

“The Nabal in Us”
1 Samuel 25:1-13; 35-38
(Preached at Trinity, February 11, 2018)

I'm supplying these notes for the benefit of busy pastors who may be engaged in bi-vocational work, feeling the pressure of preparing to preach twice on the Lord's Day while trying to balance full-time secular work as well as caring for their families. While the notes of another man are no substitute for personal study, I pray that these may aid in the process of preparing to preach.

Disclaimer: These are the actual notes I bring with me to the pulpit, which I follow loosely. They are not designed for publication. While I try to make every effort to give proper credit to my sources from the pulpit, adequate citations will sometimes be absent from my notes. If anyone feels their intellectual material has been used without adequate citation, please contact me and I'll make immediate correction giving credit.

1. As we've seen, 1 Samuel is matchless as literature with its intense action and captivating plot. The identity of the author is unknown, but he is unsurpassed in taking this historical record and displaying it before us as a story that keeps our attention.
1 Samuel moves quickly from one scene to the next.
 - A. In **Chapter 24** we witnessed the dramatic scene of Saul entering into a cave to relieve himself, but Providentially, it was the very cave where David and his men were hiding. David and his men could see Saul in the light of the entrance, but Saul could not see them hidden in the dark shadows of the cave's interior.
 - B. Stealthily, David moves forward and cut of the edge of Saul's robe, completely unknown to Saul. After exiting the cave, David reveals himself and displays the portion of Saul's robe. He had opportunity to kill Saul but, instead, spared his life.
2. Now, as we enter **Chapter 25** there is a complete change of scene. First of all, the author tells us of the death of Samuel and his burial. In this new scene we are also told that David went down to Paran in the wilderness of Sinai.
We are also introduced to a man by the name of Nabal. The author describes him in detail.
 - A. He was from Maon but did business in Carmel. He is described as "very rich" with three thousand sheep and a thousand goats. In an agrarian culture this was a sizeable fortune.
 - B. We are told he was married to a woman by the name of Abigail who is described as "intelligent and beautiful in appearance." Nabal married far above his own character.
 - C. Nabal is also described as "harsh and evil."
 - (1) His servant describes him in **Verse 17** - "he is such a worthless man that no one can speak to him."
 - (2) In **Verse 25** he is described in the words of his wife as a "worthless man." She adds, "For as his name is, so is he."
 - (3) Nabal means folly. The CSBO translates **Verse 25** - "His name is Nabal, and stupidity is all he knows."
3. It is easy for us to wag our head at the foolishness and sin we read about in Scripture.
 - A. We looked down upon David for his foolish behavior in **Chapter 21** – lies and deception that would ultimately result in the death of 85 priests and the destruction of a city.
How easy it is for us to dismiss our own deceptions and faithless scheming, trusting more in our plans than upon God.
 - B. We look upon Saul and his murderous intent upon David with disdain.
How easy it is for us to dismiss our own envies and jealousies that cause us look upon others as objects that hinder our progress.

4. So now we come to Nabal and we conclude in our hearts, "What a wretch of a man." Surely David would have been justified in ridding the earth of his existence. Wait a minute! Are we once again condemning the actions of another, with our heads held high in self-righteousness?
5. Perhaps we need to look at ourselves more carefully. I title tonight's sermon, "Nabal in Us." Is there some Nabal in you? It is far more than you might think.
6. Let me take a few moments to introduce the topic.
 - A. Nabal was rich beyond most in his generation. Again, he was described as "very rich." He glories in his wealth right up to the end – **Verses 36-38**
 - B. David and his men were in need. **Verse 1** tells us that they were in the wilderness of Paran. This is the region where Israel wandered for 40 years. It was a barren land. David sends ten of his young man to greet Nabal. They introduce themselves and tell Nabal how they had treated his laborers well and had helped protect his flock. They make a basic request for provisions:
1 Samuel 25:8 NAU - "Please give whatever you find at hand to your servants and to your son David."
 After all, Nabal would have less sheep had David and his men not protected them.
7. Before considering Nabal we must take note of David.
 - A. Once again, David is acting impulsively according to his own reason, taking matters into his own hand rather than trusting God. David was about to execute revenge by executing Nabal and all his household. God graciously restrains him.
1 Samuel 25:13 NAU - "David said to his men, "Each of you gird on his sword." So each man girded on his sword. And David also girded on his sword, and about four hundred men went up behind David while two hundred stayed with the baggage."
1 Samuel 25:22 NAU - "May God do so to the enemies of David, and more also, if by morning I leave *as much as* one male of any who belong to him."
 - B. It was only by the gracious intervention of God that David was held back from this avenging act.
1 Samuel 25:26 NAU - "the LORD has restrained you from shedding blood, and from avenging yourself by your own hand"
 God's command is:
Deuteronomy 32:35-36 NAU - "Vengeance is Mine, and retribution, In due time their foot will slip; For the day of their calamity is near, And the impending things are hastening upon them.' ³⁶ "For the LORD will vindicate His people,"
Romans 12:19 NAS - "Never take your own revenge, beloved, but leave room for the wrath of God, for it is written, "Vengeance is Mine, I will repay," says the Lord."

