

David | The Once and Future King

Abigail

First Samuel 25

9.19.21

(1Samuel 25) Then Samuel died; and all Israel gathered together and mourned for him, and buried him at his house in Ramah. And David arose and went down to the wilderness of Paran.

² Now there was a man in Maon whose business was in Carmel; and the man was very rich, and he had three thousand sheep and a thousand goats. And it came about while he was shearing his sheep in Carmel ³ (now the man's name was Nabal, and his wife's name was Abigail. And the woman was intelligent and beautiful in appearance, but the man was harsh and evil in his dealings, and he was a Calebite), ⁴ that David heard in the wilderness that Nabal was shearing his sheep. ⁵ So David sent ten young men; and David said to the young men, "Go up to Carmel, visit Nabal and greet him in my name; ⁶ and thus you shall say, 'Have a long life, peace be to you, and peace be to your house, and peace be to all that you have. ⁷ 'Now I have heard that you have shearers; now your shepherds have been with us and we have not insulted them, nor have they missed anything all the days they were in Carmel. ⁸ 'Ask your young men and they will tell you. Therefore let my young men find favor in your eyes, for we have come on a festive day. Please give whatever you find at hand to your servants and to your son David.'"

⁹ When David's young men came, they spoke to Nabal according to all these words in David's name; then they waited. ¹⁰ 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?" ¹² So David's young men retraced their way and went back; and they came and told him according to all these words. ¹³ 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.

¹⁴ But one of the young men told Abigail, Nabal's wife, saying, "Behold, David sent messengers from the wilderness to greet our master, and he scorned them. ¹⁵ "Yet the men were very good to us, and we were not insulted, nor did we miss anything as long as we went about with them, while we were in the fields. ¹⁶ "They were a wall to us both by night and by day, all the time we were with them tending the sheep. ¹⁷ "Now therefore, know and consider what you should do, for evil is plotted against our master and against all his household; and he is such a worthless man that no one can speak to him." ¹⁸ 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. ¹⁹ She said to her young men, "Go on before me; behold, I am coming after you." But she did not tell her husband Nabal. ²⁰ It came about as she was riding on her donkey and coming down by the hidden part of the mountain, that behold, David and his men were coming down toward her; so she met them. ²¹ Now David had said, "Surely in vain I have guarded all that this man has in the wilderness, so that nothing was missed of all that belonged to him; and he has returned me evil for good. ²² "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."

²³ When Abigail saw David, she hurried and dismounted from her donkey, and fell on her face before David and bowed herself to the ground. ²⁴ She fell at his feet and said, "On me alone, my lord, be the blame. And please let your maidservant speak to you, and listen to the words of your maidservant. ²⁵ "Please do not let my lord pay attention to this worthless man, Nabal, for as his name is, so is he. Nabal is his name and folly is with him; but I your maidservant did not see the young men of my lord whom you sent.

²⁶ "Now therefore, my lord, as the LORD lives, and as your soul lives, since the LORD has restrained you from shedding blood, and from avenging yourself by your own hand, now then let your enemies and those who seek evil against my lord, be as Nabal. ²⁷ "Now let this gift which your maidservant has brought to my lord be given to the young men who accompany my lord. ²⁸ "Please forgive the transgression of your maidservant; for the LORD will certainly make for my lord an enduring house, because my lord is fighting the battles of the LORD, and evil will not be found in you all your days. ²⁹ "Should anyone rise up to pursue you and to seek your life, then the life of my lord shall be bound in the bundle of the living with the LORD your God; but the lives of your enemies He will sling out as from the hollow of a sling. ³⁰ "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, ³¹ this will not cause grief or a troubled heart to my lord, both by having shed blood without cause and by my lord having avenged himself. When the LORD deals well with my lord, then remember your maidservant."

³² Then David said to Abigail, "Blessed be the LORD God of Israel, who sent you this day to meet me, ³³ and blessed be your discernment, and blessed be you, who have kept me this day from bloodshed and from avenging myself by my own hand. ³⁴ "Nevertheless, as the LORD God of Israel lives, who has restrained me from harming you, unless you had come quickly to meet me, surely there would not have been left to Nabal until the morning light as much as one male."

