

Mistaken Identity

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[0 : 0 0] Now let's read in 1st Samuel chapter 25. Jeff will preach from this in just a moment but let me read 1st Samuel 25 for us.

Now Samuel died and all Israel assembled and mourned for him and they buried him at his home in Ramah. Then David moved down into the desert of Paran. A certain man in Mahon who had property there at Carmel was very wealthy.

He had a thousand goats and three thousand sheep which he was shearing in Carmel. His name was Nabal and his wife's name was Abigail. She was an intelligent and beautiful woman but her husband was surly and mean in his dealings.

He was a Calebite. While David was in the wilderness he heard that Nabal was shearing sheep. So he sent ten young men and said to them, Go up to Nabal at Carmel and greet him in my name.

Say to him, Long life to you, good health to you and your household and good health to all that is yours. Now I hear that it is sheep shearing time. When your shepherds were with us we did not ill treat them.

[1 : 0 7] And the whole time they were at Carmel nothing of theirs was missing. Ask your own servants and they will tell you. Therefore be favourable towards my men since we come at a festive time. Please give your servants and your son David whatever you can find for them.

When David's men arrived they gave Nabal this message in David's name. Then they waited. Nabal answered David's servants, Who is this David? Who is this son of Jesse? Many servants are breaking away from their masters these days.

Why should I take my bread and water and the meat that I have slaughtered for my shearers and give it to men coming from who knows where? David's men turned round and went back. When they arrived they reported every word.

David said to his men, Each of you strap on your sword. So they did. And David strapped his on as well. About 400 men went up with David while 200 stayed with the supplies. One of the servants told Abigail, Nabal's wife, David sent messengers from the wilderness to give our master his greetings but he hurled insults at them.

These men were very good to us. They did not ill treat us and the whole time we were out in the fields near them nothing was missing. Night and day they were a wall around us the whole time we were herding our sheep near them.

[2 : 1 5] Now think it over and see what you can do because disaster is hanging over our master and his whole household. He is such a wicked man that no one can talk to him. Abigail acted quickly.

She took 200 loaves of bread, two skins of wine, five dressed sheep, five sears of roasted grain, a hundred cakes of raisins and 200 cakes of pressed figs and loaded them on donkeys. Then she told her servants, Go on ahead, I'll follow you.

But she did not tell her husband Nabal. As she came riding her donkey into a mountain ravine, there were David and his men descending towards her and she met them. David had just said, It's been useless.

All my watching over this fellow's property in the wilderness so that nothing of his was missing. He has paid me back evil for good. May God deal with David, be it ever so severely if by morning I leave alive one male of all who belong to him.

When Abigail saw David, she quickly got off her donkey and bowed down before David with her face to the ground. She fell at his feet and said, Pardon your servant, my lord, and let me speak to you.

[3 : 14] Hear what your servant has to say. Please pay no attention, my lord, to that wicked man Nabal. He is just like his name. His name means fool and folly goes with him. And as for me, your servant, I did not see the men, my lord said.

And now, my lord, as surely as the Lord your God lives and as you live, since the Lord has kept you from bloodshed and from avenging yourself with your own hands, may your enemies and all who are intent on harming my lord be like Nabal.

And let this gift, which your servant has brought to my lord, be given to the men who follow you. Please forgive your servant's presumption. The Lord your God will certainly make a lasting dynasty for my lord, because you fight the Lord's battles, and no wrongdoing will be found in you as long as you live.

Even though someone is pursuing you to take your life, the life of my lord will be bound securely in the bundle of the living by the Lord your God. By the lives of your enemies he will hurl away as from the pocket of a sling.

When the Lord has fulfilled for my lord every good thing he promised concerning him, and has appointed him ruler over Israel, my lord will not have on his conscience the staggering burden of needless bloodshed, or of having avenged himself.

[4 : 22] And when the Lord your God has brought my lord success, remember your servant. David said to Abigail, Praise be to the Lord, the God of Israel, who has sent you today to meet me.

May you be blessed for your good judgment and for keeping me from bloodshed this day, and from avenging myself with my own hands. Otherwise, as surely as the Lord, the God of Israel lives, who has kept me from harming you, if you had not come quickly to meet me, not one male belonging to Nabal would have been left alive by daybreak.

Then David accepted from her hand what she had brought to him and said, Go home in peace. I have heard your words and granted your request. When Abigail went to Nabal, he was in the house holding a banquet like that of a king.

He was in high spirits and very drunk, so she told him nothing at all until daybreak. Then, in the morning, when Nabal was sober, his wife told him all these things, and his heart failed him, and he became like a stone.

About ten days later, the Lord struck Nabal and he died. When David heard that Nabal was dead, he said, Praise be to the Lord, who has upheld my cause against Nabal for treating me with contempt.

