

The Christ Must Suffer IV

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 12 February 2012

Preacher: Rev. James Wagner

[0 : 00] This morning at the 9 o'clock service we had a baptism. Sorry that you don't have the privilege of enjoying that for the 11 o'clock service, but we had Dave Little with Emma McCoy, and Dave immersed Emma McCoy, and it was just a great occasion to see God's grace being shed abroad in her heart through that sacrament.

We also, this morning now at this service, which we didn't have at the 9 o'clock service, are CTC students, and so we're really grateful to have Dave with us in this service.

He's easy to identify. He's the guy back there with the collar on but the orange shirt, but CTC students are spread throughout the congregation, so it's great to have you here this morning.

I know that you receive the ministry of the Word when you're downstairs with Dave and Lynn, and I hope that this is that and more. I know that there might be actually more for you to do up here than down there.

There's lots of standing and rising and sitting and kneeling, and it just reminds me when I was a boy about the age of the CTC students when I would help my father, or at least try to help him.

[1 : 14] Every now and again he would say something to me. I don't know if you've ever said this to your children or you've had it said to you, but my dad would say, you know, don't just stand there, do something.

I wonder if you think I'm not just standing here, but I need to do something. But I realized at some stage with baptism, actually, and worship in the life of the church, that our Heavenly Father actually reverses that.

Our Heavenly Father says to us, he says, don't just do something, stand there. He says, don't just do something, stand there that's visibly shown to us in the sacraments like baptism and communion and when we worship because he wants to work his grace into our life.

We can't actually do anything for him when we get started. And eventually he does say to us, as he did through the words of the Apostle Paul in Philippians, that we should work out our salvation with fear and trembling, but he works his grace intensely into our life.

And all we can do is stand there. All we can do is stand there and receive it. Today in the story about David, we see that for the most part, he hasn't been doing nothing.

[2 : 33] He's been on the run. But in running, he's also been doing some kind of standing there and letting God do in his life and for the men that are with him, what he can not do for them.

But unfortunately today, he now actually reverses it. David decides that he is not going to just stand there and wait, but he's going to do something.

Something happens to him and he's going to do something about it. He'll take matters into his own hand. And here we see, I think, for the first time, a big mistake that David makes.

It's bracketed by two stories that are very similar. You heard the one last week. You didn't hear the one this week. But let me just recap them really quickly for you.

In chapter 26, the one that followed the reading, read by Craig this morning, David is actually in the wilderness. And Saul is tipped off by the Ziphites.

[3 : 29] There they are again, this band of Ziphites from Ziph. They're zipping around here and there, everywhere.

And David finds out about it. He takes one of his men, Abishai. And when Saul and his men, 3,000 of them, are in the wilderness asleep, David goes over, stands over Saul with Abishai.

And immediately, Abishai wants to pick up this spear that's been thrown at David three times and Jonathan wants, and he wants to take it and ram it through the head of Saul. And he claims that God has given Saul into David's hands, and that's why he should do it.

This is his day, and David doesn't literally say this, but he says, My time has not yet come. This is not my time to become the exclusive anointed one.

And so they actually leave with the spear and with the water bottle. Go back over to the other side. They call out. David takes Abner, Saul's right-hand man, to task because he didn't guard and keep safe his king.

[4 : 42] And Saul realizes what's happened. Saul actually admits his sin. He confesses that he's done wrong, and he also concedes of his foolishness, his utter foolishness.

And David says, The Lord rewards every man for his righteousness and his faithfulness. For the Lord gave you into my hand this day, and I would not put out my hand against the Lord's anointed. It's going to take matters into his own hands, as we'll see eventually, but not today. David won't do that. Chapter 24, which you heard last week, David's men are in En Gedi. Saul finds out about them, I think by the Ziphites again.

He searches for them. It's not search and rescue. It's search and destroy. And he ends up in a cave with David. Much to his surprise, doesn't know it. He's relieving himself. And David cuts off a part of Saul's garment.

Remember this? And when he does it, David's heart is struck. He calls after Saul when Saul leaves the cave, this place of safety. And David confronts him, after which Saul breaks down and weeps.

[5 : 49] And he admits, you are more righteous than I. For you have repaid me good, whereas I have repaid you evil. That's what he says.

All right? And there's this big turn of events, sandwiched between these two other events in David's life, where he's on the run. He's made safe.

God takes matters into his own hand. And David leaves it into the hands of God. But in the middle of this, the story actually changes. David now takes matters into his own hands.

It's about David. And he's in the wilderness once again. That's where he's trying to find a safe place. It's just the setting. It's the context. He's not there because he necessarily wants to be, but that's where he needs to be.

