

God's Patience with Us

Judges 6:36-40

36 Then Gideon said to God, "If you will save Israel by my hand, as you have said, 37 behold, I am laying a fleece of wool on the threshing floor. If there is dew on the fleece alone, and it is dry on all the ground, then I shall know that you will save Israel by my hand, as you have said." 38 And it was so. When he rose early next morning and squeezed the fleece, he wrung enough dew from the fleece to fill a bowl with water. 39 Then Gideon said to God, "Let not your anger burn against me; let me speak just once more. Please let me test just once more with the fleece. Please let it be dry on the fleece only, and on all the ground let there be dew." 40 And God did so that night; and it was dry on the fleece only, and on all the ground there was dew.

The people of Israel were by nature rebellious. They often vexed Moses when he tried to lead them into the Promised Land. After the rule of Joshua, Israel again fell into sin and were captured by a near-by nation. When they cried out to God and he sent a judge/savior. After the death of the judge, they once more ran after false gods. And once more they cried out to God and he sent another judge to free them. This pattern repeated itself six times with Samson being the last judge. Gideon of our text was the fourth judge.

Gideon did not need these signs to ascertain the will of God; the Lord had clearly revealed His will (v 14). Gideon sought signs because he wanted a demonstration that the Lord had the power and the willingness to keep His promises. The Lord is patient with him.

A fleece was a blanket of wool shorn in one piece from a sheep. Dew would have been a sign of God's blessing. Summer months in Israel produced little of no rain. By it appearing in the morning was a guarantee of moisture for crops.

Luther says: "In all his promises, moreover, in addition to the word, God has usually given a sign, for the greater assurance and strengthening of our faith. Thus he gave Noah the sign of the rainbow. To Abraham he gave circumcision as a sign. To Gideon he gave the rain on the ground and on the fleece. So we constantly find in the Scriptures many of these signs, given along with the promises."

Despite a clear revelation of the Lord's will, Gideon twice puts the Lord to a test, hoping to gain certainty for his faltering faith. Jesus said that an evil and adulterous generation looks for a sign (Mt 12:39). But when the Lord wishes to give us a sign, we are foolish to reject it (cf Is 7:10-14). The Lord is patient with us and merciful through His Son.

Prayer: Almighty God, send us your Holy Spirit, that through your Holy Word our faith may be built up and strengthened. Help us realize that in the Word alone we find the Good News of salvation, through Jesus Christ. Amen. (TLSB)