

The Watford Word

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What's on

Sunday 14 May - service, 10:30AM. *Jesus and women 1. Stefan speaking.*

Sunday 21 May - service, 10:30AM. *Jesus and women 2.*

Sunday 28 May - 10:30AM. *Jesus and women 3*
The men's and women's discussion groups in May will focus on 1 Corinthians 11:1-16 and 14:26-40.

Sunday 25 June - 10:30AM. *Dr Douglas Jacoby speaking.*

Sunday 02 July - *Wellington Country park outdoor service with the Thames Valley churches of Christ.*

A king, an intelligent and beautiful woman and - a fool!

What will we learn as we continue our series, "Men and women in Christ: A Divine Harmony"? On coronation weekend we look at a story involving a king yet to be crowned.

Context

We are located in Scripture in 1 Samuel chapter 25, in time at around the 11th century BC, and in location at the desert of Paran (the southern part of the territory of the tribe of Judah).

Saul is clinging on to his kingship - "Samuel said to [Saul], "The LORD has torn the kingdom of Israel from you today and has given it to one of your neighbours—to one better than you." (1 Sam 15:27-28) David is waiting in the wings. He has already been anointed king, but not yet appointed, "So Samuel took the horn of oil and anointed [David] in the presence of his brothers." (1 Sam 16:13).

David had been Saul's favourite music therapist, "Whenever the spirit from God came on Saul, David would take up his lyre and play. Then relief would come to Saul; he would feel better, and the evil spirit would leave him." (1 Samuel 16:23) However, they had a falling out, and now they are playing a game of cat and mouse in the wilderness, "Day after day Saul searched for him, but God did not give David into his hands." (1 Samuel 23:14) It is in this context that we find David and his encounter with Abigail. Let's meet our main characters.

Nabal

He is a Calebite - Josh. 14:13; 15:13. "from the tribe of Judah, Caleb son of Jephunneh;" (Num 13:6) which means he is from tribe of Judah, just like David's father Jesse and David himself. Jesus is of the same tribe (see the genealogies in Matthew 1 and Luke 3). Nabal was very wealthy. He owned 1000 goats, and 3000 sheep. His character was less than attractive. He is described as surly and mean, a 'wicked man', someone who will not listen, a 'fool', drunk, and vainglorious (acting 'like a king', v36). His behaviour is the very opposite of God in Psalm 23. Instead of laying on a banquet for others, he lays one of for himself. Finally, he is inhospitable in a culture where hospitality was effectively something that could be demanded.

David

As mentioned above, he is the son of Jesse, and from the same tribe as Nabal. If he and David's father were both wealthy sheep owners it would mean David understood Nabal's world and Nabal should understand David, and respect him.

David came from a prominent family, and it is entirely possible that his father and Nabal knew one another.

David has 600 men. A sizeable and competent fighting force (see 1 Samuel 23. As a former shepherd he would understand what it would be like to be vulnerable to raiders and wild animals. Did this influence his decision to protect Nabal's shepherds?

It could be argued he had the right to kill Nabal. Not only was Nabal defying cultural convention (causing David's men great humiliation in an honour and shame society), but also God's commands regarding hospitality. David is a king - if not appointed, at least anointed. Nabal is defying the king anointed by God.

David takes Abigail as his wife. From our perspective that may seem strange - is polygamy permitted? However, she asked David to 'remember' her, and he does. With Nabal dead, she was vulnerable to destitution. A daughter might inherit from her father, but a wife would not. We hear nothing of Abigail's parents, nor of any children, so we must assume her parents are dead and she had no offspring. She is safe in David's household. Marrying her is probably the kindest possible thing he could do for her.

Abigail

Abigail is beautiful - v3. One of only a few women described this way: Sarai (Genesis 12:11); Rebekah (Genesis 26:7 NIV11); Rachel (Genesis 29:17 NIV11); Bathsheba (2 Samuel 11:2 NIV11); Tamar, (2 Samuel 13:1 NIV11); Abishag, a Shunammite, (1 Kings 1:3-4 NIV11) ; Esther, (Esther 2:7 NIV11), and, most interestingly, the bride of Christ - the church, (Revelation 21:2 NIV11)

Abigail is intelligent - v3. She acted wisely in sending food ahead of her. Hungry men seeing and smelling the food would have an impact in

reducing anger and testosterone levels (see similar, Genesis 32:20). She would have been in charge of Nabal's entire household, comprising many servants and everything to do with food, provisions, clothing, linen, cooking, crockery and more (she is presented as a Proverbs 31 woman). She was courageous to go up against 400 highly motivated, hungry and humiliated men, and decisive in finding a solution to Nabal's folly. She was humble, v23, 41, a peacemaker and meek. Her strength of character and spirituality are an inspiration to us. Abigail has an interesting and unconscious prophetic role, v30. She tells David that his enemies will not prevail. How did David feel? He had been about to revenge himself, but now he is reminded of his higher calling. He is challenged to trust in God by a vulnerable woman. She teaches David to see things from God's perspective.

God

What do we learn about God? He is mentioned several times in this story, vv 22, 26, 28, 31, 32, 34, 38, 39. Some see many parallels between Abigail and Jesus. I count at least a dozen. How many can you spot? Why not reflect on this story and make your own list of lessons about what it means to honour God and his people, and to trust his protection?

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