



August 17, 2025
"Conflict and Peace"
1 Samuel 25
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Good morning. It was the 2006 FIFA World Cup Final between France and Italy. The game was tied. It was in extra time (aka, "overtime"). Everyone knew that this was going to be the last game of Frenchman Zinedine Zidane's career, one of the greatest soccer players in the history of the sport. If there was ever a player on the field that night that had the composure and ability to help lead France to victory, it was Zidane. However, with ten minutes left in the game, something shocking happened.

Zidane and an Italian defender, Materazzi, began talking back and forth. Zidane jogs ahead of him and turns to face him. Zidane suddenly headbutts Materazzi square in the chest *really* hard. Materazzi flies to the ground, and Zidane is ejected from the game.

France would go on to lose the final to Italy in a shootout after extra time.

What sparked such an incredible overreaction? What led to this legendary player who was captaining his team, whom many people and players looked up to, becoming so unhinged in the span of seconds?

Over the years, various reports, interviews, and finally, admissions, were published. Zidane's headbutting of Materazzi was an act of revenge for some foul-mouthed insults about Zidane's family members.

The world was watching. An entire nation was cheering for him. A whole professional sports team was counting on him to be the difference maker. Zidane chose vengeance, and as a result, his final act as a professional soccer player was not kicking a ball in the penalty shootout, but rather a violent action that led to him being escorted away from potentially wrapping up his career with one of the greatest trophies a soccer player could ever receive.

Zidane has since gone on the record, stating that he will never apologize to Materazzi, and that he would rather die than ask for forgiveness.

What is it about personal insults and personal offenses that drive us to shocking decisions? Why do we seek such extreme levels of revenge when we are wronged? And, more importantly, what happens when someone confronts us, and holds up the mirror so that we may see our sinful desires for vengeance, so that we can finally see the awful lengths to which we have gone, or would be willing to go, to see that someone "gets what they deserve?" Regardless of who or what someone else may have done, are we ever horrified of our own sin? Or do we double-down and, through clenched teeth, utter the phrase "they deserved it?"

These are questions that some of the people in our story today will experience.

If you have your Bibles, let's take those out and head to 1 Samuel chapter 25. We are working with the whole chapter today, and we are going to be walking through it section by section. Instead of reading it to you all at once, the sermon will be divided up as we pause to reflect together.

The scripture reading this morning from Romans really highlights the heart of many of the issues we'll find in this story: pride, revenge, selfishness, repaying evil with evil, and so on.

The title of this sermon is “Conflict and Peace.” If we think about our own lives, we each have had times of personal conflict: either with people at work, friends, neighbors, our family, and even within the church. There have also been times when peacemaking was required. When I say peacemaking, I don’t mean a simple apology, a quick “it’s all good” response, and carrying on with your day. I mean the awkward, long, difficult conversations of conflict resolution, addressing sin, sacrificing pride or expectations, and extending forgiveness.

It’s messy work, personal conflict and peacemaking. But, at the heart of scripture, is the gospel - where God’s love is poured out, covering personal conflict, and extending the ultimate opportunity for peace.

All of this can be found in our story today. Let’s pray before we begin.

PRAY

1 Samuel 25

The Death of Samuel

Now Samuel died. And all Israel assembled and mourned for him, and they buried him in his house at Ramah.

Let’s pause here already. Samuel, the great prophet, has died. This certainly is a big moment. Of course there would be mourning: we have King Saul still on the throne, who has proven himself to *not* be a great king, and David, the soon-to-be-king, a man after God’s own heart, has not yet ascended the throne.

To a watching nation, this must seem like a strange moment, and strange timing - yet God is not surprised, God still has plans for His people, and God is still in control. Regardless, the death of Samuel is not the primary focus of the chapter or today’s message, so let’s continue.

David and Abigail

Then David rose and went down to the wilderness of Paran. And there was a man in Maon whose business was in Carmel. The man was very rich; he had three thousand sheep and a thousand goats. He was shearing his sheep in Carmel. Now the name of the man was Nabal, and the name of his wife Abigail. The woman was discerning and beautiful, but the man was harsh and badly behaved; he was a Calebite. David heard in the wilderness that Nabal was shearing his sheep. So David sent ten young men. And David said to the young men, “Go up to Carmel, and go to Nabal and greet him in my name.