You need to know that the wilderness is not, by any stretch of the matter, a safe place. It's full of outlaws and outcasts and criminals. There's all kinds of criminal activity that goes on there.

[6 : 52] He's there as a Messiah figure, growing, I think, in what it means to be a servant and also to be a shepherd, not only literally and practically, but also of God's people. And so he's there in the wilderness, not, I think, as a place to test and find out how strong and resilient David is.

That's not why he's there. He's in the place so that he can discover not his strength, but the strength of the Lord, the strength of God, God's faithful ways, God's faithful working in and through his life, God doing for him what David cannot do for himself and what he'll not be able to do for his people in the future, but only God can, but yes, through him.

And I think that it's in this wilderness place that David and we meet the presence of God. And as we'll see through another person sometimes, and our ways are then turned towards the wisdom and actually the goodness of God.

We are confronted at times with God through someone else. So David is in the wilderness and he hears about a feast.

His ears are perked. This is in verse 4. In verse 7 then, he then makes a plan to get in on this feast because they're in the wilderness and they need to provide for themselves, their basic needs, their one or two or three square meals a week or a day.

[8 : 26] I don't know. And so he identifies 10 men to go to a man by the name of Nabal because Nabal is the one who's throwing the feast. And it's a realistic request when you think about it.

Actually, David was caring for Nabal's sheep and their men when they were in the wilderness. And they were out there. They were feeding them. None of them were missed. None of them were stolen.

All the men were safe in David's keeping. And so it's realistic and he sends them off to Nabal. Gets to Nabal. And Nabal is true to his name.

Nabal actually means fool. You turn with me back to verse 2. So we read, And there was a man whose name was, a man who was in Maon, whose business was in Carmel.

And the man was very rich and he had 3,000 sheep and 1,000 goats. He was shearing his sheep in Carmel. But the man, drumming down, was harsh and badly behaved.

[9 : 34] So when David's men are sent by him to go and make this request, what do you think he's going to say to them? As we go down a little bit further in the story in verse 10 and 11 and onward, Nabal just raises the question, Who is this David?

He just plays stupid. And then he makes matters even worse. Even though he denies that he doesn't know David, the next thing he says, Who is this son of Jesse?

And when David sent his servants to Nabal, he didn't send them with that information. So he gives himself away. He actually lies. He knows who this David is.

How could he not in some ways? Right? Have to have his head buried in the sand to not know what David has done. But so he plays stupid. And then he lies.

And then, of course, he denies the request. And Craig just read it. Great. You know, why should I give them all these things that are my possessions? He just says, My, my, my, my, my, my, my, my.

[10 : 39] He thinks that everything is his. He won't give anything over to David. And so he proves himself to what he is. He's actually a fool.

He can't be generous. He can't give to David. And some suggest actually that he's an alliance and very well may be. And one might understand this with Saul. Saul's his man, not David.

And David, as we know, is ticked off. He is actually quite livid. As soon as his men return, what do they do? He tells them to strap on their swords.

The rest of the soldiers to strap on their swords. And David now will strap on his sword as well. And they're fit for a battle.

They're out there. They're ready to go. David, David is completely raged. I just want to turn you to verse 22 for a second where the first reading ended.

[11 : 41] Just to show you how livid David is. But also so that you can appreciate completely and fully then when Abigail comes on the scene what she's going to do. Verse 22, read this.

This is the ESV translation. We call it the dynamic equivalent. And so this is what David starts up in verse 21. I'll read there. 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. That's why David's actually upset. It's not that, you know, he didn't think that, he thought that he deserved that.

But the issue is that he's returning David evil for the good that David did to him. And now listen to this. This is where his ire really rises. It says, God, do so to the enemies of David and more also, if by morning I leave so much as one male of all them who belong to him.

Does that sound pretty angry and agitated and aggravated to you? Do you see how mad he is? Let me suggest that that actually doesn't represent what the text says at all.

[12 : 56] He's really madder than that. Now this is the KJV translation. I didn't share this with the congregation this morning, but I think you might be up to it. You know, the Queen's English, okay?

This is what the KJV says. So and more also, the difference is really subtle, but I think you'll get it. So and more also do God unto the enemies of David. If I leave all that pertain to him by the morning light, any that pisseth against the wall.

That's the KJV. He's furious. He's really livid. He's not going to let this go unnoticed.

May not have given him food, the food that he had in some ways a right to. And I'm sure that Nabal was giving food to other hands that were hired and not hired. But he won't give it to David.

And David is furious. So David sets out. And in the meantime, one of Nabal's servants goes to Nabal's wife, Abigail, who is no fool.

[14 : 09] We're told about her early on. And he says, and he represents David's case, all that David actually did for Nabal and Nabal's household.