8. Now, there is so much the text doesn't tell us.
- Some have suggested that David is actually asking Nabal to enter into covenant with him—that is, to look to David as God's anointed, Israel's future king. The anointing of David was known far and wide. Nabal's wife surely knew:
1 Samuel 25:30 NAU - "And when the LORD does for my lord according to all the good that He has spoken concerning you, and appoints you ruler over Israel"
 It's possible, especially considering the response of Nabal, "Who is David?" He knew very well who David was even referring to him as the son of Jesse (**V.10**). This might also explain David's fury. Nabal was rejecting David's anointing. But, this reads a lot into the text. More likely, this was simply a request for provision.
 - Was David asking for provision for his entire 600-man army? This isn't likely. David only sent ten men. It doesn't seem likely they were expected to carry back provision for a 600-man army.
 Abigail's provision is more likely the amount David expected.
1 Samuel 25:18 NAU - "Then Abigail hurried and took two hundred loaves of bread and two jugs of wine and five sheep already prepared and five measures of roasted grain and a hundred clusters of raisins and two hundred cakes of figs, and loaded *them* on donkeys."
 - We shouldn't dismiss, however, the ongoing pressure upon David to provide for his 600 strong army while existing in the wilderness.
9. David's request was a simple request of provision from a wealthy man. Provision that should have been expected since David had demonstrated graciousness to Nabal. We should also note that David wasn't making this request from a foreigner. The text makes a point of telling us that Nabal was a Calebite of the Tribe of Judah, David's own tribe.
10. Nabal's response was, I don't know you. You could be runaway servants as far as I know. Why should I give my hard-earned supplies to you?
- A. But we can't miss Nabal's miserly heart.
1 Samuel 25:10-11 NAU - "But Nabal answered David's servants and said, "Who is David? And who is the son of Jesse? There are many servants today who are each breaking away from his master. ¹¹ "Shall I then take my bread and my water and my meat that I have slaughtered for my shearers, and give it to men whose origin I do not know?"
- B. When Abigail came to her husband to share with him about David we find him in a drunken feast. The text tells us, **V36** – "like the feast of a king."
 We are told that the news smote him in the heart. Most likely, a heart attack from which he died ten days later.
- (1) What was it that stirred him to such a degree that it brought about a heart attack? It isn't likely he was smitten by the news of David's army, especially since they had turned back. Knowing Nabal, it was more likely hearing of how much Abigail had given to David.

- (2) David's request had been small – **V.8** – “Please give whatever you find at hand to your servants and to your son David.”

Nabal furiously denied this simple request. How did he respond when he heard of Abigail's generosity with his possessions?

1 Samuel 25:18 NAU - "Then Abigail hurried and took two hundred loaves of bread and two jugs of wine and five sheep already prepared and five measures of roasted grain and a hundred clusters of raisins and two hundred cakes of figs, and loaded *them* on donkeys."

11. Our heart speaks within us, “That wretched Nabal! What a selfish miser.”
Not so fast! The question that should always be upon our hearts is how generous are we with our possessions? What is the extent to which we share with others? And what is the extent to which we must have regard for the poor? This is very convicting for us who are Americans because we have so much. We enjoy the highest standard of living of any people in the history of the world. Do we have the heart of Nabal?
12. The Bible makes some pretty convicting statements:
Proverbs 14:21 NAS - "He who despises his neighbor sins, But happy is he who is gracious to the poor."
Proverbs 21:13 NAS - "He who shuts his ear to the cry of the poor Will also cry himself and not be answered."
Proverbs 28:27 NAS - "He who gives to the poor will never want, But he who shuts his eyes will have many curses."
On the positive side:
Psalms 37:26 NAU - "All day long he is gracious and lends, And his descendants are a blessing."
Proverbs 19:17 NAU - "One who is gracious to a poor man lends to the LORD, And He will repay him for his good deed."
13. Our great wealth as Americans should humble us.
- In the world 800,000,000 people live in absolute poverty.
 - The median income in the poorest third world nation will earn about \$300 this year. The median income in the U.S. at the end of 2016 was \$59,039
14. What does the Bible say regarding our wealth and our duty to the poor?
- I. The proper attitude regarding wealth
- A. The worldly man loves money - It has captivated his affections
1. Nabal was intoxicated by his wealth and the life of the wealthy.
1 Samuel 25:36 NAU - "Then Abigail came to Nabal, and behold, he was holding a feast in his house, like the feast of a king."
 2. Jesus taught that our heart will always be drawn to the thing we see as having the greatest value.
Matthew 6:20-21 NAU - "But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys, and where thieves do not break in or steal; ²¹ for where your treasure is, there your heart will be also."
 3. The worldly man is controlled by his possessions
His possessions lead him further and further from God