And thus you shall greet him: ‘Peace be to you, and peace be to your house, and peace be to all that you have. I hear that you have shearers. Now your shepherds have been with us, and we did them no harm, and they missed nothing all the time they were in Carmel. Ask your young men, and they

will tell you. Therefore let my young men find favor in your eyes, for we come on a feast day. Please give whatever you have at hand to your servants and to your son David.”

Okay, a few things to unpack here. We’ve already learned the names of the 3 key figures in this text: David, Abigail, and Nabal.

David

Let’s start with what we know so far about David. David has just left his encounter with Saul, where David could have slain Saul for his multiple attempts at murder, but instead, spares his life. Saul returns home after publicly admitting that he treated David badly. David clearly does not trust Saul (and rightfully so; Saul is going to hunt him down again in Chapter 26). So, David is still remaining far away from Saul, avoiding him as much as possible, which is where we find him in this chapter.

David and his men are in the area of Carmel. Verse 13 will later tell us that there are at least 600 soldiers with David - that’s a *lot* of people. While he was in the area, they came across some shepherds, whom David provided for, protected, and cared for.

It’s kind of like finding yourself in the wilderness for work for several days, and a group of very experienced, very well supplied outdoorsmen come by. They’re trekking along and notice you not exactly *thriving* in this environment. They welcome you in, cook food for you and with you, they help shelter you, they protect you from the elements, from dangerous animals... All of it while you continue doing your work.

In this case, it’s David and his army protecting, caring for, defending, and sheltering these shepherds from the elements, literal enemies, and whatever. This account is personally verified in verse 15, by the way. David and his men personally protected these guys and took care of them.

Nabal

Next, let’s look at Nabal. He is extremely wealthy; a very, very rich man. He’s described as “harsh and badly behaved; he was a Calebite.” Despite his wealth, he’s incredibly selfish, he is not a good guy, and much of this chapter will confirm it with further description of his general awfulness. He’s just an overall unbearably bad man.

Interestingly, the text goes further and mentions that he is a Calebite. Let us remember that Caleb was one of the spies sent into the promised land, who advocated for Israel to obey the Lord and advance into the promised land. Nabal traces his lineage back to a faithful servant of the Lord. However, the Hebrew name for Caleb can also be translated as “dog” in some contexts - so, by specifying that Nabal is a Calebite alongside the added negative descriptors, we’re getting a subtle dig at his character here as well with some wordplay in the original language.

Abigail

Abigail is described as “discerning and beautiful.” Let’s keep that “discernment” piece in mind for later. We’ll hear much more about her later on.

Setting

Let’s also take a quick moment to unpack this “sheep shearing” thing as well. This may not make a lot of sense to us in 2025, but sheep shearing time in the Bible was also, culturally, a time of festival and celebration.

There would be work and plenty of people doing the actual work itself, but there would also be food, hospitality, and generosity. People would be working, eating, and enjoying themselves.

If you’ve ever helped someone move, or do a big project on their house, then you can perhaps understand - usually there’s pizza or some kind of food for everybody, plenty of food to go around, and you may not even mind if a neighbor pops in or a friend swings by who wasn’t actually there to help move furniture, etc. It’s a time of work, but it’s also a time of celebration and enjoyment.

So, quick recap: what’s going on here in our story?

David protects Nabal’s shepherds.

Nabal is not a nice man.

David doesn’t know this yet.

David sends ten of his men to Nabal, who is in the middle of this typically generous, festive time of year, to simply ask if they can partake in the festivities and receive some of the food and goodies he might be serving up.

David’s message is very respectful: “Peace be to you, and peace be to your house, and peace be to all that you have.”

They basically say, “Hey, we took care of your men, ask them yourself. Can you spare some of your food and drink as a thank you?”

Let’s see what happens next.

When David's young men came, they said all this to Nabal in the name of David, and then they waited. And Nabal answered David's servants, "Who is David? Who is the son of Jesse? There are many servants these days who are breaking away from their masters. Shall I take my bread and my water and my meat that I have killed for my shearers and give it to men who come from I do not know where?" So David's young men turned away and came back and told him all this. And David said to his men, "Every man strap on his sword!" And every man of them strapped on his sword. David also strapped on his sword. And about four hundred men went up after David, while two hundred remained with the baggage.

