

God Saves Those Who Don't Save Themselves

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Preacher: Dave Nannery

[0:00] Well, it's good to have you all here today. My name is Dave Nannery. I'm one of the associate pastors here at Squamish Baptist Church. I spoke in French for the very first time.

His update. I just finished preaching my first French sermon. A professional said he gave me 95%. The big joke was, at the start of the sermon, I told them I've never preached in French before. However, instead of saying preached, I said, I've never sinned in French. Well, there's a first time for everything.

Well, let me pray for us. And then we are going to continue with a learning from 1 Samuel chapter 25, which Chris so gallantly read for us.

And we are going to learn all about the work that God does in our lives. Let me pray. Thank you, Father, that we have this opportunity to gather together.

[1:29] We are here, just as our brothers and sisters in Quebec do. May you bless us now, just as you have blessed them, with the ministry of your word. Lord, we need to hear it. We have a lot of ideas about the world that well up from within ourselves.

And oftentimes they lead us astray. Lord, we need to know what you have done to save us so that we stop saving ourselves.

Lord God, you are the one with mercy. And so I pray, give us eyes to see, ears to hear, a heart to understand the good news that you have in store for us through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Amen. Well, the story that Chris read for us in 1 Samuel chapter 25 is a story about three main individuals, David, Abigail, and Nabal.

It's a 3,000-year-old story set in the ancient Middle East. And conflict was ever-present there just as it is now. And cultural differences aside, this story to me actually is very interesting because it feels, as I was reading it, I was like, this sounds and feels a lot like an old Western movie, right?

[2:46] You've got our hero. You've got his posse on the run. They're wandering through the dusty wilderness of the southwestern frontier. You've got the nasty local kingpin who insults them and mistreats them.

You've got our hero. He's rushing toward a violent showdown between the two of them. You've got the brilliant and the beautiful wife of that kingpin who reaches out to the hero and saves the day with her wisdom.

The villain dies in the end. The hero marries the widow. You know, you just replace shepherds with cowboys, put a tumbleweed or two to drift along as everyone's talking, and you're all set.

We've got a Western movie. And at this core, this old Western story, it's actually a piece of history that God has given to us, that God has preserved for us to read and to consider.

Because this is a part of the work that God has done in history to show us how he saves us. This is how God prepared the way for giving his own son so that we would be saved.

[3:56] He gave these Old Testament stories and histories to prepare the way for Jesus Christ so that we would learn that God saves those who don't save themselves.

Now, God saves those who don't save themselves, which may be counterintuitive sometimes in our culture. Now, we've already read this chapter, but you'll want to have your Bible open there because I'll keep referring back to it as we travel through this passage.

And if you're using one of those Bibles or ushers handout, that'll be page 247. So I'm going to give a little context and, well, then we'll saddle up, right?

So this is all happening at a low point in the life of David. This is before David became king of Israel. God had sent his prophet Samuel to anoint David as Israel's next king.

But in verse 1, we see that Samuel has died. That would have been a big blow to David because Samuel was one of David's best supporters.

[5:00] He was the one who gave spiritual authenticity to David's future reign. There is already a king on the throne of Israel. King Saul, he is a man who is suspicious, unstable, violent, and foolish.

Thankfully, you know, there were never any world leaders after King Saul that were ever like that. But David, David used to be one of Saul's loyal warriors.

But now Saul is suspicious that David is going to try to take his throne away by force. Now, David has repeatedly, up to this point, 1 Samuel, he has had opportunity after opportunity to do that. And he has always said no. He has always chosen to leave the timing in the Lord's hands. He has always told Saul that he was loyal to him, like a son. But Saul keeps coming after him again and again and again.

And so David has had to leave the heartland of Israel to wander the southern hill country of Judah, the frontier land. And canyons and crevices that David would have been familiar with in his old life as a shepherd, they are now his safe haven.

[6:18] He is wandering around with his band of warriors. He is always on the run from Saul. He is looking around for local support. And in the chapters leading up to this, sometimes he finds support. Sometimes the locals betray him to Saul.

So at the start of chapter 25, David is making an effort to befriend one of the local kingpins. He's a wealthy man. You know, he's a man, what is it?

3,000 sheep and 1,000 goats. Raise your hand if you're 3,000 sheep. If you are that, nobody. Okay, well, you know, nobody here is really wealthy like Nabal was then.

So David figures Nabal, he's from the same tribe as me. He's a wealthy man. He's a natural ally.

And so David reaches out to him, but things get ugly really fast.

Why? Because of the kind of man that Nabal is. In verse 3 we read, And what ends up happening is very significant for us because despite the fact that there is a world of cultural difference here, David is in a very different cultural situation.

[7:42] You and I have the same core problems that Nabal's household has and the same core problem that David's household has here, and we need the same help from the Lord that they needed.

First, like Nabal, you have a guilt problem. Like Nabal, you have a guilt problem. When the story begins, David sends 10 of his young men to Nabal, and they speak in the most polite and gracious manner possible.

Lots and lots of blessings. They point out that Nabal's flocks have been grazing in the same place where David's men are standing guard. As a result, Nabal has benefited from their protection.

