

Sermon Title: **“Kingdom Nobility”**

Series: *Learn, Live, Lead*

Speaker: Pastor Damian Mericka

Text: Acts 17:10-15; 1 Kings 21

## Introduction

*“Stand firm, and you will win life.” -[Luke 21:19](#)*

We began this year with a look at what Kingdom endurance is. **Standing Firm** here means *Endurance* and is a very rich word embodying an **upward, consistent, contagious, and outward** motion that goes against the current. *It is swimming upstream after Jesus.* We saw this is the work the Spirit of God does in our lives, just as He did in Jesus’ - He leads us upward to higher ground and a higher life in Him.

We also looked at some of the outward challenges we face when going upward with the Spirit, including the spiritual forces of darkness which our on their way downward. As they are being cast out of God’s Kingdom, we are being brought in. This is the nature of our Spiritual Battle. Unlike the generations that came before Jesus since His Ascension the Spirit has now come upon us to take the battle to where it truly is at.

What does this look like lived out in or lives? Following Jesus as His Disciples.



*“Come, follow me,’ Jesus said, ‘and I will send you out to fish for people.”*

**-Matthew 4:19**

This series is set to be a journey answering this question- *what does it mean to follow Jesus?* How do we today answer His invitation and see this journey with Him unfold as it did for the first-generation followers of Jesus? Together we will discover anew what it means to follow Jesus- *to be a disciple making disciples culture that **learns, lives, and leads!***

### **I. The Road Less Traveled (Acts 17:10)**

*“The brothers (believers) immediately sent Paul and Silas away by night to Berea, and when they arrived they went into the Jewish synagogue.” -[Acts 17:10](#)*

We left of last week noting that despite the abstinent backlash to the Gospel, the message of Jesus took root in the lives of people as the Kingdom of God increased in Thessalonica. We saw how Paul and Silas, still physically bearing witness to the cost of following Jesus, encouraging these new believers to stay the course- Jesus is faithful to save! What we believe matters, in fact Theology matters because it gives us eternal truth to grip amidst the storms of life in this

world. God's Word is truth and will be the anchor enabling us to weather all seasons of life in this world for His Glory.

As their Spiritual father, Paul would bear the concern for their new faith with much labor in prayer and encouragement. Remember Jesus' words,

*“Now the parable is this: The seed is the word of God. The ones along the path are those who have heard; then the devil comes and takes away the word from their hearts, so that they may not believe and be saved. **And the ones on the rock are those who, when they hear the word, receive it with joy. But these have no root; they believe for a while, and in time of testing fall away.** And as for what fell among the thorns, they are those who hear, but as they go on their way they are choked by the cares and riches and pleasures of life, and their fruit does not mature. As for that in the good soil, they are those who, hearing the word, hold it fast in an honest and good heart, and bear fruit with patience.” -**Luke 8:11-15***

It is important to note that 3 out of 4 heart types bore life; 3 bore a positive response to the Gospel. Amidst the 3, only one held on to it and are both transformed by it and bear the fruit of it (seed bearing) into the lives of others. This seed-bearing faith was to come from this Missionary effort in Thessalonica. But not today. Today persecution has hit heavy and hard, and the believers send Paul and his team away. *Their survival would help keep the planted faith alive in their hearts.*

They set their course toward Berea, along the back road less traveled. Under the cover of night, the ambassadors of God's Kingdom look no different than criminals and insurgents. This is the road you take when you want to fall off the radar of others. **(Insert story of driving without insurance)**

## **II. Is This True? (17:11-12)**

*“Now these Jews were more noble than those in Thessalonica; they received the word with all eagerness, examining the Scriptures daily to see if these things were so. Many of them therefore believed, with not a few Greek women of high standing as well as men.” -**Acts 17:11-12***

The believers in Thessalonica sent the Apostle and team to Berea because the soil there was perfect for Kingdom planting. The better of 50 miles southwest, Paul and team (Silas now; Timothy and Luke sometime shortly after) arrive and do not miss a beat to the Spirit's cadence. Locating the synagogue (Remember: A Temple away from the Temple for Jews. It was also an opportunity for Gentiles to come closer to God than they could at the Temple) they begin sharing Jesus. It is here Luke, the author, notes that they received the message of Jesus with open arms, eager to learn more about Him through Paul and teams teaching.

**Berea-** This city's name means *well watered* which was due to its natural springs and resulting streams. It was lush and luxurious for its inhabitants and boasts of a history reaching deep into Roman history. Because of this, it was the more wealthy or socially strong families that would reside here, being known for the class of nobility.

That said, this is not the sort of nobility Luke is talking about here.