[5 : 28] He has kept his servant from doing wrong and has brought Nabal's wrongdoing down on his own head. Then David sent word to Abigail, asking her to become his wife. His servants went to Carmel and said to Abigail, David has sent us to you to take you to become his wife.

She bowed down with her face to the ground and said, I am your servant and I'm ready to serve you and wash the feet of my Lord's servants. Abigail quickly got on a donkey and, attended by her five female servants, went with David's messengers and became his wife.

David had also married a Hinoam of Jezreel, and they both were his wives. But Saul had given his daughter, Michiel, David's wife, to Paltiel, son of Laish, who was from Galim. Amen.

This is God's word. Now it's a pleasure to hand over to Jeff now. Former US President, JFK, when he was on his election campaign to be elected as President of the United States, he met an elderly woman.

She said, you're one of the Kennedy brothers, aren't you? So both JFK and his brother, Robert, were in politics, and both looked remarkably similar. He said, yes, that's right, I'm one of the Kennedy brothers.

[6 : 38] And she said, I just want to say, I think you've done a terrific job on the Senate Racket Committee. And JFK said, no, sorry, that was my brother. And she says, it is?

Well, those seven beautiful children you have, aren't they wonderful? Well, JFK responded, no, that's my brother. And she said, oh, well, just tell your brother all the best in his bid to become the president.

JFK quickly said, no, that's me. Here is a case of mistaken identity. And it's that topic that we'll be talking about and discussing this morning in the case of Nabal and David in the passage that was read earlier.

When our identity is in Jesus, everything has its perfect balance rightly in our lives. But when our identity is not in Jesus, it so often can have a damaging effect on ourselves and on those around us.

For example, in our work life, we get a promotion at work or we finish off a project and our boss praises it, thinks it's amazing. It could have the tendency to puff us up and we can find our identity in it.

[7 : 46] But then what happens when we don't do so well at work, when our boss is on our case, it can really crush us and damage us. However, when our identity is in Jesus Christ, everything has its rightful place.

Finding our identity in Jesus meets three key tests, which I believe are key to finding out whether something is worth having your identity in or not.

There's the firstly, the joy test. Is this thing or person going to give me deep and lasting joy? The second test is the life ruling test. Is this thing or person worth centering my life upon?

And third of all, the eternity test. Is this thing or person really worth staking my eternal destiny upon? Now, this is not just a message for non-Christians about how they need to find their identity in Jesus.

This is a message that says also about how Christians to have an identity, have a tendency to find their identity in things and in people other than Jesus.

[8 : 50] Very often, we struggle with a mistaken identity. Our culture, our society, will say we need X, Y and Z to really truly be happy in life.

So many things are seeking our devotion and seeking to pull us away from Jesus. Christians are not exempt from it. But let's go to the text and really see these issues of identity really begin to play out in 1 Samuel.

We're introduced in verse 2 to a man named Nabal. Now, Nabal, if you're interested in the meaning of names, Nabal in Hebrew, the original language, actually means full and we'll begin to see that as time goes on.

He's very wealthy, we're told, and sheep and goats. We're then introduced to his wife, Abigail, who's beautiful and intelligent, which is then immediately contrasted to Nabal who is harsh and evil in all his dealings.

And then David comes into the narrative. So it says that David heard that Nabal was shearing sheep. And so David tells his men, go and ask Nabal for a share of his wealth.

[10 : 02] And so at this point you could be tempted, what's David doing just going up to a rich guy and asking for his money? I mean, that seems a bit strange. But it's not asking for a handout.

David's not asking for a handout. He's asking for his rightful wage. We know this because in verses 7, 15 and 16, we read about how David and his men protected Nabal's men and Nabal's animals from harm, from theft.

And so we could argue that even in part some of Nabal's wealth is down to David's and his men's diligence. And so David's men go and ask Nabal for provision and are flat out rejected.

In fact, worse yet, Nabal says, who is this David? Who is Jesse's son? I don't know who you're talking about. And then he goes even further and says, in fact, I don't even know where you guys come from.

You might be from a really dodgy place. I'm not, I'm not entertaining this. Go home. In verse 14, we read the account of one of Nabal's servants who saw this going on.

[11 : 10] And it says that he, that Nabal railed at David's men. He shouted at David's men. He wanted to keep his hands on David's rightful shares so that his wealth could go unaffected.

And we begin to see what's ruling Nabal's heart at this point. What he's really finding his identity in. though that case is going to go stronger as time goes on.

His identity is based on his wealth. And we see that not only by how he shamelessly denies David and his men their rightful wage so that he could keep a hold of his money.

