

Jephthah: A Man of His Word

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Judges: Ordinary People, Extraordinary God Series

Judges 11

I would like to begin today by welcoming our Sawmill Campus as well as our Lane Avenue Campus. I'd also like to welcome our two campus initiatives in Circleville and Mansfield. We are glad to have you with us.

I want to engage you in a little thought experiment. Imagine that if knowing that a person was a Christian told you that they would always tell the truth and always keep their promises. I mean, imagine a world in which just knowing that someone was a follower of Jesus communicated that "here's a person whose word is their bond, if they said it, you can take it to the bank!"

"Well, he promised to serve in Children's Ministry this week, and he is a Christian, so he will be there – period. I don't need to call, worry, fret or have a backup plan in case he doesn't show up. He is a Christian and Christians keep their promises – end of matter." Or "Yes, she owes me \$20 or she owes me \$1000; but, she is a Christian and she promised to repay me the first of the month. I know that because she is a Christian, she will move heaven and earth to make sure that I get my money on the first – no excuses, no evasions."

Let me continue this thought experiment. You say, "This person is a Christian, so there is no way that he would call in sick when he is not sick." Or "She would never break her marital vows in which she promised 'for better or for worse, for richer or poorer, in sickness and in health, to love and to cherish until death.'"

Imagine a world in which every time somebody thought of a Christian they thought, "Well, I don't quite understand this Christian religion and I don't really know very much about the Christian Bible, but the one thing you have to hand it to them for – those Christians sure can be counted on. I mean, there is a Christian guy at my job and he stayed until 11:00 p.m., every night last week, and he worked the entire weekend just because he promised a client delivery Monday morning. When I asked him why didn't he just make up some excuse or pretend that something outside of his control happened and delay the delivery, that Christian guy simply said, 'I made a promise – end of story.'"

Well, it is obvious that we don't live in the world of this thought experiment. But this was the world that Jesus came to introduce – a world in which his followers would be marked out by truth-telling and promise-keeping. Jesus said:

Matthew 5: 33 – 34, 37

33“Again, you have heard that it was said to the people long ago, ‘Do not break your oath, but fulfill to the Lord the vows you have made.’ 34But I tell you, do not swear an oath at all... 37All you need to say is simply ‘Yes,’ or ‘No’; anything beyond this comes from the evil one.

In other words, Jesus wants his followers to not have to add a bunch of oaths – “I swear on my mother’s grave; I swear to God; May lightening strike me, if I’m not telling the truth.” Jesus wants his followers to be marked by truth-telling and promise-keeping. When you say “yes, I will do something,” then it is yes and you do it. When you say “no, I’ll never do that,” then it is no, you never do it.

Unfortunately, the world we live in is a world in which we are increasingly surprised to find a thoroughly reliable person, even a thoroughly reliable Christian – we live in a world in which we feel like handing out awards for people just for keeping their marital vows. Or for keeping a promise to us even though it was just a little thing. Someone owes you \$20 and they told you they would pay Thursday night. And they drive in the rain and pay up even though it is totally inconvenient and it involves real sacrifice.

Of all the areas in contemporary society in which we see moral slippage, I think the great case could be made that at the very top of the list of areas of moral slippage, one should put the loss of truth-telling and promise-keeping. In contemporary society our propensity to break commitments and to change directions on a dime has become a virtue. We call all of our inconsistencies now “passages”. We’ve come up with words to describe our lack of constancy as “Well, it is just adult development. We’re practicing monogamy, only it is serial monogamy.” We have “starter marriages” now, before we move on to our real marriages.

And if we are Christians, it is even worse because we blame God for our breaking of commitments and our inconstancies. “Well, the Lord led me to quit the job; to not pay the debt; out of the marriage; out of the church...”

Promises and words are so watered down these days. *Psychology Today* recently printed an article titled “In the Name of Love” in which the author stated,

It is difficult to promise to love each other until death do us part. Love is not in our full control; we cannot always control our love. Love is a complex experience that can change. We can nevertheless say that we promise to do our best to provide the optimal circumstances for this love to last for a long time.

Can you imagine a pastor asking a bride, “Understanding that love is a complex experience that can change, and you can’t control your love, do you promise to

do your best to provide the optimal circumstances for your love to last a long time? If so, and if you understand what all of that means, say ‘I do.’”