But one of the young men told Abigail, Nabal's wife, "Behold, David sent messengers out of the wilderness to greet our master, and he railed at them. Yet the men were very good to us, and we suffered no harm, and we did not miss anything when we were in the fields, as long as we went with them. They were a wall to us both by night and by day, all the while we were with them keeping the sheep. Now therefore know this and consider what you should do, for harm is determined against

our master and against all his house, and he is such a worthless man that one cannot speak to him.”

Our story has now accelerated and hit maximum drama.

Nabal verbally thrashes these men and insults David personally as well. They go back to David with the message, and David’s reaction is immediate.

“Every man, strap on your swords,” he says to *four hundred men*.

One of Nabal’s men knows exactly what is coming as he runs to tell Abigail, “Harm is determined against our master, and against all his house.”

Nabal had insulted David verbally and practically by not extending any food items as a thank you. David’s response is, “I’m going to kill you and all that you have.” Nabal’s men are terrified; they know they are going to suffer because of their master’s rudeness.

Let us unpack this conflict to see just how timeless this kind of situation is, and where we can find some relatability with these individuals. There are a few points that stand out in the text. The first is that *selfishness leads to conflict*.

1) Selfishness Leads to Conflict

All sin is an offense to God. It destroys the relationship between God and man. However, sin *also* has a very tangible, this-side-of-eternity impact as well. When we sin, we also destroy the relationships between us and those around us. Such is the case with Nabal.

Nabal’s selfishness causes an immediate rift between him and David. David wants to literally kill him. Not only that, but we see that people that work for and live near or with Nabal are scared to even talk to him: “I’m not going near that guy. He only thinks about himself. I can’t get through to him; it’s worthless to talk to him.”

Nabal’s priority is himself. He cares about his own property, his own things, his own enjoyment, and he wants to be in charge of who gets what. When asked to share his food, Nabal’s response starts off with something that *might* seem somewhat believable: “I don’t really know you, I don’t know where you’ve come from... Sometimes people try to take advantage of other people, so I don’t know why I should trust you...” But then, we get a clear window into the *real* reason he’s not being generous:

“Shall I take *my bread and my water and my meat that I have killed* for my shearers and give it to men who come from I do not know where?”

Me, me, me. It’s mine, I did it. It’s not yours. You didn’t work for it. Get lost.

You see, being selfish is not something that only impacts ourselves, as in, “Yeah, I know I shouldn’t be so selfish, but it’s just a heart issue I need to deal with.” No, it actually has a greater ripple effect. As awful as Nabal sounds, and as much as we might not want to admit it, we have all been Nabals at one point and may still be a Nabal right now. Let’s explore that.

How do you view your finances, your food, your shelter... Pretty much everything you have? What is your attitude towards these things?

Do you view the things you've received as provision from God, knowing that He gives and takes away? Are you rightfully aware that He not only sustains, but **blesses** beyond the bare minimum over and over again, even though we don't deserve it?

Or do you view all that you have as things that *you* earned and that *you* have complete control over? Do you make up seemingly socially acceptable excuses for your lack of generosity? "I don't know them, I don't think they'll really appreciate it, I don't think they'll use it the right way, they never give *me* anything..." etc.

Whether it be our finances, our resources, our things, our food, or even our time, our unwillingness to be generous and our unwillingness to give things away negatively impacts other people's perception of us. It's not only a perception thing; when we are hyper-focused on ourselves, lashing out at any criticism or requests, people don't even want to bother talking to us.

It's true. You can prevent anyone from ever bothering you with requests ever again simply by always complaining, eye-rolling, and being aggressive. You'll get to keep your time and your stuff. However, it also creates insidious conflict around you that you may not even be aware of.

Generosity and a willingness to give up what we have as Christians, even when we may not be repaid, without expecting anything in return, is such a massive theme in scripture, we could spend a whole sermon on that topic alone.

But for today, in short, the sin of selfishness is not just a quiet little "you" problem, it's an "impacts-everybody-else-as-well" problem. Let's explore our next point in the text: *pride leads to conflict*.

2) Responding From a Place of Pride Leads to Conflict

When looking at the story of David, we know that he's overall a "good" king, he's described as a man after God's own heart, and so we arrive at the conclusion that he's overall a "good" guy. The story of David and Bathsheba is undoubtedly very familiar, and the first thing we'll point to when identifying David's faults. It's tempting to view that as the one, singular, major sin that David commits.

