

S&L, Episode V: The Happy Camper

Reconnect – July 24, 2011



Text: I Samuel 25:1-44; I Peter 3:8-10; Psalm 53

Key Thought: God still puts his people in our path to try to keep us from our worst choices.

Even when you are chased by those who seek to kill you, your life is safe in the care of the Lord your God, secure in his treasure pouch! But the lives of your enemies will disappear like stones shot from a sling! When the Lord has done all he promised and has made you leader of Israel, don't let this be a blemish on your record. Then your conscience won't have to bear the staggering burden of needless bloodshed and vengeance. And when the Lord has done these great things for you, please remember me, your servant!" (I Samuel 25, NLT)

Pre-Intro: The Adjustment Bureau video

Intro: The wrath of Janice



- Everyone out of the pool! (the case of the furious floaters)
- Is it a crop circle? An alien abduction? Or a mysterious suburban pool thief?

Pet peeves: we all have them (include list from www.getannoyed.com)



People who read out loud what they're typing in an email or letter.
People who sit next to you on public transportation even when there are other seats available.
Students who prolong class by asking the most inane questions.
When people take 20 napkins, use one, then throw them all away.
Using speaker phones in public areas at work.
Roadmaps that aren't folded correctly.
Finding a shoe and not finding its mate next to it
Couples that own a dog together and call themselves mommy and daddy.
When drivers bring their car to the wrong side of the gas pump.
Not washing hands after using the bathroom.
When you pull a string hanging from your shirt and it doesn't break, but only becomes longer.
People who use self checkout lanes but don't know how to use them and slow us all down.
People who can't seem to understand that " red eyes" are possible to remove in photos.
When you're wearing a hat, after a while it feels like it's not there. When you take it off, it feels like it's still there.
Famous people name their kids stange names.

But we don't generally make them about life and death...!

- David has taken a very small thing – an insult to his pride, by a well-known jerk that hates everyone – and has made it into a huge thing – something he's ready to kill people for...!

Read text: I Samuel 25:1-44

Now Samuel died, and all Israel gathered for his funeral. They buried him at his house in Ramah. Then David moved down to the wilderness of Maon. There was a wealthy man from Maon who owned property near the town of Carmel. He had 3,000 sheep and 1,000 goats, and it was sheep-shearing time. This man's name was Nabal, and his wife, Abigail, was a sensible and beautiful woman. But Nabal, a descendant of Caleb, was crude and mean in all his dealings.

- Samuel is dead – David's moral centre – the one that he had run to, the one who had counselled him at different times, his inspiration of a man who loved and served God
- David retreats back to his tribe's historic homeland, in the wilderness – and starts a band of do-gooders there – he is establishing himself as a local warlord, a benevolent strongman
- And then there's Nabal – a leading man – Nabal probably wasn't his name ("Fool") – it probably sounded like it, though, and this story just calls him Dummy
- Everyone knows two things about Nabal – one, he's rich, and two, he's a jerk – and no-one knows how he ended up with his sensible and beautiful wife...!
- It's that time of year when sheep-shearing happens – a time to work and party like crazy...

When David heard that Nabal was shearing his sheep, he sent ten of his young men to Carmel with this message for Nabal: “Peace and prosperity to you, your family, and everything you own! I am told that it is sheep-shearing time. While your shepherds stayed among us near Carmel, we never harmed them, and nothing was ever stolen from them. Ask your own men, and they will tell you this is true. So would you be kind to us, since we have come at a time of celebration? Please share any provisions you might have on hand with us and with your friend David.” David’s young men gave this message to Nabal in David’s name, and they waited for a reply.

- Some people think that David was running a protection racket – that he wasn’t really doing that much for Nabal, and then squeezing him for the good stuff
- But this was a land in a constant state of war, with neighbouring tribes raiding all the time and the Philistine wild cards too – to have a state of peace within that would be invaluable
- David is also trying to build alliances – to reach out to Nabal in friendship, to give him an opportunity to get on board with him (he was a wealthy influential person, even if he was a jerk) – David needed funds and support to continue to build his influence in the region
- Plus, he has a soft spot for shepherds – he knows the job, it’s what he’s done, it’s his roots – he knows the dangers they face and the help they actually might need

“Who is this fellow David?” Nabal sneered to the young men. “Who does this son of Jesse think he is? There are lots of servants these days who run away from their masters. Should I take my bread and my water and my meat that I’ve slaughtered for my shearers and give it to a band of outlaws who come from who knows where?” So David’s young men returned and told him what Nabal had said. “Get your swords!” was David’s reply as he strapped on his own. Then 400 men started off with David, and 200 remained behind to guard their equipment.

