

Palimpsest* (pa • limp • sest)

Week of **October 24, 2021**
22th Sunday After Pentecost

Sermon: Stories of Courage: Deborah
Scripture: Judges 4:4-10

Your Notes

Sermon Supplemental Reading

As you think about your own path to daring leadership, remember Joseph Campbell's wisdom: "The cave you fear to enter holds the treasure you seek." Own the fear, find the cave, and write a new ending for yourself, for the people you're meant to serve and support, and for your culture. Choose courage over comfort. Choose whole hearts over armor. And choose the great adventure of being brave and afraid. At the exact same time.

– Brown, B. (2018) *Dare to Lead*.

The accounts relate a battle between Israelite tribes and a Canaanite king (or kings) for control of the Jezreel Valley, a fertile plain that opens out into otherwise rugged hill country in Israel. Such a contest would have been critically important for Israel. The Jezreel played a key role in agriculture, trade, and communications between the central and northern tribes. Whether there actually was such a battle, and if so, just what happened, is unclear. Poetry is notoriously difficult to use as a historical source. The singers who composed chapter 5 shaped it to extol Israel and its God, or for the sake of their artistry, or to convey an emotion or image, rather than for the sake of historical reporting. The prose account appears to depend upon the poem. Like the other stories in Judges, the tale of Deborah and Barak is more story and theology than history.

– Pressler, C. (2002) *Joshua, Judges, and Ruth*.

* A Palimpsest is: 1: writing material (as a parchment or tablet) used one or more times, 2: something having unusually diverse layers or aspects apparent beneath the surface

Your Notes

When we have the courage to walk into our story and own it, we get to write the ending. And when we don't own our stories of failure, setbacks and hurt - they own us.

- Brown, B. (2018) *Dare to Lead*.

It (Judges 5) is a wonderful song, full of blood and thunder with a lot of hair-raisingly bitter jibes at the end of it about how Sisera's old mother sits waiting at the window for her son to come home, not knowing that Jael has already made mincemeat of him. Deborah composed it, but she got Barak to sing it with her ... The song brushes by Barak's role rather hastily, but it describes Jael's in lavish detail and must have gotten her all the glory a girl could possibly want. Yahweh himself gets a plug at the end ... but by and large the real hero of Deborah's song is herself. Everything was going to pot, the lyrics say, "until you arose, Deborah, arose as a mother in Israel," and you can't help feeling that Deborah's basic message was that Mother was the one who really saved the day. And of course, with Yahweh's help, she was. It's hard not to bridle a little at the idea of Deborah standing under the palm tree belting out her own praises like that, but after all, she had a country to run and a war to fight, and she knew that without a good press she was licked from the start. Besides, maybe the more self-congratulatory parts of her song were the ones she assigned to Barak.

- Buecher, F. (1979) *Peculiar Treasures: A Biblical Who's Who*.

Questions

- When have you failed and stood up again? What was that like?
- How do the various characters own their story? How powerful is it when they get to?
- How do you own your story? How does God work through that?