

“Cruel Injustice”  
1 Kings 21:1-16  
(Preached at Trinity, October 3, 2021)

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. **Chapters 20-22** focus primarily on Ahab's failures as a king and as a person. When sin goes unchecked, it continues to fester and grow. This is illustrated clearly in the life of Ahab. These chapters will reveal Ahab's repeated opposition to the Word of God. In **Chapter 20** we were witness to Ahab's failure to guard himself and Israel against the enemies. God's enemies must be our enemies. Ahab wasn't zealous for the righteous kingdom of God.
2. The account before us here in **Chapter 21** is familiar to most of you. Naboth was a peasant who had a vineyard located near the summer palace of Ahab. Ahab decided the plot would be a great location for a vegetable garden. It wasn't a necessity that he have it. The king would have had no shortage of vegetables. And there were other plots of land where he could have planted vegetables. He didn't need Naboth's vineyard. It wasn't essential. He just wanted it. This is the way it is with most of our lusts. We don't need it. We just want it. We want the new car or the new house or any other object that has attracted our eye. We don't need it. We just want it, and we determine we must have it. Often, we start looking for reasons to justify it.
3. Most people see covetousness as a small sin, if they see it as a sin at all. After all, you can't see it being practiced and it doesn't really hurt anyone. Really! Tell that to Naboth. Covetousness leads to many other sins. Paul wrote:  
**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."
4. Ahab was powerful and believed he had the right to whatever he desired and he wanted Naboth's vineyard. But Naboth was not willing to give it up. He actually had sound reason for refusing Ahab's offer. The property belonged to his family. It was their inheritance and Naboth saw it as being entrusted to his care. Actually, the Land of Canaan belonged to God.  
**Numbers 36:7 NAU** - "Thus no inheritance of the sons of Israel shall be transferred from tribe to tribe, for the sons of Israel shall each hold to the inheritance of the tribe of his fathers."
  - a. Naboth knew God's Word. Was he one of the 7000 God spoke of in **Chapter 19 1 Kings 19:18 NAU** - "Yet I will leave 7,000 in Israel, all the knees that have not bowed to Baal and every mouth that has not kissed him."
  - b. Ultimately, it was God's land and Naboth knew he should not dispose of it.

5. Among righteous men that would have ended the pursuit. But Ahab wasn't a righteous man and neither was his wife. This was one more example of how little regard Ahab had for the Word of God. Ahab wanted the vineyard and resented that Naboth was denying him what he wanted. The phrase "Sullen and vexed" in **Verse 4** is identical to the last verse of **Chapter 20** where his will was opposed to God's will. Ahab had a wicked self-will that insisted on its own way.
6. When Ahab tells Jezebel her response was typical. Verse 7 paraphrased— "What! Aren't you the king? Are you going to allow that peasant stand in the way of your plans? I'll take care of it for you." She believed that the king was above law. He was his own law. This is the way her Phoenician father king reigned. Once again, Jezebel exercised her control over Ahab and Ahab demonstrated his weakness.
7. She puts her plan into action. Using Ahab's credentials she ordered a fast and ordered that Naboth be invited to sit at the head of the table. Then she ordered that he be falsely accused of both blasphemy and treason. It's been suggested that the charge was linked to Naboth's refusal of the king's request and invoking the name of God in his answer. He was then taken out and stoned to death. We shouldn't miss that although Jezebel sent the orders in Ahab's name with his seal upon them, when the deed was done they reported back to Jezebel.
8. This chapter is the story about justice, and we have before us a terrible injustice.
  - A. Notice it was carried out under a religious façade. They called a fast, a time of prayer and calling out to God. In the midst of this an accusation was made. Jezebel was careful to follow the law of two or three witnesses. And the proper penalty was applied—he was stoned to death. Apparently, Naboth's sons were also executed:  
**2 Kings 9:26 NAU** - "Surely I have seen yesterday the blood of Naboth and the blood of his sons,' says the LORD, 'and I will repay you in this property,' says the LORD. Now then, take and cast him into the property, according to the word of the LORD."
  - B. It was all legal, all tidy and the problem was resolved. Naboth was the helpless victim of those intoxicated by their own authority. Naboth got in the way of Ahab's plans and was executed. We shouldn't fail to see the comparison with abortion. The innocent baby gets in the way of momma's plans. The only solution is to have the baby executed. It's all tidy and it's legal but it is yet another case of terrible injustice.
- I. The first thing we should note is Christians are to expect this sort of injustice in this life.
  - A. This is the nature of all persecution
    1. We are hated because of whom we serve  
**1 Peter 4:12-16 NAU** - "Beloved, do not be surprised at the fiery ordeal among you, which comes upon you for your testing, as though some strange thing were happening to you; <sup>13</sup> but to the degree that you share the sufferings of Christ, keep on rejoicing, so that also at the revelation of His glory you may rejoice with exultation. <sup>14</sup> If you are reviled for the name of Christ, you are blessed, because the Spirit of glory and of God rests on you. <sup>15</sup> Make sure that none of you suffers as a murderer, or thief, or evildoer, or a troublesome meddler; <sup>16</sup> but if *anyone suffers* as a Christian, he is not to be ashamed, but is to glorify God in this name."

