Hospitality and Horror

Judges 19

This morning we are going to read one of the most disturbing passages in the entire Bible. We have already seen some gruesome stuff over the past 18 chapters of the book of Judges.

We saw a king get his thumbs and big toes cut off
We saw a king killed by a sword that went all the way into his stomach
We saw a man get killed by a woman pounding a tent peg through his temple
We saw a strong man kill 1000 men with the jawbone of a donkey
We saw a guy get a millstone dropped on his head

What we are about to read is not for the faint of heart.

I want to begin this morning by looking at the last verse of the chapter - Judges 19:30
“All who saw it said, ‘Nothing like this has ever happened or been seen from the day when the sons of Israel came up from the land of Egypt to this day. Consider it, take counsel and speak up!’”

As we work our way through the Scripture, I want you to keep the last phrase of this verse in mind. I want you to ask the Holy Spirit to bring something to your mind and then for Him to push you to take action. Let’s pray and ask God to bless our time together this morning.

We know from chapter 17:6 there was no king in Israel and everyone just did what was right in their own eyes.
Let’s look now at the first 2 verses of Judges 19 - Judges 19:1-2

Here we see a picture of Adultery

Here we meet another Levite living in the hill country of Ephraim. Just like the Levite that Micah hired 2 chapters ago.
He also is doing what is right in his own eyes. He should be serving alongside the other priests and doing whatever is needed to help.

This is not the first time we have seen or heard about a concubine.
Gideon had one, Abraham, Jacob and Solomon to name a few.
Concubines were often used when women were barren.
It was acceptable in society, but God never condoned it. And He still doesn’t today.
We don’t call them that today, we refer to them as mistresses.

The concubine played the harlot against him.
Now, that’s not really a surprise is it?
Think about this… anyone who is willing to leave another to come to you will be just as willing to leave you for another too.

She leaves to return to her father’s house.  
Let’s see what happens next  
Read Judges 19:3

Here we see our first morsel of good from this chapter.  
An Attempt at Reconciliation

I like the way the NASB puts it here...he went after her to speak tenderly to her.  
The literal translation here is speak to her heart.  
When we attempt to reconcile with someone it helps if we speak tenderly to them.  
Have you ever tried to reconcile with someone by speaking gruffly with them?  
How did that work out for you? 

Evidently this Levite was confident in his reconciling skills, because he took two donkeys with him.  He was sure he could get her to come with him. 

But before they could ride off into the sunset on their donkeys, the concubine’s father wanted to enjoy a time of merriment with the Levite.  

Read Judges 19:4-10

What seemed right in the eyes of concubine’s dad was Having a Good Time. 
For 3 days they eat, drink, and are merry.  
I find it interesting that the dad was more concerned with the Levite eating and drinking than making up with his daughter.  
The Scripture doesn’t even mention a conversation between them.  
In verse 10 it says that the concubine was with him, but no mention of the reconciliation. 

On the 4th day the Levite is ready to go, but the father-in-law convinces him to stay another night.  
The 5th day he convinces him to stay for breakfast and then tries to get him to stay another night.  
He won’t be dissuaded this time.  
So, mid afternoon they set off towards home, the hill country of Ephraim.  

Let’s see what happens next.  Read Judges 19:11-14

People normally didn’t travel after dark.  
During this time of the Judges, it was not that safe to travel during the day, it was definitely not safe at night.
The city of Jebus was eventually conquered by David and renamed Jerusalem. At this time it was filled with pagan Jebusites. The Levite knew this and didn’t want to sleep anywhere but with his own people. So, they pushed on towards Gibeah. It was probably about 4-5 more miles down the road. Interesting bit of trivia, Saul was from the city of Gibeah.

Gibeah was inhabited by the tribe of Benjamin. Benjamin was the son of Jacob. Before Jacob died, he prophesied about his 12 sons. Listen to what he said about Benjamin

Genesis 49:27 “Benjamin is a ravenous wolf; In the morning he devours the prey, and in the evening he divides the spoil.”

I’m guessing that this Levite didn’t know this about the Benjamites. They thought they would have a better chance of someone showing them hospitality in an Israelite city over a pagan city.

They couldn’t have been more wrong. Look at v.15 - Judges 19:15

Rejection
Now, you are probably wondering why they would think that someone would welcome a stranger into their home after dark. Because God had commanded them to do it.

Leviticus 19:33-34 “When a stranger resides with you in your land, you shall not do him wrong. The stranger who resides with you shall be to you as the native among you, and you shall love him as yourself, for you were aliens in the land of Egypt; I am the Lord your God.”

