

Date: 03.05.2020

Time: 11am

Service taken by: Rev Gavino Fioretti

Psalm: Psalm 96:1-7 (Scottish Psalter)

Scripture: 1 Samuel 5:1-7:1

Outline:

- a) Introduction
 - 1. The self-glorifying God
 - 2. The hand of God
 - 3. The revealing God
 - 4. The people of God

- **Introduction**

We look through this passage and learn lessons about God and His people.

1) The self-glorifying God

The people weren't bringing Him glory. His Name was offended by the Philistines and God reveals His glory to them.

Compared to idols: God shows that He is greater than the Philistines' idol, Dagon. This idol is found face down on the ground. This god of wood is dependent on peoples' hands and strength to set it in its place again. What a contrast with our God, who doesn't need man's strength, instead people rely on God for His strength.

Praised by idols: Dagon falls again and God shows the Philistines that their god cannot deliver itself from Him, but the Philistines don't understand.

To fall on one's face in a prostrate position at that time was an act of devotion, a sign of worship, a sign of humble submission. God was showing that He was praised even by idols.

The duty of the people of Israel was to show that there was no-one like Jehovah. They failed to do that, but God did this instead.

Defeats idols: Dagon's head and hands were cut off. To have hands cut off was a sign of defeat in battle. God was showing the Philistines that He had defeated their god. Many of the 10 plagues in

Egypt were directed at the Egyptian gods, but like the Egyptians, the Philistines failed to give God the glory.

Our chief end is to glorify God through our worship and living, both individually and as a church. We often fail to do this and when we fail, God ensures that He is glorified. God's Name will always be glorified by His people or by Himself. He will show the world the foolishness of idols and that no-one can compare to Him.

2) The hand of God

The hand of God is a picture of God's intervention and His dealings with people.

Against the Philistines: The ark was taken by the Philistines as an act of defiance, not because they wanted to know more of God. God deals with them in a hard way, with fear, with illness and with death. God punishes them for their idolatry and sin.

God's judgement brings fear and death. We can't know what God is doing in and through COVID-19, but we certainly see this pattern of fear, illness and death in these days.

God's judgement is a fearful thing. Don't play with God or you'll pay the price for it. Don't live as an enemy of God. The Philistines paid a high price. Don't be like them, surrender to God.

Against his people: God's people had a superstitious view of the ark and when it was brought back, they thought God was back with them. People died that day as they worshipped God. They wanted to look into the ark and were treating it with curiosity rather than reverence. They were not offering the sacrifices required, bringing a cow rather than a male animal. They thought they could add to the worship with unholy things taken from the Philistines. The people of Israel were afraid like the Philistines and so behaved like the Philistines.

We learn from this that even when God's people treat Him lightly, they pay a price for that – in a different way from others, yes, but there are still consequences. We experience God's discipline – this is not pleasant, but it is necessary. God is a holy God and we mustn't take His will or revelation lightly – if we do, it's at our peril and there will be a price to pay. Yes, He's our Father – that means we should honour Him for who He is and obey Him.

3) The revealing God

His sovereignty: God shows the Philistines that He is the only God. He is showing them who He is. He shows them that other gods will not be able to save them. He wants them to acknowledge His sovereignty. God is evangelising the Philistines, showing them that the only way to live is to surrender to Him. He reveals His uniqueness to Him.

His judgment: God reveals His judgement. He reveals that He was behind the fear, the illness and death. Through His providence, He reveals His judgement to the Philistines. There was punishment, but there was here divine grace. He gives them the opportunity to repent and turn to Jehovah.

His law: The Philistines offered a guilt offering to God – they got it wrong, but they showed their knowledge that they couldn't come empty-handed to God. God revealed something of His law to the Philistines. They knew certain things about His character and will. A knowledge of God has arrived.

His covenant: In providence and in history, God speaks. God hasn't stopped revealing Himself to people yet. God doesn't have to speak to people in this way, yet He does. God reveals that the only way to be spared is in a covenant relationship with Him. At times, God's hand will be heavy on us, but this is well meant – that we will turn to Him and seek refuge in God.

4) The people of God

Disrespectful like the Philistines: The people of Israel treated the ark without reverence, but with curiosity, wanting to see what was in the box. They thought they could add to the worship. Like the Philistines, they treated the holy things of God without respect.

Ignorant like the Philistines: The people of Israel had God's revelation, but like the Philistines, they were ignorant.

Unrepentant like the Philistines: When challenged with the revelation of God, rather than turning to Him in repentance, they wanted free of Him.

The Israelites acted like the Philistines. They did not seek forgiveness. They did not repent. Like the Philistines, with God's revelation, they didn't seek more of Him, they wanted free of Him. For 20 years, the ark was not kept where it should have been; it was kept in a house rather than the tabernacle. For 20 years, the Israelites were happy to neglect God's worship before repenting.

The people of Israel didn't want God's discipline. They didn't want His judgement. None of us want to go to Hell. The world does not want to go to Hell, but some are unwilling to accept God. They want God to be as far away from them as possible.

Sometimes, God's hand will be heavy on you – that's His mercy calling you to repentance, to turn back to Christ. You need to repent. It's time to accept Him as your God and King, to surrender your life and will to Him. It's time to repent and make sure you're in His will. He's our loving Father and our holy God. Honour Him.