

Guest Preacher - Rev. Kenneth M Ferguson

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Preacher: Rev. Kenneth M Ferguson

[0:00] I'd like to see a few words this morning from the chapter we've read. The second, 21st chapter in the first book of Kings, and reading at the beginning of the chapter.

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 father.

One or two thoughts on this incident between Ahab and Naboth.

Ever since man sinned in the Garden of Eden, the powers of darkness make themselves known in their opposition to the kingdom of God and the people of God.

[1:33] The kingdom of Satan is always against the kingdom of Christ. This can be seen on a personal level.

For example, the apostle Paul, he writes to the church in Ephesus, chapter 6, and verse 12 says, We wrestle not against flesh and blood.

He's talking about the opposition from people whom he met who were opposed to his message, to the gospel message he was preaching.

But he says, we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over the present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places.

He's talking about the work of Satan, the work of darkness, the powers of darkness, are set to try and destroy the things of God.

[2:48] On a national level, I should say, you see the animosity between the nation of Egypt against Israel when they were tyrannizing them and enslaved them for many years.

They were there down in Egypt for 430 years until the Lord took them forth again. In our own day, there are many attacks being made on the Christian religion.

We'll come to that maybe in a moment. But in this particular chapter, 1 Kings 21, we read of an attack by the power of evil in the person of King Ahab, who deals unjustly with a man called Naboth, concerning Naboth's property.

Firstly, Ahab's covetous demand. Secondly, Naboth, the Jezreelite, godly reply.

Naboth said in verse 3, the Lord forbid that I should give you the inheritance of my father.

[4:18] And thirdly, the price that Naboth paid for being so staunch on the side of the Lord. He was stoned today.

First of all then, Ahab's evil demand. This arose from his evil character.

His character reference doesn't make very good reading at all. See, for example, it is said of him that he sold himself to do evil.

He had surrendered himself to the principles of evil to do them. See, for example, in 1 Kings 16 at verse 30, it says something very telling there.

Ahab, the son of Omri, did evil in the sight of the Lord more than all who were before him. And as if it had been a light thing for him to walk in the sins of Jeroboam, the son of Nebat, he took his wife Jezebel, the daughter of Ethbaal, king of Sidonians, went and served Baal and worshipped him, erected an altar for Baal in the house of Baal, which he built in Samaria.

[5:46] And Ahab made an Asherah. He did more to provoke the Lord, the God of Israel, to anger than all the kings of Israel who went before him.

This is the caliber of the man of whom we know Reed. And he comes this particular day with a very covetous and self-gratifying request, yes, demand that he makes upon Naboth the Jezreelite. What is he asking for? Well, he asks that that man give him his vineyard. It is beside my palace, he says, in Samaria.

And I wanted for a vegetable garden. I'll be able to go in and out at my leisure to do that.

And he says, I wanted for myself. Isn't it strange? When you discover the area over which this man was king, somebody has written that it was an area of around 8,000 square miles.

[7:09] His kingdom extended to that particular area. From Dan in the north, to Jericho in the south, to the Mediterranean Sea in the west, the Jordan River on the east.

And this man wants this little vineyard of this man because it's beside his palace in Samaria.

And you see the way he dangles things in front of this man. I'll give you a better vineyard for it or I'll give you the value of it in money. He dangles these alternatives before him to make it look like a really good deal.

Ahab didn't care whether he was trampling over God's laws or not. Typical of many today who don't mind steamrolling or dismantling aspects of the Christian framework of our society.

in favor of false religions and anti-Christian philosophies. What should our response be to that kind of thing?

[8:42] Well, when the Apostle Jude was writing in his very short one chapter letter towards the end of the New Testament, he asks the Christians in his own day earnestly contend for the faith once delivered to the saints.

Fight for it. Stand up and be counted on behalf of what the Bible says, on behalf of the Christian faith. And then, of course, the Apostle Paul, writing to 2 Thessalonians, says, chapter 2, verse 15, So, brothers, stand firm and hold to the traditions that you were taught.

He's talking about the biblical ethic, the biblical teachings. And if the Christians don't stand for these things, who will? So, we see Ahab here.

Powerful as he was. Opinionated as he was. Influential as he was. As king. And he comes to this man, Naboth.

