

The Christ Must Suffer IV

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Preacher: Ryan Cook

[0 : 0 0] Lord, we thank you for your word tonight. We thank you for the Bible that leads and guides us and speaks to us of who Jesus is and what he's done. And Lord, I pray that tonight on this text you'll help me to preach and that your spirit would be here with us because if your spirit isn't here, we're just talking.

We're not preaching. We pray this in the strong name of Jesus. Amen. Well, folks, we're in 1 Samuel chapter 25.

And it's kind of an interesting bit of scripture, isn't it? Before we dive into it, I need to give you a few little bits of framework as we kind of launch into the text.

And then I'm going to break it up into a few, as Aaron Roberts calls it, a few scenes. And then I'll conclude and we'll all go home, I'm sure. So a few background bits.

Samuel 25 is, 1 Samuel chapter 25 is sandwiched between 1 Samuel 24 and 1 Samuel 26. It's brilliant, eh?

[1 : 1 1] That was a joke, right? I'll give you the cue. I'll put my hand up or something and you'll know. Humor's a little dry. Sandwiched between 1 Samuel chapter 24 and 26.

And in chapter 24, we have the story of David with Saul in the Etangedi. You remember the story, right? Where David and his 600 men are in a cave.

And Saul comes into the cave to relieve himself, to go to the bathroom. And somehow, I don't know how you picture this scene, but like 600 burly dudes in a cage.

And then we got Saul walking into the edge of the cave. I mean, I can't imagine what David was thinking. You know, they're all standing around doing whatever they're doing in the cave. And then all of a sudden, Saul walks in. I wonder if he went, shh, you know, 600 guys.

All of a sudden, you know, the silence enters the room. And he's got Saul there. And he walks up to the edge of Saul's garment, wherever it was, whether he had taken it off or whether he's wearing it. He walks up to the edge of Saul's garment and he cuts off a little piece.

[2 : 2 0] Remember that story? And then he shows Saul, hey, I cut a little piece of your robe off. And Saul acknowledges that, hey, listen, David, you someday are going to be king.

It's one of the first great acknowledgments we get from Saul of what God is doing. And then chapter 26, which we didn't get to read tonight. Right? Chapter 26 is a very similar story where Saul is chasing David.

And David catches them while they're asleep. It says, the Lord put them to sleep. And then Saul walks into the camp. And he steals Saul's spear and his water jug.

And then he makes his way across to the other side of a ravine or something. And he yells at Saul, hey, listen, I got your spear and your water jug. I could have killed you.

So I could have killed you in chapter 24 and I could have killed you right now. So right in between these two stories, we have this story of Nabal. It's kind of peculiar.

[3 : 24] I mean, why not just run those two stories together? Why is this Nabal story right in the middle? Well, I think it's trying to communicate actually something very similar to what chapter 24 and 26 are trying to communicate.

As further context for us as we're trying to look at this passage, we need to realize that at this point, the trajectory for David is positive.

People are starting to really like David. Even though he's a rebel and he's on the outside of Saul's kingdom, people like David. We've heard lots in the text already, the people loved David.

So David's probably kind of seen like, you know, the king in waiting. He's on his way up. It's kind of, as a reader, you're reading along and you're realizing, okay, it's only a matter of time before the inevitable takes place.

And David gets this position of leadership. We don't know how he's going to get at this point. But these stories kind of come in that trajectory. That's the direction that we're moving.

[4 : 28] So right at the beginning here in one of the first verses, it says that Samuel dies. Why does it say that Samuel died? Why is that an important bit of information? I think it's because in verse 20 of the previous chapter, we've heard Saul make this acknowledgement that, hey, David's going to be king.

And now we have this thing where the text is telling us that Samuel died. It's almost like the tide is beginning to turn. There's a new era dawning for David.

There's a new wave coming in. Samuel's now dead. And the work that Samuel meant to do with his life is somehow about to come to pass. And then in scene number two, after we hear about Samuel dying, we get introduced to two different characters.

We get introduced to Nabal and Abigail. And I think these two characters are there to give us two different pictures of how to relate to God's king, to the one that God has chosen.

And I think it's really important that in this passage, we pick up on some of the nuances that are going on here. The first person that we hear about is Nabal.

[5 : 42] So what does the text tell us about Nabal? Well, one of the things the text does is before we even hear that his name is Nabal, we hear that this guy is like wealthy.

He's got some bling and some things. He's extravagantly rich. This guy is probably somewhat of a ruler over a territory.

