

**ABBAY INTERNATIONAL BAPTIST CHURCH, READING**

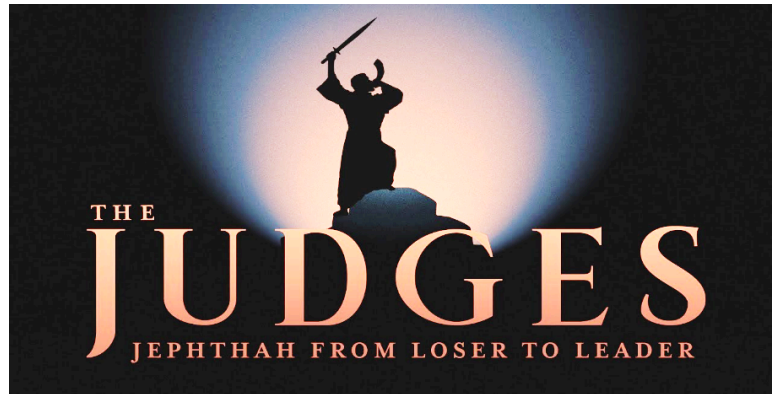
**WORSHIP SERVICE WITH COMMUNION**

**10.30 AM 18<sup>TH</sup> AUGUST 2024**

**Rev Dr Julia Binney leading & Simon Bird preaching**

[www.abbeybaptistchurch.org.uk](http://www.abbeybaptistchurch.org.uk).

Find us on Facebook @ Abbey Baptist Church, Reading



**Summer Series:** Not Only for Heroes... Twelve studies on the lesser known heroes of faith from Hebrews 11

**Theme 10:** The Commitment of Faith... Jephthah (Hebrews 11:32)

**CALL TO WORSHIP:**

Loving God: **we come to worship you.**

Life-giving God: **we come to hear and receive your life-giving word.**

Transforming God: **we come to you aware of our need to change.**

We gather to worship with our hearts and minds open and ready to receive  
**may the Lord God be with us. Amen.**

**Hymn BP&W 20:**

The King is among us,  
His Spirit is here,  
Let's draw near and worship,  
Let songs fill the air.

He looks down upon us,  
Delight in His face,  
Enjoying His children's love,  
Enthralled by our praise.

For each child is special,  
Accepted and loved,  
A love gift from Jesus  
To His Father above.

And now He is giving  
His gifts to us all,  
For no one is worthless  
And each one is called.

The Spirit's anointing  
On all flesh comes down,  
And we shall be channels  
For works like His own.

We come now believing  
Your promise of power,  
For we are Your people  
And this is Your hour.

The King is among us,  
His Spirit is here,  
Let's draw near and worship,  
Let songs fill the air.

GRAHAM KENDRICK © 1981 KINGSWAY'S THANKYOU MUSIC.

#### **A PRAYER OF PRAISE:**

We praise you gracious God and celebrate your goodness.  
We see your glory in the vastness and beauty of the universe.

#### **Gracious God, we worship you.**

We praise you Lord Jesus Christ, King of Kings and Lord of Lords,  
for you came as one of us, to live and die for us, to serve and show us how to live in  
harmony with God and others.

#### **Lord Jesus Christ, we worship you.**

Holy Spirit, you unite us with God, reveal to us the truth of God  
and bring God's power into our lives.

#### **Holy Spirit, we worship you.**

**Gracious God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit we worship you now and forever. Amen.**

#### **A PRAYER OF CONFESSION:**

Lord, you call us to follow you.

#### **Forgive us for our lack of response, our apathy and indifference in following you.**

Lord, we think of the times when we have not listened to you and gone our own way.

#### **Forgive us and transform our lives so that we may live in a way that brings your truth and loving presence to others.**

Give us a new heart, O God, and create a right spirit within us.

Help us to commit our lives fully to you without holding back.

#### **Lord, have mercy. In Jesus' name. Amen.**

**THE LORD'S PRAYER:** *You are invited to pray in your own heart language*

**Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name,**

**your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as in heaven.**

**Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our sins,  
as we forgive those who sin against us.**

**Lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil.**

**For the kingdom, the power and the glory are yours  
now and for ever and ever. Amen.**

## **FAMILY TIME:** Liquorice Allsorts

*(An offering will be taken during the next song, and then the children will leave us for their own groups)*

### **SONG:**

I'm special because God has loved me,  
For he gave the best thing that he had to save me;  
His own Son Jesus, crucified to take the blame  
For all the bad things I have done.  
Thank you Jesus, thank you Lord,  
For loving me so much.  
I know I don't deserve anything.  
Help me feel your love right now,  
To know deep in my heart  
That I'm your special friend.