We don't know much about Naboth. Seemingly, he was highly thought of or well respected among the people in the city. Because when Jezebel sought to elevate him as a were before she had plans to stone him, the men of the city, they elevated him to a high position.

[10:19] It's as if he was a highly respected man. But what was Naboth's response to the king having come with his request?

And he said, the Lord forbid that I should give you the inheritance of my father. The focus of Ahab's mind is first and foremost primarily on what the Lord says.

And what the Lord wants. How many of us think like that? in the current climate?

What sort of benchmark do we use for the affairs of our day? Well, the benchmark is right before us here in the word of God.

The only rule to direct us how we may glorify and enjoy him. And that's what Naboth did. He brought the request of Ahab and set it against what the Lord was saying.

[11:30] I'm going to mention three texts that justify the stand that Naboth took on that particular day in that particular issue.

First of all, there's a reference which Naboth would have known. Leviticus 25 and verse 23. The land shall not be sold permanently for the land is mine says the Lord.

You are strangers and sojourners with me. You remember long before this in the days of Abraham the Lord spoke to Abraham with these words I give you and to your descendants the land in which you are a stranger as an everlasting possession that's Genesis 17 verse 8.

It is a grant from the Lord to the people but it's the Lord's land that he gives them with these particular statements attached to it.

It shall not be sold permanently for the land is mine you are strangers and sojourners with me. And the second text I want to highlight is the book of Numbers 36 verse 7 So the inheritance of the children of Israel shall not change hands from tribe to tribe for every one of the children of Israel shall keep the inheritance of the tribe of his father.

[13:22] Naboth knew that text also. He was afraid to break that commandment. And later on in the Old Testament in Ezekiel 46 the prince shall not take away of the people's inheritance by evicting them from their property.

He shall provide an inheritance for his sons from his own property so that none of my people may be scattered from his property.

The Lord underlines through the prophecy Ezekiel what he has already said earlier on and Naboth he knew all of these things and he was afraid to break what the Lord was saying and there is the king waiting for an answer and the answer comes the Lord forbid that I will give you what you're asking.

You know friends we have a wonderful gospel inheritance in our nation. I mean the Christian ethos of our nation goes our way back.

Our parliaments our laws the kind of emphasis on the Lord's Day down through the years but they're all under attack.

[15:05] They're all under attack. Ahab promised a better vineyard. Is there anything better than what the Lord has given?

Is there anything better than the word of God? Is there anything better than the prospects that God gives? to those who love him and serve him and continue believing in him?

What does the Lord Jesus say? Come unto me and I will give you rest. And what has he prepared? Rather than a vineyard in this sad world of ours.

However good it might be in the eyes of King Ahab it's nothing in comparison to the inheritance that the Lord has prepared for his people.

An inheritance incorruptible and undefiled and that fades not away that's reserved in heaven for you and you who are kept by the power of God through faith and to salvation.

[16:20] Nehab had his focus in the best place.

We are asked to have our focus always on the word of God. What does it say when things come up in our society? Bring them under the light of the word of God.

I was so thankful a few weeks ago that the bill that was before the Scottish Parliament didn't pass.

It sought end of life. Killing people at the end of life. It was so much against the word of God.

And I wrote you a number of the MSPs at the time. And the ones I had written to, they weren't supportive of the bill at all.

[17:28] But with every one of them I had made the point that this contravenes and contradicts the word of God. But none of them in their reply to me mentioned my reference to the word of God.

Very strangely. But they didn't vote for the bill. So the bill fell. But we as Christians, as a Christian community, have to stand firm.

Just like Ahab said, on the basis of what the word of God says. it says in Ephesians chapter 6, therefore take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all to stand.

when you think back to Puritan times in the history of this country, think of Bishops Latimer and Ridley, put to death in 1555, burned at the stake.

Think of the Scottish Covenanters, hundreds of them put to death. one of them, Donald Cargill, he was allowed to speak before the fire caught him.

[18:58] And one of the things he said in the midst of all of that was, he says, I have been most in the main things. He was focusing on the main things, and he was willing to die in support of the main things.

I remember in college one day at the history class, and Professor Collins, some of you remember the late Professor Collins, and he was talking about this kind of situation with Puritans and Covenanters and so on.

