

EHUD: Becoming an Agent of God

We all know who James Bond is. But before James Bond, there was Ehud. Some of you go, “E-who?” Yes, the name is not very familiar. He didn’t star in any spy movie but his name is right here in the book of Judges mentioned in the same breath as Gideon and Samson. Probably, you’ve never even heard of this guy until now. But his life is a fascinating story of intrigue, bravery, trickery, and espionage but no romance. It is the story of a secret agent. More than that, it is the story of an underdog.

This kinds of resonate with us because we like stories about people who seemingly are handicapped and yet are able to overcome big and frightening enemies. When an unknown, unlikely, and overmatched individual goes up against the big guys and wins, we all take pleasure in the accomplishment, don’t we? I think we love these stories because we see ourselves as underdogs. It gives us hope and motivation if someone like us has a great victory!

Today we’re going to look at an episode in the life of Ehud, a spy and an underdog in the book of Judges. Please open your Bibles to Judges 3:12-31 (NIV) and follow along as I read from this passage. Let me warn you though that it contains one gory scene that could rival those you find in James Bond movies.

Now, let’s look closer at the life and character of Ehud. Ehud was the son of Gera, a Benjamite. We also know some things about his make-up. He must be trustworthy because he was given the responsibility of taking the tribute to present to Eglon. And he must have been courageous, because he was

willing to go it alone. Unlike the Terminator or Rambo, he didn't go in with a lot of heavy artillery. All he took was a double-edged, 16-inch dagger. Ehud was a military strategist. He plotted to kill Eglon, to get him alone, to tantalize him with something very special. And he had an escape route planned.

That's why Ehud reminds me of James Bond. He was a secret agent. He was a man with a mission from God. The story of his assassination of King Eglon reads like a spy novel.

Today, I want to make some observations about this man Ehud that I believe can be applied to our lives. From his life, we can derive three principles that can help us to become ourselves an agent of God. But as agents, we should differ from Ehud in two respects. First, we're to be visible agents not secret agents. As Jesus says in Matthew 5:16, "*Let your light shine before men.*" And more obviously, we don't go around killing people in the name of God. We're to pray for our enemies as Jesus says in Matthew 5:44, "*Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you.*"

So, here are the three principles you can apply in your life to become an agent of God.

I. I MUST CONFRONT THE ENEMY

Ehud wasn't afraid to confront the enemy (in this case, Eglon who represented sin). You can't read the book of Judges without talking about sin. For instance, sin can grow to an obese state. We see this in Eglon, the king of Moab. If you let sin go unchecked, it just grows, and it can become terribly

fat. And sin is ugly. I think the story of Ehud has tremendous shock value. We can try to justify sin, we can paint it pretty colors, we can deny its importance or relevance, but when we look at it for what it is, it's just plain ugly. At first, it seems pretty and likable but it shows its ugliness once you dabble with it. And get this, sin is not easy to kill. It doesn't go away by ignoring it. It must be faced head-on – like Ehud taking on Eglon – even if it is gory and disgusting.

I read the true story of John Hanneman. He's a Christian who called his pastor inquiring about getting married. His pastor asked him if he and his fiancée were both Christians, and he said he was, but she was not.

They talked about that for a little bit, and they were even able to talk about some of the patterns that had developed in his life and in his relationship with this woman. Evidently they were doing things that an unmarried couple should not be doing. Finally, the pastor said, "I have to be honest with you. I cannot be involved in your marriage because of what the scriptures say about a Christian marrying or having a relationship with a non-believer." It was a real blow to John.

Then, a couple of weeks later, John and the pastor had lunch together, and he told his pastor that he had called off the marriage and was in the process of severing the relationship completely. He had begun to see the patterns that had developed in his life over the last few years, and how he had become dependent on women. In this relationship he was dependent upon her, not God. She controlled his life. So for the first time he said no to the flesh, no to what he thought he wanted to do, and yes to God. He was learning about God again. He was back in church; he was growing, and

becoming dependent upon God. He's in the process of being delivered and being made whole. His face was radiant, as he kept saying over and over again, "This is a very difficult thing for me to do, but it feels good." In other words, there was rest; rest had entered the land once again. He had said no to the flesh; he had said yes to God. After years of enslavement he was experiencing rest. All because he confronted sin head-on.