You know, this is not the safest place. There are bands of raiders that often travel around. And so, David and his men have behaved actually in a very honorable fashion.

They have treated his flocks and trepers honorably. They've not stolen a thing. It's like the situation is almost like Nabal. Like he's got cowboys working for him, and they've got cattle.

[8:59] And they've been protected from rustlers because they set up a camp near a band of noble gunslingers. Right? Like the Magnificent Seven. And David's men tell Nabal, you know, don't just take our word for it.

Go and confirm the story with your own shepherds. And now that it's time for the sheep shearing, which that's a time of festival and celebration. And David asks Nabal, would you extend a little bit of hospitality of your own?

And his request in verse 8, it's very simple. It's courteous. It's just, it's not a heavy demand at all. He says, let my young men find favor in your eyes, for we come on a feast day.

Please give whatever you have at hand to your servants and to your son David. Now, in that culture, a good and honorable man would be expected to extend hospitality to his guests.

And how much more to a guest who has already benefited you greatly. So Nabal would be expected to say yes. Now, there are reasons that Nabal might choose to decline.

[10:09] Maybe he is afraid that King Saul will get word of this. And maybe he'll go after Nabal. Maybe Nabal decides that David is more trouble than he's worth. So he has reason to decline.

But boy, the way he declines. He makes a terrible mistake. Because he speaks to David and he proves that he is indeed harsh and badly behaved.

Because he makes David's servants wait for a while for his answer. And then in verses 10 and 11, he replies, Who is David? Who is the son of Jesse? There are many servants these days who are breaking away from their masters.

Shall I take my bread and my water and my meat that I have killed for my shearers? And give it to men who come from I do not know where. Now, again, it would be one thing to politely tell David no. But this reply is calculated to humiliate David. To return insult for blessing.

[11:14] To return shame for protection. Nabal does not consult his own shepherds at all like he's invited to do. He just reacts aggressively and escalates the situation.

That's exactly, by the way, what King Saul had a habit of doing. Nabal knows full well who David is. He knows where David comes from.

And so when he says, who is David? Who is the son of Jesse? That's not a good faith question. He's treating David with contempt. Like David is a nobody.

In fact, he's suggesting, oh, you're from that family? That trash family? He slanders David when he says, there are many servants these days who are breaking away from their masters.

David didn't break away from Saul. He was driven away. So Nabal says, he's saying that David and his men, they're not worthy of trust. They're not worthy of his generosity.

[12:13] They're not even worthy of his attention. Do I need to convince you that Nabal is sinning here? That he has a guilt problem?

He is guilty of sin. Proverbs 15, verse 28 says, The heart of the righteous ponders how to answer. But the mouth of the wicked pours out evil things.

Do we not see that? Just how often people just react and out of their heart comes out ugly stuff. And that is the kind of man Nabal is. He does not consider the consequences of his words.

He does not consider what might be right and gracious and good. He just pours out a bunch of evil and ugly things. Now I wish I could say that you and I are nothing like Nabal and we never have been.

But oh boy, there is a bit of Nabal in every one of us, isn't there? Have you ever been in a situation where you reacted and you said some ugly things to somebody else?

[13:17] No, that's not a thing that we do around here, is it? But it gets worse because God has sent us his own son as our promised and anointed king, the greater David.

And we have treated God's son the way Nabal treated David. Dismissed his commandments, disregarded his sacrifice for us, treated him as though he has no claim on our lives.

Along with Nabal, by default, we have dismissed Jesus Christ as Lord. By our actions, we've showed that we do not want this man to reign over us.

And that means that rejecting this far greater king, that is a far greater sin than what Nabal did. His harsh words against David. We've got the same problem that Nabal had.

Because we are guilty of the same sort of sin. Both against one another and against God's anointed king, Jesus Christ. Like Nabal, you have a guilt problem.

[14:25] And then second, like David, you have a shame problem. Like David, you have a shame problem. Because look at where David is now. Nabal has spoken words that are intended consciously to shame him.

Nabal's words, this isn't like a private message. Everybody is going to know what Nabal has said. Public knowledge.

A rich and powerful local kingpin is sending a message to everybody in the area of Carmel. David is a trash person. He is a nobody.

He is a disloyal renegade. He is not worth any hospitality. He is not worth trusting. He is an outlaw. He is not good for us here in the towns of southern Judah.

Has anyone ever spoken to you that way? Treated you that way? Like you are a nobody.

[15:29] Like you are trash. Maybe it is a message running around and around in your own mind. Do you ever feel like trash because of things you have said and done?

Or that other people have said and done to you? Maybe because of who you are and where you are from and what your family name is. You have got a shame problem. Shame is a big problem. Shame creates big problems for David. It doesn't just feel bad. It costs him his reputation. It costs him any hope he has of supporting himself and his men.

Shame makes David an outcast. Shame makes David an outcast. Even among his own countrymen. Maybe even among his own men that are staying with him.

Shame doesn't just feel terrible. Shame could get David killed. And that's why the Psalms, they are littered with prayers like these from Psalm 119.