But because in contemporary society we have lost the simple virtues of truth-telling and promise-keeping, we’ve not only eroded the foundation of marriage, we’ve eroded the foundation for remaining single. These days there are increasingly few Christian singles that can give a Christian reason for choosing singleness. Most folks who are single by choice, as opposed to by circumstance – I want to be married; I just haven’t met someone – these days most folks who are single by choice will give their reasons as “I don’t want to be tied down.” Or “I want to keep my options open.” In other words, I don’t want to bind my future by a promise to limit my freedom by any commitment.

The issue of the erosion of truth-telling and promise-keeping has gotten so bad that who here or at our campuses really believes anything that the vast majority of politicians say these days? The point of political communication these days is not to convey the truth accurately to the public. The point of political communication is to craft a powerful sound bite that will manipulate public opinion to achieve the spin that will enhance your political power and its all designed by media consultants and poll takers and even consultants which tell politicians how to manipulate the Christian vote.

We’ve been doing a series over the course of the summer from the Old Testament book of Judges. And as you should know, Judges in the Old Testament were not people wearing black robes who decided cases between two litigants. A judge would be more like today what we would call a governor or a General. We’ve been doing a series titled Ordinary People, Extraordinary God. Today we’re going to look at Judges 11 in a world of broken commitments. We’re going to look at *Jephthah: A Man of His Word*. Let’s pray.

Now in Judges 10 we read about the same cycle of apostasy that we discovered back when we started this series.

So, who does God raise up to help his people?

Who does God choose as his servants?

One person God chooses to use is Jephthah. Let’s read about him in Judges 11: 1 – 3:

Judges 11:1-3

1 Jephthah the Gileadite was a mighty warrior. His father was Gilead; his mother was a prostitute. 2 Gilead’s wife also bore him sons, and when they were grown up, they drove Jephthah away. “You are not going to get any inheritance in our family,” they said, “because you are the son of another woman.” 3 So Jephthah fled from his brothers and settled in the

land of Tob, where a gang of scoundrels gathered around him and followed him.

Now, what do these verses tell us? God's choice of who he is going to work through to serve his purposes in this world is often utterly unexpected. We've seen this repeatedly in the book of Judges. God chooses people like Gideon and Ehud, and Jephthah who wouldn't have even gotten to the initial round of interviews for a management position. I mean Jephthah is a guy whose resume would have been filed in the circular file – that is in the garbage. He probably wouldn't even have gotten the courtesy of a rejection letter.

He was the illegitimate son of a prostitute. He was disinherited by his family. He was kicked out of his home and his country. And he moved to a nearby neighborhood where he basically found employment as a gang leader. That's what Jephthah was. He found a bunch of guys who similarly had lost the support of their families for whatever reason and he formed them into a gang.

What we need to understand as we read Judges 11 is that Jephthah lacked everything that would have made him valuable in a traditional society. In a traditional society what gives you value is your connection to your family and your connection to your tribe. In contemporary society what makes people valuable is how successful you've been in employment, how much money you make, what degrees you have. What we're saying about Jephthah is he didn't have any of the things that his society would say marked him out for leadership or for God's blessing.

Yet God chooses the most unlikely people to serve his purposes in the world. We need to say this over and over again because we don't get it. Remember that we Christians follow a Savior who himself was unlikely. Here is what we read about Jesus, the Jewish Messiah:

Isaiah 53:1-3

1 Who has believed our message and to whom has the arm of the Lord been revealed? 2 He grew up before him like a tender shoot, and like a root out of dry ground. He had no beauty or majesty to attract us to him, nothing in his appearance that we should desire him. 3 He was despised and rejected by others, a man of suffering, and familiar with pain. Like one from whom people hide their faces he was despised, and we held him in low esteem.

Think about the people that Jesus chose as his followers. Some years ago, Jim Graham, a preacher quoted from the following memorandum from one of his talks at a Christian conference in England:

*To: Jesus, Son of Joseph, Woodcrafters Shop, Nazareth
From: The Jordan Management Consultants, Jerusalem*