Now, in the story of Ehud, we also learn that people are content to stay enslaved for a long period of time. It took Israel eighteen years before they cried out to the Lord. We have to ask ourselves, why did they wait so long? Why do WE wait so long when we become addicted to patterns of sin? Perhaps because we're afraid or ashamed to face the reality or the ugliness of these patterns and addictions. Maybe we feel we're going to lose something we enjoy too much. Or maybe we're content to remain where we are and our misery becomes comfortable.

But we have a Redeemer, a Savior, a Deliverer whose name is Jesus, and he saves us from the dominion and power of sin in our lives. Whether it's been eight years or 18 years, we can cry out to the Lord today. We can turn away from sin and he will begin to free us from our enslavement to patterns and addictions. Then we see the result of coming to Christ, of turning away from our idols and having him deliver us. The result is rest and peace. God says in Isaiah 30:15, *“Only in returning to me and resting in me will you be saved. In quietness and confidence is your strength.”*

After Ehud judged Israel, there was rest in the land for 80 years. Because he faced sin head on, Ehud allowed himself and his people to

experience peace like they never had before. That is what happens when we deal with sin.

Sin makes us miserable; it robs us of our sense of joy and well-being. But God gives us new life in Christ and gives us rest from our enslavement to sin. Paul writes that the wages of sin is death but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord (Romans 6:23).

So, to become an agent of God, I must first confront the enemy which is sin. Then,

II. I MUST USE WHATEVER WEAPON IS GIVEN ME

The second observation we can make about Ehud is the fact that he was left-handed. Who among you here are left-handed? They say that lefties are peculiar but creative. My wife is left-handed. That's why she's peculiar... and also creative. Do you know Ally and Eze are left-handed, too? Only Eza is right-handed like me. God is merciful.

I remember when Anabel and I got engaged eleven years ago. Naturally, we prepared the wedding invitations and being creative, Anabel designed all of them and I was pleased and I heard many people were pleased too. But during the time we were preparing those invitations I noticed something peculiar about them. When I checked some of them, I saw that the cards weren't put inside properly, like when you pull it out, it didn't come out naturally. Like this envelope. (demonstrate)

I wondered at first why this was so. All of them were done by Anabel but wondered why Anabel would arrange them that way. Until I figured out

that it was because she was left-handed. And so, I had to rearrange them, all 200 of them. Not really. I think there were only a few that was like that before I caught it.

Then also, in the early part of our relationship, both of us have to adjust because of a peculiar situation we always find ourselves in inside a restaurant. When we sit on a bench chair with a back like at AppleBee's, and she is on my right, we find it hard to eat because we literally rub elbows. And so, we get up and exchange seats. I have to be conscious of this whenever we eat inside a restaurant.

Anyway, let's talk about Ehud again. So he was a lefty. He was from the tribe of Benjamin. The name Benjamin means "son of my right hand". But you know what, this tribe was characterized by a large number of men who were left-handed and some of them were soldiers. In fact, in Judges 20:16, it says that out of the 26,000 fighting men of Benjamin, there were choice 700 men who could use the slingshot with great accuracy. Biblical scholars say this was a genetic trait among them.

If Ehud were alive today, he would have made it great as a baseball pitcher. As a warrior, however, during his time, it was kind of a handicap because it means apart from having a sword or other weapons that was especially made for him, it also meant wielding it in a special way. Verse 16 says that he made his own sword. That's why, perhaps, those who were left-handed were given the slingshot instead of the sword.

In Hebrew, the literal translation of the phrase "a left-handed man" which is described of Ehud in verse 15 is actually "hindered in the right hand."

Thus, Ehud was left-handed because he was "hindered in the right hand," meaning, his right hand was weak and physically limited. Perhaps, it was a birth defect. Perhaps, he suffered injury. In any case, he couldn't use his right hand as much as his left hand.

