can afford it. They are the only ones who can afford the attorneys' fees.

This generally works out better for men than **women**. When men do what they want, women usually pay a huge price. Where women have rights, they've had to **fight** for them. Why? Because when men do what is right in their own eyes, women become possessions and profit centers.

You can't do what's right in **your** own eyes without eventually hurting **someone**.

Eventually, **you** hurt **you**. Eventually, you will be **mastered** by something.

You hurt the people **with** you.

You hurt the people who **care** about you.

You hurt the people who are coming **after** you.

In the end, this thinking makes us all **hypocrites**.

When we begin to reap what we sow, we all look for a king to bail us out.

Nobody wants a king until doing what we want lands us in a place where we can't do what we want.

Remember disobeying your parents and then calling them for help?

NEXT WEEK– Right in the Eye: One King Leads to Another

Don't be deceived: People who do what they want, when they want, with whom they want, eventually discover that one king leads to another.

- Mom, I'm pregnant.
- Dad, I'm at the police station.

It's why some of you are here today. *Maybe God can help me ... the God I didn't want interfering in my life.*

The good news is...It's one of the themes in Judges.

It's okay to ask!

Conclusion:

If you were God, how would you respond to a culture, a nation, or an individual characterized by what I want, when I want, with whom I want?

How would you respond knowing that “every man for himself” isolates every man unto himself and ultimately from himself?

That's what we are going to chat about for the new few weeks.

A few weeks from now, our families, our communities, and our nation will pause and celebrate the birth of a **king**. A king. How odd.

The celebration of the birth of a king in a nation that seems more intent than ever on doing what is right in our own eyes ... how strange.

NEXT STEPS:

- Memorize: Judges 21:25.**
- Think about when you did what was right in your own eyes.**
- How did that go? Disobedience → Disaster → Deliverance**
- Are you ready to call God for help? If so, pray and ask. It's okay!**
- Return next week for Right in the Eye – Part 2**