**More noble-minded** has a two-fold meaning; one regarding well born, of a noble family. The other is **open minded**. It is this turn of meaning in which nobility is noted as a positive characteristic in the new believers here in Berea. To receive the Gospel, embrace and be transformed by it, is of far greater nobility than birthright. **To value where you are going more than where you have come from is the weight carried here.**

To preach a message to a class of high nobility to value where they are going more than where they have come from stands apart from what they have heard before. And for the Jewish community, to see this Messiah that brought life to us through His suffering for our sin to become a part of His Kingdom, His family, is to know a richer source of living water than they have come to value in Berea.

*“On the last day of the feast, the great day, Jesus stood up and cried out, “If anyone thirsts, let him come to me and drink.” **-John 7:37***

**Eagerness** here plays on their nobility, or open-mindedness. The Spirit is bringing life to these Gospel seeds with such stride that the roots are striving to reach deep into the soil of their hearts. The Berean audience was eager to learn, eating up Paul’s words with diligent pursuit of understanding all that he was teaching! How does the Gospel root deep into us, enabling us to hold on to faith from the beginning through to the end? *The persistent Study of God’s Word.*

### **Theology Matters!**

But knowing without living does not lead us to live in His nobility. To be open-minded to the truth is the starting point, not the end. The Gospel of Jesus Christ always leads to an invitation to follow Him. Always. *If our witness of Jesus does not lead to such an invitation for the audience, it has fallen short of being a full Gospel witness.*

*“But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves.” **-James 1:22***

Kingdom Nobility is **knowing** God’s Word and **living** out God’s Word.

### **III. Nobility: Knowing & Living (1 Kings 21)**

*“Now Naboth the Jezreelite had a vineyard in Jezreel, beside the palace of Ahab king of Samaria. And after this Ahab said to Naboth, “Give me your vineyard, that I may have it for a vegetable garden, because it is near my house, and I will give you a better vineyard for it; or, if it seems good to you, I will give you its value in money.” But Naboth said to Ahab, “The Lord forbid that I should give you the inheritance of my fathers.” And Ahab went into his house vexed and sullen because of what Naboth the Jezreelite had said to him, for he had said, “I will not give you the inheritance of my fathers.” And he lay down on his bed and turned away his face and would eat no food.” **-1 Kings 21:1-4***

Stepping back into the text of what the Bereans would have been reading, our Old Testament, we find story illustrating what Kingdom Nobility looks like. Here we find it involves the same thing- knowing and living God's Word.

Ahab and his wife Jezebel were the dream team for chaos. Ahab's *brokenness* in heart overflowed into a *broken* marriage and spread this *brokenness* over the entire Northern portion of Israel. Here we find him in his winter palace overlooking a lush vineyard. This soon transitions to lusting after it. In many respects, this narrative bears much resemblance to King David's descent into sin with Bathsheba.

Naboth refused to relinquish his ownership of this vineyard to Ahab. Whether he wanted to sell it or not is not the issue. It was against the Lord to do so. What did he mean?

*The inheritance of the people of Israel shall not be transferred from one tribe to another, for every one of the people of Israel shall hold on to the inheritance of the tribe of his fathers. And every daughter who possesses an inheritance in any tribe of the people of Israel shall be wife to one of the clan of the tribe of her father; so that every one of the people of Israel may possess the inheritance of his fathers. So no inheritance shall be transferred from one tribe to another; for each of the tribes of the people of Israel shall hold on to its own inheritance."*

**-Numbers 36:7-9**

No matter what, the portion each tribe inherited was to be retained from generation to generation. No one Tribe was to possess all- but in their different regions would be diversity in resource. Though they were one Nation, they were multiple tribes each gifted to function in the benefit of one another. Together, they were strong and, in this God, structured them to coexist.

*Like the Church being one Body yet many members; One Spirit yet diversity in gifting...crazy, right?! I'm sure it's just a coincidence!*

While it was the custom of other nations to empower their royalty to take whatever they wanted, in Israel the king was not above the people he served. They all were under God's Word.

Regardless of *if Ahab knew this, forgot this, or simply did not believe or care*, Naboth did.

Naboth, whose name means fruitful, was plugged into living what he believed, and modeled Kingdom Nobility.

**Ahab was closed minded and relied on his earthly nobility. Naboth had his eyes focused on where he was going; Ahab on where he was from.**

As Ahab lies crying and pouting in bed, his wife steps up to do what he in her eyes is again to weak to do.

*"And Jezebel his wife said to him, 'Do you now govern Israel? Arise and eat bread and let your heart be cheerful; I will give you the vineyard of Naboth the Jezreelite.'" -1 Kings 21:7*

To do this she orders a feast in her husbands name, sending it to the corrupt elders and leaders with the instructions to make Naboth the guest of honor. Ensuring then Naboth would be there, they would have staged *Two worthless men opposite him and accuse him of cursing both God*

*and the king, and then take him out and stone him to death (v.10).* This is similar to what happened to Paul and Silas in Thessalonica when the opposition stirred up the city against them by hiring thugs to accuse them falsely. *The enemies' tactics do not change!*

Jezebel used Naboth's own faith in God against him by bringing him falsely under the judgment of death.

