

Scripture 1 Sam 25:1-38

The use of force is always an option that is met with various reactions. Nelson Mandela was vilified in South Africa after he declared that “an armed struggle” was the only means of securing freedom in 1958. His abandonment of Mahatma Gandhi’s ‘passive resistance’ led to a twenty-eight year sentence in maximum security facilities in South Africa—that is until his “Long Walk to Freedom” in 1989.

I watched with great interest as he was released in the spring of South Africa’s freedom, but could I trust him. What would he do to those of us who held him in derision? What would twenty-eight years of near-solitary confinement do to you? How would I treat those who have maligned and misrepresented me?

In our selected passage we have David on the charge against Nabal who is cited in verse 3 as being churlish—discourteous, dour, grouchy, gruff or grumpy according to Webster’s Dictionary. Could this be the reason for David’s dissatisfaction with Nabal? His personal characteristics? After all he did rudely turn back David’s men who were courteously requesting supplies for wartime contingencies. Surely David had every right to

1Sam. 25:13, Gird ye on every man his sword. And they girded on every man his sword; and David also girded on his sword: and there went up after David about four hundred men.

After appealing to Nabal's suspected latent capacity for good David reverts to gut reaction. David could have been thinking the line in the popular movie "Apocalypse Now"

"You have to have men who are moral and at the same time able to utilize their primordial instincts to kill without feeling, without passion, without judgement, without judgement. Because it's judgement that defeats us."

Lessons on Discipleship.

1. Lesson on Judgment.

It is clear of David's intent when harnessing his sword and encouraging four hundred others to do the same; Nabal would meet the consequences of the meaning of his name—folly. (verse 25). David felt that the unreasonableness of Nabal not to reward those who had rescued his possessions would meet with stern censure as a lesson to all others.

1Sam. 25:21 Now David had said, Surely in vain have I kept all that this fellow hath in the wilderness, so that nothing was missed of all that pertained unto him: and he hath requited me evil for good.

1Sam. 25:22 So and more also do God unto the enemies of David, if I leave of all that pertain to him by the morning light any that pisseth against the wall.

David saw his taking the proper action was to not only be an example, but a blueprint against dissent. This is how he would deal with adversaries.

2. Lesson on Good Understanding.

In verse 18 we learn that Abigail, Nabal's wife, takes action when learning of the danger that resulted by the actions of her harsh husband. Her actions are not only to send the needed supplies, but also to follow in person. In verse three we learn

1Sam. 25:3 ...; and the name of his wife Abigail: and she was a woman of good understanding, and of a beautiful countenance.

Abigail's good understanding must have been apparent for we also learn that the servant of Nabal approached her with "Now therefore know and consider what thou wilt do." v17. It seems to be this quality of carefully considering that made David turn from his intended mission of killing Nabal.

Meaning of Discipleship.

To Abigail discipleship meant leaving your comfort zone and facing an imminent demise. One wonders if she was protecting her no-good mismatched Nabal, but quickly you realize that she had a long-term vision. Long-term for David and not for herself for in verse 24 "Upon me, my lord, upon me let this iniquity be: and let thine handmaid, I pray thee, speak in thine audience, and hear the words of thine handmaid." Abigail is willing to take the sin of her husband as her own—indirectly showing a willingness to face the punishment that David had for Nabal.

Abigail appeals to David's sense of judgment by pointing to the importance of the action he intended to take in relation to the plan that God had for him when he would be ruler in Israel. Her appeal includes the strong insistence that

it was David 'avenging thyself with thine own hand' v.26. , She goes on to indicate that 'a man is risen to pursue' David v.29 in his dealing with Nabal.

The most pressing meaning of discipleship is in verse 31

1Sam. 25:31 That this shall be no grief unto thee, nor offence of heart unto my lord, either that thou hast shed blood causeless, or that my lord hath avenged himself: but when the LORD shall have dealt well with my lord, then remember thine handmaid.

Here Abigail states that no grief would come to David. This grief she seems to identify as an 'offence of heart' or sullied conscience.

Conclusion

It must have been this advice that David listened to that when he became king he took Abigail to be his wife. At David's coronation Abigail must have been foremost in the band of advisors that he would gather around him to assist him in ruling Israel wisely.

Nelson Mandela went on his long walk to freedom to be the first black president in South Africa. He treated his old captors, who considered him their enemy, with kindness and respect. He set up the famous "Truth and Reconciliation Commission" which would exonerate and grant immunity to any of the perpetrators of Apartheid who would come before the panel and publicly admit their injustices.

The Sanctuary is the grand "Truth and Reconciliation Commission" that God set up to deal with the sin problem. At it's conclusion there will be one who reigns on David's' throne. One who, before the Universe, will be extolled with "Just and true are Thy ways, Thou King of saints."