

Shamgar – Judges 3:31

A woman walked to work past a pet store. One day a parrot called out to her as she passes and said, “*Hey lady, you’re ugly.*” She was upset but blew it off. Same thing happened the next day. She got a little angrier but went on. The third day same thing. She went into the store and told the owner who had a talk with the parrot. The next day she passes by, “*Hey lady.*” She looks at him says, “*Yes.*” The parrot said, “***You know.***”

Sometimes, as much as we hate to admit it, we do know, right? Sometimes, at least for some of us, we have to admit that we are no longer as good-looking as we used to be. We are no longer in as good a shape as we used to be. We can’t do what we used to.

I was in Walmart the other day and a pretty, young lady walking down the aisle looked at me and smiled real pretty. I have to admit I walked with a little bit of swagger for a few minutes until I looked in the bathroom mirror and realized she was smiling at me like a young lady smiles at her grandpa. That look she gave me was not, “*Hey big boy*” but more like, “*Can I help you reach something, Papaw?*”

For some of us, not only is the parrot correct but it’s worse than that. Some of us feel like we don’t have anything going; like we have no gifts or talents; we have no abilities and we have no tools to work with. Do you ever feel like there is just nothing you can do to help make anything any better? We all feel that way sometimes.

Well, I say we all feel that way. Maybe somebody like **Brad Pitt** never feels that way. He has it going, doesn’t he? He has good looks, good health, good hair and all the money in the world. People listen to him when he talks. Why doesn’t God use somebody like Brad Pitt? That’s what I would do if I were God. Make him into an evangelist. *Then* people would hear about Jesus.

But, then again, if Brad Pitt became an evangelist, who would probably wind up getting all the glory? Brad Pitt, right? That would be a problem because God, as the Creator and Sustainer of all things and the One who gives life and breath to all things, wants the glory and He should get it. He deserves it.

1 Corinthians 1:26-29 says, “*Brothers and sisters, think of what you were when you were called. Not many of you were wise by human standards; not many were influential; not many were of noble birth. ²⁷ But God chose the foolish things of the world to shame the wise; God chose the weak things of the world to shame the strong. ²⁸ God chose the lowly things of this world and the despised things—and the things that are not—to nullify the things that are, ²⁹ so that no one may boast before him.*” God actually specializes in using the weak and the small and the ridiculous to accomplish His will. That way He gets the glory.

We are going to talk this morning about Shamgar. Do you know Shamgar? Some of you may never have heard of him. I bet nobody else is preaching on ol’ Shammy this morning. Shamgar

was no Brad Pitt. Shamgar had nothing going for him. He had a huge job to do and *almost* no tools to use to accomplish that job. “Almost”! We will see that in **Judges 3:31** as we continue our series on the great saints of the Old Testament. The book of Judges is between Joshua and Ruth in the Old Testament.

We have so far looked at Abraham who showed incredible faith and became the father of our faith. We saw Moses lead millions of Hebrews through the Red Sea up to the promised Land. And then we saw Joshua take over and lead the same group through the flooded Jordan River. Their stories involved millions of people and those guys have many chapters devoted to them and their stories.

The passage we are going to look at is just one verse about just one man. And it doesn’t tell us a whole lot but it tells us enough. It tells us what we need to know. We do know from other passages that this was a dark and difficult time for the Israelites. They had gotten to Israel, the Promised Land, but they had been disobedient and so God allowed them to be at war with all their neighbors. They had been beaten down and oppressed by so many other countries so many times that they had very little hope for their future.

They lived in a time when Jehovah God was ignored, mocked and scorned. People around them lived only for themselves. They didn’t want to be ruled by God and so God allowed them to have judges rule over them. Some of whom were good guys and some not so much. It seemed like God must be very far away sometimes. Maybe you know that feeling living in the United States in 2026, some 3000-plus years later.

But in God’s perfect will and plan and timing, He rose up a man; a man with no special abilities or talents or good looks or money or anything else to save the nation of Israel, God’s chosen people. He didn’t raise up a Brad Pitt or even a Billy Graham or a Charles Spurgeon. He used a lowly farmer named Shamgar. Let’s read it in **Judges 3:31**.

