

Hidden in the Cleft of the Rock

by Erlo Stegen

The sermon highlights the importance of meeting with God and experiencing His presence and power, which brings fear, awe, and a deeper understanding of His holiness and power.

Duration: 1:06:10

Scripture: Exodus 33:19-20, Judges 6:22, Judges 13:1, Judges 13:22, Judges 16:30, Matthew 6:33

Topics: "Safety"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher begins by introducing the story of Manoa and his wife, emphasizing the significance of their encounter with God. He then transitions to discussing the current state of the world, highlighting the hypocrisy of those who claim to be saved but still indulge in worldly desires. The preacher shares a personal anecdote about his grandchild's experience in a shop, illustrating the corruption and injustice present in society. He urges the audience to be aware of the consequences of sin and emphasizes the importance of being part of the remnant of true believers who can be used by God. The sermon references the book of Judges, specifically chapter 13, verse 22, where Manoa and his wife express their fear of death after seeing God.

Transcript

From the the book of Judges at the beginning it is, you get the fifth book of Moses, then Joshua and then you find the book of Judges, chapter 13. Verse 22, from there, And Manoah said to his wife, we shall surely die because we have seen God. He said to his wife, we shall surely die for we have seen God.

We'll read this far. Now I'd like to briefly recount the story of Manoah and his wife. Manoah was the father of Samson, that mighty man of strength.

And in this chapter, we are told the story of Manoah and his wife. And if we read right at the beginning of the same chapter, verse one, we read that the children of Israel did evil in the sight of the Lord, and the Lord delivered them into the hands of the Philistines for 40 years. You will never get away with doing wickedness without God in heaven taking notice.

Always, when the children of God went into wickedness, God observed it and said, well, this will be the consequence and all the nations of the earth need to understand that. Let every politician understand it too. I was sad when after having been invited to preach in jails in the Johannesburg area, I was told how difficult it is to get into the jails.

You can go from one office into the other through this door, through that door, and it can take ages. But I hear that a Muslim can arrive in his fancy car, and as he gets out, he is escorted to wherever he wants to go to in the prison. Do you see? Do you have eyes to understand what is happening in our country, or is it just that your brains are lost in a forest? You need to be aware of what is happening to us.

Take off then, take off the clothing that you have, put on these white jalabas and these special caps. God always sees what is happening in South Africa, and in Africa, and the rest of the world. And God will always give consequences to sin, He will provide His results to our wickedness.

But you will find that in any age of great wickedness, there is always the remnant of true believers, those who are not swept downstream, where God is able to use a select few, and is able to use them. Now, in the tribe, within the tribe of Dan, there was a man whose name was Manoa. His wife was barren, and they had no children.

The Lord appeared to her and said, Indeed, you are barren and have no children, but you shall conceive and bring forth a son. Now, therefore, please be careful not to drink wine or similar drink, and not to eat anything unclean. Eat nothing that is defiled.

Now, you have heard today, it is called Mother's Day. Manoa had his wife, who was barren. God heard the cry of his children.

He saw the children of Israel being under the heel of the Philistines, of the enemy. And the Lord God said, I will work, I will raise up a man through whom I will conquer the Philistines. He will start, through him I will start to overcome the enemy.

He was just the beginning, the start of the answer that would conquer the enemy. God said, I will work, I will raise up a man through whom I will conquer the Philistines. He was just the beginning, the start of the answer that would conquer the enemy.

He was just the beginning, the start of the answer that would conquer the enemy. Otherwise, I will rise up against you on Judgment Day and accuse you. Samson began with the work of routing the Philistines.

And the Lord worked after Samson through others. He continued raising up those until finally he raised up David, who vanquished the Philistines. That was their knockout blow.

But Samson started it. God looked around and said, I seek a man, I seek a woman who will bring into this world a hero. And he found the wife of Manoah, Manoah's wife being barren.

The angel of the Lord appeared to her and said, indeed you are barren, but you will conceive a son. And therefore, I don't want you to drink wine or anything similar which makes a person drunk or anything defiling to eat. God wanted the child in her to be sanctified while still in her.

And the Lord was there with his sanctifying hands creating and molding and bringing this about. Today is Mother's Day. Now I ask you mothers, you who have maybe a long time ago given birth, or maybe you are still to, or maybe you are pregnant.

During this time of pregnancy, what did you eat? What was it that you took into yourself? The Lord said, don't drink wine or any similar drink which is intoxicating, for I want to work through this child. And don't eat anything unclean. You understand, you mothers? Now I ask you mothers, you who have maybe a long

time ago given birth, or maybe you are pregnant.