Subject: A Staff Aptitude Evaluation

Thank you for submitting the resumes of the twelve men you have picked for management positions in your new organization. All of them have now taken our battery of tests and we've not only run the results through our computer, but also arranged personal interviews for each of them with our psychologist and vocational aptitude consultant. It is the staff opinion that most of your nominees are lacking in background, education, and vocational aptitude for the type of enterprise you are undertaking. They do not have the team concept. We would recommend that you continue your search for persons of experience in managerial ability and proven capability. Simon Peter is emotionally unstable and given to fits of temper. Andrew has absolutely no qualities of leadership whatsoever. The two brothers, James and John, the sons of Zebedee, place personal interests above company loyalty. Thomas demonstrates a questioning attitude that would tend to undermine morale. We feel that it is our duty to tell you that Matthew has been blacklisted by the greater Jerusalem Better Business Bureau. James, the son of Alphaeus, and Thaddaeus definitely have radical leanings and they both registered a high score on the manic-depressive scale. One of the candidates, however, shows great potential. He is a man of ability and resourcefulness, meets people well, has a keen business mind, and has contacts in high places. He is highly motivated, ambitious, and innovative. We recommend Judas Iscariot as your controller and right-hand man. All the other profiles are self-explanatory. We wish you every success in your new venture.

You know, we have a philosophy here at Vineyard Columbus in which we tell people at our Newcomers Class that:

“We want to be a church in which everyone gets to play.”

Of course, we do background checks in children's ministry to protect our kids. Of course, we are wise in limiting the activities of those who have had a history of harming others. But God's message to our church through this entire series is never say, “Because of this particular deficit in my life, my family background, my education, my lack of a father, my childhood abuse, my poverty, my missing out on marriage, my coming to Christ late in life, that I can't serve God's purposes in this world.” Friends, God uses the most unlikely instruments. He absolutely wants to use you. He even wants to use me to extend his kingdom in this world.

Well, Jephthah, the most unlikely person, the illegitimate son of a prostitute, without any of society's marks of success, is chosen to lead God's people. Let's read on:

Judges 11:4-11

4 Some time later, when the Ammonites were fighting against Israel,⁵ the elders of Gilead went to get Jephthah from the land of Tob.⁶ “Come,” they said, “be our commander, so we can fight the Ammonites.”⁷ Jephthah said to them, “Didn’t you hate me and drive me from my father’s house? Why do you come to me now, when you’re in trouble?”⁸ The elders of Gilead said to him, “Nevertheless, we are turning to you now; come with us to fight the Ammonites, and you will be head over all of us who live in Gilead.”⁹ Jephthah answered, “Suppose you take me back to fight the Ammonites and the Lord gives them to me—will I really be your head?”¹⁰ The elders of Gilead replied, “The Lord is our witness; we will certainly do as you say.”¹¹ So Jephthah went with the elders of Gilead, and the people made him head and commander over them. And he repeated all his words before the Lord in Mizpah.

The elders turn to Jephthah and what they want is his help, they want assistance from Jephthah in their suffering. “Jephthah, you’ve proven to be quite resourceful as a gang leader. Will you come to our city and help us out, protect us from the Ammonites, who come all the time and raid our farms and steal our produce, and carry off our sons and daughters. Jephthah, come and help us out.”

Jephthah says, “I can’t help you; I won’t help you unless you make me your leader and let me rule over you.”

Judges 11:9-11

9 Jephthah answered, “Suppose you take me back to fight the Ammonites and the Lord gives them to me—will I really be your head?”¹⁰ The elders of Gilead replied, “The Lord is our witness; we will certainly do as you say.”¹¹ So Jephthah went with the elders of Gilead, and the people made him head and commander over them. And he repeated all his words before the Lord in Mizpah.

Now, this is really important. In saying what Jephthah said, he is being a witness to God and he is echoing something the Lord said to the people of Israel when they asked for God’s help in Judges 10:14:

Judges 10:14

Go and cry out to the gods you have chosen. Let them save you when you are in trouble!”

Why does God insist on ruling?

Why does God insist on ruling our lives when we ask him for help? I mean, almost everyone, religious, irreligious, Christian, non-Christian, moral or immoral – almost everyone other than the most hardened atheists, turns to God when the pain level gets too great to bear on our own. Polls tell us that virtually everyone in

America prays when the pain gets great enough. You don't have to be a church-goer. Lots of people pray who never show up at church, "God, can you help me out here? My daughter is in the hospital and she is dying. Please heal her." "God, they just told me that I have stage 4 cancer. Help me, Lord." "I'm out of work; I'm really struggling. If you're there, can you get me a job?" "Lord, I'm really scared. We're going into battle. I don't want to be killed. Protect me; protect the men in my unit."

Almost everyone in the world, when the pain level gets too great for us, when the problem is too massive, almost everyone prays. They shoot a prayer up, as they say.