2. This is the nature of bearing the name of Christ in this fallen world. They hate us and will seek reasons to condemn us. Our actions are holy and our actions condemn them.
  3. In 2012 a homosexual couple went to Masterpiece Cakeshop to order a wedding cake for their same-sex marriage. The baker, Jack Phillips, refused on the grounds that his Christian principles would not allow him to do so. They sued and finally in 2018 the Supreme Court ruled in his favor. Now he is facing fines again, this time for refusing to bake a transgender cake. Its not that there aren't many bakeries that would be willing to bake the cake. They have their sights fixed on this particular baker because of his Christian beliefs; because he has dared to hold a view different from theirs. But his has been played out endless times in history.
  4. At least, in the case of this baker, there have been those willing to speak up on his behalf. Often when injustice is administered few are willing to stand up for those facing the abuse. No one was willing to stand up for Naboth. Apparently, not one had the integrity to do the right thing.
- B. Many times injustice will come from the hands of civil authorities
1. This is tragic because they are the very ones God has ordained to administer justice.  
**Romans 13:3-4 NAU** - "For rulers are not a cause of fear for good behavior, but for evil. Do you want to have no fear of authority? Do what is good and you will have praise from the same; <sup>4</sup> for it is a minister of God to you for good."
  2. When the powerful have limitless authority it is dangerous to stand in their way. We saw it during the pandemic. In one case people were ticketed for sitting in their cars with their windows rolled up listening to their church service broadcast on their radio. The local mayor was flexing the muscle of his authority. It wasn't about public safety—they were in their cars with the windows rolled up. It was about this mayor maintaining control.
  3. Dale Ralph Davis: "Government does have a God-ordained role but, historically, governing authorities have repeatedly made themselves the adversaries and oppressors of the people of God. Ordinarily we are to submit to government; always we should beware of it."<sup>1</sup>

## II. Naboth stands before us as a type of Christ

- A. Jesus stood in the way of the plans of the elite
1. Ahab had plans for the field of Naboth. Naboth stood in his way. He was a threat to Ahab's plans and Ahab's happiness.
  2. Jesus stood as a threat to the religious leaders—the Scribes and Pharisees
    - a. They love the praise of the people and Jesus was drawing away their attention. People were following Jesus.  
**John 11:47-48 NAU** - "Therefore the chief priests and the Pharisees convened a council, and were saying, "What are we doing? For this man is performing many signs. <sup>48</sup> "If we let Him *go on* like this, all men will believe in Him, and the Romans will come and take away both our place and our nation."

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<sup>1</sup> Dale Ralph Davis, *1 Kings: The Wisdom and the Folly*, Focus on the Bible Commentary (Great Britain: Christian Focus Publications, 2002), 299–300.