- Nabal insults David and demeans his men – and comments on David’s sore spot, his parting from Saul
- And David loses it! He decides to teach Nabal a lesson once and for all, with 400 men ready for bear – to clean him out or worse

Meanwhile, one of Nabal’s servants went to Abigail and told her, “David sent messengers from the wilderness to greet our master, but he screamed insults at them. These men have been very good to us, and we never suffered any harm from them. Nothing was stolen from us the whole time they were with us. In fact, day and night they were like a wall of protection to us and the sheep. You need to know this and figure out what to do, for there is going to be trouble for our master and his whole family. He’s so ill-tempered that no one can even talk to him!”

- Nabal’s servant gives Abigail the bottom line – that David’s group has been very helpful to the farming operation, and that there’s trouble coming (probably not for the first time) due to Nabal’s big talk and lack of people skills

Abigail wasted no time. She quickly gathered 200 loaves of bread, two wineskins full of wine, five sheep that had been slaughtered, nearly a bushel of roasted grain, 100 clusters of raisins, and 200 fig cakes. She packed them on donkeys and said to her servants, “Go on ahead. I will follow you shortly.” But she didn’t tell her husband Nabal what she was doing.

- Abigail quickly puts together the basics for a party – it’s not going to feed them for weeks anyway, but it’s what she has on hand – and goes out herself with the servants to see what she can do to help – but she keeps Nabal in the dark (he wouldn’t have wanted her to go anyway) – she goes around his authority to try to save his fortune – and even his life

As she was riding her donkey into a mountain ravine, she saw David and his men coming toward her. David had just been saying, “A lot of good it did to help this fellow. We protected his flocks in the wilderness, and nothing he owned was lost or stolen. But he has repaid me evil for good. May God strike me and kill me if even one man of his household is still alive tomorrow morning!”

- David is ready to massacre the whole clan of Nabal – everyone in his household – family, servants, everyone – his temper has him ready to commit atrocities against his own people, for the sake of his pride being hurt
- That’s not Torah – that’s not God’s way – it’s not an eye for an eye, it’s not even in the ballpark – David is about to start a blood feud that will tear apart his tribe, over a few bags of groceries!
- David’s not fit to be king acting like this – this isn’t the ruler that will bring lasting peace and prosperity – this is someone who first was called a thug, and now is living up to that nickname

When Abigail saw David, she quickly got off her donkey and bowed low before him. She fell at his feet and said, “I accept all blame in this matter, my lord. Please listen to what I have to say. I know Nabal is a wicked and ill-tempered man; please don’t pay any attention to him. He is a fool, just as his name suggests. But I never even saw the young men you sent. “Now, my lord, as surely as the Lord lives and you yourself live, since the Lord has kept you from murdering and taking vengeance into your own hands, let all your enemies and those who try to harm you be as cursed as Nabal is. And here is a present that I, your servant, have brought to you and your young men. Please forgive me if I have offended you in any way. The Lord will surely reward you with a lasting dynasty, for you are fighting the Lord’s battles. And you have not done wrong throughout your entire life. “Even when you are chased by those who seek to kill you, your life is safe in the care of the Lord your God, secure in his treasure pouch! But the lives of your enemies will disappear like stones shot from a sling! When the Lord has done all he promised and has made you leader of Israel, don’t let this be a blemish on your record. Then your conscience won’t have to bear the staggering burden of needless bloodshed and vengeance. And when the Lord has done these great things for you, please remember me, your servant!”

- Abigail humbles herself before David – in an unheard of confrontation, the wife of a jerk puts herself in the path of an angry-enough-to kill insulted man and his force of 400 men
- And she demonstrates that she is more righteous than David – in an incredibly respectful way, she calls him an idiot for getting all worked up over some sheep for dinner

- David is ready to sacrifice his future for the immediate good feeling of smacking Nabal – but he’s throwing away the kingdom by doing it – if his own tribe won’t follow him, who will? And if he wipes out Nabal, no-one will be able to trust him – he will be creating a kingdom of fear, just like Saul – and just like with Saul, it will evade his grasp
- She sees it clearly – David doesn’t, none of his men do – but this godly woman on a path in a ravine, down in the dirt, she gets it – she is the wise woman
- “the lives of your enemies will disappear like stones shot from a sling” – shades of the day that God used a nobody named David to slay Goliath, long before the notoriety and the book deal...

David replied to Abigail, “Praise the Lord, the God of Israel, who has sent you to meet me today! Thank God for your good sense! Bless you for keeping me from murder and from carrying out vengeance with my own hands. For I swear by the Lord, the God of Israel, who has kept me from hurting you, that if you had not hurried out to meet me, not one of Nabal’s men would still be alive tomorrow morning.” Then David accepted her present and told her, “Return home in peace. I have heard what you said. We will not kill your husband.”

- And she gets through to David – he comes to his senses – and relents of his plans to wipe out everyone in the farm operation

When Abigail arrived home, she found that Nabal was throwing a big party and was celebrating like a king. He was very drunk, so she didn’t tell him anything about her meeting with David until dawn the next day. In the morning when Nabal was sober, his wife told him what had happened. As a result he had a stroke, and he lay paralyzed on his bed like a stone. About ten days later, the Lord struck him, and he died.

