

## His Name Will Be A Different Kind of Might

Today we're starting our advent series called "His Name Will Be" Advent comes from the Greek word *Adventus* meaning "coming" or "arrival". And the goal of Advent is to stir our heart's affections for Christ by in a sense recreating the longing and the anticipation that God's people felt as they waited for Christ to come over 2000 years ago. Hospital—liquid diet. I longed for food and someone brought me Pie 5 pizza! And that longing before made it so much better!!!! Well, we're waiting for the messiah, not pizza!

And when you here this description of the messiah in Isa 9... "For to us a child is born, to us a son is given; and the government shall be upon his shoulder, and his name shall be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace." You would have said Yes please come please come—it would have created such a longing in your heart. Why? Because if you step back and take a look at Israel's history and you realize that it is marked by idolatry and disobedience and war and suffering that came from it and to hear that there was finally going to be an Israelite who was so wise and so mighty that he would bring full and final peace that no other Israelite leader seemed to be able to do...but what it's really important for us to understand is that mighty God that was coming did not come with the kind of might they expected. In fact the might of the messiah appeared with a kind of might that actually looked a lot like weakness...And I'm convinced that today you and I constantly confuse weakness with strength and strength with weakness and no one got those more confused than a guy named Samon

If there was a bench press competition between all the biblical characters the person who would win would be a guy named Samson. Judge is a warlord. Book mentions 12 and the last one is a guy named Samson. And you can read about him in Judges 13-16. And I want to just give you the backstory on Samson and then focus most of our time on chapter 16...

Samson was a Nazarite from birth. Now the word Nazirite means consecrated or separated. A Nazarite was separated because he had taken the Nazarite vow, in Numbers 6. Grapes, Dead stuff. It was normally temporary, but for Samson it would be forever. Hair—he couldn't cut it. It was normally temporary, but for Samson it would be forever. He was a lifetime Nazirite. Set apart to God to accomplish amazing things for God.

But from the very outset, we see that Samson has very little interest in living out God's plan for him. In fact, he was a man consumed by his passions, particularly for women. And one of the first things we see is that Samson sees a Philistine woman and says, (14:3) "Get her for me." And his parents plead with him not to do this...not to marry an uncircumsized philistine. And as he's going down to the city to meet her, he gets attacked by a lion and rips it to pieces. And what we learn here is that God has given Samson supernatural strength to deliver Israel and enact judgment on the Phillistines (14:5-6). And between 14 and 16 things just get crazy. He kills over 1000 people by himself, he continues to disobey God by touching dead animals, his wife is killed so he finds a prostitute and hooks up with her to satisfy himself...And so it's right in the middle of the crazy, out of control story of this super strong where we pick up in 16:4 with what has become one of the most famous stories in the Bible...Read 16:4-22.

## A Strength That's Not That Strong...

Want to make a few observations about the way Samson related to and displayed his strength and then show you how Christ—the mighty god promised in Isaiah—actually displays the power Samson needed but never had.

If we're not careful, like Samson, we will be attracted and pursue the wrong kind of strength. I think if we're honest, we all read this story and say, "What an idiot. How could anybody be that stupid?" How could he not see this coming? And I want to suggest that it's because in a strange irony Samson wasn't strong at all in the most meaningful sense of the Word.

Judging by everything you could see Samson was the epitome of strength. He was the professional athlete. He was the wealthy business executive. He was the gorgeous super model. The perfect mom and dad with perfect kids. The person everyone looked at and said "wow". Look at him! His abilities. His achievements. He does whatever he wants! He doesn't deny himself! That's the kind of strength I want to have!

And if we look at Samson and say, "I want to be like that" we're in dangerous territory. You see the mighty God that was going to come displayed a completely different kind of strength. Isa 53 says he didn't even look good. Didn't have the biceps and yet he was going to re-write the book on what true strength look like. The world and our culture defines strength as a function of your abilities and achievements. In the Bible, strength is being defined and controlled by someone else's strength and achievements. (2 Cor 12:9-10) The Bible says that when I'm at my strongest, it will look to the world like someone is carrying me. I'm strongest when I am most clearly conveying to the world that there is a power at work in me achieving things I could never achieve on my own.

And I'm afraid that this strength isn't really that attractive to us. And the reason that's dangerous is this: if that strength isn't attractive to us then we're not going to really be attracted to the life of Jesus. Because his whole life was a display of god's strength through his voluntary weakness. Resisted sin and temptation, he put others first, he didn't feel the need to prove people wrong because he knew who he was, he wasn't career focused but kingdom focused, he had many enemies, and could barely pay his taxes he let himself be executed.