³⁵ So David received from her hand what she had brought him and said to her, "Go up to your house in peace. See, I have listened to you and granted your request."

³⁶ Then Abigail came to Nabal, and behold, he was holding a feast in his house, like the feast of a king. And Nabal's heart was merry within him, for he was very drunk; so she did not tell him anything at all until the morning light. ³⁷ But in the morning, when the wine had gone out of Nabal, his wife told him these things, and his heart died within him so that he became as a stone. ³⁸ About ten days later, the LORD struck Nabal and he died.

³⁹ When David heard that Nabal was dead, he said, "Blessed be the LORD, who has pleaded the cause of my reproach from the hand of Nabal and has kept back His servant from evil. The LORD has also returned the evildoing of Nabal on his own head." Then David sent a proposal to Abigail, to take her as his wife. ⁴⁰ When the servants of David came to Abigail at Carmel, they spoke to her, saying, "David has sent us to you to take you as his wife." ⁴¹ She arose and bowed with her face to the ground and said, "Behold, your maidservant is a maid to wash the feet of my lord's servants." ⁴² Then Abigail quickly arose, and rode on a donkey, with her five maidens who attended her; and she followed the messengers of David and became his wife.

⁴³ David had also taken Ahinoam of Jezreel, and they both became his wives.

⁴⁴ Now Saul had given Michal his daughter, David's wife, to Palti the son of Laish, who was from Gallim.

We're looking at the life of King David (1000BC). He was a shepherd and the youngest son of eight sons and that's why he was a shepherd – the job no one else wanted. But it was that very background that God would use as a training ground to make David into a humble king, tender toward God's sheep and yet brave to protect God's people from threats.

The current king, Saul is trying to kill David so David has fled into the desert and (22.2) all the indebted and discontent are coming to hide out with him... Now he has some 600 men with him. AND David leads them and harnesses their energies for good. They've become a refuge for shepherds and travelers in the desert because the desert can be a dangerous place.

Today, in this long passage that begins with bad news (the death of the title character, Samuel) and ends in a wedding, we find David taking steps toward the throne. God continues to shape David – this time less by truth (since the messenger of the truth has died) and more by beauty and goodness.

Truth, Beauty and Goodness are the three "transcendentals" of philosophy/theology. And in a sense Truth, Beauty and Goodness come to David's rescue today in the form of a woman named Abigail.

David, this time, is rescued NOT so much from an external enemy like Saul or Goliath but from an internal enemy – his own pride and his tendency toward irrational, emotional outbursts that

could devastate others and himself. Let's see this amazing story of a man rescued by beauty, a story of:

- 1) Two Ugly, Emotional Men**
- 2) One Beautiful, Wise Woman**
- 3) Beauty, Wisdom and Grace in Our Modern Lives**

It's a little odd that Samuel's death gets what looks like a passing mention – Samuel dies, the whole nation mourns, buries him at home and on we go. Maybe though, *this whole chapter* is a commentary on what happens when the word of God is taken away from the church. David no longer has God's messenger and he immediately gets into trouble; he needs guidance and restraint but Samuel is gone.

There was a very wealthy man, named Nabal and he had a wife named Abigail. She was wise and beautiful but he was harsh and evil even though he came from a long line of faithful believers.

Two words on this name: **1)** Imagine you meet a man who has no manners, crass, inappropriate and impolite and then you learn that his name is Rud-y... Get it? If he was a great guy, you wouldn't think twice about his name but since he's so very, very RUDE ...his name is funny. Nabal means brutish or morally perverse (fool) and that's what he is. Everyone recognizes this about the man...and later his wife actually states the obvious "Nabal is Nabal" (25).

