

I know Summer doesn't officially start for another couple of weeks, but it's June and school's out (at least for everyone except Beaver Creek...) and the Riverscape is open, so it feels like summer to me. And (I know many of you won't vibe with me on this) one of the most summery things (besides Baseball) is the yearly glut of superhero movies.

One of my favorite superheroes had a movie out this summer: Spider-Man. [picture] I'm not alone in liking Spidey. The web-slinger is one of the most popular, beloved superheroes in the world (his mostly mediocre movies notwithstanding). Why? Because Spider-Man has these awesome superpowers, but he's just like us. He has to go to school, manage family problems, keep a job. He's not a billionaire like Batman or an invincible alien like Superman.

He's a regular guy who can do some amazing things. So even though we don't have spider-powers, we can relate to poor Peter Parker.

I couldn't help but think about Peter Parker today because here at Beaver Creek Nazarene, we're celebrating the various opportunities we have throughout the year to serve our community. Today, we pause to investigate how we're fulfilling Jesus' final command to us before he ascended the Throne of Heaven. In Matthew 28,

Jesus came and told his disciples, "I have been given all authority in heaven and on earth. Therefore, go and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. Teach these new disciples to obey all the commands I have given you. And be sure of this: I am with you always, even to the end of the age." -- Matthew 28:18-20

Go and make disciples of all nations. Baptize them. Teach them to obey everything I've commanded you. That's a huge job. And I don't know about you, but I hear Jesus' words and I get paralyzed. I think, I can't do that!! That sounds more like a job for a superhero than a regular person like me! [image of me vs. superhero]

The good news for us today is that the job is, in fact, way too big for us. There's no way we could possibly accomplish all God has commanded us to do, so we might as well stop worrying if we can. We can't.

[Scripture Title Slide] Of course, that's not *all* the good news. If you have a bible, turn with me to Judges chapter 6. If you grabbed one of our bibles on the way in, you can find Judges 6 on page XXX. And if you don't own a Bible, please keep that one as a gift from us!

We're about to meet a guy named Gideon. Gideon lived during a time when Israel had settled the land God had promised Israel. But Israel repeatedly refused to follow God, to trust God to protect them. So God allowed neighboring tribes to conquer them. Gideon is living under pagan rule. And when we meet him, he's hiding in a cistern, threshing wheat. He's hiding from the Midianites, the tribe who's conquered Israel. The picture is meant to be pathetic: Gideon is so afraid he has to hide to provide food for his family.

Then God comes to Gideon and gives him some surprising news. He comes upon Gideon, threshing wheat in secret (no doubt surprising him), and says, "Yahweh is with you!"

“Sir,” Gideon replied, “if the LORD is with us, why has all this happened to us? And where are all the miracles our ancestors told us about? Didn’t they say, ‘The LORD brought us up out of Egypt’? But now the Lord has abandoned us and handed us over to the Midianites.”

Then the LORD turned to him and said, “Go with the strength you have, and rescue Israel from the Midianites. I am sending you!”

“But Lord,” Gideon replied, “how can I rescue Israel? My clan is the weakest in the whole tribe of Manasseh, and I am the least in my entire family!”

The Lord said to him, “I will be with you. And you will destroy the Midianites as if you were fighting against one man.” -- Judges 6:13-16

I can't tell you how often I've felt like Gideon - I hear about all these amazing things God did in the Bible and I wonder, but what about now? What about today? Where are all the miracles our ancestors told us about?

But what does God tell Gideon? Go with the strength you have. Not, Gideon get better. Or train for a few months. Or read some books and get smarter or develop a business plan and get richer or track down a radioactive spider and let it bite you.

Go with the strength you have.

And when Gideon (rightly) points out that he's not equipped to do the job, God doesn't contradict him. Instead, God says, "I will be with you. And I will destroy Midian."

In other words, God is going to do the work. We just have to show up with what we have.

The good news is that we don't have to do anything ourselves. God's mission in the world is not up to us. God created us and God calls us and all we do is respond. We say Yes to God, to what God asks us to do.

God's call *will* be bigger than you can accomplish. If the vision you have is something you can accomplish, it's not from God. It's too small.

If our vision as a Church is something we can conceive of doing ourselves, it's not from God. God's mission is something only God can do.

So no wonder it's paralyzing. No wonder our first response is fear, a sense that God got the wrong person, that God wants a superhero, a super Christian, not little ole me.

But that's the wrong response. God *is* in fact calling us. You and me. Ordinary, everyday people. And God doesn't make mistakes. God knows exactly what he's doing when he calls us.

God doesn't ask us to do everything. God asks us to do what we can. Come with the strength you have. And God will do the rest.

Gideon finally realizes he's not just having a conversation with some guy, but actually with God. He's understandably afraid:

When Gideon realized that it was the angel of the LORD, he cried out, “Oh, Sovereign LORD, I’m doomed! I have seen the angel of the LORD face to face!”

“It is all right,” the LORD replied. “Do not be afraid. You will not die.” And Gideon built an altar to the LORD there and named it Yahweh-Shalom (which means “the LORD is peace”). -- Judges 6:13-24

Do not be afraid. God's words to Gideon. Do not be afraid, Gideon. You won't die. You'll conquer. You'll be victorious. Because I'm the one doing the heavy lifting. I'm accomplishing. You just respond. You join. You follow.

So Gideon names that place YHWH-Shalom. Yahweh-Peace. Yahweh is setting the world right. Yahweh is taking care of business. Yahweh is handling this.

Throughout the rest of the day, you're going to hear several ways our church family is responding to God's call. Different opportunities you have to join in where God is already working. How we are obeying Jesus' command:

Jesus came and told his disciples, “I have been given all authority in heaven and on earth. Therefore, go and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. Teach these new disciples to obey all the commands I have given you. And be sure of this: I am with you always, even to the end of the age.” -- Matthew 28:18-20

We are not going alone. We are not the primary workers. We are responding to God's call, to Jesus' command. And just as God was with Gideon, so Jesus promises he is with us. Forever and always, to the end of the age.

So in everything else you hear today, listen for the Spirit calling you. You may hear a call to get involved in something we're already doing. Or the Spirit may give you a crazy idea that no one has thought of yet. It may seem crazy. Impossible, even.

Good. That's a clear sign it's from God. Remember: God isn't calling you to be a superhero. God is calling you to be you. To bring what strength you have and join the God of peace in restoring all things.

Let's get started!

First Interview