GRAHAM KENDRICK © 1986 KINGSWAY'S THANKYOU MUSIC

### **PRAYER OF DEDICATION**

**BIBLE READING 1:** Judges 11:1-12, 28-35

**BIBLE READING 2:** Hebrews 11:32-34

**SERMON:** Not only for Heroes 10: The Commitment of Faith – Jephthah (Judges 11:1-40)

Have you watched a film where a band of misfits come together and are then moulded by a great leader into a fighting force? Why do we like these stories? Do we like to see hidden potential come out? Maybe we associate with the misfits and imagine being part of this exciting bunch.

Well this is God's story with us. Think of Jesus choosing the 12 disciples? - a more unlikely band I do not think you could find. God delights in using all sorts of people. As Julia said last week 'Are you thinking that God cannot use you or you've read 1 Timothy 3 and think you could not possibly become a leader in the church?'

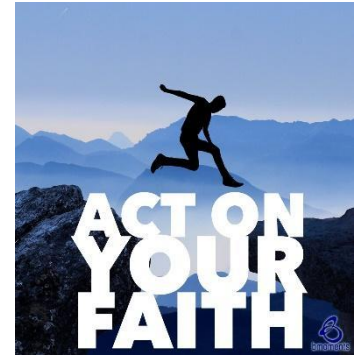
This is why we are looking at the heroes of faith from Hebrews 11. We see they are all different; they have their faults, yet God used them and delights in them. Today, we are looking at Jephthah and we see different sides of his character. He is not like Gideon, Samson or Barak. We might not see ourselves in him, but we can see the principle of God using all-sorts.

**The basic message today is, if God can use all sorts like these, then he can use us too! Let us not disqualify ourselves, rather know that God counts us worthy, and he can empower us.** If we don't, we will stay on the sidelines in doubt and fear.

The story starts with the same cycle that has happened through the time of the Judges. The Israelites did evil in the eyes of Lord (10:1). They served foreign gods. Surrounding nations invade (9). Then the Israelites cried out to Lord (10) and they got rid of foreign gods and served the Lord (16). See how God responds. He is faithful to his covenant with Israel, it is agony for him when they turn away; but when they turn back in repentance he cannot resist coming to their rescue.

The story turns to Jephthah (11:1-3). It says he was a mighty warrior. So he is not like Gideon, who felt he was not the mighty warrior that God saw him to be. Jephthah has the abilities of a fighter. But we learn more of his background. His mother was a prostitute, but it seems his father kept him in the family. However, when his brothers, who are the legitimate children, grow up they reject Jephthah and send him away. He leads a gang of scoundrels in a remote place.

When the Ammonites invade, the leaders turn to Jephthah (5). We start to see noble aspects of his character. He is concerned for integrity and knows God's ways. He repeats the leaders' request and promise that they will make him leader 'before the Lord.' (11).



I am just thinking he is not bitter after being rejected by his brothers and he was able to be assertive with the leaders – not pushed around. Maybe his father who kept him in the family gave him a good sense of self-worth and he was brought up to know God's ways.

Now, Jephthah shows wisdom by not rashly going to war. He messages the attacking Ammonite king, who replies with some misinformation, which Jephthah counters. Jephthah makes a stand for the rightness of his cause based on his knowledge of the history of God's people and the promises of God. He puts himself in God's hands, 'Let the Lord, the Judge, decide the dispute this day between the Israelites and the Ammonites!' (27). This is reminiscent of David's declaration of faith in his God when he went out to fight Goliath, 'You come against me with sword and spear and javelin, but I come against you in the name of the Lord Almighty, the God of the armies of Israel, whom you have defied' (1 Sam 17:25).

The king of Ammon ignores this, so a fight ensues. It says that the Spirit of the Lord came upon Jephthah and he defeated the Ammonites (29 & 32). God was faithful and saved the people.