“After Ehud came Shamgar son of Anath, who struck down six hundred Philistines with an ox goad. He too saved Israel.”

I love those two sentences! Like I said, there is not much there but it tells us all we need to know about Shamgar and really all we need to know about how we, too, can change our world with what we have to work with. Now, we don’t know for sure if Shamgar killed all 600 at one time or if it was in different times and places but all signs point to it being all at one time.

Some of you remember the story of Gideon and how he was in a winepress threshing grain because the enemy would come over the mountain like a bunch of locusts and run off or kill all the Israelites. That is the picture I see here. Shamgar is out plowing his field and looks up and 600 Philistines are headed his way, armed to the teeth and ready to kill him and take everything he has worked for.

The problem is that the Israelites didn’t have any weapons. None. They had all been taken from them and they didn’t even have any blacksmiths to make any. So, Shamgar has to make

a decision. He can run into the hills and hide and watch everything he owned and knew be taken away from him...or he can use what he has, when he had it, right where he was.

So, what was it that Shamgar had? It says he had an ox goad. Now, this is a shepherd's staff. It is used to guide sheep and goats and it could be used for a weapon in an emergency but it wouldn't last long. It's going to break pretty easily. But this is closer to what an ox goad would look like. A real ox goad would be made of wood and it had a sharp point on one end to prod the ox or cow to move faster. The other end had a flat blade made to clean the dirt off the plow.

But my research shows that a real ox goad was typically about 8 feet long and about 6 inches in diameter. It was heavy and cumbersome because it had to be to persuade an ox to do something he didn't necessarily want to do. But that is all that Shamgar had. There was no other option. He could either use what he had or run off and lose everything. Shamgar used what he had and God blessed what he had to be everything he needed.

Hudson Taylor was a missionary to China in the 1800's and he said, *"Depend on it, God's work done in God's way will never lack God's supply."* (*Our Daily Bread*, May 16, 1992) It was God's will that Israel be saved. It was God's will that Shamgar was standing there and it was God's will that Shamgar only have a piece of farm equipment to use. This was no accident just like it was no accident that young David had only a slingshot or that some little kid shows up at a meeting of 5000 people with only a few loaves and some fish.

God can use anybody and *sometimes He calls the qualified* but most of the time *He qualifies the called*. Most of the time God tells us to do something and only after we start to do it does He bless our efforts. I have no reason to believe that Shamgar expected to kill all 600 of the enemy. I think he really believed he was going to die that day but he was not going to go without a fight, taking as many of the enemy out as he could. But God blessed his efforts and God blessed that ox goad and turned it from a farming utensil into a weapon of mass destruction. Shamgar used what he had and God blessed it so that God got the glory.

Shamgar not only used **what he had** but he used it **when he had it**. He didn't wait until he could use it better. He didn't wait until it was a little lighter and easier to use. He didn't spend time sharpening the tip. He didn't have that kind of time. He just used what he had when he had it.

In a lifetime, Americans spend on average: 28 years sleeping, 15 years working, 13 years relaxing, seven years doing household chores, 4 years eating and a year and a half traveling to work.

Psalms 90:12 says, *"Teach us to number our days aright, that we may gain a heart of wisdom."* What does it mean to *"number our days aright"*? I'll tell you what comes to my mind about that. You know how I say all the time that we are not guaranteed another breath? Numbering your days aright means to realize that we may not live another day or even another hour. Our

friends and family may not live another day or hour. Who do you need to talk to? Who needs to hear your testimony?

All you have to do is listen to the news every day and you will see that people all over the world got up in the morning and went to work not knowing it was their last day on earth. People are killed, die of disease, get into an accident and that sort of thing happens all the time. Who do you know; who is in your circle of influence that needs to hear that you love them; that Jesus loves them and that Jesus is the way, the truth and the life and no man gets to the Father except through Him?

Use what you have while you have it. Do you want to change the world? You can. Start by changing the world around you and you do that by **using what you have while you have it and use it right where you are**. Shamgar didn't have a choice. He could have asked the Philistines nicely if they would please move over to the edge of the field where there was some shade. He could have complained that this wasn't a good place to fight since he had just plowed right here or that the footing was better over yonder.

