

Thought for the Day 4th November - John Reed

Read 1 John 5:13-21

As I write, the media is full of heightened interest in, and wild speculation about, the American presidential election. Maybe, by the time you read this, the outcome will be known. Or maybe it won't.

What is clear is that tensions are high. Two news articles highlighted this for me this morning. On the one hand, a 26-year-old man has been accused of stealing a bulldozer from a Florida construction site, driving it into a neighbourhood, and knocking down campaign signs for Democratic presidential nominee Joe Biden.¹ On the other hand, a Los Angeles man called James Otis, who doesn't like Donald Trump, used a pickaxe to try to demolish the star bearing Mr Trump's name on Hollywood's famous Walk of Fame.² This is apparently his third attempt.

As we have been reading through the book of Judges, one of the people we have met is Gideon – who is also called Jerubbaal, which means “Let Baal contend against him,” because – a little bit like Mr Otis trying to destroy Mr Trump's star - he attacked and tore down the altar of Baal that his father had built in his community (Judges 6:32).

What a nickname to have, and what a way to go down in history – as the man who tore down the altar of Baal.

Now this may seem contradictory, but while I can't condone James Otis' act of public vandalism, I wholeheartedly applaud Gideon's act of devotion to God. Because God asks and expects of his people that they serve him and him only and that they remove from their midst any other gods or idols (Exodus 20:1-6). Gideon was doing what God had commanded Israel to do in Deuteronomy 12:2-3:

You shall surely destroy all the places where the nations whom you shall dispossess served their gods, on the high mountains and on the hills and under every green tree. You shall tear down their altars and dash in pieces their pillars and burn their Asherim with fire. You shall chop down the carved images of their gods and destroy their name out of that place.

Now, we may not actually have to tear down or throw out the idols that our families have set up in the back yard. But we must consider in what ways we find ourselves influenced by the false gods of this world and of our age, and remove their influence from our lives.

I find it particularly intriguing that as John came to the end of his first letter, the last words he wanted to leave with his readers were these (1 John 5:21): “*Little children, keep yourselves from idols.*”

¹ https://www.huffpost.com/entry/florida-man-james-blight-bulldozer-biden-signs_n_5f97007bc5b6b74d85f33dd8

² https://www.huffingtonpost.com.au/entry/donald-trump-hollywood-walk-of-fame_n_5f9c60f7c5b6f7f4a16bf675?ri18n=true