Ehud was an unlikely hero; a man who was handicapped and not well-known. He was an underdog, an obscure person, a man whom God chose to use to his glory. Ehud could very easily have dwelt on his disability and doubted his value to God. He could very easily have passed on the opportunity of taking the tribute to Eglon and hence passing up the opportunity to deal with him. Ehud could have doubted and said, "How could God possibly use me?" Most likely, he was an expert in the use of the slingshot not the sword. But if he was going to kill Eglon, whom he was going to meet face to face, a slingshot was not the best weapon. He had to rely on God to help him use the sword. In the end, Ehud accepted his potential in God's eyes. He rested in his value to God.

We encounter these people all throughout the book of Judges. What we have here are underdogs, obscure people, men and women whom God chose to use to his glory. Like Gideon and Samson and Abimelech and other judges. Jesus was a most unlikely hero too. Isaiah says in Isaiah 53:2-3 (NIV)

2 He grew up before him like a tender shoot, and like a root out of dry ground. He had no beauty or majesty to attract us to him, nothing in his appearance that we should desire him. 3 He was despised and rejected by men, a man of sorrows, and familiar with suffering. Like one from whom men hide their faces he was despised, and we esteemed him not.

Yet Jesus accomplished the single most important act in history: He died for our sins, thus becoming the greatest hero of all. No one recognized him when he came upon the scene. There was no red carpet, no fanfare. An unlikely hero.

Now here we are in Christ. We, too, might feel like underdogs; that we don't have the right credentials. Our family background is not good enough, we think. We feel we're too ordinary. We don't have what it takes. We're not as strong as Pacquiao. We're not as beautiful as Megan Young. We're not as intelligent as Steve Jobs. But our text tells us that God can use us in amazing ways. This room is filled with possible Ehuds. It doesn't matter what your family background is. It doesn't matter if you're limited in some capacity. God sees you as very much more than ordinary. He takes each one of us from our different backgrounds, with our different talents and our different gifts, and he molds us uniquely into a representation of himself. We don't have to look alike. He uses us, each one of us, in unique ways. And God is excited about how he wants to use you!

The miracle of Christianity is when God takes someone ordinary, someone just like you and me, he uses him or her to his glory. He doesn't heal all the problems or the handicaps at first. The miracle is, he uses us when we're limited. This is how he used Ehud. He takes a life that the world discards and uses it to his glory. Paul says in 1 Corinthians 1:27, *"But God chose the foolish things of the world to shame the wise; God chose the weak things of the world to shame the strong."*

Sometimes it takes only one person to motivate many to righteousness. That's what happened in Ehud's case. He was willing to go on the attack first,

but then he blew the trumpet and all of Israel joined in the battle, routing the enemy!

There may be just one person here this morning who wants to influence his or her generation for Jesus Christ. We live in similar times to the book of Judges, don't we? "Every man did what was right in his own eyes." (Judges 17:6) Our world is coming apart at the seams. Immorality and tolerance for sin is running rampant. But then there are the Ehuds. People who are willing to do whatever God wants them to do – using whatever God has given them to use.

Do you believe that about yourself? Do you believe that God can use you in these ways, that you're valuable and important to him and that you can make a difference?

A little boy was heard talking to himself as he walked across the backyard, baseball cap in place, ball and bat in his hands. "I am the greatest hitter in the world," he said. He threw the ball up, swung and missed. "Strike one," he said. But again, he told himself, "I am the greatest hitter ever." He threw the ball up again, swung and missed. He looked at the ball, and at the bat, and said, "I'm the greatest hitter that ever lived." He threw the ball up again and swung and missed a third time. This time he said, "Wow! Strike three! What a pitcher! I'm the greatest pitcher in the world!"

God thinks you're great at something. You may not be what you envisioned, but you're great in his eyes. He sees your heart; he knows your potential. He will take you, with your limitations and weaknesses, and use you to his glory. But are you willing, like Ehud did, to accept your potential in God's eyes?