And therefore, I ask you mothers, you who have maybe a long time ago given birth, or maybe you are pregnant. And therefore, I ask you mothers, you who have maybe a long time ago given birth, or maybe you are pregnant. You mothers, you might complain about the rebellious nature of your child, that it gets drunk, it is immoral, etc.

What did you do? What did you eat? What defiling thing did you do perhaps in contacting the occult, talking to the spirits? In other words, initiating your child into the world of wickedness because of your sin. Why don't you start, you come to the fountain, you confess your sins first. And you wonder why? Why your child is so obstinate? Why is your child so disobedient? Why is your child so evil? Mother stay, it's the time for you to think, you mother, and repent of all the evil that you've done in your life.

I was just stressing the point that some women, when they expect the child, they simply impossible. The devil is let loose, and he knows why. He is inspiring the child.

He is influencing the child. The devil wants the child in his hands, that he'll mold it according to his ways and purposes. The devil wants the child in his hands, that he'll mold it according to his ways and purposes.

Maybe you smoked. It made your child then to smoke. Eating what is defiling, your child does the same.

If you want your children to come to the Lord, your school children to repent and get converted, then you come to the Lord, you repent of your sin to save your children. I don't know what you are saying. I don't know what you are saying.

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I don't know what you are saying. I don't know what you are saying. Understand that you mothers, all you mothers to be, that when you eat what is defiling, in other words, maybe you took into yourself something sinful, maybe you listened to some wicked advice, something which was a lie, you took it in, it's defiling.

She had thought this man who gave her this news, this angel, to be just a man of God. She was outside at the time, then she came in and went to her husband and said, a man of God has appeared to me. He has said that I will conceive, and this is how I am to behave, what to do while expecting.

And she said, this is in verse 6, that the countenance of this man, his countenance was that of an angel of God. It was awesome. I didn't ask him where he was from, and he did not tell me his name.

But he said to me, behold, you shall conceive and bear a son. Now drink no wine or similar drink, nor eat anything unclean. For the child shall be a Nazarite.

Nazarite to God from the womb right till death. Sometimes this was a position for part of a person's life, but with him it was to be from being in his mother's womb right till his day of death. Do you notice mothers, this being Mother's Day, that God began by speaking to the wife of Manoa? Do you hear that? Blessed is the man, blessed is the husband who has a wife who is in contact with God, to whom God can speak.

So the wife went to Manoa and she explained it all to him. When Manoa had heard this, he had his time of prayer. And then he besought God, he looked, he sought God and prayed to the Lord.

Pleading with God. He pleaded with God in prayer and said, Oh Lord, please let the man of God whom you sent come to us again and teach us what we shall do for the child who will be born. My, what a couple! When the man heard that his wife would conceive, he went and he sought God's face.

He says, Oh God, reveal yourself to us once again and teach us how to bring up this child. What an amazing couple! When he hears of what the Lord spoke to his wife, he goes to the Lord in prayer and says, Oh my Lord, please teach us how we are to bring up this child. Oh Baba, we need mothers and fathers like that.

Not that we just bring into this world offspring who are worldly, offspring who will drink and who have no sense of God and who belong to this world and are political or fighting who are political or fighting for their tradition, their culture instead of the heavenly culture, the only real one. I'm saddened when I see kings and leaders of groups of people who are fighting for worldly things. I'm saddened when I see kings and leaders of groups of people who are fighting for worldly things.

who are fighting for worldly things. I'm saddened when I see kings and leaders of groups of people who are fighting for worldly things. It's not long ago, in this year of 2003, that there was a ceremony by a leader of a group and his getting his whole tribe together saying let's pray to for the spirit of rain to grant us our wish for rain and they had a certain occult ceremony for the rain to come there was a Christian who went there said he heard the most filthy vile and blasphemous talking and it hasn't rained since that time.

And one wonders if one has leaders who lead their people into the pit into darkness one can only say oh God show mercy. But Manoah was not of that category. He wasn't of that class of people who belong to Balaam and lead people into darkness the blind leading the blind Manoah went to God and he pleaded with God he said Lord I know how our people bring up their children but I want to hear from you give us direction how to teach this child so that it would become a fighter for you one who would conquer the enemy.

And then it says in verse 9 that God listened to the voice of Manoah and the angel of God came to the woman again as she was sitting in the field but Manoah her husband was not with her. And then the woman ran in haste and told her husband and said to him look the man who came to me the other day has just now appeared to me. And then it says Manoah arose and followed his wife.

Isn't that amazing he followed his wife. You see you ladies you wives be men of God. Grasp hold of the mysteries of heaven.

