

Judges 6:11-16

“Now the angel of the Lord came and sat under the oak at Ophrah, which belonged to Joash the Abiezrite, as his son Gideon was beating out wheat in the wine press, to hide it from the Midianites. The angel of the Lord appeared to him and said to him, “The Lord is with you, you mighty warrior.” Gideon answered him, “But sir, if the Lord is with us, why then has all this happened to us? And where are all his wonderful deeds that our ancestors recounted to us, saying, ‘Did not the Lord bring us up from Egypt?’ But now the Lord has cast us off, and given us into the hand of Midian.” Then the Lord turned to him and said, “Go in this might of yours and deliver Israel from the hand of Midian; I hereby commission you.” He responded, “But sir, how can I deliver Israel? My clan is the weakest in Manasseh, and I am the least in my family.” The Lord said to him, “But I will be with you, and you shall strike down the Midianites, every one of them.”

In August of last year we went through a sermon series entitled “Altar Your Life.” We discussed areas of our lives which would benefit from bringing them to the altar and giving them over to God; altering our attitudes, our choices, our service, etc. Today we are beginning a new series which sounds similar but is very different. Today we are beginning a new sermon series called “Altar Ego.” Again I have not misspelled alter, A-L-T-A-R is what I want to say.

If we know anything about the Old Testament or maybe about history, we’d know that for centuries, an altar – was a place where believers would come and sacrifice something meaningful before God or lay something down before God at an altar. We seem to have an understanding about what the altar is, but what is an ego? Ego is who we think we are, who we believe we are, and for some who they are convinced they are. Unfortunately, some of us think too highly of ourselves; and some we think too lowly of ourselves. And what we want to do over the next few weeks is we want to lay down our egos; we want to lay down what we think of ourselves, lay it at the altar of God. So that we will not be who we think we are or who others think we are, but instead together we will strive to be who God knows we are.

Over the next several weeks I pray we would be preparing our hearts, our minds, and especially our egos to lay them all down before God.

Today, what we're going to talk about is laying down our feelings of inadequacy. We all have those feelings of inadequacy, and we're going to give those to God by faith at His altar.

Today, we're going to talk about laying down our feelings of inadequacy. I don't know about you, but it's amazing to me how quickly I can feel incredibly inadequate. Maybe it's comparing myself with someone that's more financially successful than me, and I think, "What's wrong with me? Why am I like this? How stupid am I?" Maybe, you've drive by a really nice neighborhood and ask, "What do those people even do for a living? I mean, I must be really stupid I don't even own a house, and look at them. I feel inadequate because I just don't measure up to those around me."

I go to a friend's house and their house is always so perfect. I walk in and it smells so good and everything is perfect and in its place. Mine on the other hand smelled like laundry, and dirty laundry at that. You also notice her hair is always perfect and her nails are always done.

You really do love your friend because she's your friend, but you also hate your friend because she always looks perfect and seems to have it all. "Why can't I live up to that?"

Or maybe you're a student and your best friend is really smart and popular, and you study your buns off and make B's and C's, and your friend never studies and makes A's. You go to the dances alone and your friend always has at least seven invitations to the same stupid dance. "What's wrong with me? Why don't I measure up like this?"

Or sometimes, I don't know if you ever feel this way, but I've felt spiritually inadequate at times. You know what I mean; you're around like this "Super Christian." You know the person? And you just bring up something and they're like, "Oh yeah, that reminds me of Obadiah 1:3, and then they actually quote it. And you're like going, "How do they do that? You're asking yourself is Obadiah even a book in the bible? I think it is it sounds biblical; but I'm not even sure." You know? Or they pray and their prayers are like well, you can just tell God's stepping back and saying, "Wow, now that's a prayer." Then they ask you to pray and you're like "Oh, I don't really want to pray. No really I'm really not the one you want

praying. Okay, I'll pray. Good God, good food, good friends. Let's eat Amen." And you're like; I really stink as a Christian. I feel so spiritually inadequate."

If you feel that way, I totally and completely can relate with you. I think, for me, I've always felt like I had to prove myself by trying to perform up to some imaginary standards because I never felt good enough myself. Why do we all battle with our ego's and these beliefs of inadequacy?

Why do we feel inadequate? There are many reasons we feel inadequate, but these are my top three picks. Number one is we've received unfair criticism. Somewhere along the way in your life, someone told you, "You don't measure up." "You don't have what it takes." "I don't like you." "I wish I'd never had you." "You're pathetic." "You're never going to amount to anything." "I wish you were more like your brother or sister." And internally, those messages have been burned on the hard drive of your ego. And anytime you want to do something significant, you begin to hear those old messages replaying and they tap into your inner me or mini me that says, "I am not adequate or I'm not capable to do this."