Probably over a particular territory in Hebron there. And he's a powerful man. He's a rich, rich guy. And then the next thing it tells us is that this guy Nabal was harsh and badly behaved.

Harsh and badly behaved. So we've got a rich, an extravagantly rich, powerful, badly behaved, harsh man. And then it tells us that his name was Nabal.

And we know that Nabal's name means fool. So we've got this extravagantly rich and powerful man that is harsh and badly behaved.

[6 : 47] And he's a fool. What is significant about him being a fool? Well, I think, you know, when we hear the word fool, what we think of, we think of someone who's a little bit insipid.

Somebody who's, you know, stupid or intellectually a little dull or doesn't quite get it. Or maybe doesn't get my jokes. See, you guys are in on that one, hey?

There's no fooling around now. But this is not the way the Hebrews saw this word fool. A fool, in this context, was not somebody who was just intellectually dull.

This isn't trying to tell us that Nabal was silly, dull, insipid, intellectually not quite on top of it. It's trying to tell us something different. A fool, in this context, is somebody who doesn't recognize God's authority.

You remember Psalm 14? A fool says in his heart that there is no God. A fool will not acknowledge that there's a God who rules and reigns and who is sovereign over the world.

[7 : 56] And I think we're supposed to pick up on that, that Nabal is a fool. And it's not just that he's a little dull. But he's a fool in the sense that he is not someone who acknowledges God or what God is doing.

I think we're supposed to pick up on that. So we're supposed to see Nabal in this light. And the next person it talks about is it talks about Abigail, his wife. What does it say about her?

It says that she is discerning and beautiful. She's like the opposite of Nabal. Maybe you've seen some folks and you're like, man, those folks are married and they're opposites.

Well, this is like the biblical example of the extreme opposites. So if we're supposed to see Nabal as a fool, somebody who doesn't acknowledge God's rulership in his life, Abigail's like the opposite.

She's someone who's open to the rule of God. She's not foolish. She's discerning. She's understanding. She was wise. It seems that the narrator of this story is trying to get us to look at these things.

[9 : 04] We're supposed to see these two contrasted people because we're going to meet them in a few seconds. We're going to meet them as they react to the King David, God's King.

So what happens next? Well, in scene number three, verses four to eight, David is living in the wilderness and he's in the wilderness, in the desert, and he's surviving mostly by, I don't know, like donations.

He's kind of like a church planter, right? Somebody in the wilderness surviving by donations. And Nabal's guys are out in the wilderness and they had brought all their sheep out there and David and his men had acted generously and graciously towards Nabal's employees.

They had protected Nabal's business by watching out for his sheep, protecting the men, and just generally caring for these folks that may have been victims to wild animals or whatever the case.

The text tells us that David and his men watched out for Nabal. And then it says that Nabal, it comes to the time when, it's kind of like year end, when Nabal is doing a big sheep shearing.

[10 : 24] I mean, to us, you know, in our culture, this is not a big deal, right? I mean, maybe for Reverend Roberts from New Zealand, sheep shearing is a big deal. But I mean, to me, living here in this urban center, I don't do a lot of sheep shearing.

And probably, I'm guessing, you don't do that either, or very often at least. But sheep shearing in this culture, man, it was like a big deal, right?

It was like, it was like the year end party. It was like the time of the year. It was kind of like, it's kind of like, you know, like the Christmas party when a big corporation throws the Christmas party and they invited everybody and there's like lots of food there and they're lavishing gifts on the employees.

Maybe this isn't the place where you work, but there is places out there that do this type of thing and I'll use them as an illustration. It's just kind of like what was going on. There's plenty of food.

They're shearing the sheep. It's like year end and all the employees are involved in a big feast, a big party. So there's lots of resource.

[11 : 30] There's plenty to eat. And David hears about this and goes, guys, you hungry? And they're like, yeah, man, we're hungry. 600 guys in the woods, all big burly folks.

They're hungry. So he says, well, let's send a message to Nabal and his guys and let's ask if we can join the party because we were good to him.

So David picks some of his servants and he sends them out to Nabal and he says specifically, listen, make sure when you get to Nabal, make sure to bless him.

Make sure to speak words of peace to him so that he knows that we're wanting to be invited to this party. It's kind of awkward. I mean, we're asking you to invite us to this party.

So he sends his servants. They make their way towards Nabal and the big sheep shearing festivity, the big party. And in this next scene, scene number four, we get Nabal's reaction to David.

