

Sermon title: Ahab desires Naboth's vineyard

Sermon text: 1 Ki 21:1 – 4

Introduction

1. We know that God is a fair judge – He will reward the just and punish the ungodly. Therefore, we have an expectation that God will be fair in this life.
2. However, there are many instances in our lives where justice is NOT meted out in this life. Instead, the righteous are disadvantaged and the ungodly escape judgement.

21 Some time later there was an incident involving a vineyard belonging to Naboth the Jezreelite. The vineyard was in Jezreel, close to the palace of Ahab king of Samaria. ² Ahab said to Naboth, “Let me have your vineyard to use for a vegetable garden, since it is close to my palace. In exchange I will give you a better vineyard or, if you prefer, I will pay you whatever it is worth.”

Observation 1

There is no compelling reason why Ahab would want Naboth’s vineyard apart from its convenience or a personal whim.

Observation 2

Ahab makes a reasonable offer – but an offer he knew to be illegal/unethical.

³ But Naboth replied, “The LORD forbid that I should give you the inheritance of my ancestors.”

Explanation

In Israel, all land belonged to God. The Israelites were considered tenants since all land belonged to God.

⁴ So Ahab went home, sullen and angry because Naboth the Jezreelite had said, “I will not give you the inheritance of my ancestors.” He lay on his bed sulking and refused to eat.

Observation & Application

Ahab was sullen because Naboth would not accede to his royal request in preference to divine obedience.

⁵ His wife Jezebel came in and asked him, “Why are you so sullen? Why won’t you eat?”

⁶ He answered her, “Because I said to Naboth the Jezreelite, ‘Sell me your vineyard; or if you prefer, I will give you another vineyard in its place.’ But he said, ‘I will not give you my vineyard.’”

Observation

Overall effect: Ahab tried to paint Naboth as unreasonable.

Notice that Ahab quoted only part of Naboth’s statement “The Lord forbid” is omitted

21:7 – 10

Observation – Props and Script

A. Props

A1. Elders and nobles – notice that both Ahab and Jezebel are absent
I.e. Jezebel was working behind the scenes – just like Mandy.

A2. Declare a day of fasting

A3. Naboth is given a prominent/honourable seat (so that he does not realize the conspiracy)

A4. There are two scoundrels – because the Law required two witnesses

B. Script

B1. Naboth had cursed God – crime of blasphemy – punishable by death/stoning (Lev 24:13 – 16)

B2. Naboth had cursed the king – crime of treason – punishable by death

11 So the elders and nobles who lived in Naboth's city did as Jezebel directed in the letters she had written to them. **12** They proclaimed a fast and seated Naboth in a prominent place among the people. **13** Then two scoundrels came and sat opposite him and brought charges against Naboth before the people, saying, "Naboth has cursed both God and the king." So they took him outside the city and stoned him to death. **14** Then they sent word to Jezebel: "Naboth has been stoned to death."

Observation

Jezebel, the elders and the two scoundrels carry out the plan perfectly.

An innocent man is wrongfully executed simply for obeying God's commands.

¹⁵ As soon as Jezebel heard that Naboth had been stoned to death, she said to Ahab, “Get up and take possession of the vineyard of Naboth the Jezreelite that he refused to sell you. He is no longer alive, but dead.” ¹⁶ When Ahab heard that Naboth was dead, he got up and went down to take possession of Naboth’s vineyard.

Observation

Jezebel takes care of the situation in the most wicked way possible. Jezebel sets up Naboth to be murdered and the plan is perfectly executed. What is Ahab’s reaction to this? “Ahab arose to go down to the vineyard of Naboth the Jezreelite, to take possession of it.” (21:16). Ahab does not care how he got the vineyard. He is just happy to have his piece of property.

Application

Will you do whatever it takes to get what you want or to get your way? How far will we go to get what we want? Will we lie to get our way? Will we cheat to get what we want? What will we sacrifice? Will we sacrifice time with our family to accumulate more wealth?

Summary

1. Ahab wants to acquire Naboth's vineyard; but Naboth explains to him that Naboth is unable to accede to Ahab's request.
2. Naboth's inconvenient truth puts him squarely against Ahab.
3. Ahab selectively quotes Naboth to make Naboth look unreasonable. The conspirators make the righteous appear unreasonable/rigid.
4. The conspirator(s) set up the perfect scheme to eliminate/murder the righteous
5. We sometimes take extreme measures like Jezebel to get what we want/desire.