I digress for a moment about the work of the Spirit. In the time of the Judges, the Spirit comes on individuals with raw power enabling them, frankly, to do some strange things. We may worry about the work of the Spirit now; we may have heard of strange things. But a commentary said of the time of the Judges, 'we see the gifts of the Spirit without the fruit.' And the New Testament situation is entirely different. Our chief example of Spirit filled life is Jesus, so there is nothing to fear. Speaking about Jesus' baptism, after which he received the Spirit, I heard it said the result of us receiving the Spirit is to hear those same words for ourselves, 'You are my beloved son/daughter, whom I love, with you I am well pleased!' (Luke 3:22).

This understanding of how we interpret the Old Testament in the light of the New, helps in looking back at something extraordinary that Jephthah did.

Then there is a tragedy. Jephthah made a vow to the Lord (30-31) that, if God gave victory, he would sacrifice the first thing that came out his house when he returned home. This turns out to be his only daughter (34), who danced out to meet him. She agrees this must be done, after she has spent time with her friends. Now, I found this the most disturbing and outrageous part of the story. How can I preach on Jephthah's life? What lesson is there? What example of faith is this? Yes, Jephthah was a man of integrity, he wanted others to keep to their promises, and he knew God kept his promises to him. But to see this through and have his only daughter killed is tragic. Well, I found some comfort in the commentaries. They said he was rash to make this promise. Also, if he knew God's law better, he would have known that God forbids child sacrifice (Lev 18:21). So he could have annulled his vow. But, but, but! Jephthah is commended for his faith in Hebrews 11, and this included holding himself to his words, whatever the cost. This reflects his faith in a God who never breaks his word. In this case his actions prompted by faith were mis-guided. There is a lesson: not to be so sure of our rightness before God that we abandon love and a sense of God's wider ways.

Later, we have a further insight into Jephthah's character when another tribe of Israel came complaining. He told them when he fought the battle, he 'took his life into his own hands' (12:2-3). Yes, he was mighty warrior, but that didn't completely expel fear. There was a little bit of Gideon in him. But despite his fear, he still fought. I wonder if we often look on at other people who do amazing things, 'Oh, what faith they have!' thinking it is easy. Actually, they may have some fear, but they have learned to let the promises of God speak louder. I read a book once called, 'Feel the fear and do it anyway.' Being afraid does not necessarily mean we should not do something; sometimes it means we need to press into it. I have heard it said that faith is spelled R.I.S.K, and FAITH is Feeling Afraid I Trust Him. Sometimes we need to step out of the boat.

How has Jephthah's life and faith spoken to you this morning? I said at the beginning **If God can use people like these, then he can use us too! Don't disqualify yourself, rather count yourself worthy, and capable when God empowers you.**

Despite his background, rejection by family and going off and living as an outlaw, Jephthah showed many noble characteristics. He did not become bitter through his wilderness experience; he had a sense of his worth before God. He was wise, sought the Lord, and knew God's wider plans and promises for

Israel. Empowered by the Spirit he was able to step up to God's tasks despite inner fear. If we can set aside the foolish vow he made, we see the qualities of integrity and faith that include him among the heroes of Hebrews 11 who, 'through faith conquered kingdoms, administered justice and gained what was promised' (33).

Are there things God is calling you face today? Are you fearful? Do you feel unsuitable or unequipped for the task? Are you wavering or shrinking back in any way? Is God calling you to just get on with it, step up, or step out of the boat?

### **HYMN BP&W 233:**

When I survey the wondrous cross  
Where the young Prince of glory died,  
My richest gain I count but loss,  
And pour contempt on all my pride.  
Forbid it, Lord, that I should boast,  
Save in the death of Christ my God:  
All the vain things that charm me most,  
I sacrifice them to His blood.

See from His head, His hands, His feet,  
Sorrow and love flow mingled down:  
Did e'er such love and sorrow meet,  
Or thorns compose so rich a crown?

Were the whole realm of nature mine,  
That were an offering far too small;  
Love so amazing, so divine,  
Demands my soul, my life, my all!

ISAAC WATTS (1674-1748)

### **COMMUNION**

#### **WORDS OF INVITATION:**

The table of the Lord is spread. It is for those who will come and see in broken bread and poured out wine symbols of his life shed for us on the cross and risen again on the third day. The Risen Christ is present among his people and it is here that we meet him. It is for those who know him a little and long to know him more. We invite all who are seeking him and all who are weary of their sin and doubt to come and share in the feast. Therefore, we need to come in faith, conscious of our weakness, renouncing our sin, humbly putting our trust in Christ, and seeking his grace.