[12 : 35] So remember, who is Nabal? Nabal's a fool. Nabal is somebody who doesn't acknowledge God. Nabal is somebody who's dull to God.

He doesn't acknowledge God's rule. So what is his response? What is this Nabal's response? Well, Nabal's response is sarcastic.

It's demeaning. It's rude. And it's absolutely not acknowledging the person that God sees David to be. He says, who is this David?

Who is this son of Jesse? I mean, this is not Nabal inquiring as to who David actually is.

Nabal would have known who David was. People knew who David was. David was kind of a big deal. Remember the whole Goliath thing? You know, where he like killed him and then cut off his head with the sword?

[13 : 36] Like David was a big deal. People knew David. Nabal knew David. We know later on, Abigail knew who David was. She makes reference to this whole Goliath incident in her speech, doesn't she?

So Nabal knows who David is. And he insults him by basically saying, like, who is this guy? Who is this David? Insults him. Who does this guy think he is?

When I first read this, I thought, man, this guy is bold. Because do you remember, have you read about, like, David's mighty men? You know, we hear the word servants, right? But these aren't like servants, like, you know, 5'8", Metro men from Vancouver.

This is like David's mighty men. Check out 2 Samuel chapter 23. Read the account of David's mighty men. Folks, folks, one of David's mighty men got thrown in a pit with a lion on a snowy day and he ripped the lion apart.

Another one of his guys fought 800 guys and took them out. Like, David's mighty men were like, they were, it tells us, right?

[14 : 45] They're like a bunch of disgruntled, discontented outsiders. It was like, it was like a bunch of prisoners kind of let loose. And this is David's guys.

Like this, David's got like a motley crew. And so he sends some of this motley crew to go talk to Nabal. And I can imagine him saying, okay, listen, fellas, I'm going to send you out on a very important mission.

And I need you to not be yourself. I need you to be peaceable when you get to Nabal. I need you to be, I need you to be gracious to him. And I need you to make sure that he knows that we're coming in peace.

And we just want to, we just want to be included in the party. We're hungry. And he owes it to us. I just want you to send that message. And this motley crew, you can imagine them.

I mean, this is the guy, you took him off, you're dead. And Nabal is so bold. He says to David's mighty men, you know, who is this David guy? He basically calls him a rebel.

[15 : 50] He calls him a rebel. Who's this, who's this, you know, there's all kinds of thieves and, and people rebelling against, Saul running around out there.

Who does this David guy think he is? Come asking for an invitation to this party. What we can see here, folks, is that by doing this, Nabal is putting himself in Saul's camp, resisting God's man and what God is doing.

So in conclusion, he's, he's not acknowledging who David really is, the king in waiting. Instead, he insults him and rejects him.

And we're left thinking, man, what is going to happen to this guy who rejects David? He's not just rejecting David. In doing this, he's rejecting God. Nabal has effectively positioned himself on the outside of what God is doing.

I think that's what we're supposed to get here as we read this text. And then it, and then it has this next little part about David's reaction to Nabal.

[17 : 01] What's David's reaction? Well, the servants return. They say, listen, David, didn't go so well. Nabal dissed you. He doesn't like you, and he's not inviting us to the party.

What's David's reaction? David says, get your swords. And I guarantee you, with the folks that David ran with, with David's mighty men, there was no hesitation.

This is like, this is business time. This is go time. Nabal's dead. These guys are ticked, and they are going to make their way towards Nabal.

Nothing's going to stop them. What's interesting here is that in chapter 24, we see David and his reaction to Saul. You remember how he reacts to Saul?

He comes up behind Saul. He cuts off the edge of his robe. And then it actually says, it says that his heart kind of hurt that he had even done that.

[18 : 03] So he's like nervous about even cutting off Saul's robe. And then in this, in this instance, what's he doing? Man, he's like, strap on your sword. It's go time. We're going to kill some folks today.

You see, it's like we're seeing two different Davids. One David is nervous about cutting off, cutting the robe. Then this David is like, let's kill some folks.

But why, why is David so anxious to get out there and kill some people in this instance? Well, it's because this is what powerful men do.

There is nothing abnormal, especially in this culture, about David's reaction to Nabal. There is nothing abnormal about what he's doing.

You insult a powerful man in this culture, that means war. You insult somebody who's a king or a potential king, I mean, that means war.

[19 : 04] Those are fighting words. The real problem here is not necessarily David's reaction. I think the real problem here is that this is not the way God's king is supposed to react.