Second reason, we feel inadequate, we receive unrealistic compliments, that's right unrealistic compliments. Like "You're the best." "You're simply amazing." "Wow, you're great." And inside we're going, "You don't really know me. I'm not really that good. I'm not that amazing." And it's my belief that we've really done a disservice to this and the next generation that, because we've constantly told them "you're great!" When I was a child and like most of you older people here know we actually had to be good at something to win an award. You actually had to win to get a trophy. I mean, you actually had to win. My 9 yr. old grandson informed me, you just show up, and they say "Here's your trophy, kid. You did great."

Another injustice I see is, we used to have to actually graduate all 12 grades to graduate. Today children graduate from Kindergarten. "Woo Hoo, you got through Kindergarten. Then they graduate again from Primary School, and again in Middle School. By the time you reach High School it no longer means anything. And yet we're still there cheering "You're amazing, you're the best." But based on teen suicide rates, they're saying, "I don't feel that great or special. Now we have at least two generations paralyzed with the fear of failure.

First is unfair criticism; second is unrealistic compliments; and third our reason which is becoming even more common – is unwise comparisons. We just look around at the other people and say, “You know, I’m not like them. I’m not as attractive; I’m not as bright; I’m not as good.

In fact, I read an article that said social media is now one of the greatest causes of feelings of inadequacy. Because, you upload your picture of your wedding reception cookout, and then you look at your friend’s picture of her lobster reception, sitting on the beach in Hawaii. And you’re going, “my life really stinks. I don’t go to Hawaii for my wedding and I don’t have important people as my friends. You know, and I only received 20 likes on my first Instagram photo the other night and someone I know received 138 for their photo. I must be a loser.”

Pastor Steven Furtick, said it best – “We compare others highlight reels with our behind the scenes.” We look at the highlight reels of everybody else’s life and we think we know the behind the scenes. We see them with their children, and their children look perfect. And we just had to yell at our children, and their socks don’t even match. We see them worshipping in church and they look all beautiful and put together, and we don’t like things

about our appearance. We feel very inadequate. We're comparing our
behind the scenes with their highlight reels. And suddenly, our ego starts to
tell us what we're not where God wants to tell us what we are.

Looking at the story of Gideon, starting in **verse 11**, "*Now the angel of the Lord came and sat under the oak at Ophrah, which belonged to Joash the Abiezerite, as his son Gideon was beating out wheat in the wine press, to hide it from the Midianites.*" What was Gideon doing?

Everyone would know that anyone responsible threshes wheat outside
somewhere up high so that when they throw it up, the wind would blow the
chaff away and the best of the wheat would be left. Yet Gideon was in a
wine press hiding because the bottom line was, he was afraid of his enemies,
the Midianites. He was very very afraid. He was trying to keep the wheat for
himself. He was terrified of the enemy and this is what the angel says to him.

Verse 12, "when the Angel of the Lord appeared to Gideon, he said,
"*the Lord is,*" what? Everyone say it with me. He said, "*the Lord is with
you.*" And then what did he call him? He called him a mighty warrior.

If I would have been there, I would have told Gideon the truth. I'd have said "the Lord is with you, you scaredy cat. You're hiding. You're scared, you're nothing but a scaredy cat."

But the Lord saw something in him that Gideon didn't see in himself. **Verse 13**, "*But sir, if the Lord is with us, why then has all this happened to us? And where are all his wonderful deeds that our ancestors recounted to us, saying, 'Did not the Lord bring us up from Egypt?' But now the Lord has cast us off, and given us into the hand of Midian .*"

The Lord turned to him and said, "*Go in this might of yours and deliver Israel from the hand of Midian; I hereby commission you.*" Gideon then asks in **verse 15**, "But Lord, how can I save Israel? My clan is the weakest in Manassah and I am the least in my family." You might say it this way. "Well, I'm the leader you think I am." Or, "I can't sing," or "I'm not that smart and I can't teach." Or "I'm not as creative and would not help the worship Committee." Or "If you really knew all that I had done." All of the inner me, our mini me messages try to tell us why we can't do what God already said we could do.

Verse 16, the Lord answered with the key to this whole message, and said, *“I will be with you, and you shall strike down the Midianites, every one of them.”*

What are we going to do? We’re going to lay down our ego at the altar of God because we are not who we think we are; we’re going to become who God says we are. Three things you need to know about you from the story of Gideon. The first thing, when your inner mini me voices those messages of insecurity and inadequacy, number one, remember that God’s view of you is different than you think. God’s view of you is different than you think. I promise you that God sees more in you than you see in yourself.

The angel of the Lord appears to Gideon who is hiding. Everything about his physical actions says, “I’m scared.” But the Lord says, “I am with you,” and calls Gideon what? He calls him a mighty warrior. God sees more in you than you see in yourself.