I remember I remember the now deceased Mr Dube who stood up in front of a group of men and said men I want to testify to you that I followed my wife because she has followed the Lord and what she does is of the Lord. If you women want your husbands to be able to follow you hear from God be a man of God. Manoah followed his wife.

And she led him to the angel of the Lord. You wives are you able to lead your husbands to God to lead him to the Lord Jesus so that he stops with his drunkenness his immorality. Otherwise he'll come and give you aids and bring wickedness to you.

It's not a disgrace if you've got a godly woman and she does the right thing to follow her. You're a fool if you don't do it. On the same line I say you're a fool if you follow her if she leads you into the wrong thing.

Manoah arose and followed his wife who led him to this man. And he arrived then at this man. And he asked are you the man who spoke to my wife.

Literally he said did you speak to this woman. And he said I am. May I just test whether you are blunt or whether you are sharp.

Manoah asked this man is it you that revealed yourself to this woman. And he said I am. Who was this angel.

If you haven't known up till now who this man was now you should. I am. Who as I am.

That's God himself. That's God's name. This wasn't just a man of God.

The so called angel of the Lord. As I am. The Alpha and Omega.

Was the Lord Jesus Christ himself. It's the same man who stood before the Pharisees and scribes. And then when they questioned him he said I am.

He asked him what is your name. Verse 18 verse 18. I'm just making it brief and summarizing on purpose.

The angel of the Lord said to him why do you ask my name. Seeing it is wonderful. Or seeing it is a secret.

Yes. Now it's very difficult to translate that Hebrew. Most translations if I say most I don't know.

But a number of translations say it's a secret. Why do you ask my name. That's a secret.

You can if must be interpreted as wonderful as well. The matter of Jesus is a secret. It's a mystery.

The gospel is a mystery. It is a mystery to many but to those being saved it is open and clear. And when it's open and clear then it's wonderful.

In the Old Testament when it refers to the angel of the Lord it refers to the Lord Jesus Christ. It's not the same in the context of the New Testament. Manoah then took a young goat and some grain offering to offer it upon the rock to the Lord.

For he had wanted to offer it to the angel of the Lord but he said no you take it to the rock of the Lord. And then as he made this offering and set alight this offering unto God the angel of the Lord did a wonderful a wondrous thing in front of Manoah and his wife. He did something astonishing and marvelous in the eyes of Manoah and his wife.

For as the flame was going up from the altar of the rock the flames were rising up towards heaven. And our Lord did an amazing thing. He entered into the flame and ascended into heaven.

As Manoah and his wife were watching this they fell both of them to their faces on the ground. Fell on their faces they didn't see him again. And Manoah understood that this angel of the Lord was God.

Then Manoah said to his wife we shall surely die for we have seen God. What a meeting with God have you ever met with God? This is how Manoah and his wife met with God. Enoch if I'm not mistaken was 300 years old when he bare a child.

And from that day on he walked with God. He walked with God. How many children have you brought into this world? Are you walking with God? For Enoch one child was enough and he walked with God.

Enoch was walking with God. Enoch was walking with God. He was walking with God.

How many children have you brought into this world? Are you walking with God? For Enoch one child was enough and he walked with God. How many children have you brought into this world? Are you walking with God? For Enoch one child was enough and he walked with God. How many children have you brought into this world? Are you walking with God? For Enoch one child was enough and he walked with God.

But Enoch when his first child was born it was a meeting for him with God. And he walked with God ever since that time. Continuously.

Continuously. You who belong to the devil you will be with the devil condemned into hell by men like Enoch in hell forever. But Manoah and his wife before the child was even conceived they met with God.

There is no sense in living in this world if you don't walk with God. Not that you peep through holes when girls are in the bathroom. Peep into the windows.

Sinning going from one sin to the other. You are worse than a beast. We are made in God's image to walk with God.

And nothing else. Every day and every hour of our lives. But Manoah and his wife before the child was even conceived they met with God.

There is no sense in living in this world if you don't walk with God. Not that you peep through holes when girls are in the bathroom. Sinning going from one sin to the other.

You are worse than a beast. You have your love affairs, you meet around corners. You are like the beast of the field.

Better is the beast of the field which eats grass than you. Now that was just the introduction. That was for you who don't know the story of Manoa and his wife.

Now get to the heart of the matter. From the text I originally read, we shall surely die when Manoa said this to his wife, for we have seen God. All were the words, that was the words of someone who had met God, who had seen God.

And how is that? What did the people who had met the Lord say when they returned? They sang pop music, Christian songs. They sang and danced. Like the world, you say you're saved and you're like the world.