To become an agent of God, I must confront the enemy, I must use whatever weapon is given me, and

III. I MUST HAVE FAITH IN MY COMMANDING OFFICER

What allowed Ehud to have the victory, to serve God and to be used by God, was not his own strength, but his faith in God. He believed in God. God was his commanding officer. He was just obeying orders. He didn't ask any questions. What was it that Ehud said to Eglon? *"I have a message from God for you"* (v. 20). Certainly, this gained the ear of the king but it was also something Ehud firmly believed in – the message was the sword and the sword was God's swift judgment on Eglon and deliverance from the Moabites. And then listen carefully to Ehud's words to the Israelites when calling them to battle, in verse 28 (NIV), 28 *"Follow me," he ordered, "for the LORD has given Moab, your enemy, into your hands."*
So they followed him down and, taking possession of the fords of the Jordan that led to Moab, they allowed no one to cross over."

Can we trust God the way Ehud trusted him?

There was this guy who had a problem trusting God.

Me: God, can I ask You a question?

God: Sure.

Me: Promise you won't get mad?

God: I promise.

Me: Why did you let so much stuff happen to me today?

God: What do you mean?

Me: Well, I woke up late.

God: Yes.

Me: My car took forever to start.

God: Okay.

Me: At lunch they made my sandwich wrong and I had to wait.

God: Hmmm.

Me: On the way home, my cell phone went DEAD, just as I was answering a call.

God: All right.

Me: And on top of it all, when I got home, I just want to soak my feet in my new foot massager and relax. BUT it wouldn't work!!! Nothing went right today! Why did You do that?

God: Let me see, the devil wanted to give you a very bad dream so you wouldn't wake up. I had to send one of my angels to battle him for your life. I let you sleep through that.

Me (humbled): OH

GOD: I didn't let your car start because there was a drunk driver on your route that would have hit you head-on if you were on the road.

Me: I see.

God: The person who made your sandwich today was sick and I didn't want you to catch what he has. Or you'd miss work the whole week.

Me (embarrassed): Okay

God: Your phone went dead because the person that was calling was your old flame and I didn't want you to rush in where even angels fear to tread.

Imagine what it would do to your family.

Me (softly): I see, God.

God: Oh and that foot massager, it had a shortage that was going to electrocute you, so I stopped it from turning on.

Me: I'm sorry, God.

God: Don't be sorry. Just learn to trust me, in all things , the good and the bad.

Me: I will trust You.

God: And don't doubt that my plan for your day is always better than your plan.

Me: I won't God. And let me just tell you God, thank you for everything today.

God: You're welcome child. It was just another day being your God and I love looking after my children.

So, we just trust God. We don't see the whole picture. But he does.

Isaiah 55:8, 9 (ESV) says, "For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, declares the Lord.

9 For as the heavens are higher than the earth,
so are my ways higher than your ways
and my thoughts than your thoughts."

Now, notice, too, that Ehud did not take any credit for anything but gave God all the glory. He recognized and had faith in the ability and resources of God at work in his life.

The thing that allows us to have victory in our lives, to serve God and to be used by God, is not our own strength, or our list of credentials, but it is our faith in God through Christ. Paul writes in 2 Corinthians 3:5 (NLT), "*It is not*

that we think we can do anything of lasting value by ourselves. Our only power and success come from God.”

We live in a world where success is measured by degrees, by credentials, by climbing the ladder, by financial wealth, by popular fame. This is how the world views effectiveness and importance. But it's not so in the kingdom of God. What God requires is faith and faith alone. This is why he chooses the weak and the limited – because he can't use the proud. Did you hear me? This is why he chooses the weak and the limited – because He can't use the PROUD! When we are weak then we are willing to trust in him, and then he can use us. The people who are handicapped and limited are rich in faith. They have the great resources that God makes available to them. This is why he uses the weak, like Ehud, to topple the proud. Hudson Taylor once said, *"God is sufficient for God's work...God chose me because I was weak enough. God does not do his great works by large committees. He trains someone to be quiet enough and little enough, and then he uses him."*

Our text this morning encourages us in three ways. First, we need to be willing to confront areas of sin in our lives, even if they are ugly. When we do this, we can enter into God's rest. Second, we need to see how valuable we are in God's eyes. No matter how weak or limited we might feel, we are capable of great things for God. Third, we need to remember that it is unreserved faith in the strength and grace of our living God that will enable us to do what he wants us to do. We may be weak, but He is strong!

Philippians 4:13 tells us, *"For I can do everything through Christ, who gives me strength."*

Let us pray...