

74th Annual Women's Day
Sermon Title: "The Subversive Shift"
Biblical Passage: Judges 4:12-23

Passage Background and Summary

The passage for today takes place in Judges during the period that Deborah leads as judge. Barak is leading the army of the people of Israel in a battle against the Canaanite army led by Sisera. Deborah sends them out saying that God has delivered the Canaanite army into their hands. As God has said, Barak and his army slay all in the Canaanite army, except Sisera who has fled on foot. Sisera flees to the tent of Jael which should have been a safe place as there's an alliance between her husband, Heber the Kenite's family and Jabin, king of Hazor, under which Sisera serves. Nevertheless, she welcomes him in, and when he falls asleep, drives a tent peg through his head, killing him. This is the beginning of a shift for the people of Israel as Jabin, king of the Canaanites is subdued and eventually destroyed.

Sermon Points

Jael is among the women who have been cast in a particular light. She violated the expectation of hospitality, she seduces battle weary Sisera, she disregards the peace treaty which exists between her husband's kin and Sisera's clan, and she acts without a word from the Lord. She gives us a peek into the vital urgency of shifting outcomes in your world and acting in your season. She reminds us that all revolutions aren't televised. She helps us to understand shifts in the public and private and highlights the fact that sometimes God's subversive shifts start on the margins.

Jael says/to create subversive shifts:

- **Start where you are:** Never be intimidated by external indicators, race, age, gender, etc. start in your reality at the expense of your responsibility. Don't spend too much time on yesterday. Start today and be an instrument of God's hand to bring some subversive shifts, like Ruth and Naomi or Paul and Silas.
- **Be where you belong:** Don't allow uncomfortability to draw you to pre-mature exits. Sometimes we leave too soon and mess up God-ordained assignments. Also, beware of the seductive pull of competition and comparison. God was arranging Sisera to run to the tent of Jael, but she had to be in position. There is a shift around the corner, but you have to be where you belong. The safest place despite despair and discomfort is where you belong. That's where God will take care of things.
- **Greet what's coming your way:** Half of life is your attitude toward what happens. Your enemy presupposes that intimidation will work in your life, yet the outcome is fixed if we'll just greet what's coming our way. Let them enter your territory and recognize that invitation does not mean infiltration.

- **Use what you got on hand:** You can't win a spiritual battle with human ingenuity or weapons. Our ancestors were experts at using what they had on hand and making something out of nothing. She only had a hammer and tent peg but shifted the outcome of a nation. We too can do this when we use what we have on hand.

What we have can break down every argument against the truth of God, demolish oppressive forces and systems, and demolish all things that think they are greater than God. Yet, we must go back to praying and fasting and looking for God everywhere. Subversive shifts don't happen on the front page, but God is still at work.

Reflection Questions

1. Share how you felt if you were ever overlooked or underestimated?
2. Have people ever misunderstood you? Why?
3. What are some of the instances in which you've experienced a shift in your life?
4. What are some shifts on a national or global scale that began on the margins?
5. Are you in position? Are you where you belong? How do you know you are?
6. Have you ever felt like you were in the right place at the right time?
7. What are some of the weapons we can use in spiritual battles?
8. When have you had to "use what you had" to fight a spiritual battle?