

Wicked

Injustice

1 Kings 21:1-16

July 22, 2018 am

HDBC

Today we continue our study of one of the really ***bad couples*** of the Bible; Ahab and Jezebel. Ahab was the 8th king of Israel and Jezebel was his wife. The simple testimony of scripture about Ahab is that he was **more evil** than all the kings who had come before him. He and Jezebel led the people into immorality and idolatry. They appeared to have no moral compass or conscience. But God refused to leave the people without a voice of truth.

He raised up a prophet named Elijah, who would confront this wicked couple and call upon them to forsake their idolatry. God was so serious about this that He caused a three-year drought. No Rain! This was designed to show the people that He and He alone was God.

In a powerful demonstration on Mt. Carmel God proved himself to the people. The prophets of Baal were destroyed and the rains returned. Jezebel's immediate reaction was to eliminate Elijah. She threatened his life, but was unable to carry it out. After a short period of discouragement, Elijah was renewed and continued his ministry. **This was not the last time** Elijah found himself opposing Ahab and Jezebel.

1 Kings 21 reveals more of the evil of Jezebel and Ahab. It is a story of selfish greed, unchecked power, terrible injustice, and apathetic complicity in evil.

This is the text for R. G. Lee's famous sermon [Payday Someday](#).

1. Greedy Desire (1-6)

Three things about this greedy desire.

A. The Offer (1-2)

Ahab offers to buy vineyard from Naboth. Trade or pay cash. Wanted to have vegetable garden close by. Everything ok at this point.

B. The Refusal (3)

He was doing exactly what the Scriptures told him to do. He was to retain possession of his land. Ahab was asking what was forbidden by God. That tells you how out of touch he was with the law of God.

The preservation of one's inheritance was not just a wise business move. It was a religious duty associated with the covenant of God.

Here is a man who defied the king because of conscience and conviction. How we need more like that. People who have backbone, fiber, strength to say no, even though it would be so easy to say yes.

C. The Self-Pity (4-6)

Ahab went home and pouted. Jezebel questioned him about his pouting.

2. Evil Plan (7-10)

A. Her Promise (7)

Jezebel reveals her disdain for Ahab. ***Do you now govern Israel?*** That was a put-down. You are the king and can take what you want. What's the problem? His unwillingness to teach Naboth a lesson was a reflection upon the whole royal family.

There was something in Naboth that she could not tolerate. He was a man of conviction. He could not be bought with the world's goods, nor persuaded with the threat of royal retribution. Ahab had done the unthinkable by allowing a peasant to say **no** to the royal family.

So, she promised to take care of the situation. If he was not man-enough to get the vineyard, she would step in and do it. She encouraged him to cheer up. She would get the vineyard and give it to him as a gift.

B. Her Plan (8-10)

She had it all worked out, down to the last detail. She would set Naboth up and have him executed. Once he was dead, the vineyard could be seized by her husband. She would manipulate the law in order to give it the appearance of legitimacy. What hypocrisy!

She would have him accused and convicted of blasphemy and treason. Blasphemy might not get him executed, but treason would. And it worked. **This woman** fears nothing, not even God.

3. **Terrible Injustice (11-14)**

The people of the city did as Jezebel instructed. They took one of their neighbors and had him falsely accused, convicted and executed. This is shocking! Not surprised that Ahab and Jezebel would come up with a an evil plan that would involve a terrible act of injustice to an innocent man, but it is shocking that the people of his town would so easily go along with it.

There is no hint in the text of any hesitation, of any push back against this horrific directive. Instead, they were all-too-eager to join Jezebel in this terrible act. They proclaimed a fast to pretend that they were spiritually appalled at what Naboth would be accused of doing.

They were willing to bring God's name into the process, as if to proclaim that He was the one leading them to do what they were about to do. They organized a kangaroo court, secured **two worthless men** to lie about Naboth that they might be justified in their condemnation and execution.

Following this kangaroo court, they dragged this innocent man outside the city and stoned him to death. With that, they sent word to Jezebel that the deed had been done and Naboth was dead.

I'm stunned by this! How easily and quickly these ordinary people sunk into the depths of depravity to turn on one of their own. They probably would have argued that they were just following orders, just doing what their national leader told them to do. But, they left a wife without a husband and kids without a daddy.

I'm stunned, but I should not be. This is life in a Genesis 3 world. Evil is real and people can easily be swept up into its deceitful web. **Even in our day people do unspeakable things to other people. Kidnapping, Murder, Torture, Genocide, Sex Slavery, Child Abuse, Spouse Abuse.** I am sickened by some of the things that I have read in history books. Things that would be inappropriate to even verbalize in a message like this.