4. Jesus said that it is a great rarity for a lover of money to enter into heaven – indeed, He declared it to be impossible
Matthew 19:23-24 NAU - " And Jesus said to His disciples, "Truly I say to you, it is hard for a rich man to enter the kingdom of heaven.
²⁴ "Again I say to you, it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God."
 5. In the end a lust for material possessions will cause much sorrow
1 Timothy 6:10 NAU - "For the love of money is a root of all sorts of evil, and some by longing for it have wandered away from the faith and pierced themselves with many griefs."
 In all probability Nabal hearing of Abigail’s generosity with his possessions precipitated his heart attack. His wealth had deceived him. He left this world emptyhanded.
 6. Many wealthy men have testified to the deceitfulness of riches
 - a. John D. Rockefeller – “I have made many millions, but they have brought me no happiness. The poorest man I know is the man who has nothing but money”
 - b. Henry Ford – “I was happier doing mechanic’s work”
 - c. Elvis Presley died a wealthy but miserable man
 - d. Steve Jobs – “Being the richest man in the cemetery doesn't matter to me.”
- B. The Christian must never be motivated by wealth – A Christianity Check-list
1. Is your satisfaction in Christ? Have you found Him sufficient?
 The man who has found Christ has found everything
 2. How do you see this present world?
1 John 2:15 NAU - "Do not love the world, nor the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him."
 - a. The things on earth must only be seen in a utilitarian sense. How can my resources be properly used? This doesn’t mean we can’t enjoy the fruit of our labors. It means it must not be the driving force in our lives.
 - b. The things on earth must be seen as only temporary
 3. Do you find your contentment apart from this world?
 You may not have many possessions, your income may be small, you may not have a large home or new car.
 Yet you are content.
- C. The Christian exercises great caution with regard to his money
1. The Christian recognizes the dangers inherent with both poverty and riches.
Proverbs 30:8-9 NAU - "Give me neither poverty nor riches; Feed me with the food that is my portion, ⁹ That I not be full and deny *You* and say, "Who is the LORD?" Or that I not be in want and steal, And profane the name of my God."
 2. We understand the dangers that can accompany the acquisition of wealth
 - a. Wealth has the potential of turning us from God
 - b. Wealth can rob us of time that could be used to benefit our soul.
 - a. Time spent earning more and more
 - b. Time spent thinking of better ways to hoard it

- c. Time spent thinking on how we can spend it
 - c. Wealth can blind us to our spiritual poverty
 - d. Wealth can make us proud – it can make us seek the recognition of men - the new car, the large house, the stylish clothes, food in the finest restaurants
 - e. You can begin to convince yourself that it all belongs to you, that you deserve it. Listen again to Nabal
1 Samuel 25:11 NAU - "Shall I then take my bread and my water and my meat"
 - 3 The Godly man understands that he is but a steward taking care of that which belongs to another. Only when we understand this will we begin to see our wealth from a proper prospective.
 Only then will we learn to discipline ourselves to spend less than we make
 - D. The blessings of stewardship
 - 1. When we understand we are only watching over God's wealth we are then free to give ourselves to the wise oversight of His wealth
 - 2. We can learn to give abundantly
 - 3. We begin to evaluate how our purchases might advance the kingdom of God
 - 4. We learn to distinguish between wants and needs. Few stop to consider the difference.
 Our highest joy and source of greatest reward should be contributing to the work of the kingdom.
 - 5. Then we can give serious consideration towards the poor
- II. Stewardship demands wisdom – Before we complete our consideration of Nabal what are some Biblical principles as we consider the poor?
 - A. We must never forget the high virtue of love – Nabal only thought of himself and his possessions.
1 Samuel 25:11 NAU - "Shall I then take my bread and my water and my meat that I have slaughtered for my shearers, and give it to men whose origin I do not know?"
 - 1. This is the high duty of all men
Luke 10:27 NAU - "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your strength, and with all your mind; and your neighbor as yourself."
 - 2. Jesus taught this principle of loving our neighbor
 The story of the Samaritan was instructive
Luke 10:36-37 NAU - "Which of these three do you think proved to be a neighbor to the man who fell into the robbers' hands?" ³⁷ And he said, "The one who showed mercy toward him." Then Jesus said to him, "Go and do the same."