And somebody asked from the class, do you think anybody would be able to stand like these Covenanters stood and be burnt at the stake for their faith?

And his answer always intrigued me. He said, yes, they would if they had the same grace as these men had long ago.

It was something that the Lord enabled them to do. to stand to that extent in their own day. And we ask him to give us strength for our own day and to be witnesses in our day for the challenges that

come up against ourselves.

[20:40] Listen to what James says, the Apostle James. Blessed is the man who remains steadfast under trial.

For when he has stood the test, he will receive the crown of life which God has promised to those who love him.

And the other one I was going to quote was this, Revelation chapter 2. what the Lord says to the church of Smyrna, be faithful unto death and I will give you the crown of life.

Isn't this the crown that the Apostle Paul was looking for when he writes his last epistle, 2 Timothy chapter 4? henceforth he says, there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness which the righteous judge will give me at that day and not to me only but also to all them who love his appearing.

I've often thought of that last phrase in these words, who love his appearing. Who love his appearing I think first and foremost as he reveals himself to us in his word.

[22:10] We love the way he appears in his word as our lawgiver. also we love him as he appears in the giver of life and the sustainer of life and the giver of more grace for every situation into which he sees fit to send us.

And we love his appearing at his second coming when he will reveal himself in all of his glory and receive all of his people with him.

And he will say to him he will say to them from the throne of judgment come you blessed of my father inherit the kingdom prepared for you before the foundation of the world.

He has gone to prepare a place for us and these are the appearings as it were of Christ in the word and in prospect in prophecy.

He's coming in the fullness of time. Naboth suffered for what he said and what he did.

[23:34] He suffered for it. there's a sense in which the people of God suffer still.

I mean the people of God have trials and testings and afflictions that very often the world knows nothing about. They are inward trials and trials of the heart and of the mind and of the soul.

But the Lord knows them all and the Lord is able to give grace for every situation. when Naboth comes in some form to you asking for some time to be devoted to this particular aspect of worldliness or to yield to this particular sin or this or that or the other thing that cuts God out of things.

Don't listen to him. Ask the Lord to give you grace and strength to stand on what the word of God says. And you remember what it says.

Those who honor me, he says, I will honor. And those who despise me shall be lightly esteemed. May we be like Naboth who refused the king his whim.

[25:09] May we be like him who trusted in his God our Lord caused him to lose his life in this world. Like many before us have done, may we be willing also to stand, to do what God says, to do what he asks of us, to stand and be counted.

God forbid, he says, that I should give you the inheritance of my father. Don't give Satan one inch of your life.

Give your life to Jesus. Say to him, like the people who were following David long ago, thine we are, O David, and for you are we, the son of Jesse.

Let us pray. Help us, O Lord, to be thankful for your own word that you have left so graciously with us as a light that shines in a dark place.

Our minds and our hearts and lives are so dark in so many different ways. And we thank you that we can bring the light of God's word to the problems and difficulties and decisions of life.

[26:36] We pray that you would lighten our way as we walk through this world. Be our light. Be our strength. Be our company.

Give us to lean upon you because we have no strength of our own. Go before us now, Lord, and bless the congregation in the evening service and your servant who is to teach and forgive our sins in Jesus' name.

and for his sake. Amen. We'll conclude by singing from Psalm 37.

Psalm 37 and verses 1 to 5. This is the Scottish Psalter. For evil doers fret thou not thyself unquietly, nor do thou envy bear to those that work in equity.

Or even like unto the grass soon be gone down shall they like the green and tender hair they wither shall away. Said thou thy trust upon the Lord and be thou doing good so thou in the land shalt dwell and verily have food.

[27:52] Delight thyself in God he'll give thine heart's desire to thee. Thy way to God commit him trust it bring to pass shall he. This stands as verses 1 to 5 of Psalm 37 For evil doers fret thou not.

For evil doers fret thou not thyself quietly nor do thou men be fair to those that work in eclity for even!

I come to the grass to be cut down shall they and like the green and tender hair they with shall away set thy trust upon the Lord and be left to incur and so!

Thou which thou shalt dwell! and barely have food delight thyself in God to give heart to heart to thee thy way to God God come to God to God Thou may pass!

shall hear now may the grace of Jesus the the the of the rest upon with you now and more Amen of of of of any any any