

Mother's Day Message

1 Samuel 25

“Abigail: A Woman of Grace”

Introduction

Usually, I am not given over to “special day” sermons. But this week, I felt lead to preach a message that would honor all the Godly women that we all have been blessed by over the years of our lives. The Church absolutely would not be what it is today, if it did not have the wonderful women of faith that have raised the banner of Christ high for all to see. As a wise person once said, “A mother is she who can take the place of all others, but whose place no one else can take”. So today, we honor our Christian mothers, as well as, ALL of the Godly women who have served so faithfully, for they have shown us the love of Christ as no one else ever could. I would like to read a story from the book of 1 Samuel, about just such a woman. In fact, she is my favorite lady in all of scripture! Her name was Abigail, and the name means “My Father’s Joy”. She is a remarkable woman, that I believe all of us should aspire to emulate. She was a woman of grace and poise, as well as, remarkable intelligence and insight. Now, I don’t know about you this morning, but those are some attributes that I wouldn’t mind having. In addition to Abigail’s wonderful spirit, *The Bible* tells us that she was very beautiful. I imagine that her beauty was not simply physical, but spiritual as well. Simply put, Abigail was pretty, both inside and out. She was the exact type of woman that Peter, the Apostle, was speaking of in his letter to The Church, when he spoke of the inner beauty of a Godly woman:

“Don’t let your beauty consist of outward things like elaborate hairstyles and wearing gold jewelry or fine clothes, but rather, what is inside the heart — the imperishable quality of a gentle and quite spirit, which is of great worth in God’s sight.”
1 Peter 3:3-4

With her name meaning “my father’s joy”, I imagine that Abigail was deeply loved by her father, and as the case, it is not hard to assume that her dad wanted the very best for his special little girl. It was customary in those days for a young girl’s father to actively search for a suitable husband, who would provide for his daughter’s every need. No doubt, when her father chose Nabal as a husband, he thought that because of his vast riches that he would provide a lifestyle for Abigail that would be unequaled by any of the other men who lived in Judah. We do not know for sure whether or not this is the case, but it is a reasonable explanation as to why someone as lovely and intelligent as Abigail ended up as the wife of a man such as Nabal. His name actually means “fool” in the Hebrew, and I suspect that it is actually more of a nickname than his actual given name. After all, who names their kid “Fool”?!

Nabal was very rich according to the scriptures. In those days, wealth was not measured by how much money one had in the bank, or even their 401k, but rather, by the size of one’s flocks and herds. Nabal had three thousand sheep and a thousand goats to his tally, and that made him a very wealthy man indeed. But, in spite of all that wealth, the man Nabal was a miserable wretch, who lived only to get all that he could with a continual thirst for more. I once read that the billionaire John J. Rockefeller was once asked, “How much money is enough?”; to which he replied, “One more dollar that I do not already have”. What a sad existence! Nabal and Rockefeller, according the world’s standards, “had it all”, and yet, both men were still empty on the inside. You see, there is within each of us a great empty hole that only Jesus can fill. Riches can never satisfy, and it is a wise person who turns to Christ to be filled.

In any case, poor Abigail found herself bound to this evil man, with no hope of ever escaping. In those days, a wife was considered just another property of her husband. So, although Abigail was wed to a wealthy man, who no doubt provided financial stability, he was not the kind of man that any loving father would ever desire for his daughter. Especially one that he had thought of as “his joy”. What a terrible tragedy for a young woman who had such wonderful potential. How sad her life must have been, being forever bound to such wickedness. But the good news for her was... her circumstances were about to change.

Nabal had sent his sheep to graze in the wilderness of Carmel. While it was indeed good grazing land, it was also a very dangerous place, filled with bandits and robbers. Fortunately for Nabal’s shepherds, there was also a former shepherd who had taken up residence in this same region. David, whom God had anointed to be Israel’s next king, was living with his 600 man army in Carmel. He had settled there to escape from Saul’s wrath. Saul was King of Israel and had vowed to kill David, for a king doesn’t usually cherish having someone else taking up his crown. A throne must be a very comfortable place to sit, for it seems that once a man sits upon one, he will fight to the death not to give it up! God had rejected Saul, and it was a just a matter of time, before David would be king. However, this would

happen according God's schedule and not man's. David, in the meantime, would find himself on one very long "camping trip" as he awaited God's perfect timing.