But also in his love of money, we also see how his love of money had shaped how his peers viewed him. We see in verse 17 one of his servants said, Nabal's a worthless man.

Nobody can even approach him. And then in verse 25 his own wife Abigail calls him a worthless fellow. And his love of money as his wealth grew so too did his ego.

[12 : 15] And he thought he was unstoppable. He was untouchable. He was the king of his world. Being so unapproachable, unbearable as he was, it really poisoned his relationships.

And he loved his money so much that it would mean he would treat his servants, he would treat his own wife so poorly that they would consider him worthless. Falling on from the pleas of Abigail and her giving generously to David, David agrees to relent from his attack.

Abigail then goes to tell Nabal what happened only to find Nabal drunk in the middle of a feast like that of a king. Now in verse 36 there's that addition a feast like that of a king and that addition is not random it's not to get the author's word count up but this is actually an insight into what Nabal thinks about himself.

He thinks himself so great he thinks his wealth so grand that he considers himself like a king. Once he sobered up Abigail went and told him what had happened with David and upon hearing that part of his wealth was taken away the ESV translation puts it really strongly his heart within him died.

Such powerful language his heart within him died and so we see what his identity is wrapped up in his wealth and we see that because of how he responded to and treated David's men how he treated those around him how those around him consequently viewed him as a worthless fellow and then we see that too in his response to part of that wealth being taken away it literally killed him and that is the power of finding your identity in something it becomes your all in all it becomes a dictator over whether we have a good mood or a bad mood it becomes all consuming it becomes the director of our eternal destiny for Nabal he was at his happiest when he was having drunken feasts enjoying all his wealth and grandeur but he was at his very lowest and we see that in his death at his very lowest when part of that wealth was taken away we all have identity battles in our hearts things that we struggle with things that we place our hopes our joys and our plans in things that dictate our mood and rule our lives now this might look differently for each and every one of us for you it might be power you might have your identity wrapped up in being honoured being respected being thought well of maybe it's like Nabal you have your identity wrapped up in your wealth and you know you might be having feasts fit for a king while your neighbour next door is going down to the local food bank the problem with these things is not money we need money to feed ourselves to clothe ourselves to pay our bills the problem is not being respected or being honoured the bible actually has quite a lot of positive things to say about respecting and honouring one another and the problem comes in though when these things become ultimate in our lives when our lives are ruled by money our lives are ruled by having to be respected and honoured as I said earlier this is as much an issue for

[16 : 02] Christians as it is non-Christians and we see that in David's response so David's men come back and tell him what's happened in the encounter with Nabal that Nabal has rejected the request rejected knowledge of him insinuated that they were no users from goodness knows where and David is raging he's fizzing he's so much so that he goes and gets his sword and tells his men go and do likewise he wants to go and have it out with Nabal let's see who's the big man now sort of thing on verse 21 we see that David complains all his service to Nabal was futile verse 22 even brings God into the equation you see David was angry because he thought he deserved more honour more respect than he was getting how many of us have been there with our bosses you know we don't think that we're honoured or respected or given credit for the things that we think we deserve credit for now whilst we may not go to our bosses with a sword in hand

I'd certainly hope not the anger the rage that builds up in our hearts can sometimes be far more devastating it takes Abigail to bring him a generous portion also a humble bowing before him cry for mercy in order for David to relent not only does Abigail do this but she points David to the Lord to his justice and his judgment reminding David that this is not David's to sort out this is not David's battle to fight justice and judgment belong to God who will not let the guilty go unpunished so what then is the takeaway from all of this don't be like Nabal don't be like David be like Abigail Abigail was good Abigail pointed her neighbour to the Lord Abigail was generous well well no not exactly you see the story is not telling us a moral story of what we are to do to find a sort of goodness a morality within ourselves now my wife and

I have a guilty pleasure of hallmark movies you might know of them you might not they're on channel 5 like all the time they're usually called something along the lines of harvest moon or autumn dreams out workaholic girl is tired of the hustle and the bustle of the city and so moves out to the town or the village it's all very idyllic to find out what really matters in life what are the true values to hold to upon arriving she goes to a grocery store or she goes to a pub meets a handsome chap and although initially trying to ignore him she falls in what are the good moral values to hold onto in life now the Bible is not like that and this story is no exception it's not a compilation of positive and inspiring stories which teach a good moral value that we take away and apply to our life and that's us good with

God it's not like that the Bible isn't 10 tips to personal improvement so that we could be the hero or the saviour of our story the Bible is about how Jesus is the hero Jesus is the saviour of the story the Bible from beginning to end every page every book of the Bible is all about how good Jesus is now how all of that relates to the question of identity is that placing your identity in something it becomes your all in all they become the masters of your life everything you think say or do is dictated to you by your identity and that whilst money sex power make terrible masters I want to say that Jesus is the best master so Christian or non Christian this morning whoever you are wherever you're listening from look to