When I went overseas, I had some of my children with me. One of them, the oldest one said that she went into a shop. Sorry, it was the child, my grandchild, it was the child that went into a shop.

The lady there was selling things. And even if you didn't, that's for the whites. It was just about the red toenails.

And Dirk's little son, he went straight for her feet. He put his finger on the biggest toe when he touched it. It was a historical day.

He had never seen such a thing before. He didn't know what it meant. It was quite interesting for him.

And then we claim we have met with God. Well, if you say it's red because it's symbolic of the blood of Christ that has cleansed and sanctified me, then I'll just keep quiet, look at you, and will behold your life. Billy Graham said when he was a young man, people came sobbing to the altar, accepting Jesus Christ.

Nowadays, they do it with a smile on their faces. Billy Graham said when he was a young man, people came sobbing to the altar, accepting Jesus Christ. But Manoa said to his wife, We shall surely die, for we have seen the Lord.

He had seen the Lord enter into the flame, ascending into heaven. Who is like our Lord Jesus? Who doesn't want to serve the Lord? He who is the hero of heroes. Senseless is the man who spurns him.

Why should Manoa have feared so greatly in telling his wife that they would die? Dear friends, when we are confronted by the purity and holiness of God's presence, then we recognize that it is only mercy and grace of God that we are not blotted out. Wasn't it God himself when he met with Moses, and Moses said, God, show me your face. God said, Moses, show me your glory.

God said, Moses, you cannot see my face, for no one can see my face and live. That's what God said himself. You shall not behold my face, for no man can behold my face and survive.

Another man who met with God, Gideon, that warrior of the Lord, also said after meeting with the Lord, I am going to die, for I have seen the Lord. And in our time, when the Holy Spirit convicts us, and we catch a glimpse of God's awesome presence, and the awfulness of sin, we can't but tremble in God's presence, fearing him, and just pleading for grace to stay alive. For his presence brings fear, and for you see your sins.

Then you'll do as Manoa and his wife did, fall upon your face. Manoa had thought that that was the end of their lives. If you meet with the Lord God himself, with Jesus Christ, it's not the same as meeting with de Klerk, or Favut, or Mandela, or Mbegi, or Saddam Hussein, or Bin Laden, or Bush, or Blair.

For they too will have to stand before this man who rides the clouds and the flames of fire. Where do you stand regarding this one? This one who did a wondrous thing in the sight of Manoa and his wife, and entering into the flames he ascended into heaven. I lack the ability and the expressions to depict and to carry this across, this meeting with God.

This is something that is mysterious and hidden from those who are being destroyed, but to those being saved it is the power of God. Manoa said to his wife, we shall die. His wife said to her husband, she said to him, I don't think that he's going to kill us, for didn't he promise us a child? And should he have wanted to kill us, he wouldn't have accepted the burnt offering and the grain offering that we brought to the rock of the altar.

And I say Manoa, you would have died, but you lived because of him who entered into the flame, the Lord Jesus Christ. Moses too, wanting to see the Lord, was told, no man can see God's face and live. But Moses, here is the rock.

There was a cliff in the rock. There was a cliff in the rock in which God hid Moses, covering him with his hand, and he said, Moses, I will pass by and you will just see the trail of my glory, so that you shall not die. Who is the eternal rock? It is Jesus Christ.

Do you want to be hidden in the cleft, in this wound of the Lord Jesus, in his sight, so that you would not die? We are going to pray now. Those of you who truly say, rock of ages, cleft for me, let me hide myself in thee. You want to be hidden in the wound of the Lord Jesus, protected in him.

Stand with me in prayer, identifying in this prayer. If you do not, feel free just to go, disassociate yourself from this. You may just remain seated.

But if you, you say on this Mother's Day, you say, rock of ages, I hide myself in you, then you may stand with us in identifying in this prayer. Our God, you who have always existed, and the one who is, and the one who always will be, we ask you to hide us in the eternal rock, that we may not die, but live because of you. Lord Jesus, the things that belong to you are marvelous.

And you are wondrous that you should bring us and unite us with the holy of holies. And Elijah saw you. And Isaiah who said, as he heard the seraphim saying, holy, holy, holy, said, woe is me, woe is me.

For I am a man of unclean lips. And when he saw your holiness, your purity, he was as a dying man. And was helped only by that flaming coal taken from the fire which scorched his lips, healing him of all unclean things spoken.

Work in our myths, Lord, that we wouldn't just be people who have come to a service, but people who have met with God. Those who have been healed by Jesus. Lord, let your grace be multiplied to us.

Amen.

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