- Nabal is in the middle of a big drunk when Abigail gets home – and knowing what he’s like, she waits to tell him everything that happened until the next day – and he gets so angry he has a stroke – ultimately, he dies, but at God’s hand, not David’s – David is not guilty of his blood

When David heard that Nabal was dead, he said, “Praise the Lord, who has avenged the insult I received from Nabal and has kept me from doing it myself. Nabal has received the punishment for his sin.” Then David sent messengers to Abigail to ask her to become his wife. When the messengers arrived at Carmel, they told Abigail, “David has sent us to take you back to marry him.” She bowed low to the ground and responded, “I, your servant, would be happy to marry David. I would even be willing to become a slave, washing the feet of his servants!” Quickly getting ready, she took along five of her servant girls as attendants, mounted her donkey, and went with David’s messengers. And so she became his wife. David also married Ahinoam from Jezreel, making both of them his wives. Saul, meanwhile, had given his daughter Michal, David’s wife, to a man from Gallim named Palti son of Laish. I Samuel 25:1-44, NLT

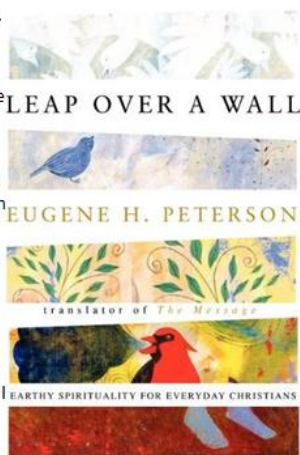
- David recognizes the treasure that Abigail is – and with Nabal out of the way, this is a chance to not only marry her, but to advance politically and with alliances – she is a key figure in the area, Nabal’s estate is now his as well – it was win-win for David, ultimately, because one of God’s people kept him from going off the rails
- David is now truly a happy camper

Letting things go... or not

- What we shipwreck ourselves over is so minor – but there are those things that we just can't let go – and whatever we can't let go, we hang onto – and pretty soon, we call that baggage – the stuff we can't let go of starts to choke us out as we carry it and drop it in inopportune places

“Abigail on her knees in the wilderness, on her knees before David. David is rampaging, murder in his eyes, and Abigail blocks his path, kneeling before him. David has been insulted and is out to avenge the insult with four hundred men worked up into a frenzy. Abigail, solitary and beautiful, kneels in the path, stopping David in his tracks. As this moment David is full of himself and empty of God; the emptiness is visible as ugliness. Abigail recovers God for David. David is earlier described as beautiful, though there's no sign of it here. But beautiful Abigail restores the beauty of God to David, his original identity” (Peterson, Leap, 82)

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- David is a passionate guy – when he's ON with God, that makes him devoted, passionate in worship, ready to do the right thing whatever the cost, no matter who's in the way
- But when he's in the wrong, that makes him angry, volatile, foolish, easily swayed by the people around him
- David throws himself into everything that he does – but sometimes, like this time, he forgets to look before he leaps
- He loses it, and for the sake of losing it, almost loses everything in the process
- At this point the wilderness HAS gotten to David – he's started to believe he's more than he is – and that someone else owes him a living, that God on his side is not enough
- God sends Abigail literally in David's path, to save him from himself

Key Thought:

TAKE IT HOME:

God still puts his people in our path to try to keep us from our worst choices.

Finally, all of you should be of one mind. Sympathize with each other. Love each other as brothers and sisters. Be tenderhearted, and keep a humble attitude. Don't repay evil for evil. Don't retaliate with insults when people insult you.

Instead, pay them back with a blessing. That is what God has called you to do, and he will bless you for it. For the Scriptures say, "If you want to enjoy life and see many happy days, keep your tongue from speaking evil and your lips from telling lies. **1 Peter 3:8-10, NLT**



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Conclusion: Choices and paths



- The tragic death of Amy Winehouse illustrates the danger of not having people around you who can tell you the truth – without them needing anything from you, without them using you – with them being completely consistent

Response: Psalm 53

For the choir director: A meditation; a psalm of David.

Only fools say in their hearts,

“There is no God.”

They are corrupt, and their actions are evil;

not one of them does good!

God looks down from heaven

on the entire human race;

he looks to see if anyone is truly wise,

if anyone seeks God.

But no, all have turned away;

all have become corrupt.

No one does good,

not a single one!

Will those who do evil never learn?

They eat up my people like bread

and wouldn't think of praying to God.

Terror will grip them,

terror like they have never known before.

God will scatter the bones of your enemies.

You will put them to shame, for God has rejected them.

Who will come from Mount Zion to rescue Israel?

When God restores his people,

Jacob will shout with joy, and Israel will rejoice.