2) David's flight is parallel to the story of Jacob (Gen 27-33). In the midst of his journey, Jacob met a man who is a rude, trickster who takes advantage of Jacob. That man's name is Laban and Laban is Nabal spelled backward in English and in Hebrew. It's like the writer wants us to see the parallel because there are patterns in God's dealings with His people.

David's 600 men have helped the incredibly wealthy Nabal. They provided a "wall" for Nabal's livestock so the rustlers couldn't get to them. And now David needs a little help from Nabal *and the rich man ought to be especially hospitable at this time of the year* because it's wool season and there are parties and galas to celebrate the end of the shearing. And David very respectfully asks, "Hey... I helped you ...I probably saved dozens of your sheep/goats from being stolen... so can we join the festivities?"

And Nabal lives up to his name and asks with a sneer, "David? Who's David? What is he some rogue, slave running from his master like so many of these young people today (what's wrong with the young people today?!)" Nabal's like Scrooge, "Are there no prisons? Are there no work houses?"

And then Nabal the Rude manages to stuff eight first-person, singular pronouns into one sentence: (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?" (*Aye-aye-aye-aye!*) Nabal's life-focus is pretty clear!

When David gets word of this rude, insult and refusal to help a good neighbor... the young king blows a gasket! And he knows what MUST be done – he takes 2/3 of his men with swords to go destroy the fool named Fool!

Nabal's foolishness brings out David's foolishness. Now we have two hotheads paying no attention to common sense, being ruled by their emotions with no wisdom or insight... and both of them are going to suffer great losses and *it's just a big ugly testosterone storm and people will die for nothing!*

And this introduces Abigail, Nabal's wife. *It's not difficult to imagine the dynamics of their marriage.* He's a jerk. He's a rude, self-centered, hotheaded, tough-guy and she picks up the pieces and tries to mitigate the damage. *She's used to picking up the pieces of relationships damaged or destroyed by her perpetually abrasive husband.* It was likely an arranged marriage and she was likely a young bride but she's learned to run interference for this rich man who's universally recognized as always living up to his name.

And ...as usual...folly begets folly. Rudeness leads to rage. Insults lead to violence and now David (without Samuel there to guide and restrain him) – David becomes irrational, ruled by emotion and driven by mindless RAGE.

Rage is the sin of our day. We live in a time where there's no room for mercy – only justice, only revenge, only retribution and anger, castigation and cancelation. AND since the pandemic...it's gotten worse. Here's a short paragraph from this month in *The Atlantic*: "Less than six months into 2021, airlines had reported more unruly passengers to the FAA than they had in any full year since it began collecting data, in 1995. A Southwest flight attendant lost two teeth after a passenger punched her in the face. A Delta flight had to be diverted after a passenger threatened to take the plane down. Southwest and American Airlines have delayed bringing back alcohol sales, because of the added danger of getting people drunk; United is offering only lower-alcohol options such as beer and wine, and only on long flights." (By Amanda Mull, August 3, 2021)

Suffice it to say: in our day people are irrationally angry.

But between these two ugly, ridiculous men...comes a woman, beautiful inside and out...*a picture of someone who knows how to make the best of a bad situation.* Ugliness is confronted by beauty.

She missed the initial request that Nabal answered with insults and disregard and now it's really serious so she hurries (v.18 and Luke 16.6) with deft efficiency she manages the employees and puts together a tremendous feast and she sends them on ahead (she wants to lead with gifts!)

and she comes up behind and she pleads with David (like David pleaded with 24.8 Saul last week).

She uses logic with David, "Look... this is ON ME (first words she says in v. 24 – on me alone). My husband lives up to his name...I'm not disrespecting him – I'm just stating what anyone who knows him would tell you (v. 25): he's a worthless man" (lit. "a son of Belial" -- NT writers use that word as a name of the devil - 2 Cor 6.15)

"And I know you want to kill him and all his employees but please forgive ME (She takes the blame again!) But I know about you...you're the anointed king we need...and you don't wanna be one of those kings with a lot of bloodshed and baggage...do you? Have empathy with your future-self" (someone said that self-control is actually empathy with your future-self!)