However, this story reveals that David is inherently sinful. While, yes, a man who loves God and strives to pursue God's direction for his life, we find David in 1 Samuel 25 in a very dark, very grotesque place. This is actually a moment where David almost becomes like Saul, and the comparison is intentional - Abigail will later highlight the type of king that David will become, and the type of king he is supposed to be: antithetical to that of Saul.

I am astounded by the fact that in chapter 24, David just extended grace to the man who was hunting him down. He's going to extend that same grace in chapter 26 as well. Our story today is sandwiched between David extending grace to his attempted murderer. In between, we have a switch being flipped, and David is out for blood. Why?

Pride.

What is Nabal's offense towards David? First, it is personal. He insults David and his family: "Who is David? Who is this son of Jesse?" Well, Nabal is clearly unaware... David is the soon-to-be-king. He's the guy who slayed Goliath. Could've killed the bad king Saul but

didn't. He's a big deal. (Realistically, it's very likely Nabal already knew who David was at this time, everybody would have, which makes his insults that much more sting-worthy).

Nabal also implies that David is some disobedient man: "Many servants these days are breaking away from their masters." This isn't true of David's character at all. David was very good to Saul. He put up with a lot. He was respectful towards him and fled for the safety of his own life.

Second, Nabal does not give to David what he is somewhat rightfully owed. I say "somewhat" because this is an unclearly defined expectation: David helped Nabal's shepherd and it's festival time, so David assumes showing up to the sheep shearing festival at Nabal's would be an easy way to be thanked. He's right, and Nabal being generous to him as a thank you would be the right thing to do - but Nabal is technically allowed to say no. It's sinful and rude, it's offensive, and Nabal could lean pretty hard on that flimsy defense of "I don't really know you... This might be a setup or some kind of extortion." ...But he can still say no if he wants to. It's his choice; it's a *bad* choice, but regardless.

David takes this whole thing so personally that he tells 400 of his men to get their weapons. They are going to slaughter Nabal and all that he has, to really, in the words of the modern phrase: "teach him a lesson" or "give him what he deserves." To say that it's an overreaction would be an understatement. Now, not only is Nabal in trouble, but Nabal's men, *even the men David helped*, are scared.

There is widespread worry about what David is going to do now. This shows us the widespread impact of our sin when we respond to situations from a place of pride.

Let's think for a moment. How do we react when we are insulted, or someone implies something about us and our reputation that is completely false? How do we act when someone doesn't give us something we are technically owed, and instead, we are turned away?

Later on, in verse 21 and 22, David is still going on and on about Nabal's insulting behaviour to him: *"Surely in vain have I guarded all that this fellow has in the wilderness, so that nothing was missed of all that belonged to him, and he has returned me evil for good. God do so to the enemies of David and more also, if by morning I leave so much as one male of all who belong to him."*

Have you ever expressed the same sentiment?

"What was the point of everything I did for that person? They didn't even thank me. They turn around and do something like *that* to me?! I hope they get what's coming to them." Or, even, one step further: "I'm going to see to it myself that they learn a lesson. That's not how you treat me and my time."

David has become irrational.

In this life, we will be wronged. We hurt God, we hurt others, and we hurt ourselves with our sin. We can expect it. But, when we respond to being wronged from a place of ego and pride, our response actually causes widespread harm and creates further conflict. We are not solving things by lashing out in response, or by seeking revenge.

This is incredibly difficult, and incredibly painful at times because the call of the Christian is to be a peacemaker, to be a light, to respond in such a way that goes against all that our sinful flesh would hope for. This is the "turn the other cheek, sacrificial lifestyle, radically

different as a new creation, go to your brother first if you have conflict, blessed are the peacemakers” kind of lifestyle. It’s not easy.

When we are insulted, the response is not to cut deeper in response with harsher words or more aggressive actions.

When our kindness is spurned, we do not aggressively seek retribution or vengeance.

When we are persecuted, we rejoice. We love our enemies. We pray for them. As Christians, we seek to bring peace, and the light of the gospel wherever we go. We do not use personal offense as a license to mistreat.

