

Two things need to be said:

The Book of Judges: Patterns

We are in the book of Judges for the next 3 weeks.
I hope you will read the 21 Chapters in our lectionary.
Judges is one of the most violent and disturbing books in the Bible.
Not only does it depict acts that rival any historical acts of atrocity
But is it absolutely unflinching in depicting Israel, the chosen people
In their downward spiral into depravity.
And it is indeed a spiral because it indicates a repeated pattern.
Israel turns away from God.
They are oppressed by an enemy because of this.
They cry out to God.
He responds by rescuing them through a Judge.
Ehud, Deborah, Gideon, Jephthah & Samson.
After these Five cycles, the bottom really falls out.
They who were meant to be a blessing have become a curse.

We also have patterns in our lives.
We tend to trust in ourselves, or others things rather than God.
We worry, we are easily distracted, we have others concerns.
And that is what separates us from God.
Our fears, our pain, our hang-ups, our desires all deafen & blind us to God.
God cannot bless us because we will not receive the blessing.
He may be stuffing it into our hands but our fists are clenched.
And we cry out, "Why do you not hear me? Why do you not care!"
It is not until we open our hands and say,
"I trust you, Save me," that we find salvation.
The hope that Jesus brings is this – that it is not a downward spiral.
But an upward one.
Each time we realize we are bound by fear or pain or illusion,
Each time we cry out – "I trust you, save me!"
We will not forget, but build a memory of God's Faithfulness.
Israel's unfaithfulness and forgetfulness drove them into the curse.
But Christ's faithfulness, and our brokenness lifts us to God.
Live in the Spirit.

Deborah

Deborah is an astounding case in biblical account.
Certainly the story fits right into the cycles of the Judges.
The story is told in a straight-forward fashion.
Israel has wandered from God.
The Canaanites have formed a coalition to oppress Israel for 20 years.
The people cry out to God.
Deborah is called by God to raise a resistance.
What stands out is this simple aside.
Deborah is a woman.
This sticks out in two ways.
Historically, Women had non status.
And in certain church traditions, Women are barred from leadership.
And yet in this case, Deborah is a capable and wise judge.
People come to her a long ways for a decision.
She is respected and commands men like Barak (Thunderbolt).
Her courage and status is without peer.
What is most important is that she knows the voice of God.
She is a prophetess.
Now I know there is controversy in the church regarding women leadership
Often we hear cited from 1 Timothy 2:11-15
Women are not allowed to teach men.

Women are not allowed authority over men.

The case of Deborah flies in the face of this.

She both taught and had authority over men.

Do note however, that in 1 Timothy, Paul uses the personal "I do not."

Is this personal opinion or is it God's command?

The Bible makes several very clear points.

1. Men & Women are equally loved in the sight of God.
2. Men & Women are different – complimentary, not identical.
3. Men are charged with responsibility, not exclusive authority, meaning they are to care for the well-being of women.
4. The Holy Spirit gifts both men and women and each should serve as they are gifted.

So, to say that women are not to be given a position of leadership in the church community is not only ambiguous in Biblical teaching, it is a statement that is on very shaky ground. It is theologically untenable to be so definitive on this matter.

Questions & Thoughts

What is our pattern? How do we see ourselves and others and men & women?