Devotional Reflection, Tuesday, August 4, 2026
Proper 13, the week of the tenth Sunday after Pentecost
The Rev. David W. Perkins, Th.D.

Discerning God's Leadership

Key phrases for reflection from today's reading:
9 That same night the Lord said to him, 'Get up, attack the camp; for I have given it into your hand. 10But if you fear to attack, go down to the camp with your servant Purah; 11and you shall hear what they say, and afterwards your hands shall be strengthened to attack the camp.'

You will find the full text of the Judges reading at the end of this reflection.

Daily Office Lectionary Readings (*BCP*, 979)
AM Psalm 78:1-39; PM Psalm 78:40-72
Judges 7:1-18; Acts 3:1-11; John 1:19-28

David's Reflections

We find in Gideon one of those enigmatic figures of the Old Testament. As one of the judges, Gideon combined functions of an occasional civic and military leader of the loosely confederated twelve tribes with those of a prophet. Like Moses, he demonstrated timidity and a lack of confidence. As the previous readings in Judges have demonstrated, he often required multiple messages from God in a variety of forms to prompt him to take the courageous actions God demanded. Unlike Moses, he became increasingly unresponsive to God and insensitive to others.

In today's passage, we see Gideon hesitating in response to God's voice and requiring multiple messages to confirm his faltering confidence. One such message amounted to overhearing two of his opponents talking and taking the message one of them shared from a dream as a sign from God.

Just how do we discern what God is leading us to do? How do we determine whether what we are discerning actually comes from God? In his book, *Hearing God,*+ Dallas Willard suggests that three lights from God must coalesce to confirm our discernment about what God is leading us to be or to do. First, Willard says we must take account of circumstances. We certainly see Gideon doing just that. What is your situation, your context? What is happening in your life and in the lives of those around you?

Second, Willard suggests we must align circumstance with the persistent inner leading of the Spirit. What voice, what intuition, what leading keeps recurrently coming to you? We see God repeatedly speaking to Gideon. Frail creatures that we are, hindered by distractions and by lack of confidence in our inner voice, God keeps whispering to us.

Third, Willard says we must listen to what we are reading in Scripture. That does not mean proof texts that we lift out of their natural setting. Rather, it means the impact passages make on us in our ongoing reading. How does the voice of those passages coalesce with our circumstances and with our inner voice.

I would add a fourth light. What do we hear from the loving and faithful Christians in our community? If you have a spiritual director, what light comes of those conversations? If you have a small group, what do you hear repeatedly from their counsel? If you have trusted Christian friends and/or clergy, what do you hear from conversation with them? I have found the little book *Listening Hearts* very helpful as a guide to discerning God's leading and doing that discernment in the context of the faith community. #

If we believe that God yearns to make Godself and God's will known to us, we can look for the coalescing of those lights and know where God is trying to take us.

+Dallas Willard, *Hearing God*. (IVP, 2021)
Suzzane G. Farhan and others, *Listening Hearts: Discerning Call in Community* (Thirtieth Anniversary Edition). (Morehouse, 2021).

Collect of the Day, Proper 13. The tenth Sunday after Pentecost
Let your continual mercy, O Lord, cleanse and defend your Church; and, because it cannot continue in safety without your help, protect and govern it always by your goodness; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. *Amen.* (BCP, 232)

Lectionary Prayers
Generous God, in abundance you give us things both spiritual and physical. Help us to hold lightly the fading things of this earth and to grasp tightly the lasting things of your kingdom, so that what we are and do and say may be our gifts to you through Christ, who beckons all to seek the things above, where he lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit. *Amen.*
Revised Common Lectionary Prayers: Proposed by the Consultation on Common Texts (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2002), p. 169

A Collect for Peace
O God, the author of peace and lover of concord, to know you is eternal life and to serve you is perfect freedom: Defend us, your humble servants, in all assaults of our enemies; that we, surely trusting in your defense, may not fear the power of any adversaries; through the might of Jesus Christ our Lord. *Amen.* (BCP, 99)

For the Church
Give to your Church, O God,
a bold vision and a daring charity,
a refreshed wisdom and a courteous understanding,
that the eternal message of your Son
may be acclaimed as the good news of the age;
through him who makes all things new,
even Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen. (1)