The Nazi's gassing the Jews, simply because they were Jews.
The genocide Rwanda and Burundi in early 90's.
The atrocities done by Taliban in Afghanistan on women/kids.
The over 4000 African Americans lynched 1882-1950 in America.
Each Jew in Europe had a name.
Each Hutu or Tutsi in Rwanda and Burundi had a name.
Each boy, girl, man or woman in Afghanistan had a name.
Each African American lynched in this nation had a name.

The story of Naboth is just another story that contributes to the narrative of injustices in a broken world. We see injustices of every form and shape all around us. It's in the **junior high class room, on the elementary school playground, on the factory floor, in the executive office, on the ball team.** Injustices are all around us. **It would be easy** to grow numb to them. I don't want that to happen to me!

4. **Deceptive Victory (15-16)**

It appears that evil has won the day. Ahab gets word that the plan has worked. So, he goes to claim his prize and take ownership of the vineyard. There was **the false appearance** that Jezebel and Ahab had won. Let me assure you that they were deceived by this victory. This was not the end of the story. We will look at this next time.

Takeaways:

1. **We must be willing to suffer for doing the right thing.**

Naboth suffered for doing the right thing. He could easily have said **yes** to Ahab, sold the land and made a profit. It would have been the easiest thing to do. **To say *no* to a person who has power, influence and control is never easy.** Naboth surely knew that Ahab could seize his land, if he chose.

He was theologically motivated. He knew the right thing because the Word of God made it clear. So, instead of taking the easy road, the profitable road, he chose the right road, even though it meant the possibility of suffering. Little did he know just how much he and his family would suffer.

What price are you willing to pay for doing what is right? Let me suggest to you that *doing the right thing* is worth any price! **Daniel** did the right thing and he was thrown into a den of lions. **Jeremiah** did the right thing and he was thrown into a pit and left to die.

2. We must be willing to sacrifice for the sake of the oppressed.

The primary characters in this sordid drama are obvious. **Ahab** is the greedy king. **Jezebel** is the power-hungry, manipulating queen. **Naboth** is the righteous innocent man who was oppressed and killed. But these were not the only players in this drama.

What about the men who were willing to bring false witness against Naboth? They sold their consciences on the altar of pleasing the wicked, Jezebel. ***Sure, we'll help condemn another human being if that makes the powerful queen happy.***

What about the rest of the people in Naboth's town who sat silently by while their neighbor was oppressed and killed? Maybe the ones most condemned in this entire saga were the ones who simply allowed it to happen because of their silence and inactivity. Make no mistake, they were complicit in this sinful and appalling act.

As Christ-followers we should speak up for the oppressed and against those who perpetrate injustices on others.

We need to do this on a personal level.

Classmate who is picked on by other students, needs a friend.

Co-worker who is mistreated by the boss, needs an advocate.

Friend or acquaintance who is verbally beaten down.

Wife or child who is abused by a spouse, parent or family member.

Child who does not have food to eat or clothing to wear.

We need to do this on the group level. Groups systematically oppressed.

We can be quick to criticize the citizens of Germany who turned a blind eye and deaf ear to the suffering of the Jews during the holocaust, but we are not without our own flawed history.

Mistreatment of native Americans, institutional slavery, Jim Crow laws, Japanese internment camps in 1942. Even today we think of the legal killing of unborn babies in their mother's wombs, mistreatment of the poor and undereducated in the legal system, those trapped in poverty, human sex trafficking, child sex abuse and so much more. There are entire groups in our society who are at greater risk of injustice than most of us are.

I challenge you to read Bryan Stevenson's book, ***Just Mercy***. Or just google his name and listen to him for a few minutes. Good introduction to some of the injustices in our nation today.

3. We must trust God to respond to injustice with justice.

Naboth did not see the justice of God in his time. But the justice of God came, nonetheless. God's justice may be delay but it is never derailed. If you are the victim of injustice, please know that God sees and knows. He will one day bring justice to your situation.

In closing, there is one prevailing, dominant theme of this passage.

God is a god of justice! He will not let injustice go unchecked forever. What is our assurance that God will get justice? The cross!

That is the whole point of the death of Jesus. He died at the hands of unjust people because of the justice of God. He died an **unjust death** in order to satisfy the **justice of God**. What a surprise! That is one reason the religious Jews missed it. It was too shocking, too surprising, too different from what they expected of God. The penalty for sin had to be paid and you and I were unable to pay it. So, Jesus paid it for us.

Jesus is the ultimate victim of injustice, in the sense that he was perfectly innocent. However, he voluntarily submitted himself to that injustice to satisfy the justice of God on our behalf. In a nutshell . . .

Jesus died for you and me!