Jesus and find your identity in him that's why the message isn't don't be like Nabal don't be like David be like Abigail because in this identity war in your life the hero of the story is always Jesus and he's the only one who's really worth having your identity fixed in and I'll tell you why earlier I set before us three tests as to whether something is worth having your identity fixed in first was the joy test is this thing is this person going to give me deep and lasting joy the second was the life ruling test is this thing or person worth centring my universe on and thirdly the eternal test is this going to bear fruit in eternity is this going to bear fruit before God I also said earlier that everyone and everything apart from Jesus fails to meet this test and we'll see that because these other things make horrible masters for our lives

[21 : 39] I want to say that Jesus is the best master and makes the best master for our lives first of all is the joy test I want to go to John chapter 4 and we read in that of Jesus meeting a woman at a well Jesus says to the woman you drink the water from this well you're just going to be thirsty again but the water that I give you is going to bubble up within you well up within you to a spring of eternal life so Jesus here is not just saying this water is no good you need to find some different water in this world he's pointing not to the deficiency of that particular water from that particular well but it's a picture of the deficiency of all things apart from Jesus to give us true and lasting satisfaction we also have the testimony of the apostle Paul in Philippians 3 recounting his former life of

Judaism and he says that he counts that as worthless compared to knowing Jesus Christ now before we think that Paul was writing that at a really swell moment in his life sitting on a warm beach somewhere sipping a cocktail he wasn't he was sitting in a cold stony Roman jail cell imprisoned for telling other people about Jesus Christ and so in the dark confines of a Roman prison Jesus is enough for you and me today in poverty and sickness and suffering Jesus and the joy in him is sufficient the second issue is the life ruling problem is this thing or person really worth centring my life upon is Jesus worth centring my life upon I just want to read some things from the Bible some texts from the Bible that I've put together that tell us about Jesus and I'll let you make up your mind is Jesus really worth centring your life upon heaven this Jesus who is the image of the invisible

God greater than all the angels in heaven who created and sustains all things who despite being God came down to live in time and space to live the life that we should have lived on our behalf to endure our shame our suffering that we were due on the cross instead of hearing the praise of angels in heaven he heard the crowds cry crucify him he received beatings mockings sneerings he was spat at for you and for me for the joy that was set before him namely this joy of seeing people like you and me reconciled to God our father in heaven he is the only way to God and he is the only way the only person worthy of our worship and adoration Jesus is the only master to have died for his subjects which leads us on to the third problem which is the eternal problem the eternal test is Jesus worth staking my eternal future on well I've just said that

Jesus is the only way to God the father Mark chapter 8 verse 36 he also says what will it profit a man if he gains the whole world but forfeits his soul now what Jesus is saying here is that you could be perfectly happy with having the best family the nicest car the biggest house the biggest salary for your job but before almighty God that's gonna do you no good and so from an eternal perspective Jesus is the greatest master not just in eternity but right now right here right now he provides deep and lasting joy he is worth revolving our lives around why can I say that with certainty well because Jesus who being almighty God identified with us in order that we could find our identity in him one of my favourite contemporary

Christmas songs it's called How Many Kings and the chorus goes like this how many kings stepped down from their thrones how many lords have abandoned their homes how many greats have become the least for me and how many gods have torn out their hearts to romance a world that is torn out apart how many fathers gave up their sons for me and I highlight something really really really important the celebrities of our day do not obey the law of God on our behalf money did not sacrifice itself for you nails did not pierce the hands of comfortability power and prominence did not stoop down as a servant to save you the great influencers of the past did not rise again from the dead to defeat death for us only Jesus did that only he did that for you and for me only Jesus is qualified fully to be master over your life run from all else that would seek to be masters over your life and run to

[27 : 12] Jesus the greatest master so every single person who's listening wherever you're listening from whatever background you're from I want to say look to Jesus to find your identity in him look to him and find in him a better master the best master whilst money relationships and joy have our joy fluctuate the joy that Jesus gives is constant that you would have the deepest sense of hope and joy and peace and assurance in him this morning friends put your trust in him today and find in him your soul's deepest longings look to Jesus Christ the greatest master let's pray heavenly father we confess that we are too ready to run to other things and to other people to try and get our identity money sex power respect it can be such a temptation for us forgive us for this thank you that the

Christian faith is not simply self-denial but rather in Jesus we find someone who is greater than these things whose glory surpasses them all whose joy and satisfaction that he gives exceeds these things and therefore in joy we can forsake our finding our identity in other things we can give up being mastered by money or ruled by lust and joyfully submit to the lordship of Jesus Christ in whose name we pray amen