For who are we? We ourselves are sinners who mistreated God, and those around us. We are forgiven, loved, and raised up with a new identity in Christ, who God the Father was pleased to reveal to sinners. Our reputation and our things are not our identity. Our identity is found in Jesus Christ - regardless of what people say or do, that can never be removed from us.

Our God loved and reconciled us to Himself; and it is because of this relationship that we set out to radically love our neighbor as Christ loved us.

We must let go of our pride if we are ever to live in such a way that displays the gospel to a watching world. All of which leads us to our third point in this section:

3) Revenge Impacts Others

Revenge is not something that only impacts the offended and the offender. Revenge often has a widespread, destructive reach. In this particular story, we see that all that Nabal has, which includes people, would have been destroyed by David and his army.

It is an awful scene to imagine, if it were to occur: these people enjoying a festival and David arrives. He annihilates everyone because of Nabal’s personal insult and lack of repayment. There is already terror and fear in the hearts of Nabal’s people. We see later, when Abigail is going to speak up, that she describes this as something that would weigh on David’s conscience had he followed through. Not to mention, the guilt of this bloodshed would likely be felt by David’s men, as well as himself.

David is hyper-focused on getting back at Nabal but is unaware of the brutally widespread destruction that would be felt by others.

Throughout both the Old and New Testament, the theme of not repaying evil for evil, of seeking revenge, or carrying out acts of vengeance, is a common thread. Whether it be Old Testament law, the words of Jesus himself, or the various authors of the epistles, the instruction for God’s people is clear: we do not engage in revenge.

Revenge hurts not just your own heart and soul, but it hurts the victim of it, it hurts those around you as you change into this cold, angry caricature of yourself, and it hurts those around the person you are targeting.

Paul’s words in Romans 12 are helpful for us as we seek to understand *why* we do not engage in such behaviour:

“Repay no one evil for evil, but give thought to do what is honorable in the sight of all. If

possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all. Beloved, never avenge yourselves, but leave it to the wrath of God, for it is written, "Vengeance is mine, I will repay, says the Lord." To the contrary, "if your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him something to drink; for by so doing you will heap burning coals on his head." Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good."

Romans 12:17-21 ESV

Our job is not to get even. God knows and sees. There will be discipline and consequences for those who commit evil. There will be justice, and if they escape justice this side of eternity, they *will* meet God and they will answer to Him. That alone is a terrifying thought.

Stooping to the level of evil people, repaying evil with evil, is not the way of God's kingdom here on earth. Rather, we overcome evil by pouring out light and goodness. Darkness trembles and has no other option but to flee from the light of the gospel, of which we are given the responsibility of bringing into the darkest regions of the world.

As a quick side note, this does *not* mean ignoring justice. God gave His people a judicial system, and we, today, continue to operate as a society with a justice system. It is *not* unbiblical to pursue justice when crimes are committed. We can seek to make things right, and we must pursue justice in this world, but not in a way that is sinful or evil.

Crimes have consequences. Harming others has consequences. It is right and just to enforce these consequences, but we do not seek to satisfy our pain through revenge and continual punishments beyond what is appropriate.

Perhaps that's a topic for a bear pit or adult Sunday School.

Then Abigail made haste and took two hundred loaves and two skins of wine and five sheep already prepared and five seahs of parched grain and a hundred clusters of raisins and two hundred cakes of figs and laid them on donkeys. And she said to her young men, "Go on before me; behold, I come after you." But she did not tell her husband Nabal. And as she rode on the donkey and came down under cover of the mountain, behold, David and his men came down toward her, and she met them. Now David had said, "Surely in vain have I guarded all that this fellow has in the wilderness, so that nothing was missed of all that belonged to him, and he has returned me evil for good. God do so to the enemies of David and more also, if by morning I leave so much as one male of all who belong to him."

When Abigail saw David, she hurried and got down from the donkey and fell before David on her face and bowed to the ground. She fell at his feet and said, "On me alone, my lord, be the guilt. Please let your servant speak in your ears, and hear the words of your servant. Let not my lord regard this worthless fellow, Nabal, for as his name is, so is he. Nabal is his name, and folly is with him. But I your servant did not see the young men of my lord, whom you sent. Now then, my lord, as the Lord lives, and as your soul lives, because the Lord has restrained you from bloodguilt and from saving with your own hand, now then let your enemies and those who seek to do evil to my lord be as Nabal. And now let this present that your servant has brought to my lord be given to the young men who follow my lord. Please forgive the trespass of your servant. For the Lord will certainly make my lord a sure house,

because my lord is fighting the battles of the Lord, and evil shall not be found in you so long as you live. If men rise up to pursue you and to seek your life, the life of my lord shall be bound in the bundle of the living in the care of the Lord your God.