(1) This Franciscan-inspired prayer was offered by our chaplains during this meeting of the House of Bishops House of Bishops, ECUSA, March 2008
http://www.episcopalchurch.org/79901_95614_ENG_HTM.htm

A Prayer for Light
Grant us, Lord, the lamp of charity which never fails, that it may burn in us and shed its light on those around us, and that by its brightness we may have a vision of that holy City, where dwells the true and never-failing Light, Jesus Christ our Lord. *Amen*. (BCP, 110)

A Collect for Mission
Almighty and everlasting God, by whose Spirit the whole body of your faithful people is governed and sanctified: Receive our supplications and prayers which we offer before you for all members of your holy Church, that in their vocation and ministry they may truly and devoutly serve you; through our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. *Amen.* (BCP, 100)

Daily Office Old Testament Lesson, Judges 7:1-18

7:1Then Jerubbaal (that is, Gideon) and all the troops that were with him rose early and encamped beside the spring of Harod; and the camp of Midian was north of them, below* the hill of Moreh, in the valley.

2 The Lord said to Gideon, 'The troops with you are too many for me to give the Midianites into their hand. Israel would only take the credit away from me, saying, "My own hand has delivered me." 3Now therefore proclaim this in the hearing of the troops, "Whoever is fearful and trembling, let him return home." '

Thus Gideon sifted them out;* twenty-two thousand returned, and ten thousand remained.

4 Then the Lord said to Gideon, 'The troops are still too many; take them down to the water and I will sift them out for you there. When I say, "This one shall go with you", he shall go with you; and when I say, "This one shall not go with you", he shall not go.' 5So he brought the troops down to the water; and the Lord said to Gideon, 'All those who lap the water with their tongues, as a dog laps, you shall put to one side; all those who kneel down to drink, putting their hands to their mouths,* you shall put to the other side.' 6The number of those that lapped was three hundred; but all the rest of the troops knelt down to drink water. 7Then the Lord said to Gideon, 'With the three hundred that lapped I will deliver you, and give the Midianites into your hand. Let all the others go to their homes.' 8So he took the jars of the troops from their hands,* and their trumpets; and he sent all the rest of Israel back to their own tents, but retained the three hundred. The camp of Midian was below him in the valley.

9 That same night the Lord said to him, 'Get up, attack the camp; for I have given it into your hand. 10But if you fear to attack, go down to the camp with your servant Purah; 11and you shall hear what they say, and afterwards your hands shall be strengthened to attack the camp.' Then he went down with his servant Purah to the outposts of the armed men that were in the camp. 12The Midianites and the Amalekites and all the people of the east lay along the valley as thick as locusts; and their camels were without number, countless as the sand on the seashore. 13When Gideon arrived, there was a man telling a dream to his comrade; and he said, 'I had a dream, and in it a cake of barley bread tumbled into the camp of Midian, and came to the tent, and struck it so that it fell; it turned upside down, and the tent collapsed.' 14And his comrade answered, 'This is no other than the sword of Gideon son of Joash, a man of Israel; into his hand God has given Midian and all the army.'

15 When Gideon heard the telling of the dream and its interpretation, he worshipped; and he returned to the camp of Israel, and said, 'Get up; for the Lord has given the army of Midian into your hand.' 16After he divided the three hundred men into three companies, and put trumpets into the hands of all of them, and empty jars, with torches inside the jars, 17he said to them, 'Look at me, and do the same; when I come to the outskirts of the camp, do as I do. 18When I blow the trumpet, I and all who are with me, then you also blow the trumpets around the whole camp, and shout, "For the Lord and for Gideon!" '

Daily Offices in the Book of Common Prayer
Morning Prayer, Rite 2, page 75, *The Book of Common Prayer*
Noonday Prayer, page 103, *Book of Common Prayer*

Order of Worship for Evening (Vespers), p 109, *Book of Common Prayer*
Evening Prayer, Rite 2, page 115, *Book of Common Prayer*
Compline (Night Prayer), page 127, *Book of Common Prayer*
Daily Devotionals, page 136, *Book of Common Prayer*