- b. Jesus openly opposed their hypocrisy. He was holiness incarnate.
- B. Jesus was falsely accused
1. Wicked men rose up and false accused Naboth. He had done no wrong but was unable to resist their lies.
  2. Jesus was falsely accused. False witnesses rose up and accused Jesus so that the leaders would have a charge to bring against Jesus.  
**Matthew 26:59-61 NAU** - "Now the chief priests and the whole Council kept trying to obtain false testimony against Jesus, so that they might put Him to death. <sup>60</sup> They did not find *any*, even though many false witnesses came forward. But later on two came forward, <sup>61</sup> and said, "This man stated, 'I am able to destroy the temple of God and to rebuild it in three days.'"
- C. Jesus was tried and convicted unjustly. His trial was illegal on several technical grounds.
1. No trial involving a person's life was allowed at night. Yet Jesus was tried and condemned between the hours of 1-3 A.M. In addition, no hearings involving capital punishment could occur on the day of one of the great feasts. This trial was held at night at the home of the high priest to avoid any conflict with the people.
  2. The arrest of Jesus was effected as the result of a bribe.
  3. No person on trial could be asked a question that would incriminate him.  
**Mark 14:61 NAU** - "Again the high priest was questioning Him, and saying to Him, "Are You the Christ, the Son of the Blessed *One*?"
  4. In cases of capital punishment Jewish law did not permit the sentence to be pronounced until the day after the accused had been convicted.
  5. Witnesses were to be examined separately with no contact with each other. The penalty for a false witness was death.
  6. In the court proceedings all evidence for the innocence of the accused had to be presented before the evidence for his guilt was presented.
  7. In essence, it was no trial at all – it was murder. But they were careful to try to make it appear like a legal trial.
  8. This was the case of Naboth. He was falsely accused and executed. There was not trial, no defense. Jezebel's purpose was to destroy Naboth and she was successful.
- D. No one came to the defense of Jesus
1. This was surely true of Naboth.  
 No one stood up on Naboth's behalf. No one had the courage to refuse to take part in the injustice. Jezebel could not have accomplished this by herself, but no one was willing to stand up against Jezebel. Staying silent was to share in the guilt of the injustice.
  2. No one stood on behalf of Jesus.  
 All of His disciples fled. Peter even denied knowing Him.
  3. The crowds who shouted "Hosanna in the Highest" on Sunday had suddenly changed their minds.  
**John 19:15 NAU** - "Away with *Him*, away with *Him*, crucify Him!"  
**Matthew 27:17-23 NAU** - "So when the people gathered together, Pilate said to them, "Whom do you want me to release for you? Barabbas, or Jesus who is called Christ?" <sup>18</sup> For he knew that because of envy they had handed Him over. <sup>19</sup> While he was sitting on the judgment seat, his wife sent him *a message*, saying, "Have

nothing to do with that righteous Man; for last night I suffered greatly in a dream because of Him." <sup>20</sup> But the chief priests and the elders persuaded the crowds to ask for Barabbas and to put Jesus to death. <sup>21</sup> But the governor said to them, "Which of the two do you want me to release for you?" And they said, "Barabbas." <sup>22</sup> Pilate said to them, "Then what shall I do with Jesus who is called Christ?" They all said, "Crucify Him!" <sup>23</sup> And he said, "Why, what evil has He done?" But they kept shouting all the more, saying, "Crucify Him!"

4. Jesus came as the suffering servant. He came in a world of hatred to save His people from their sins.

**Isaiah 53:7-8 NAU** - "He was oppressed and He was afflicted, Yet He did not open His mouth; Like a lamb that is led to slaughter, And like a sheep that is silent before its shearers, So He did not open His mouth. <sup>8</sup> By oppression and judgment He was taken away;"

#### Conclusion:

1. Like Naboth, we live in a dangerous world that will often rise up to remove us from their midst.
2. We share in the same treatment as our Master.  
**John 15:18-20 NAU** - "If the world hates you, you know that it has hated Me before *it hated* you. <sup>19</sup> "If you were of the world, the world would love its own; but because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, because of this the world hates you. <sup>20</sup> "Remember the word that I said to you, 'A slave is not greater than his master.' If they persecuted Me, they will also persecute you; if they kept My word, they will keep yours also."
3. But we have a sweet comfort. As we share in the sufferings of Christ we are united with the one who comforts us in our affliction.  
**2 Corinthians 1:5 NAU** - "For just as the sufferings of Christ are ours in abundance, so also our comfort is abundant through Christ."
4. It would appear that no one gave regard for Naboth. He was murdered and his sons were murdered and his land was seized. No one took notice of the injustice. But God did. And He watches over us. There will be justice in the end.  
**1 Kings 21:17-19 NAU** - "Then the word of the LORD came to Elijah the Tishbite, saying, <sup>18</sup> "Arise, go down to meet Ahab king of Israel, who is in Samaria; behold, he is in the vineyard of Naboth where he has gone down to take possession of it. <sup>19</sup> "You shall speak to him, saying, 'Thus says the LORD, "Have you murdered and also taken possession?"
5. And will you stand up when you seen injustice being perpetrated?  
The leaders were from Naboth's city. They knew him, but didn't have the courage to stand up on his behalf.  
May God give us the courage to stand up for those who are being treated unjustly.