And like a light switch, David seems to see the glaring contrast of HIS own irrational, runaway emotions and the stupidity of his rage. And David goes from seeing red...to seeing beauty. She's outwardly beautiful but it's her wisdom and discretion and her beautiful mind he finds arresting. Beauty and the Beast – she talked him of the ledge just as effectively as Samuel could've done it.

And David recognizes that she is not simply a good talker... she's a messenger from God (like Samuel had been): (v. 32) : *"Then David said to Abigail, 'Blessed be the LORD God of Israel, who sent you this day to meet me, and blessed be your discernment, and blessed be you, who have kept me this day from bloodshed and from avenging myself by my own hand.'"*

Abigail is a picture of grace. "She takes the blame/She covers the shame/Removes the stain/It could be her name/Because Grace makes beauty/Out of ugly things" (U2 – "Grace" 2000)

It's the pattern that we saw last week and that ultimately comes to fulfillment in Jesus Christ. He is the incarnation of Beauty to eyes that can see Him as He is. Second Corinthians CH 4: "For God, who said, 'Light shall shine out of darkness,' is the One who has shone in our hearts to give the Light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ." (6)

Jesus Christ comes to us in our rage *and He absorbs OUR unjust and twisted anger at God*. We're not justified in our anger against God (we're angry, rude fools like Nabal) but Jesus Christ still accepts our anger when He hangs on the Tree and is showered with mockery, insults and spit.

And more important – Jesus takes God's anger toward us – which IS just! We've all broken God's good and beautiful commands and we bring JUSTICE upon ourselves and yet, Jesus comes to us with arms full of gifts. He's the true Abigail which means "my Father is joy" – Jesus is the JOY of the Father and the overflow of God's beauty - "He is the radiance of the Father's glory and the exact representation of His nature" (Heb 1.3)

Jesus Christ is mediator that Abigail could never be... not between two hot heads but between a rational, infinitely wise and holy God and WE who are hotheads and fools and Nabals and Labans and Davids and Jacobs. We're rash boneheads so much of the time... IN BEAUTY HE COMES and takes the blame.

And this means that believers in Jesus Christ will, when we're really believing (and often we're unbelieving believers) but when we are believing we'll have an eye on Truth, Beauty and Goodness.

It's why over the 2000 years since Beauty walked among us; it's why, in places where there was a Christian consensus, that art became so important. Christians recognized and cultivated an appreciation for beauty and art that communicated that beauty. Christians saw that beauty is not simply in the eye of the beholder but there really is an objective, transcendent standard of beauty.

When we're seeing life through the lens of the Gospel, we see beauty in places we may not expect to see it. When we do see it (like a POP of purple in field!) we feel like we have to stop and trace that beauty back to its Source.

AND this is also why Christian men... listen to their wives. I know the Scripture teaches that men have primary responsibility for the family and we're called to shoulder that responsibility as God equips us to do – BUT – we have to see that just as often as women can be irrational and driven by emotion, MEN are just as prone.

And the wise husband will repent of his boorish, abrasive, stupidity long enough to see the world through his wife's eyes. That was the difference here between David and Nabal – David knew something of beauty and when SHE was standing (like God's messenger!) right in front of him – he recognized her. Your wife, her wisdom, her beauty MAY be the messenger you need to talk you off the ledge (it's happened to me a few times...last week).

I dunno... I think there's a lot of work the church needs to do in recovering a true sense and the true nature of masculinity and femininity but let's be careful about saying that one of the genders has the market cornered on beauty or on rationality. That's not how marriage was meant to work... unless you're a boorish fool.

Lastly, I'd like to address anyone listening today who might NOT know the grace and beauty of Jesus Christ. Grace may be calling you today. She comes laden with gifts for you and she's calling you to put down your weapons and let go of your objections AND your guilt and regret, to come to Beauty Incarnate, Jesus Christ the Source/Essence of Truth, Beauty and Goodness.

He is able to turn your mourning into joy and your ashes into beauty. Come talk to me after the service.