And so then, in this case, Abigail takes some action. She gathers up some food. She sends some servants ahead.

She doesn't say anything to her husband about this. And the reason is, but quite clearly, according to the servant, is that he just won't listen.

So why bother even telling him? That's what fools do. They don't listen. But even though David will not suffer a fool gladly in this case, David is no fool.

He's about to make a big mistake because not only does he unjustly accuse, we'll grant him that, but his will doesn't meet the infraction that he wants to kill Nabal and all these men.

[15 : 16] So Abigail gets on a donkey. She goes towards David. She hits him off at the pass. And even though David wasn't going to stand for this kind of treatment and behavior, there she is.

And she comes. And this is the centerpiece of the whole passage now. We'll dig into verses 23 through 31. Okay? The first thing that she does when she comes to him, she comes in this great humility.

She lays herself down. Just reminds me of the passage when Peter encounters Jesus, doesn't he? And he says to Jesus, away from me, for I am a sinful man.

He just bows down straight to Jesus. And so here's Abigail. And she does something that's very similar. She falls before him. She falls at his feet. She lays herself at his mercy.

He's the one with a sword on, after all. And she has nothing. But some food that she sent ahead. And then she makes four requests of him. Very, very significant requests.

[16:24] The first one is this in verse 25. She says, Let not my Lord regard this worthless fellow. In other words, you're saying, look, pay no attention to Nabal.

Nabal actually means a fool. Sure, he's rich. He's got all these things. They're his possessions. He thinks that he's more than he is. He thinks that he's something that he's not. But look, make no mind of him.

Pay him no attention. He is worthless. He is foolish. Don't do this. Don't do this to yourself, as it were. And she'll name what it is that he would do to himself later. But whatever you do, David, don't do this.

And in fact, if you do this, I think she's saying. And we could go back to this earlier in Samuel, that he would be breaking the law. And of course he would. Murdering someone doesn't actually, isn't merited by someone who doesn't show you generosity or give you the food and your basic needs that you deserve.

That's the first thing. The second thing is, on in verse 26, she basically says, let your enemies go or at least show them some generosity. Right?

[17:32] When she says, now then, my Lord, as the Lord lives and as your soul lives, because the Lord has restrained you from blood guilt and from saving with your own hand.

Now then, let your enemies and those who seek to do evil to you, sorry, evil to my Lord, be as Nabal. It's not just Nabal, but all of his servants.

And the reason is, in the beginning of that verse, because two things, the Lord has restrained your blood guilt, one, and two, also from saving yourself with your own hand.

David, don't do it. Don't spill blood. Don't try to save yourself. And therefore, whatever you do, don't kill these men. The third request she makes is just accept the gift.

Accept the gift. She's bringing this food. If you look at it, it's not enough for 600 men. He goes with 400 men. He leaves 200 behind to protect their possessions.

[18:32] She sends out some food. You can look at it, but it's not enough food for them. But at any rate, she says, please, please, just accept this food. Okay? If he accepts this from Abigail, I think that it just makes it that much more difficult than to go.

And wipe out all of Nabal and Nabal's household. But the big request is the one that follows in verses 28 to 31.

She plain and simply, in verse 28, asks David to forgive. See it? Just one sentence. Please forgive the trespass of your servant.

It's very interesting. She's made herself his servant. She's actually identified her guilt with her husband. And now she's saying to him, forgive your servant.

Please just forgive me. There's more to it than that, though. Her petition is actually fivefold. And the reason is that she's giving a picture of the future, a promise for David, that if he goes this route, he may forfeit the whole thing.

[19:45] And it's just a fabulous picture that she paints. The first one is this, that David has actually been told earlier about not only his anointing, but that he may have a house that will be enduring eternal, a sure house.

And so she says this, For the Lord will certainly make my Lord a sure house. Don't do this, David. Forgive. Because you won't have the sure house if you do.

Right? The second one is that the battle belongs to the Lord. David's taking things up in his own hands. He's going to do the fighting. He's going to save his people. Right? But, she says, because my Lord is fighting the battles of the Lord.

That's the second reason. Fight the battles of the Lord. This actually isn't a battle of the Lord. If it is, leave it to him. And he'll handle that later, which he does. Right? The next thing she says to him

about this beautiful, this promised future.

Right? Is that he's going to be made a prince. So she continues on. Because my Lord is fighting the battles of the Lord as you live. But, if men rise up to pursue you and to seek your life, the life of my Lord shall be bound up in the bundle of the living as the care of the Lord your God.

[20 : 56] And the lives of your enemies shall sling out from the hollow of the sling. That's the transition to the next point. 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.