So why does God insist on ruling our lives instead of just answering our prayers for some help? Why is God like Jephthah when he says, "I will help you, but first you have to make me your ruler. I need to be made your King, your Master, your Lord."

See, God understands our real needs even better than we do. We think if you would just answer this one prayer, God, then I would really be happy. Just give me a break here and I will be set and I won't bother you any more, God. But God loves us too much to have us build our lives on what ultimately will not satisfy. By insisting on being your King, by insisting on being your Master, being your Ruler, Jesus is saying to each of you, "You don't really understand the roots of your discontent in life. You don't really understand your deepest longings, your greatest need. You think that if you got this job, or this loved one would be healed that you would be forever happy. Friend, happiness will pass in a month or two.

The only long-term way for you to do life well, is if I'm at the center of your life. The only secure foundation for you is if you build on me, Jesus says. The only way you're going to get through not just today, but next week, next month, next year – the moment of your death and then eternity is if you let me meet your deepest need. And your deepest need, whether you realize it or not, your deepest need is to have Christ at the center of your being – ruling, directing, guiding whatever comes your way.

For much of the rest of the chapter, Judges 11: 12 - 28, we read a description of ancient diplomacy in which as one Old Testament scholar put it, Jephthah argues from history and from theology and from precedent and from silence why the land belongs to the people of Israel. Jephthah's argument is rejected by the King of Ammon. So we read:

Judges 11: 29 - 33

29 Then the Spirit of the Lord came on Jephthah. He crossed Gilead and Manasseh, passed through Mizpah of Gilead, and from there he advanced against the Ammonites. 30 And Jephthah made a vow to the Lord: "If you

give the Ammonites into my hands, 31 whatever comes out of the door of my house to meet me when I return in triumph from the Ammonites will be the Lord's, and I will sacrifice it as a burnt offering." 32 Then Jephthah went over to fight the Ammonites, and the Lord gave them into his hands. 33 He devastated twenty towns from Aroer to the vicinity of Minnith, as far as Abel Keramim. Thus Israel subdued Ammon.

Now here we read about Jephthah's vow. And before asking what the vow means, we need to ask the question:

Why did Jephthah make his vow?

Why did Jephthah feel like it was necessary to promise the Lord, as a burnt offering, whatever came out of his door when he returned in triumph? Why did Jephthah make this vow?

I think here we see Jephthah as being like many of us. We don't understand the difference between religion and the gospel. Jephthah is bargaining with God. All bargains have the word "if" in them. God, if you give me x, I promise to do y for you. How many non-believers approach God this way? God, if you show yourself in some unmistakable way, I mean, write something in the sky, then I promise you that I will believe in you. Many men in battle have said, God if you get me out of this one, I promise you I will give my life to you.

How many of us as Christians regularly bargain with God because we really don't trust him. We want to see God's work on our behalf and we say, "I will give up eating; I will trade you fasting for three days, for this healing."

Now, it is a good thing to fast, if what your intention is is to clear everything out of the way so that you can draw near to God and receive what God has for you, or what God has in a given situation. But if you are just trying to manipulate God by your fasting, or by your tithe, "God, I need your blessing on my business and so I'm going to manipulate you by tithing."

Jephthah, like so many of us, did not understand the difference between religion and the gospel. And the difference between religion and the gospel is the difference between good advice and good news. You know what it's like when someone gives you advice. It may be really wise advice – here is what you need to do in this situation. Here is how you should act. Here is how you should handle this. That's what most people think is the core message of Christianity. Here's what you need to do to get God to do what you want him to do. Clean up your life; go to church; pray; make God certain promises; act like Jephthah and make a vow to God. That's religion; that's good advice.

But the gospel is entirely different. The gospel is not good advice; it is good news. When you hear news, the newscaster is telling you what happened. This

is what happened today in Washington. This is what happened locally. This is what happened with your sports team. The gospel is called good news because you hear and get to believe a message about what God has done for you in Christ. It's not if you do this, I will do that. It is here is what I've already done. I've offered myself as a sacrifice for your sins. Jesus said, "I've died so that you don't have to die. I've lived a life that you should have lived, but never have lived. I've opened up the way for you to come into God's presence. The veil in the temple is torn. You can come into God's presence. I've defeated death and broken the power of Satan. Good news – believe it!"

But Jephthah was caught up in religion. Even though God's Spirit was on him, even though God had chosen him, he felt he still needed to bargain with God.