- B. There is the work principle – David and his men had not been idle. They had served as protectors of Nabal’s shepherds and his flocks
1. The law followed a work principle
The law gave strict orders regarding how the harvest was to be gathered
Leviticus 19:9-10 NAS - "Now when you reap the harvest of your land, you shall not reap to the very corners of your field, neither shall you gather the gleanings of your harvest. Nor shall you glean your vineyard, nor shall you gather the fallen fruit of your vineyard; you shall leave them for the needy and for the stranger. I am the LORD your God."
 2. This allowed the poor to come and glean from the field
We can see this in practice in the Book of Ruth
 3. We find here the work mandate. God has created us to work and earn our bread. Charity must not encourage idleness.
2 Thessalonians 3:10 NAU - "For even when we were with you, we used to give you this order: if anyone is not willing to work, then he is not to eat, either."
- C. We must follow the principle of alms giving. This is a principle of mercy and generosity. Nabal was void of mercy and generosity.
1. The Jews systematically gave alms for the poor – pleasing in the sight of God.
Acts 10:1-4 KJV - "There was a certain man in Caesarea called Cornelius, a centurion of the band called the Italian *band*, ² A devout *man*, and one that feared God with all his house, which gave much alms to the people, and prayed to God alway. ³ He saw in a vision evidently about the ninth hour of the day an angel of God coming in to him, and saying unto him, Cornelius. ⁴ And when he looked on him, he was afraid, and said, What is it, Lord? And he said unto him, Thy prayers and thine alms are come up for a memorial before God."
 2. This was the principle Paul was using when collecting for the poor in Jerusalem
2 Corinthians 9:6-9 NAS - "Now this I say, he who sows sparingly shall also reap sparingly; and he who sows bountifully shall also reap bountifully. ⁷ Let each one *do* just as he has purposed in his heart; not grudgingly or under compulsion; for God loves a cheerful giver. ⁸ And God is able to make all grace abound to you, that always having all sufficiency in everything, you may have an abundance for every good deed; ⁹ as it is written, "He scattered abroad, he gave to the poor, His righteousness abides forever."
 3. This means there will be times when we simply give.
- D. We must follow the principle of priority
1. This demands great wisdom and we have to be careful.
 - a. We have a priority to care for our own families
1 Timothy 5:8 NAU - "But if anyone does not provide for his own, and especially for those of his household, he has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever."

- b. We have a priority to care for our brothers and sisters in Christ
Galatians 6:10 NAU - "So then, while we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, and especially to those who are of the household of the faith."
2. David was Nabal's kinsman
 Nabal was a Calebite of the Tribe of Judah, David's own tribe.
 3. We have a priority to help our brothers and sisters in Christ. We must be able to recognize who they are. Not all who call themselves Christian are Christians. I've never had a homeless person that didn't claim to be a Christian.
 4. Then we must give help to those outside the faith—but we must give first priority to those who are truly poor.
 U.S. poverty is unique.
 92% of Americans own a cellphone
 68% have a smartphone – 86 % of ages between 18-29
 87% have internet. Of the 13% that did not use internet only 19% cited cost as a factor.
 5. These priorities must never be an excuse to close our eyes to the poor.

Conclusion:

1. One of the marks of our righteousness is our generosity.
Psalm 112:6-9 NAU - "The righteous will be remembered forever. ⁷ He will not fear evil tidings; His heart is steadfast, trusting in the LORD. ⁸ His heart is upheld, he will not fear, Until he looks *with satisfaction* on his adversaries. ⁹ He has given freely to the poor, His righteousness endures forever; His horn will be exalted in honor."
2. That which marked Nabal was his miserly heart. He is described as "very rich" but also described as "harsh and evil in his dealings," a man known by all to be a "worthless man." He demonstrated a faithless heart.
 Did David have Nabal in mind when he wrote **Psalm 14**
Psalm 14:1 NAU - "The fool has said in his heart, "There is no God." They are corrupt, they have committed abominable deeds"
 The Hebrew literally reads, "Nabal has said in his heart . . ."
3. What a terrible description – outwardly he possessed great wealth. Inwardly he was worthless.
 We must strive to keep the Nabal out of our own hearts.