David, forgive. You don't forgive. You're going to forfeit this too. He'll end up being just like Saul. Right? He'll be appointed prince. The two other reasons that she gives is, one, to eliminate the cause of grief and pangs of the conscience for bloodshed.

And finally, finally, this is the big issue. David, vengeance is not yours. It's the Lord. She says it there at the end of that.

Right? She says, My Lord shall have no cause of grief or pangs of conscience for having shed blood without cause or for my Lord taking vengeance himself. Now, David, don't do this.

Forgive. Because this is the road that you'll go down or you'll forfeit if you don't. Don't. It's just a beautiful picture of this woman who is full of wisdom.

[22 : 03] She's described as being beautiful, which actually means she's of good form. She's of great form, but not only good form, but she's discerning and wise. When she makes this case with David, she uses the Lord six times.

It's just all about the Lord. The Lord, the Lord, the Lord, the Lord. It's what the Lord is doing. David, it's not about you. It's about the Lord. Leave it to him.

Don't take matters into your own hands, David. It's also a beautiful picture just for two of the reasons, which I thought was an aside, but maybe it's not.

It is a beautiful picture of what social justice looks like. Social justice often kind of comes on like a form of good works. And you give people what they deserve. That's what's just and right and true. She does that. She gets the food. She has this good work, and she gives it to him. But she doesn't leave it at just good works. She also gives good words because it's all about the Lord.

[23 : 05] And she confronts David as a servant in humility but calls him to forgiveness. So you have these good works and good words.

It's both. But the good words also draws my attention to another thing, which is that it's just great pastoral care that she gives to David. I think of pastoral care at times as people in crisis.

And when they're in crisis, coming alongside of them, praying with them, caring for them, practically, physically, spiritually. It is no fault of their own. It's just a crisis. Everyone faces a crisis. But there are some times when pastoral care has to have this element to it as well. And she does this for David. He's about to sin. In fact, he already has because he has the will to kill another man. He's rebelling. And she comes to him and she calls him to forgiveness. And that's exactly what David does. He forgives and he repents.

[24 : 05] And he realizes that he was in danger of having guilt, blood guilt on his hands and avenging himself. It comes actually in verse 32 as David says to Abigail when he's realized the wrong that he was about to do that he'd already done in his heart.

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 blood guilt and from avenging myself with my own hand.

Look, David didn't have a right to go and kill a man, but he had a right to be angry, I think, because of what he did for this other man. And it wasn't actually returned to him.

I would be angry. I would be hurt. But the Bible says don't sin in your anger. He was angry, but he was about to sin in a very big way. And he would have had blood guilt on his hand and he would have taken revenge and matters for himself.

So I think that it's important that we actually see here, even in that, that David is this suffering Messiah. He is the Messiah figure that God wants to use to save his people, but not in the way that David had imagined.

[25 : 28] And he suffers because of being falsely accused, of being actually a rebel like all the other outcasts that were in the wilderness. He wasn't a rebel for that reason.

He was a rebel for another reason. But nevertheless, David actually is this God-anointed person that God will use to show what it means to save his people.

Not because David's the one who's saving them, but because the Lord is the one who saves them. And it should just remind us and draw our attention to Jesus, shouldn't it? Jesus, too. He suffered insults and injustices. He was criticized for eating with outcasts and sinners. He was accused of being the devil himself. He was the subject of constant criticism right from the beginning, as they said, can anything good, can anything good come from Nazareth? He suffered continually, unjustly, before he suffered on the cross. And so we see that in David, too. But David actually is not sinless, and Jesus is.

[26 : 37] And Jesus actually becomes the one who takes our guilt when he dies on the cross. He's the one who is broken. He is the one who bleeds and dies, suffers before, suffers during. He's the one who accounts for the blood guilt that's actually on our hands. Jesus is also different from David in this.

And that is where David tried to take things into his own hands and do it his way. Jesus did only thing. The only thing that Jesus did was God's way. And I'll just close with this from John chapter 5, verse 16.

This is a scene where Jesus has actually healed someone on the Sabbath day, and the Pharisees are livid. Passage reads, And this was why the Jews persecuted Jesus, because he did this on the Sabbath.

But Jesus answered them, My father is working still, and I am working. This was why the Jews thought all the more to kill him, because he had not only broken the Sabbath, but also called God his father, making himself equal to God.

[27 : 53] And Jesus said to them, Truly, truly, I say to you, the son can do nothing of his own accord, but only what he sees the father doing. For whatever he does, the son does likewise.

The son only does the father's will. I suspect there's times when he just stood there and did nothing. To see God's work of grace. I think of him before Pilate, not answering questions, just standing there and doing nothing. Although probably doing everything that he possibly could, just to stand there.

as he suffered and died and then rose again. Speak to you in the name of the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Amen.