David, being a man of Judah (the same tribe as Nabal), took it upon himself to protect the man's flock, as well as his shepherds, while they were living in Carmel. Having an Army of six hundred men, the servants of Nabal were afforded a security detail that was fit for a king, as David and his men carefully watched over them in the wilderness. So, as would be expected (and also according to Jewish Law), when shearing time came, Nabal should have been willing to "share the wealth", so to speak, with David's men to show appreciation for their protection. The shearing of the sheep normally took place in the spring, as well as, in the fall, and on both occasions, the wool was sold and would therefore bring not only a great deal of money to the owner of the flock, but usually a time of celebration accompanied by a great feast for all the household and the servants. David had every right to expect Nabal to be in a generous mood during this celebration time, so he sent a delegation of his men to the home of Nabal to request whatever he could give. Nabal reacted not with benevolence, but rather with a screaming fit much like a spoiled child throwing a tantrum. He had no desire to share his wealth with anyone, let alone David, this runaway in the wilderness. He sent David's men back into the hills with nothing (except a barrage of insults), not realizing the severity of the wrath that he was bringing down upon himself in the process. Had it not been for Abigail's wise actions, Nabal would have been dead by the next morning. Abigail sprang into action as soon as one of the servants came and told her what her foolish husband had done. She did exactly what a Godly person should have done, and in so doing, she saved many lives that day. Today, let us look together at Abigail's **Response**, her **Repentance**, and her **Redemption**. It is a wonderful story of God's amazing grace.

Abigail's Response (verses 12-19)

Have you ever been so stressed out, that you just snapped? It's as if when you woke up that morning, you only had one nerve left, and someone had managed to get on it! David had been running for his life for several years now. He had been anointed by Samuel to be the next king, while he was still a teenager, and at this point he was well into his twenties. He was living not as royalty mind you, but as a fugitive, with the constant pressures of not only providing a living for himself, but for an army of men, who had joined him in the wilderness. Can you imagine the constant stress of it all? And here, David had thought that by doing a good deed for Nabal, he would at the very least be able to get some much needed provisions for his soldiers. When his men returned with their story of Nabal's insulting tirade, David... **LOST IT**. His response was simply:

"All of you, put on your swords."

1 Samuel 25:13

War was coming to the village of Maon. David had put up with about all that he could take, and Nabal had become the object of every bit of his long years of stress. Ordinarily, the days events might have just ended up in a fist fight, but David had 600 soldiers with him. This was going to end in serious bloodshed. Nabal was a dead man walking. He was just too stupid to know it.

Upon hearing of his master's treatment of David's men, an unnamed servant rushes to Abigail to tell her what had transpired (**vs.14**). Obviously, the servant was in fear for the safety of the entire household. He had firsthand spent time in the wilderness with David. Notice the two things that he tells Abigail about David:

1st "David's Merit":

"The men treated us very well. When we were in the field, we weren't harassed, and nothing of ours was missing the whole time we were living among them. They were a wall around us, both day and night, the entire time we were with them herding the sheep."

1 Samuel 25:15-16

David had shown nothing but kindness to Nabal's men. In fact, it was David who had been their defense in the wilderness, protecting their very lives at the risk of his own. Nabal's response should have been gratitude, rather than contempt.

2nd "David's Might":

"Now consider carefully what you should do, because there is certain to be trouble for our master and his entire family."

1 Samuel 25:17

You see, the servant had witnessed the strength of David and his army up close. Nabal didn't stand a chance. David was not a man to be trifled with. He was a mighty warrior, and living in the wilderness had only served to make him stronger. And, as if this weren't enough, he was The LORD'S anointed. To stand against David was tantamount to standing against God! A consuming wrath was coming to Nabal's house, and there wasn't a single man there who would be able to withstand it.