'For you did not receive a spirit that makes you a slave again to fear, but she received the spirit of sonship. By him we cry, 'Abba, Father.' The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God's children.' (Romans 8:15-16).

#### **PRAYERS OF THANKSGIVING**

##### **INSTITUTION:**

'The Lord Jesus on the night when he was betrayed took bread and when he had given thanks, he broke it and said, "This is my body that is for you. Do this in remembrance of me."

In the same way after supper he took the cup saying,

“This cup is the new covenant in my blood.

Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me.”

For whenever you eat this bread and drink this cup you proclaim the Lord’s death until he comes.

*(1 Corinthians 11:23-26)*

This is the body of Christ, broken for you.

*(take a piece of bread and eat as it is served to you)*

This is the blood of Christ, shed for you.

*(we drink together once all have been served)*

**POST COMMUNION PRAYER:**

**Living God, we thank you for feeding us**

**with the body and blood of your Son,**

**the Lord Jesus Christ.**

**You bring strength out of weakness, plenty out of little,**

**the great from the small,**

**we trust you and commit ourselves to your service. Amen.**

**PRAYERS OF INTERCESSION: Benna & Ernest**

My Heavenly Father, as the summer holiday unfolds, we thank you for the gift of rest and the freedom it brings. Let this time of rest also be a time of renewal, where our faith is refreshed and our commitment to You is deepened. Moreover, please help our kids to use this time wisely, to draw closer to You and to strengthen their faith. Encourage them to visit your house more often, to find solace and inspiration within the walls of the church.

Lord, We lift up the teenagers of this world who are facing the challenges of drug abuse and the grip of online addictions. We pray that You break the chains of addiction that hold them back, whether it be substances or the endless cycle of online distractions. Open their eyes to the truth and help them see the potential within themselves, the beauty of life beyond these harmful habits. Guide them back to You, Lord. Let them feel Your presence in their lives, drawing them closer to Your love and wisdom. Give them the courage to seek help, the strength to resist temptation, and the discernment to choose what is right over what is easy.

Lord, We come to You in a time of great distress, lifting up our country as it faces the turmoil of riots and unrest. We ask for Your peace to descend upon the nation, calming the hearts of those who are angry, fearful, or desperate.

Lord, please bring healing to the communities torn apart by violence and discord. May those who feel unheard and unseen find peaceful ways to express their concerns and seek justice. Guide the authorities to respond with wisdom, fairness, and restraint, working towards solutions that bring about true and lasting peace.

God, we come before You with compassion and concern for all those around the world who are living in hardship. You see the struggles of every individual, in every corner of the earth, and You know the weight of their burdens. Lord, we ask for Your mercy to cover those who are suffering. Provide for their needs – whether it be food, clean water, shelter, healthcare, or safety. May your presence be a light in the darkest places, comforting those who are hurting and guiding them through their trials. Help them to know that they are not forgotten that they are loved by You, and that there is hope even in the most circumstances when they commit in faith.

We pray for our church to grow in faith and numbers, reaching out to the communities around us with open arms and hearts. Let our church be a sanctuary where people feel welcomed, valued, and loved.

Help us to open our hearts to one another, building strong and genuine relationships grounded in Your love. May we support each other in times of need, offering a helping hand, a listening ear, and a shoulder to lean on.

We pray in the name of Jesus Christ, Amen

**SONG:**

Our confidence is in the Lord, the source of our salvation.  
Rest is found in him alone, the author of creation.  
We will not fear the evil day, because we have a refuge;  
In every circumstance we say, 'Our hope is built on Jesus.'

He is our fortress, we will never be shaken; x4  
We will put our trust in God. We will put our trust in  
God.

NOEL & TRICIA RICHARDS © 1989 KINGSWAY'S THANKYOU MUSIC

**THE BLESSING:**

May God encourage you and strengthen you  
as you go from this place to live out your calling to  
followers of Jesus.

May everything in your life reflect the love and  
mercy of God.

And may God bless you as you go,

in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.



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**THE GRACE:**

**May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God,  
and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with us all evermore. Amen.**

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**Dates for your Diary:**

**Church Walk:** Saturday 24<sup>th</sup> August. Details on Abbey Baptist Church WhatsApp or talk to Simon Bird (07547 424246)

**Church Meeting:** Sunday September 8<sup>th</sup>

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