

## Before the reading

So let me give you a bit of background on the story. God's special people were in some trouble. Israel had begun to turn away from God. But because God loved his people, he wanted to send them a reminder that he was in charge and that it was really important to follow him. And so God allowed a man called Jabin, who was the King of the Canaanites to take over Israel. Now Jabin had left a man called Sisera who was the commander of his armies in charge. But Sisera was a really nasty guy. He loved bullying the Israelites and although they tried to resist they realised they couldn't do it on their own. After 20 years of trying, they finally cried out to God to rescue them. Boys and Girls it's always a good idea to ask God for help.

Now God had people that he had chosen to help lead the people and they were called Judges. One Judge was a woman called Deborah, and she was a prophet. That means she could hear from God and then she shared it with the people. She was strong, powerful and obedient to God, and she helped to lead the people back to God. So she sent for a man called Barak and told him that if he took 10,000 men up to the top of a mountain, she would bring Commander Sisera to him. He wasn't too sure and he was worried about Sisera, and he said he would only go with Deborah came also. And even though Commander Sisera came to attack the Israelites, Deborah wasn't at all worried – she trusted fully in God. And so Deborah's trust in the Lord resulted in victory and the Israelites defeated the Canaanites.

Our bible reading today is where Barak and Deborah burst into song praising God and celebrating how he had saved them.

## Reading: Judges 5:1-9

### The Song of Deborah

**5** On the day that the Israelites defeated Sisera, Deborah and Barak son of Abinoam sang this song:

**2** "The men of Israel prepared for battle. They volunteered to go to war. Praise the LORD!

**3** "Listen, kings. Pay attention, rulers. I will sing. I myself will sing to the LORD. I will make music to the LORD, to the God of the Israelites.

**4** "LORD, in the past you came from Seir. You marched from the land of Edom. You marched and the earth shook. The skies rained. The clouds dropped water. **5** The mountains shook before the LORD, the God of Mount Sinai, before the LORD, the God of Israel!

**6** "In the days of Shamgar son of Anath, and in the days of Jael, the main roads were empty. Caravans and travellers travelled on the back roads.

**7** "There were no soldiers in Israel until you came, Deborah, until you came to be a mother to Israel.

**8** "God chose new leaders to fight at the city gates. No one could find a shield or a spear among the 40,000 soldiers of Israel.

**9** "My heart is with the commanders of Israel. They volunteered to go to war. Praise the LORD!

## Talk

So here's a question this morning for our young people – how many of your mums do Wordle? Do you know what Wordle is?

Wordle is an online game that many people like to play. Every day around the world, a word of a certain number of letters is hidden and you have to guess what the word is. So how it works is you start off with any 5 letter word, and then Wordle will tell you how many of the letters in the word you've got correct, and whether they are in the right place in the word. So if you get a letter correct but it's not in the right place, Wordle will display it in yellow or grey. But if the letter is both correct and in the right place then Wordle will display it as green.

So we have a wordle up on the screen and we have 6 attempts to see if we can get it. And through this Wordle we are going to find out more about this bible passage and the woman that Deborah was.

So I'm going to start with a word which is very appropriate for today. And that word is MUMMY.

Now in Wordle that's not a great word to start with because it's got 3 letters all the same which won't give you many clues about what the word is. But let's try MUMMY and see how we've done.

Oh so we have no letters correct.

But for our bible passage it's very helpful, because in verse 7 of our reading it says "There were no soldiers in Israel until you came, Deborah, until you came to be a mother to Israel"

Can you see, she is being described as a Mother or a Mummy for Israel. So Deborah comes to a mummy, someone who cares for Israel. When we think of mums, what kinds of things to mums do for us?

## ANSWERS

Now do you think that when it says here that Deborah was a Mum to Israel, does it mean she made them food and cleaned their clothes for them? She probably organised them and comforted them, and lead them to trust in God. She was clearly very brave and courageous. She helped, she pointed them in the right direction. She cleared up the mess that they had made in walking away from God. She was a mother to the people.

And on this Mothering Sunday, there's all kinds of mums. And in our church family today is a day when we can recognise the incredibly important role that our women have in leading, and comforting our church family.

Now if we think about the story and look at verse 1, Barak and Deborah began to celebrate God's goodness. And so one of the ways they did this is listed in verse 1. Can you find a word that we can turn into a 5 letter word about what they to celebrate?