And remember, there were no Holiday Inns or Best Westerns. They depended on the hospitality of others when they travelled. And God told them to do it. One way you can know for sure God is giving a command is when He ends a sentence with I am the Lord your God. That means He isn’t joking, He means business.

But they found no one among the people of Gibeah who would be kind to them. Let’s see what happens next… read Judges 19:16-21

It wasn’t even someone from Gibeah that showed them kindness. It was a sojourner. A sojourner is a temporary resident. Someone who isn’t from there. In fact, this guy was from the same place in the hill country of Ephraim as the Levite was from.

Here is another glimmer of goodness that comes out of the chaos of chapter 19.

Hospitality
There are a few things I want to point out about the kindness of the old man here. First, he sought them out - he didn’t wait for them to ask, they were just sitting patiently in the city square. He approached them and asked where they were from and what they were doing.

Second, he gave them a blessing - shalom is a Hebrew word for peace. It means much more than that though.

Third, he provided for their needs - they had everything they needed but a place to sleep. He was a good host. He fed the animals, washed their feet and gave them food and drink.

Ok, here’s one of those places that we should take the advice of the last verse into account. Consider It
Take Counsel
Speak Up

How does God want you to offer hospitality in your center of influence?
It’s not the same for today. We aren’t required to let strangers stay in our house, but there are some things that God can do through us is we are willing to listen to His voice.
Are you seeking someone out?
What will God have you do when you find them?
How will you speak up and bring glory to God?

Ok, if that were the end of the story, there would have been no need for the warning I gave at the beginning. Let’s see what happens next. Read Judges 19:22-30

I call this last section Heinous Acts of Horror

Who is causing all this trouble?
The Bible calls them worthless fellows a.k.a. Sons of Belial.
Belial means wicked or worthless. It is also a name used for the devil.

They surround the house. There must have been quite a few of them.
They start pounding on the door and asking for the man to come out so they can have relations with him. The Hebrew is the word Yada - to know in a sexual sense.

The host, the old man begs them to go away and asks them not to act so wickedly and calls it an act of folly. When they persist, he offers his virgin daughter.

Wait…how is this a feasible alternative?
That seems like a terrible idea too.
Women in that day were seen as having less value than men.
It was the same thing that Lot offered when the men came to his house in Sodom.
The worthless fellows did not want the virgin. The wanted the man. The Levite has an idea, he grabs his concubine and brings her out to them and they rape and abuse her all night.

Wait...isn’t the same one he spoke tenderly to? Why is he treating her this way now? Because people are doing what seems right in their own eyes.

What is amazing to me is that he slept that night. That just shows a total lack of concern and respect.

What he does next is perplexing. He opens the door and tells her to get up. When she doesn't answer, he takes her home and cuts her into 12 pieces and mails one piece to each of the 12 tribes of Israel.

This is a rally cry. A signal that there must be a stop to the chaos and the Benjamites have gone too far. They must pay.

Next week we will see how it all unfolds.

For now, let’s see how God wants to use this Scripture in our lives today. Appication

Let’s go back to the last verse of the chapter. Judges 19:30

This was the battle of all the Israelites who had had enough. They were about to take matters into their own hands. Let’s focus in on that last sentence, “Consider it, take counsel and speak up!”

That is our call to action this morning.

Consider it - there are things happening in this world that break God’s heart. The first thing we must do is to consider it. Is this something that God wants me to help with?

Not every issue is going to be our issue. God has blessed each of us with Spiritual Gifts so He can work through us. When you have considered your issue, move on to the next step.

Take Counsel - the best counsel we can get is from God Himself. We can do that by praying and reading His word. Often times He will show us something in prayer or through His word that will inspire us to action.

We can also seek counsel through godly men and women in our lives. There are lots of people in our lives, not all of them will give you godly counsel. Make sure if you seek counsel outside
of God or His word that you seek it from someone who is spending a lot of time in God’s word and in prayer.

**Speak Up** - when you have considered the issue and sought counsel, it’s time for action. What can you do to make a difference in the lives of others? We have to take great care in the words that we use. They have to be full of truth and bathed in love.

Our words are like a resounding gong or a clanging cymbal if we speak them without love.

There are a ton of things wrong in our society today.
As I was preparing for this so many thoughts came to my mind.
The pure evil that exists in our society is not unlike that of the time of the Judges.
People are still doing what is right in their eyes.

Do you realize that there is sex trafficking going on right here in north Texas?
As close as Arlington and the Ridgmar Mall.
We can ignore it or we can consider it, seek counsel and speak up!

How will you speak up and let God’s name be praised?
How will you balance truth with love?

We can only do it with God’s help.