Friends this is the strongest man who ever lived. I'm afraid that many of us are much more attracted to the strength of Samson than to the strength of Jesus. I am so tempted to live for and pursue and respect and admire and desire the wrong kind of strength. I'm tempted to value intelligence over humility, talent over self-control, ability to achieve more than willingness to sacrifice, how much people have more than how much people give. I desperately need a kind of strength that can only come from God. I need more strength that looks like weakness. This is what is attractive. This is what I should admire.

And ladies can I just say when you're looking for a man, please look for the right kind of strength. Please. It kills me to see young ladies pursue a guy who looks and certain way and has a certain social status or makes them feel a certain way only to find out that they're just like Samson. Don't do it. Date a guy who's strong in heart. Have you seen the wizard of Oz? Y'all pursue the tinman hard on the outside but hollow on the inside. Bad boy. Strong back weak mind. Pursue a man that's truly strong.

If we're not careful, like Sampson, our personal cravings will distract us from God's calling.

You see Samson had this inner struggle. He knew he was a Nazirite—set apart to God. He knew he was supposed to walk in obedience to God for the glory of God and yet there were some things he wanted that weren't on the approved list. And he just couldn't say no. Judges 21:25, In those days there was no king in Israel and everyone did what was right in his own eyes. Samson's biggest threat wasn't outside of him, it was inside him. Samson didn't need to be saved from his enemies as much as he needed to be saved from himself.

It's really pathetic if you think about it. Like he knew the consequences...He knew if he cut his hair that he would lose his strength! He knew that by cutting his hair he would lose God's unique blessing on his life and step out of God's unique plan for his life. And the tragic thing is, that's a trade he's happy to make. Commenting on verse 17 Alter says, "...a powerful image of the seductive woman lulling the mighty hero and reducing him to a baby in her lap."

He's willing to sideline God's plan for his life for current opportunity. And we quickly say, "Well he was wrong he shouldn't have done that" but I wonder how often we make trades like that; trades we know will take away from our relationship with God but that we do anyways because it's something we really want and it's a trade we're willing to make.

Hey don't you know taking this promotion isn't going to allow you time to invest in your spouse and children? Yes—but I want the money. Hey don't you know this romantic relationship isn't pushing you toward Christ?—yes but it feels too good to have someone to miss. And if we're saying these things, we're Samson. We're looking at God and saying, "I know this isn't wrong and will most likely damage my soul, but that's a risk I'm willing to take because I'm the kind of person that if I want something... I do it." And this may sound powerful but it's reckless and it fails to realize this...

Biblically, strength is not your ability to do whatever you want but the power to want and do what you should. "for it is God who works in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure." Phil. 2:13 In Western culture strengthen is "My will be done" but in the Bible it's "Thy will be done." Jesus wasn't interested in doing all the things he wanted but in doing what God wanted. Like wouldn't even entertain the idea that a single moment of his life would be used in a way that didn't bring glory to God. In Jn 6 "For I have come down from heaven, not to do my own will but the will of him who sent me."

And if you know what God's plan is for Jesus you know why it takes strength to go through with it. Garden of Gethsemane— Think about this! The next day one through whom the universe was created—the eternal son of God—would let a man he created nail him to a cross of wood that he made. And then he's going to hang there and suffer. Now obviously there is weakness represented here and I don't want to downplay that...but the kind of strength on display here is the kind of strength we're called to.

What does he do? Does he call down angels? Instead he prays for the people who crucified him, provides care for his mother and offers forgiveness to the criminal being crucified next to him. Jesus uses his strength not to actualize his will but the will of His Father...and the will of his Father is to crush him, in order to save us...

Narrate 16:2-27 and read 28-30. Now what we see here is a sort of imperfect incomplete redemption. You'll notice that Samson's motive here still doesn't seem to be God's glory, but his own pride—he specifically says he wants vengeance. Nevertheless in his final moments we can see a very dim imperfect picture of the redemption that Christ will bring. You see Samson is betrayed, mocked, sacrifices himself in

order to defeat the enemy. And while it certainly represents God's grace to Samson here and his judgment on the Philistines, Samson's sacrifice couldn't actually bring any lasting peace. You read further and you realize that Israel has no peace at all and not only that...they can't find a king that will bring it. When will he come? When will a leader finally come who has the strength to bring global peace? To heal us from the sin that binds us and the brokenness in the world...and one day that answer would come in a stable in Bethlehem, a mighty God who, like Samson, would be betrayed, a sacrifice himself—but rather than sacrifice himself out of pride, he would sacrifice himself out of love for God—and he wouldn't stay dead!!! That power is available to you in salvation and in the Holy Spirit. Not a power that says I can do anything, but one that says my god can do anything! Don't let the testimony of your life be that you were such a strong person but that you were held by such a strong God! Don't try to create you own peace, rest in the peace Christ brought!

He brought a spiritual peace then and will being a cosmic peace in the future!