They sang a song. So what 5 letter word could we use. Deborah sings. So let's try that into Wordle – SINGS.

And now let's see if that has helped. Good news, we have got one correct and it's in the correct place in the word.

Does your mum or granny sing? Is it good singing? Do you know that when you sing, it actually reduces your stress. You feel calmer when you sing. There's not many people when they sing that it stresses them more. It helps you feel better, and so Deborah's singing must have been very popular because it got a place in the bible – here is chapter 5. She tells the story of God's goodness and how he saved the people, through her song. You know it's one of the best ways that we can express our thanks to God. And when we sing we should sing with joy in our hearts. We should be happy. So we know that Deborah was not just a mum to the people, but that she was a worshipper – she knew the need to sing praise to God.

Martin Luther who lived about 500 years ago said that we should sing songs to God and that through it we can put the devil down.

So let's move back to Wordle. We have the last letter, and so let's look at the passage again. Let's look at verses 4 & 5. Deborah reminds us of what God has done in the past. She remembers what the Lord had done on Mount Sinai. In other words God is someone that is not a stranger to her. She knows God well. So there's a possible word we can throw in here to Wordle – KNOWS. Let's try that.

So we now know that there's an 'O' in the word but it's in a different place.

Deborah knows quite a lot. She knows God very well, and she hears from him, but actually it got me thinking about mums. Because mums know a lot. I don't know whether it's the same in your house, but often you will hear Nathan shout down at Alison from his bedroom – “mum do you know where my football boots are?” Or I will ask Alison, “Do you know where I left my keys?” We ask her lots of questions and she always seems to know the answer. Is it the same in your house? Mums just seems to know everything. Where would we be without mums? And in church I think it's really important that women have an important place. If God used Deborah many thousand years ago as an appointed leader and prophetess then it's really important that we today continue to listen to the wisdom that women provide. So boys and girls, when women in your life, whether mums, grannies whatever give you advice, then listen carefully because the KNOW a lot. Deborah was a prophetess which means that she knew what God was saying to his people and so she was able to then share it. And she helps them see how it would apply to their lives. She knows that God is faithful and will be.

So let's move on to our next word.

The people of Israel had lost all hope in their future. They had been crying out to God for 20 years to help them. They realised that they had once been disobedient, but they were willing to once again place their hope in God, and it was through Deborah that this happened. She told Barak to gather 10,000 soldiers and lead them into battle. But Barak wasn't willing to go without her present. And although Barak hadn't faith, eventually through another woman, called Jael, she was able to bring the freedom which Deborah had prophesied.

So I am going to put in the word HOPES. Let's see how we get on. Yeah, we have 3 right – we are nearly there.

Mums always bring hope for the future. No matter if you have had a bad day at school ,or you hurt yourself, or you're worried, mum always has the words that make you feel hopeful. She reassures and protects her family. And on a day like today we are so thankful for the hope that mums bring.

So we are nearly there. What could the last word be then?

Do we have any guesses what the word might be that describes what mums do a lot of?

LOVES

Let's see if it's right. Yes.

So let's look at the final thing that Deborah says from our reading ““My heart is with the commanders of Israel. They volunteered to go to war. Praise the Lord!”

Deborah's heart is with God's people. She loves them, and she loves the Lord. Good Mothers love their children so much. She would do anything for them. She helped Barak a lot. He wasn't willing to go into battle, and she was very happy to be alongside him. But the other thing about Deborah today is that God loves her. God is the one who has made Deborah such a wise and brave woman. God has made her a mother of Israel just when they needed it. No one else was standing up for them at that time. There were no men coming forward to stand up for the people – it was Deborah who God had chosen.

Whether you are a mum today or have a mothering role of some sort, or in fact anyone here today, this lady Deborah reminds us today of the difference it can make when we know that God loves us and is working in us. She knows God's love, she listens to his voice, she believes in his promises, and it makes her wise and brave and helpful. And so whilst we celebrate mothers and those who mother today, the best thing that you could do is to follow Deborah's example today of someone who worships the Lord, who knows the Lord, who provides the hope of the Lord, and who loves the Lord. And through all of this his Love shines through Deborah to the people.

And when we get it wrong, the Bible tells us that someone far better and perfect than Deborah came into this world. His name was Jesus. And that through his death on the cross he made it possible for all of us to know just how much God loves us today.