

Judges 9:22-57
The Fall of Abimelech: A Man Reaps What He Sows
Sermon Outline

Introduction: During an election year some people get to vent their moral outrage and hope, while others laugh at what they see as a vain and naïve reach for a moral order that does not exist. Judges 9 asserts that there is in fact a moral order.

I) God judges the bad guys

vv. 23-24, 56-57

A) God's work is not always obvious or clean

B) God lets the bad guys destroy themselves

- *Bad Spirit*—Mistrust
- Multiplied conspiracies
- All out war

God removes his restraining hand

C) God shames the bad guys

Not just a film noir. A farce
Nothing noble about evil

D) Learning from this

II) God preserves his people

v. 55: Everybody returned home
Fire contained

How can a holy God preserve people like us?

Good Friday

Questions for Reflection this Week

- 1) Read Judges 9:23-24, 56-57. Paraphrase the narrator's interpretation of the story.
- 2) Read judges 9:25-55 (that is, the story without the narrator's interpretation). What strikes you about the account?
- 3) The conspirators (Abimelech and the leaders of Shechem—v 23) are not the only people caught up in the fire of this episode. Who else is burned (see Judges 9:42-43 and 9:49)? How are we to understand and cope with all the 'collateral damage' in this story of divine judgment? Reflect on the following statement in the Westminster Confession of Faith (chapter 3) as you answer: "God ordains whatsoever things come to pass, yet so as not to make God the author of sin, nor that he represses the will of created things, nor that he takes away the freedom and contingency of secondary causes."

- 4) Judges 9:57 says, in part, “And God made all their evil...return on their heads.” This phrase suggests that these evil men received ‘in kind’ what they had done. Document how this happens in the events of Judges 9. Reflect as you do on the following statement by Michael Wilcock: “God’s almighty power is seen most chiefly in his showing mercy and pity; he has little need to use it in judgment. He has but to take his restraining hand off the brakes, and wicked men will run to their own destruction. All who live by the sword die by the sword.”
- 5) Judges 9 reads in some ways like a farce—in which all the self-important figures are exposed as ludicrous and ineffective. Document this in the story and then reflect on the following: “There is nothing noble about evil. Stalin was a bore. Satan dresses up like an angel of light, but he is petty in his malice, unable to see or enjoy either love or beauty. We must work to show ourselves and our children how beautiful goodness is.”
- 6) Scripture tells us that “the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom.” What evidence is there in your life of genuine fear of the Lord?
- 7) The good news in this story is that God loves his people, despite their own unfaithfulness, and destroys those who destroy them. Why should God love us, and how can he, without compromising his own searching judgment of our lives and hearts? Reflect in your answer on the events of Good Friday.