*“Then you shall bring out to your gates that man or woman who has done this evil thing, and you shall stone that man or woman to death with stones. On the evidence of two witnesses or of three witnesses the one who is to die shall be put to death; a person shall not be put to death on the evidence of one witness.” **-Deuteronomy 17:5-6***

How much pain and suffering has been brought upon people for using God's Word without knowing God Himself? One can just about find what they want, and twist God's Word to say what they want. Therefore, like the Bereans, we need to study, research, and weigh the text in light of who God is. No portion of the Bible can be separated from the character of God who authored it.

While Jezebel and corrupt politicians may not believe in God, that does not lessen the reality of who God is in any respect. Further, God is not fooled. As Ahab goes to receive his newly acquired vineyard God sends the prophet Elijah with these words,

*“Thus says the Lord, “Have you killed and also taken possession?”” And you shall say to him, “Thus says the Lord: “In the place where dogs licked up the blood of Naboth shall dogs lick your own blood.” **-1 Kings 21:19***

Now his wife may not believe in God, but Ahab was raised differently and when God speaks, especially with judgment, there is not disbelief in either God or His Word for him. While he may not have liked it or wanted to hear it, his mind was open to both hear and receive God's word through this prophet. As a result of this,

*“And when Ahab heard those words, he tore his clothes and put sackcloth on his flesh and fasted and lay in sackcloth and went about dejectedly. And the word of the Lord came to Elijah the Tishbite, saying, “Have you seen how Ahab has humbled himself before me? Because he has humbled himself before me, I will not bring the disaster in his days; but in his son's days I will bring the disaster upon his house.” **-1 Kings 21:27-29***

Ahab humbled himself before God and repented; God extended mercy and grace. Because Ahab deserved it? No. **It is because this is who God is.**

*The Lord is gracious and merciful,  
slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love. **-Psalm 145:8***

But wait a minute- *what about Naboth?* Where was this gracious and merciful God for him? After all, Naboth was the one choosing to live with Kingdom Nobility amidst a crooked and perverse generation! I hear this often, “Either God is not all powerful, or God is not all loving,

or God is not real.” Looking at this story, how could God have allowed this to touch Naboth? How could God honor Ahab’s repentance?

Naboth was looking toward where he was going; and he arrived. Naboth suffered violently but entered God’s Vineyard. Ahab is looking at where he came from and dying on the inside out with every step forward. This is part of why we must know God through His Word. *Theology matters.*

Ahab knew he was a selfish, rotten king. He knew his marriage sucked. He knew he was not getting a father’s day card from his kids. And he knew this vineyard would only temporarily make him happy until it, like everything else in this world, the novelty wears off. Yet God loved Ahab enough to send his son Naboth to become an invitation for Ahab to stop looking at where he came from, and look at where God as a loving Father, is inviting Him to come into.

Naboth was of Kingdom Nobility, just was Paul, Silas, Timothy, Luke, and the growing number of believers in Berea. As a result of this, many were turning in repentance to this God of Grace and Mercy! But understand, Naboth faced the same question persecution and suffering brings each of us to- ***Do you really believe this?***

#### **IV. Do you really believe this? (17:13-15)**

*“But when the Jews from Thessalonica learned that the word of God was proclaimed by Paul at Berea also, they came there too, agitating and stirring up the crowds. Then the brothers immediately sent Paul off on his way to the sea, but Silas and Timothy remained there. Those who conducted Paul brought him as far as Athens, and after receiving a command for Silas and Timothy to come to him as soon as possible, they departed.”*

#### **-Acts 17:13-15**

The enemy is close on the heels of those who go forth with the Gospel of reconciliation, making the appeal on behalf of God to humanity. Those who stirred the crowds to persecute the gospel in Thessalonica have arrived to do the same in Berea. And it is in the same heart believers send Paul onward, for two possible reasons:

- 1) The seeds are planted; God is bringing the increase. There are those whose hearts are good soil, and the Gospel has taken root; fruit and new seeds will come and continue to cast into the hearts of those withing Berea.
- 2) The movement is still young, and the death of Paul would dampen the vibrancy of the newfound faith in the church. Many movements are lost with those who lead them passing. While this is not true for Christianity, it is a fear for the early church.

Regardless, the Gospel brought invitation to step into Kingdom Nobility- that which is both received from God with an open mind, and a submission to God in obedience to come and follow Him with eyes on where we are going, not where we are from. Kingdom Nobility is continuing to ***Learn from Jesus, Live like Jesus, and Lead others to Jesus!***