The Bible says that Abigail responded quickly, wasting no time. She knew that she had to act, and act fast. You have heard me say this before, and it bears repeating. The purpose of good preaching is to solicit the proper response. The servant knew that talking to Nabal was a waste of good oxygen (**vs. 17**), but Abigail was another story. She had enough wisdom to see what was coming, and not only did she heed the warning, but she also responded properly. If Nabal was too foolish to see the reality of the danger he had placed them all in, then she alone would do something to mitigate that danger. She prepared a feast fit for a king, and then saddled up her donkey to ride into the mountains to feed one!

Abigail's Repentance (verses 20-31)

Now let's be realistic. No one could blame David for his anger, but if he had actually been allowed to go down and slaughter every single man in Nabal's household, he would never have become king. Nabal was in the same clan as David, the clan of Judah, and if David had slaughtered a prominent man from his own tribe, then his own people would have despised him, not to mention the other eleven tribes of Israel! No, David had to be rescued from his own impetuous self. Been there, done that! It is important to note that there is no mention of David seeking The LORD's counsel **BEFORE** he strapped on his sword and jumped up on his mule! The worst mistakes that I have ever made, no, scratch that, ALL of the mistakes that I've ever made are the ones that I **didn't** pray about. The great thing about being a child of God is that oft times God, in His grace, steps in before we do something stupid. Can I get a witness?

David needed to be stopped, and God, in His infinite wisdom, wielded the perfect weapon that can bring a very strong man man to his knees every single time... a beautiful woman... with a crock-pot. I know very few guys who can withstand such a powerful force of nature! David was still muttering curses about his plans for Nabal (Many translations of *The Bible* have somewhat sanitized David's language, but The KJV tells us exactly what he said), as he rode down the mountainside. But, before he was able to carry out his murderous threats, He looked up, and there was Abigail. The two came together in a ravine, and when David and his men saw her, the entire army came to a screeching halt. Abigail got down off her donkey and bowed low to the ground in reverence. Then she stood to her feet and gave the longest speech by a woman ever recording in all of scripture.

"The guilt is mine, my lord, but please, let you servant speak to you directly. Listen to the words of your servant. My lord should pay no attention to this worthless fool Nabal, for he lives up to his name: his name means 'stupid', and stupidity is all he knows. I, your servant, didn't see my lord's young men whom you sent. Now, my lord, as surely as The LORD lives and as you yourself live — it is The LORD Who kept you from participating in bloodshed and avenging yourself by your own hand — may your enemies and those who intend to harm my lord be like Nabal. Let this gift your servant has brought to my lord be given to the young men who follow my lord. Please forgive your servant's offense, for The LORD is certain to make a lasting dynasty for my lord because he fights The LORD'S battles. Throughout your life may evil not be found in you. Someone is pursuing you and intends to take your life. My lord's life is tucked safely in place, where The LORD your God protects the living, but He is flinging away your enemies' lives like stones from a sling. When The LORD does for my lord all the good He promised you and appoints you ruler over Israel, there will not be remorse or a troubled conscience for my lord because of needless bloodshed or my lord's revenge. And when The LORD does good things for my lord, may you remember me your servant." **1 Samuel 25:24-31**

Wow! What incredibly crafted words of wisdom! Did you notice how Abigail took it upon herself to repent? Even though she had been ignorant of the day's prior events, she bowed and took responsibility for the sin. She humbled herself before the king and simply asked for his mercy. I love how she reminded David, that it was God that had anointed him as king, and this same God would take care of his enemies just as He had done many years earlier with the giant Goliath (did you catch the "sling" reference?). Abigail gave the perfect message to David, just when he needed it. Why? Because it was

inspired by The Holy Spirit, that's why. Why else would it be here for us to read in the scriptures? Abigail's plea (or prayer, if you will) of repentance saved her entire family from the wrath of the anointed king. When Abigail repented, David forgave. That, my friends, is called grace. Instead of a massacre, David and his men had a picnic! Only God can turn a disaster around like that. Which is exactly what He wants to do in each of our lives. We serve an awesome God!