This young boy I knew played soccer all over the Southeast including Texas and a few northern states. This young man went on to college where his competitive nature helped secure him a spot as goal tender on his college soccer team. He played hard and was still very competitive but something

happened. He called me one day and asked if we could go to lunch and he asked me “How did you know?” He was asking about ministry. Why? Because God saw something inside of him that he did not see in himself.

And I want you to know, for every single one of you, God’s view of you is different than your view of yourself. Someone may have told you, you can’t, or you won’t, or that inner mini me said, “Here’s all the reasons why I can’t do what I believe God is calling me to do.” But God’s view of you is different than you think. I love the way it’s worded in **Ephesians 2:10**, the Bible says, “*For we are God’s*” what? What are we? *We are God’s masterpiece. He created us anew in Christ Jesus so we can do the good things he prepared and planned for us long ago.*

Do you realize that long before you were even born, God had a “to-do” list just for you? And God created you with everything in you to do everything that he called you to do. God’s view of you is different than you think. Others don’t see you as God sees you.

When everybody looked at Rahab in the Old Testament, what did they see? They saw a prostitute; they saw a harlot. What did God see? God saw someone who’s heart would be turned toward him, who would one day marry

a Godly man named Salmon, who then would give birth, and through her genealogy, would come Jesus, the Savior of the World. Others saw a prostitute but God saw divine potential.

When people, when his own family looked at David as a child, they saw a little scrawny shepherd boy. God saw something they didn't see. God saw a worrier, able to stand up against a giant. Whenever David sinned and fell, as we all do, others saw an adulterer, and a murderer. What did God see? God saw a man after His own heart God more than anything else.

When Peter messed up again, and again, and again, and again, and couldn't seem to ever get it right, what did Jesus see? Jesus saw a rock, Jesus saw someone who would one day be the guest speaker at Pentecost.

When others see you or when you see yourselves, what or who is seen? God sees more in you than they see , or more than you see. God's view of you is different than you think. God has put more in you than you realize.

Number one, God's view of you is different than you think. Number two, God has given you more than you think. God has given you more than you think. **Verse 14**, I love what God says to Gideon. Does He say "Go take a class and get ready for this calling." No? Does He say go study, study, and

then study some more before you start? No. What does God say? God says “**go**” in the what? God says, “Go in the strength you have.” “Go in the strength I’ve already given you.” “Go in the strength that you already have.” “Am I not the sending you?” “You go and use what I have already given you.” “Go in the strength that you have.”

There are some of you today, all you hear is the negative message from your inner mini me. “I don’t have what it takes.” “I don’t measure up.” “I’m not good enough.” “I’m not attractive enough.” I want you to know that God has given you more than you think; there is more inside of you. You have everything you need to do everything that God wants you to do. I am living proof that God put more in me than I ever even imagined.

Scripture says -- this in **2nd Peter 1:3** – “*His divine power has given us everything needed for life and godliness, through the knowledge of Him who called us by His own glory and goodness.*” Is God holding anything back from you? No. He gives you everything you need for what? For life and godliness. Through what? Through our knowledge of Him who called us by his glory and goodness. It’s in our knowledge of Him that He gives us everything that we need. Don’t dare believe what somebody else

said about you. Don't dare believe those negative messages that your inner mini me continues to tell you that you can't. God's view of you is different than you think. God has given you more than you think.

When God calls you to do something, it's more about the presence of God than it is about your own strength and power. It's more about His strength than it is about your strength. It's less about you than you think. That's why as a follower, we need to take our ego and lay it down at His altar so we will not be who others say we are; we will not be who we wrongly think we are, but we will become who God says we are.

I told you earlier that I feel very inadequate to be a pastor. And I do because I am inadequate; I really am. I know my behind the scenes. Okay? And I'm not good enough. The good news is, it's less about me than I think. And here's what I do. Every week when I preach, I get very nervous before the first service when I preach every week. People ask, "Do you still get nervous?" I still get nervous every single time. When I no longer get nervous I need to step aside.

But instead of stepping aside I just have to get alone. I have to just pray, pray, and pray some more, because I feel so inadequate. Because, it's really not about me; it's really about Him, it's all about Him.

You are not who others say you are. You are not who your inner mini me says you are. You are who God says you are and He says you are His master piece, created in Christ Jesus to do good works that He prepared a long time ago for you to do. So, lay down your inadequacy at the altar. As you kneel down and receive communion, as you come to sacrifice, sacrifice your ego before God.

And when you stand up, you stand up boldly and be who God called you to be. Because God's view of you is different than you think. God has given you more than and you think and it's less about you than you think. It's really all about him. Today is the day we stop feeling inadequate, and go boldly to be who He created us to be and do what we were created to do.