This is not the way he's supposed to do it. So up next, scene number six, we get this little story of Abigail. So if Nabal means fool, somebody who will not submit to God, somebody who ignores God's authority, somebody who says in his heart that there is no God, then Abigail is the opposite.

She's wise and she's potentially ready to submit herself to God. She's not a rule unto herself. I think we're supposed to see that contrast.

We need to see that as she's coming to David. So what happens here? Well, first of all, one of Nabal's servants comes to Abigail and says, Listen, Nabal, he's dumb.

Like, Abigail, he has done something really stupid. You see, David and his men, they protected us when we were out with the sheep.

[20 : 23] They made sure nothing bad happened to us. They were like for us. They were gracious to us. They were merciful towards us. They acted in kindness towards us.

And they came to the party and they wanted something. And Nabal said, forget it. You know what? He calls his master Nabal. He calls him a worthless man.

It's like calling him a son of evil. This is kind of important, this servant speech. Here's why. Because it's kind of like justifying David's reaction.

David was just in the way that he reacted to Nabal by saying, Let's strap on our swords. He's been insulted. He's been insulted. He's been insulted.

The problem is, I guess, though, still, that this is not how God's king is supposed to react. But I think this servant speech is there to make us, or to help us think, about the fact that David is justified in what he's about to do.

[21 : 33] He's been good to them and now Nabal's going to get what he deserves. I want to point out three quick things in Abigail's speech. Three things that emerge out of her speech.

First of all, when she gets to David, the first thing she does is she repents. She repents for her foolish husband. She acknowledges, man, this guy's actions were wrong.

She acknowledges in contrast to her husband that David is God's chosen king. That's what we see in this speech.

Her husband rejected David, but she acknowledges him. She says, listen, God is going to set you up as king. Nabal's rejected you.

Abigail is embracing. She says, my husband's a fool for doing this, for rejecting you. Notice also that her speech is like, it's like a prophecy, isn't it?

[22 : 37] It's like speaking of the present. There's like this repentance thing going on, but it's also speaking into the future. What is to come? We get the sense in her speech that Abigail sees herself as somebody coming to intercept David from doing something that God's king should not do.

She words it like it. She talks about, she says that, listen, I've come to prevent you from saving with your own hand. From saving with your own hand.

God's king shouldn't save himself with his own hand. God's king is not supposed to avenge himself.

This is a theme in this passage. And then next, after Abigail's beautiful speech, her repentance, her acknowledgement that David is the king, and her encouragement that he should not save himself with his own hand, David relents.

He like backs totally off. And you'll notice in David's talk that he says, listen, Abigail, this is real good. And I'm really thankful that you did this because I wanted to save myself with my own hand.

[24 : 03] He repeats this thing. So we get this sense like this is a big deal that David wanted to save himself with his own hand. This is the real problem here, wasn't it?

The problem was not that David wasn't justified in what he was doing. The problem was that he was going to do something that God's king was not supposed to do. Namely, justify himself or avenge himself with his own hand.

Save himself with his own hand. Then what happens? Well, Abigail goes back to Nabal. And Nabal is like drunk as a skunk. And he's like totally out of touch with what's going on.

He's like totally clueless. I mean, his wife has been out there saving his behind, getting this raging army to back down. And Nabal is like partying it up.

And he's so drunk she can't even talk to him that day. And so she said, so the text says that she lets the wine go out of him. She waits until he sobers up the next morning.

[25 : 05] And then she says to him, listen, this is what happened. And you were like this close to death. And then it says that Nabal's heart became like stone.

We don't know what that totally means. We don't know if like Nabal had a heart attack. There's a very good chance to go. And I think that, you know, some of the commentaries lean towards suggesting that Nabal had had, you know, a lot of lamb sausage and it was high in cholesterol and that this was a heart attack.

But I can't speculate that far. So something happened to Nabal's heart. And ten days later, Nabal kicks the bucket. We don't have to speculate, though, about how this came to pass.

We know, whether it's a heart attack or whatever, we know God did it. God did it. So then, the interesting thing is then we have David saying, having like kind of like an aha moment.

We praise this prayer, thanking the Lord for avenging his enemies. It's like it's like it's sinking in that God is always going to avenge him.

[26 : 21] That God is going to take care of God's business on David's behalf. And then we're told that David takes Abigail as his wife.

And we're also told that, I don't actually know if the reading went this far tonight, but we're also told that he takes another wife, Ahinah, whatever, Ahinahom, him, home.

You know, it's in there, right? You can just read it later for yourself. It starts with an A. You'll find it somewhere near the end. David takes Abigail and this A girl as his wives.