And the lives of your enemies he shall sling out as from the hollow of a sling. And when the Lord has done to my lord according to all the good that he has spoken concerning you and has appointed you prince over Israel, my lord shall have no cause of grief or pangs of conscience for having shed blood without cause or for my lord working salvation himself. And when the Lord has dealt well with my lord, then remember your servant.”

And David said to Abigail, “Blessed be the Lord, the God of Israel, who sent you this day to meet me! Blessed be your discretion, and blessed be you, who have kept me this day from bloodguilt and from working salvation with my own hand! For as surely as the Lord, the God of Israel, lives, who has restrained me from hurting you, unless you had hurried and come to meet me, truly by morning there had not been left to Nabal so much as one male.” Then David received from her hand what she had brought him. And he said to her, “Go up in peace to your house. See, I have obeyed your voice, and I have granted your petition.”

Early on in this chapter, Abigail was described as wise. Here, in these verses, we certainly see her come through as the human hero in this chapter. As a quick recap, to make sure we’re understanding this:

- Abigail gathers a large bundle of gifts for David and his men
- She sends out servants ahead, and follows behind the group on a donkey
- She does *not* tell Nabal she is doing this (which, by the way, is demonstrating incredible loyalty to Nabal by setting out to save his life)
- David is still declaring (out loud!) his dedication to destroying Nabal and his household
- Abigail meets David, falls at his feet and says:
 - “I will take the blame for this. Place all the guilt and the blame on me. Don’t give Nabal the time of day, he’s foolish. People who do wrong to you are also foolish. So, please take this gift, and forgive what has happened. God is going to protect you because you fight the Lord’s battles, not evil, selfish ones like this. Do not do what you are about to do here. By sparing us today, when God establishes you as king, and things are going well for you, you will not have to live with the guilt of this bloodshed.”
- David replies by praising God, blessing God, and blessing Abigail for her discretion. He has “come to,” he has woken up from the blind rage he was operating in and realizes the horror of what he was about to do.
- David was willing to listen to Abigail, and as a result, realized the horrific error of his ways, and turned back entirely.

Peace

As David and Nabal were headed towards complete chaos due to their selfishness and pride, it is Abigail who steps in as the person demonstrating true humility, self-sacrifice, and peacemaking ability. Scripture commends her as wise, and we would do well to learn from her example here. There are a few things we can learn from her.

Firstly, Abigail is willing to go. Abigail is willing to organize and coordinate a massive travel group. She is willing to personally deliver these items. This is a lot of time, effort, and a lot of resources. She could have packed up and headed in the *opposite* direction, leaving Nabal to his arguably deserved doom. Instead, she packs up and heads *towards* the conflict. She steps into it, willingly.

Are we willing to step into conflict? Are we willing to give up our time and our things to sort out the messy-ness around us, whether that be our families, friends, or people at work? Or are we on the sidelines with popcorn, waiting and watching to see what happens from a distance?

Check out these verses from James 3:13-18:

“Who is wise and understanding among you? Let them show it by their good life, by deeds done in the humility that comes from wisdom. But if you harbor bitter envy and selfish ambition in your hearts, do not boast about it or deny the truth. Such “wisdom” does not come down from heaven but is earthly, unspiritual, demonic. For where you have envy and selfish ambition, there you find disorder and every evil practice.

(Wow, sounds like David and Nabal!)

But the wisdom that comes from heaven is first of all pure; then peace-loving, considerate, submissive, full of mercy and good fruit, impartial and sincere. Peacemakers who sow in peace reap a harvest of righteousness.

(This sounds like Abigail!)

Second, Abigail is humble. Her willingness to go and step in for Nabal means that she is not worried about what people think of her. She's not too proud, too busy, too conceited to get involved in this situation. Her approach is not “look at these two ridiculous men who hate each other, let them fight it out like boys and sort out their silly conflict.” She sees conflict, a conflict that will send everyone towards disaster, and she goes. It is not beneath her to do so.