This was not a good time or place for Shamgar to fight. He wasn't a warrior. He was a farmer. But he didn't have any choice if he wanted to do what Israel needed him to do and to do what was God's will for him and Israel. There are no good excuses at this point. He was fully committed. He wasn't going to wait for somebody else. He wasn't going to wait for a better time or place. Shamgar saw the need and was devoted to doing all he could do.

D.L. Moody was told one time that the world had yet to know what it looked like for a man to be wholly and completely devoted to God. His response was, *"Well, let's find out."* (paraphrase) Moody, like Shamgar could have waited until conditions were better to do what he was supposed to do. They could have waited until they were smarter or wealthier or had some more help. But none of us really have those options, do we? Life doesn't wait for us to catch up and rarely does God get the glory if we are completely prepared and able to handle the situations we find ourselves in.

I can't stand it when people say that God will never give you more than you can handle. Really? Because 600 Philistines was more than Shamgar could handle. I don't have any doubt Shamgar was a big, strong, tough guy and was able to handle that ox goad like a pro but he killed 600 men. That's a God thing. That's not a Shamgar thing. If God had wanted to, He could have used the oxen themselves but He chose Shamgar to be obedient and Shamgar got the blessings.

Shamgar used what he had, while he had it and he used it where he was and because he did God got the glory, Shamgar got blessings and Israel was saved. Now, are you pumped up and ready to run out and do the same in your life? I doubt it because if you have really been listening (and a couple of you have) you may have noticed I have been a little vague about the whole goal of this message. How does this really apply to you? None of us are going to be fighting any Philistines any time soon. What is this going to look like in your life when you leave here?

Well, it could involve your gifts and talents, and we all have them. We have talked about that before. Maybe you use your gift of intercessory prayer to ask God's blessings on your spouse and you do that right here and right now, using what you have, when you have it and where you are. Or maybe you use your gift of knowledge and you do that by teaching a Bible study at your house with your family and neighbors. Some of you would rather face 600 Philistines, I know.

Maybe you have the gift of serving and you want to help plan parties or benevolence meals. Maybe you use your gift of singing or your gift of mercy or faith to edify this church body. Do it now with what you have, while you have it and where you are. I hope you will pray fervently about doing those things.

But maybe those are not options for you right now. Maybe God has said for you to wait on some of that and waiting can be difficult, I understand. But I know of something that you can do that you shouldn't wait on. You better not wait. You can't afford to wait. Your community and country can't afford for you to wait. Please don't wait because you can change the world if you do it.

Do you want to change the world? Do you want to change the world your kids and grandkids grow up in? It's not complicated. You can do it right now with what you have and where you are. One word: Jesus! Speak Jesus. Live like Jesus. Love like Jesus. Forgive like Jesus. Yes, that's right. Forgive like Jesus. How many times? 7 x 70 times. Give sacrificially like Jesus. Pray like Jesus. If nothing else just speak his name to somebody in need. Jesus Himself said there was power in His name.

In **John 17:11-12** Jesus is praying to the Father and He is praying for you when He said, *"I will remain in the world no longer, but they are still in the world, and I am coming to you. Holy Father, protect them by the power of your name, the name you gave me, so that they may be one as we are one."*¹² *While I was with them, I protected them and kept them safe by that name you gave me."*

There is power in the name of Jesus. Use it for yourself like it says in **Philippians 4:13**. What does that say? *"I can do all things through Christ Who strengthens me!"* and then use it for somebody else by telling them that Jesus Christ loves them. Tell them that **John 14:6** says that Jesus is the Way, the Truth and the Life and that no man comes to the Father except through Him. How's that for changing somebody's world; somebody's eternity?

Just like Shamgar picked up that ox goad and found it to be a powerful tool for the salvation of Israel, we, too, can pick up the name of Jesus and have, not a weapon of mass destruction, but a weapon of mass salvation. You can do that and you can do it right now, right where you are. Have you asked Jesus to be Lord of your life?

Have you asked Him for forgiveness of your sins? Have you repented – turned away – from those sins? Cry out to Jesus right now, right here. Don't wait. We are not guaranteed another breath.