Why is this in there? Why does the text tell us that he married Ahinahom and Abigail? Well, because probably when David took Abigail as his wife, he also got all of Nabal's stuff.

David possibly also got control over the little territory that Nabal had previously ruled over. So this is like a way of telling us that God himself was advancing David's cause.

[27 : 34] David had let God avenge him and now God was advancing David's cause. And that's why I think this little reference to Ahinahom is even in there. Because we're seeing that God is giving territory over to David.

He's giving him alliances. We're seeing the shift happening. Two things I think we need to take from this passage and then I'm going to conclude.

After reading this, one of the things I think we're supposed to think and we're supposed to get the illusion to is that this Nabal guy is like Saul.

He's a rich man. He's powerful. But he's a fool. He's a fool not in that he's stupid or not that he's not handsome and not that he's not charismatic and not that he's, you know, not a stellar guy.

He's a fool in that he's not acknowledging what God is doing and he's resisting what God is doing. We're supposed to see that Nabal is like Saul and that he's like Saul also in the fact that Saul's days are numbered.

[28 : 52] Saul's days are numbered. Someday David is going to take this whole thing over. Number two, I think at the core of this narrative is also an insight about God's king.

God's king will not avenge himself in the way that people expect him to through power and might. He will not save himself with his own hand.

Rather, the methods that he will employ to come into his kingdom will be counter-cultural and counter-intuitive. However David's going to come into his kingdom, it's going to be different than the way other people would want to come into their kingdoms or the way that they would come into their kingdom.

I think that in a sense this prepares us also, this text prepares us to think about the way that Jesus came into his kingdom. I think we see this counter-intuitive method, which David employed, also employed in the great king, Jesus.

The method that he used to come into his kingdom was definitely not the one his associates would have preferred, is it? For the most part, they didn't even have a paradigm for understanding Jesus.

[30 : 11] Do you remember all the conversations that Jesus had? You know, where his guys would say to him, listen, Jesus, is this the time when you're going to come into your kingdom?

Is this the moment when you're going to do it? Remember the other conversation where he's got two of his disciples fighting? They're like, man, who's going to sit at your right hand and your left hand?

They're thinking that Jesus is going to establish a natural kingdom. See, in this moment of time, in the times of Jesus, there is like a real undercurrent of resistance from the Jews against the tyranny of Rome.

Many people, when they were thinking about a Messiah to come and free him, they weren't thinking about, save me from my sins. They were thinking somebody who's going to stand up to Rome, overthrow them, and set us up as a natural kingdom in the here and now.

You can also see this. I mean, you remember what Peter did, right? Like, when they came to arrest Jesus, what does Peter do? Peter, like, pulls out the sword, and he's, like, ready to chuck the knuckles.

[31 : 22] And when they come to grab Jesus, he, like, hacks off the servant's ear. Like, he thinks this means war. What does Jesus do?

What is his counterintuitive reaction to this? What does he do? Jesus reaches down and he picks up the ear and he puts it back on. I love it.

This kingdom, whatever kingdom Jesus is going to bring, was not going to come like how everybody expected it. The interesting part of the Christian story is that Jesus smashed expectations.

And instead of rising to a position of earthly power, instead, instead of taking the kingdom by force, he goes the opposite direction. He rushes full on, headlong, not into life and power, but into death.

The way others thought that this kingdom was going to come about was not the way that God intended to bring it.

[32 : 33] The way that he intended to bring it was counterintuitive. Instead of overthrowing Rome, Jesus overthrew a power that was deeper, darker, and more evil, and more powerful than Rome could ever be.

He overthrew death itself. This is not the way that people thought the kingdom was going to come about. And if the disciples would have caught on to this sooner, they might have said, you know what?

This is not good news. Jesus, this is foolishness. This gospel that we preach does sound a little counterintuitive.

It does sound, some ears, like foolishness. So as I close, let me just give you one last thought. One insight from this story that I think speaks deeply to the predicament of our discipleship is as David was beginning to learn, and as David was beginning to learn in this story, the key to relating to God is not saving yourself by your own power, your own money, your own status, your own charisma.

The key to saving yourself is by trusting, clinging, and falling into the arms of God, the arms of Christ for our salvation, letting Him avenge us, letting Him bring about our justification.

[34 : 16] What is required from us is not charisma, power, or anything like that. It's not perfection. It's trust. I think that's the lesson David learned, and I think that's the lesson that we too need to learn.

Amen.