And what kind of words does she meet David with? Is she throwing fire at him verbally? Is she going on a rant about Nabal?

She acknowledges that Nabal is a stubborn fool, which is completely accurate here, but that's as far as she goes. She is kind, she does not talk down to David or get in his face; she is respectful, and humble (she refers to him as “my lord,” and herself as a “servant”). The words

she uses and the tone with which she uses them *really matters*. You see, the path of peace is paved with humility. We will never solve conflict or destructive sin with pride and ego.

Thirdly, Abigail is self-sacrificing. Abigail is boldly willing to stand in the place of Nabal and take the punishment and consequence that is coming. It's a shocking move on her part. Her words to David are: "*On me alone, my lord, be the guilt.*" Later, she asks for forgiveness. She puts herself in the place of Nabal. Let us be very clear: Nabal does not deserve this grace. Nabal does not deserve this intercession. He's an awful man, described as worthless, he repays people with evil... And yet Abigail offers herself up, to stand in his place.

Peacemaking and resolving conflict are always going to require something to be given up. It's going to be sacrificial. You may never be thanked or appreciated. You may not get public recognition, thanks, or clout. You may be out of pocket some cash or belongings. Your pride, your expectations, your sanity sometimes will take a hit. Even the act of forgiving someone is sacrificial; you are forgoing the right to continually savour the bitterness and pain you feel from what someone did. When you forgive, you are releasing someone from the burden of what they did and essentially saying "I am intentionally choosing to absorb the pain. I will not bring the pain up again to use as justification for acting harshly against you, or for heaping further guilt on you. I will absorb it; I will carry the weight of it. You are free from that now."

Again, this does *not* mean freedom from consequences. It *does* mean releasing someone from their guilt (for their own good) and letting go of your bitterness (for the good of your own soul).

In the end, if we want to see conflict be resolved, we must be willing to do something, we must be humble, and we must be willing to sacrifice.

Let us continue our story:

And 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 told him nothing at all until the morning light. In the morning, when the wine had gone out of Nabal, his wife told him these things, and his heart died within him, and he became as a stone. And about ten days later the Lord struck Nabal, and he died.

When David heard that Nabal was dead, he said, "Blessed be the Lord who has avenged the insult I received at the hand of Nabal and has kept back his servant from wrongdoing. The Lord has returned the evil of Nabal on his own head." Then David sent and spoke to Abigail, to take her as his wife. When the servants of David came to Abigail at Carmel, they said to her, "David has sent us to you to take you to him as his wife." And she rose and bowed with her face to the ground and said, "Behold, your handmaid is a servant to wash the feet of the servants of my lord." And Abigail hurried and rose and mounted a donkey, and her five young women attended her. She followed the messengers of David and became his wife.

There are a few key points I want to draw out of these final verses.

Do we notice the *timing* of Abigail's conversation? She returns from saving Nabal's life and finds him completely drunk. Abigail once again displays her wisdom as she lives out the phrase: "time and place." It matters when and where you bring something up. If you need to have a serious conversation with someone, you need to be smart about how you approach that.

An example of this is: "calm down." There's a phrase I've seen online, "never in the history of calm down has anyone ever calmed down by being told to calm down." Basically, yelling "calm down" at someone in an escalated state almost never works. Sitting down together *afterwards*, when things have de-escalated, and talking about it is far better than matching someone's heightened emotions.

So, Abigail waits until Nabal has sobered up. She sits him down to walk him through what almost happened, and what she had done. The weight, the seriousness of Abigail's explanation shocks Nabal so much that he ends up in some sort of comatose state; the result of a heart attack, or some sort of event, I'm not sure - I won't speculate. Regardless, Nabal has not only become aware of the seriousness of the events that transpired, but he is also receiving his consequence. He dies shortly afterwards.

David learns that the Lord truly does deal justly with those who do evil, so much so that when Saul hunts him down again in Chapter 26 verses 10 and 11, David will say: "As surely as the Lord lives," he said, "the Lord himself will strike [Saul], or his time will come and he will die, or he will go into battle and perish. But the Lord forbid that I should lay a hand on the Lord's anointed."

When David faces Saul's evil again in a very short time, he can confidently trust that the Lord will deal with Saul in *some* way, having now seen how the Lord dealt with Nabal.