Many of us have not had the gospel deeply rooted in our hearts. It's not what you have done, what you need to do, what you do; it is what God has done in Christ that makes all the difference.

What did Jephthah mean by his vow?

Judges 11: 34 - 36

34 When Jephthah returned to his home in Mizpah, who should come out to meet him but his daughter, dancing to the sound of timbrels! She was an only child. Except for her he had neither son nor daughter. 35 When he saw her, he tore his clothes and cried, "Oh! My daughter! You have brought me down and I am devastated. I have made a vow to the Lord that I cannot break." 36 "My father," she replied, "you have given your word to the Lord. Do to me just as you promised, now that the Lord has avenged you of your enemies, the Ammonites.

There are many attempts to avoid the horrible implications of Jephthah's promise to God to offer whatever, literally whoever, comes out of my door I will offer them up to you, Lord. In most of the church's history Christians believed that Jephthah literally offered his daughter up as a burnt offering to God as a fulfillment of his promise.

In the Middle Ages Christian interpreters began to say no what happened was that Jephthah offered up his daughter's future marital prospects to God. His daughter had to live as a perpetual virgin. There were even some Jewish commentators following the Christians, who took this line. "No, Jephthah didn't offer his daughter as a burnt offering."

But I think the text is clear. Jephthah promised whoever came out from the door would be offered up to God as a sacrifice and his daughter said, "Do it to me as you promised the Lord."

Now, I will get to the evil and the horror of fulfilling this promise in just a moment.

What was good about Jephthah's vow?

Is there anything that we would say in the midst of this horror, there is still something good here? What is good is that Jephthah was a man of his word. Numbers 30: 1 - 2 say this:

Numbers 30:1-2:

1 Moses said to the heads of the tribes of Israel: "This is what the Lord commands: 2 When a man makes a vow to the Lord or takes an oath to obligate himself by a pledge, he must not break his word but must do everything he said.

In Deuteronomy 23.21-23 says this:

Deuteronomy 23: 21 - 23

21 If you make a vow to the Lord your God, do not be slow to pay it, for the Lord your God will certainly demand it of you and you will be guilty of sin. 22 But if you refrain from making a vow, you will not be guilty. 23 Whatever your lips utter you must be sure to do, because you made your vow freely to the Lord your God with your own mouth.

Why is it important to keep our promises? Why in an uncommitted age, an age of sound bites and market testing every phrase and folks, even followers of Christ, who think nothing of saying one thing and doing another; when keeping a promise is inconvenient or requires some sacrifice, why is it important for you and me to be truth-tellers and promise-keepers?

Let me tick off four reasons. First of all, when we break a promise to someone – I will pay you back this money; I will be there Wednesday night; I will give you that promotion in three months; when we break a promise to someone, what we are communicating to that other person is we don't value him or her. We are putting something else above our promise. We put our convenience above our promise. We put our current mood above our promise. We put the cost to us above our promise. What we're saying when we break our promise to someone is that we don't value you enough to keep our promise.

Second, when we break our promise, we are not only communicating this to others, we are communicating it to ourselves. We are telling ourselves that we don't really value keeping our word. As you look at yourself in the mirror, you say, "Really, what is most important to me is my convenience. It is more important to me than telling the truth and keeping my promises. What's really important to me is not costing myself very much. I value living a low cost life more than I value keeping my promises." As you look at yourself in the mirror you say to yourself, "I am the kind of person who can't be relied on." Or "I'm the kind of person whose word is good."

Third, why be a truth-teller and a promise-keeper? Because keeping your promises is a way of worshipping God. Psalm 15:1-2, 4 says this:

Psalms 15:1-2, 4

1 Lord, who may dwell in your sanctuary? Who may live on your holy mountain? 2Those whose walk is blameless, who do what is righteous, who speak the truth from their hearts; 4 who despise those whose ways are vile but honor whoever fears the Lord; who keep their oaths even when it hurts;

Friend, how do you worship God? The Bible says it is not just by singing to God. That is a way of worshipping. It is not just by lifting our hands in a public service, although that is a way of worshipping. The Bible says one major way that you worship God that you prove that you honor him in your life that his rule and kingdom is the dominant force in your life is that you are a truth-teller and that you keep your promises, even when it hurts you to do so. Even though you would much rather be doing something else. Even when circumstances change and keeping your promise really exacts a high price. The way you worship God is by being a truth-teller and a promise-keeper.