Abigail's Redemption (Verses 32-42)

When Abigail returned home that evening, she didn't tell her husband what she had done. She let him have his drunken feast and waited till he sobered up to tell him how she had saved his miserable life the day before. When he heard the story, *The Bible* says that his heart died, and he became as a stone (**vs. 37**). More than likely, the wicked man's blood pressure went through the roof, and he had a stroke. Ten days later, he was dead, with no-one to mourn his passing. If a person lives a life that only serves themselves, then we shouldn't be surprised when there is no long line at the funeral home to honor their self-serving existence. Jesus tell us that in order for a grain of seed to produce a crop, it must die to itself (**John 12:24**). Those who have a lasting impact upon this world are those who come to realize that their lives aren't about them. Nabal, the fool, learned this lesson when it was far too late, and God struck him dead. It is appointed unto man once to die, and after this the judgment (**Hebrews 9:27**).

When David was told of Nabal's passing, he rejoiced and blessed God that he had waited on The LORD to avenge him, rather than take the matter into his own hands (**vs. 39**). He had made this very wise decision, thanks to Abigail and the picnic lunch she had served him and his men upon the rocky mountainside. David sent for her and asked her to be his wife. Another very wise move on his part, I might add. You see, David, who was from the tribe of Judah, was acting as Abigail's "kinsman redeemer." To fully understand this, you must read the book of Ruth, but to give a brief explanation, suffice to say that women were not allowed to own property in those days. When a woman became a widow, in order to keep the lands and properties of her husband, someone, who was a nearest male relative of the deceased, could marry the widow and inherit the property. Now certainly in Abigail's case, there were probably closer relatives of Nabal than David, although they were technically of the same clan. But when the prospective suitor has an army of six hundred men, then I would assume that most fellas wouldn't be too excited about standing on ceremony. So David had no real competition, when it came right down to it. David had inherited a beautiful new bride, as well as a fortune, all at the same time. Abigail had **responded** correctly to the message she had heard, she **repented** for the sins committed against God's anointed king, and she had found **redemption**. She was delivered from her loveless bondage to an evil man to become the bride of a king. No one in Hollywood ever wrote a better story! Abigail had certainly found grace, and that beyond measure!

Conclusion

For those of you who have heard me preach before, you know that I am always saying that you can find Christ in every Bible story. So I'm certain that you are waiting for the "rest of the story", as it were. So here it is:

There is a Great King, Who has been anointed by God and promised that He shall reign over all the earth. This King is both good and mighty. He laid down His very life to protect us from a certain death in the wilderness. He expects one thing, and one thing only, in return; for us to offer ourselves as His "living sacrifices" (**Romans 12:1**). God has sent a messenger to tell us of this King, Who is soon coming. This messenger is The Holy Spirit, and it is His responsibility to reveal to us that we must either accept this King, or reject Him. To accept Him means life, but to reject Him will certainly bring down God's wrath upon us. Only a fool (Nabal) would reject this great King, Who is coming to reign. But, for those of us who truly hear the message, like Abigail, we will **respond**, **repent**, and find **redemption**. Jesus is this Great King. He died on the cross to save you from God's judgment, that will surely come upon those who reject this His offer of salvation. He is not a King to be trifled with, for He is The Almighty God of the universe. But to Him, we are beautiful, and He longs to forgive us and take us to be His bride. You see, Abigail is so much more than just a beautiful young woman. She is a picture of The Church of Jesus Christ, The spotless bride of He who died to redeem her from the bondage of sin! Jesus, the Mighty King Who is coming soon to reign, is asking this question of you this morning; "Will you marry Me?" The wisest of us will **Respond** with a resounding... YES! We will **Repent** and find in Him our Kinsman **Redeemer**!

And ALL of God's people said... TRUTH!!!