We, too, when faced with something difficult can look back and say "God is trustworthy. He does what He says He will do. I've seen Him do it in the past. I know that He will provide for me again, though I may not exactly understand how."

Ultimately, through Abigail's intercession, Nabal and his household were spared, Nabal received his consequence, David was spared the guilt of slaughter, and David became wiser due to a greater trust in the Lord as he remembered this moment.

More Than A Moral Tale

To be honest, there is far more I could say about this chapter. I have absolutely loved spending time in this text the last few weeks. There's so much here for us, but more importantly; this story is more than some moral tale about why we should avoid revenge, and how we can be good people in the world by making peace amongst those who are fighting with one another.

When we read scripture, both Old and New Testament, we find it all pointing towards the gospel: the epic moment where Jesus Christ takes the sin of the world, the sins of you and me included, all of our breaking of God's law, onto the cross where He stands in our place, is crucified, and dies. A great exchange is made: God offers us Christ's righteousness for our sin. Death is also destroyed. Christ's resurrection assures us of a hope that there is an eternity

where we will be alive and with Him forever. For those who trust in his death and resurrection with their life, there is an unshakeable hope and assurance of salvation.

What we read in scripture points to this over and over again. Here are just a few examples:

Moses in the desert with the bronze serpent raised high on a pole; those who are sick and dying of snake venom are to trust and look on it and be healed. The gospel.

The rainbow after the flood, which is better understood as a war bow, hung in the sky, aiming upwards. God himself will take the arrow for mankind's disobedience. The gospel.

Isaac and Abraham. Isaac, walking up the hill with wood on his back, preparing to become the sacrifice. The gospel.

These are just a few Old Testament stories; all of which are incomplete pictures that point to what we ultimately find in the perfect fulfillment of Jesus Christ and the gospel. Jesus is always the better Moses, the better David, the better priest, the better sacrifice. And what about our story today?

Abigail, on a donkey, on a road, heading towards oncoming wrath in response to Nabal's evil behaviour. Putting herself in Nabal's place and saying "On me alone be the guilt... Please forgive the trespass." Putting herself in harm's way to bring peace. This story screams the echoes of the gospel centuries beforehand.

Jesus.... Is the better peacemaker.

Romans 5 verse 1: *"Therefore, since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ."* "Peace" in this verse is to be understood as peace between two enemies who are at war.

Isaiah 53:5 - *"But he was pierced for our transgressions; he was crushed for our iniquities; upon him was the chastisement that brought us peace, and with his wounds we are healed."*

While Abigail intercedes for Nabal, Abigail's interaction with David here is an echo, reverberating through the centuries, pointing directly towards the ONLY mediator between God and Man: Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ walked that road, he rode on a donkey, towards a coming death He knew was waiting for Him. He did that for you and me, and for the evil we committed. We did not deserve Christ's willing self-sacrifice, and yet he did that for us.

We are Nabal in need of an intercessor. We need someone to walk that road, fulfilling the law perfectly, heading straight towards the wrath of God on our behalf. Sometimes we're not even aware, like Nabal, of how badly we need Christ's intercession.

And yet, unlike this story where Nabal and David simply go separate ways, the peace we have with God through the gospel brings us into a much closer relationship with him. He empowers us with the third person of the trinity, the Holy Spirit, and he draws us continually into a deeper and deeper relationship with himself. He wants to know us and wants us to know him *personally*, not simply acquire peace and go live a life independently away from him.

Our salvation is *not* something we simply acquire and forget about. It is life changing. The gospel brings peace between us and God, *which then* empowers us further, by the power

of the Spirit, to turn from sin and to turn towards the things God loves. We are tasked with going into the world to be a light, and to bring the light of the gospel.

Our vertical peace, the peace between man and God, allows us to begin to spread peace horizontally, among mankind.

Our *sin* was once widespread, impacting others. But now?

As Christians, our *peace* should be widespread, impacting others. Are we willing? Are we willing to radically love those around us who do not deserve it by living out the gospel that saved us?

May God further embolden us today and this week to be people who bravely, willingly, step into the conflict and sin around us to bring the peace of Christ.

BENEDICTION

Now may the God of peace, who through the blood of the eternal covenant brought back from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great Shepherd of the sheep, equip you with everything good for doing his will, and may he work in us what is pleasing to him, through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen. Hebrews 13:20-21