Why tell the truth? Why keep promises? Because by doing these things you communicate to someone else that they have value. You communicate to yourself that your word has value. You worship God by telling the truth.

And fourth and finally you bear witness to Christ by being a truth-teller and promise-keeper.

I read that text to you from the Sermon on the Mount where Jesus says in Matthew 5:37:

Matthew 5:37

All you need to say is simply 'Yes,' or 'No'; anything beyond this comes from the evil one.

The mark of a Christian is truth-telling and promise-keeping. By telling the truth and keeping your promises you are communicating to the world that you follow someone who is the Truth, who is an embodiment of truth. Jesus says, "I am the Way, the Truth and the Life. You are bearing the mark of a Christian when you tell the truth.

So what was bad about Jephthah's promise?

What was bad about Jephthah's promise?

What was bad was that God specifically in the law told his people to never offer up a human sacrifice. Look for example at Deuteronomy 12: 29 – 31:

Deuteronomy 12:29-31

29The Lord your God will cut off before you the nations you are about to invade and dispossess. But when you have driven them out and settled in their land, 30and after they have been destroyed before you, be careful not to be ensnared by inquiring about their gods, saying, “How do these nations serve their gods? We will do the same.” 31You must not worship the Lord your God in their way, because in worshiping their gods, they do all kinds of detestable things the Lord hates. They even burn their sons and daughters in the fire as sacrifices to their gods.

Jephthah was not caught in a dilemma between keeping his promise, however rashly made, and obeying this command against human sacrifice. The scripture lays out a way to get out of one’s vow in Leviticus 27: 1 – 2:

Leviticus 27:1-2

1 The Lord said to Moses, 2 “Speak to the Israelites and say to them: ‘If anyone makes a special vow to dedicate a person to the Lord by giving the equivalent value,

Here, by the way, they are not talking about human sacrifice. They are talking about dedication by way of a Nazarite vow of dedication to God, or a dedication of a son or daughter to the service of the Lord in the temple. There was a way to get out of these vows by paying a certain sum of money. There are some vows that should never be made and, if made, should always be broken. Certainly, a vow to do something that God prohibits; I promised him that I would lie for him. I told my girlfriend that we could live together before marriage. I promised I would help out with this crime. We don’t keep those vows.

You know, there is another kind of vow which is very common that we don’t think about, but it is a bad vow and needs to be renounced – that is an inner vow. So often in our counseling center here at Vineyard and in our Support and Recovery Ministry we meet people who have made inner vows that are doing damage to their own lives.

What do I mean by an inner vow? I mean a promise that you make to yourself in order to protect yourself from some hurt or pain that you’ve experienced in the past. You’ve experienced a tragic romantic breakup and you make an inner vow saying, “I will never let someone have my heart again.” I will never be vulnerable.

Inner vows. I will never be like my father. I must always be strong. I will never trust another man, or another woman again. I must always be nice. I will avoid all conflict. I will never allow anyone to tell me what to do, again.

Friends, so often at the root of broken and twisted lives that we see in our counseling center or in our Support and Recovery Ministry is an inner vow that someone took as a child, or as a teenager, or as young adult, or as older adult. They've taken an inner vow to protect themselves in the future from hurt and that inner vow is exercising control and bearing terrible fruit in the person's life.

Have you ever made an inner vow, friend, to protect yourself? Rather than turn to the Lord for his protection and his provision in your future, you decided to cover yourself with a vow. Have you ever done that? Are you aware of such a vow in your own life? If you are aware of such an inner vow, you need to confess it to the Lord and renounce it, specifically, break its power in the name of Jesus because it is controlling you and it is causing all kinds of bad fruit in your life.

Let me close with this. Where is Jesus in this story of Jephthah? We always want to look for Jesus because the whole Bible testifies to him. Where is Jesus?

Well, like Jephthah, Jesus makes vows that he keeps. Jesus is a man of his word. He made a vow before all eternity to God the Father to redeem those who are trapped under the power of sin. Jesus made a vow to us to forgive and to remove the guilt of sin to all who came to him and place their sins upon his head at the cross. Like Jephthah Jesus is a man of his word.

But unlike Jephthah, Jesus kept his vow not by sacrificing another, Jesus kept his vow by offering himself. Jephthah said, "I'm going to keep my vow to God, so I am going to sacrifice my daughter." Jesus said, "I'm going to keep my vow to God and to others, so I'm going to offer up myself." This is good news. Let's pray.

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