[16:36] Take away from me scorn and contempt, for I have kept your testimonies. Turn away the reproach that I dread, for your rules are good. I wish I could say that you and I are not in David's situation.

But we do experience the same sort of shame that David did, don't we? We experience all the ordinary sorts of shame that come from living in a fallen and broken world where sin is ever-present, where we are feeling less than human, sometimes being treated as less than human. This is who we are at times. And for some of us, this is who we are all the time. I wish I could say that being a Christian just magically whisks all of that away.

But Jesus and his apostles are so, so clear that it doesn't. That being a Christian doesn't make it vanish. You end up experiencing the shame that your anointed King Jesus, the one who is your identity, the one who is your glory and your life, that at best he is dismissed and disregarded by a world that doesn't know him and doesn't love him.

That means that the very best and most glorious thing about you is perpetually unloved and unwanted. And you feel that in your bones, don't you?

[18:11] We've got the same problem that David did. We're experiencing the same sort of shame that he experienced. Like David, you have a shame problem.

And third, like David, you have your own ways of saving yourself. You have your own ways of saving yourself. When you're under pressure, your reflex, this is the way we are, your reflex under pressure is to fall back to your strengths, to your defaults, to the ways that have worked to save you in the past.

When David hears Nabal's message, we are told in verse 13, David said to his men, So David reacts, boom, in haste.

Nabal made it personal. David's going to keep it personal. He puts himself at the front of his men. He straps on his own sword. His instinct, revert to my strength.

Revert to what I'm good at. He is a warrior. Being a warrior has saved him in the past. And David knows how to inflict violence. He knows how to win.

[19:37] Getting revenge. That's just one of the ways that you try to save yourself when you've been shamed. Maybe that's what you revert to.

Maybe you just stew in bitterness and blame against the person who hurt you and shamed you. Maybe your default instead is to boast and brag or get other people to say good and affirming things about you.

A neediness for that. To cover your shame in something that looks better. That other people will like. Or maybe your default is to shrink down and hide away.

Disappear into a bottle. Where you can avoid all the pain. Disappear into a cave. And never be seen again. Every one of us has a cocktail of strategies that we use to save ourselves.

And the ways that we try to save ourselves. Oh boy. We reap the consequences. Think of the disastrous fallout if David had followed through with this.

[20:47] If he had showed up at Nabal's camp and killed every man he found before sunrise. Abigail later warns him. That not only would it destroy many lives.

Not only would it poison his reputation forever. But he will live the rest of his life with blood on his hands and on his conscience. We've got the same problem that David had.

We have a million little ways that we try to save ourselves from shame. And to save ourselves from guilt. Like David. You have your own ways of saving yourself.

But just like David's household. God has sent someone to save you. God has sent someone to save you.

God has sent you. Because as David and his men. They are arming themselves. They are beginning their march toward the frontier town of Carmel. Someone from Nabal's household is rushing to intercept him.

[21:49] Because one of Nabal's servants knows there is a wise person in this household. Who will listen to what's going on. And he turns to Nabal's wife Abigail for help.

We already heard. She is a discerning and beautiful woman. She is the opposite of her husband. And she proves it. She moves swiftly to make things right.

She moves swiftly to de-escalate the situation that her husband has escalated. And she reconciles her household with David's. If you ever find someone coming after you in wrath.

Someone who is upset at you. Who is out for blood. You can take notes here on what Abigail does. She is a wonderful model of de-escalation.

Because I guess she must have learned well from her years of being married. To a harsh and badly behaved fool. You know. She puts on a master class of peacemaking.

[22:54] That stems David's moments of folly. That nips it in the bud. What Abigail does. She sends out. I mean this is so brilliant. Right. This is wisdom.

That you see playing out in front of you. She sends out in front of her. A bunch of donkeys. With a large gift of food and drink. And that was what David had asked for. Right. It's a request for generosity.

And it honors him with a gift. That her husband had denied him. That wins her hearing when she runs into him in one of these mountain valleys.

And the first action that she takes. Is to bow down low to the ground in humility. And the first words out of her mouth in verse 24 are. On me alone.

On me alone. My Lord be the guilt. How can David. Now avenge himself. On such a gracious and humble woman.

[23:52] Who says. Let all the guilt fall on me. She pleads for him then. To hear her. Give him a hearing. Give me a hearing. She then urges him.

That her husband's words. Look. They're not to be taken seriously. Because he is a fool. Okay. Amen. You know. I don't know how many of us would like our wives to say that about us. But. In this case.

She didn't label him as a fool. Because she wanted to shame him. She labeled him as a fool. To give David instructions on how to respond to him. Because the Proverbs are filled with instructions about what you do with fools. By classifying him as a fool.

She's letting David know. Okay. You do not have to worry about what this guy says. You can disregard it. Then she gives him words of warning.

And she gives him words of affirmation. Now this story is your story too. God has sent someone to save you from the ways you save yourself.

[24:53] God has sent someone to save you from the ways you save yourself. What drew my attention with fascination to this chapter is this line that Abigail says to David in verse 26.

This is just an amazing word here. 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 my Lord be as an able. Now Abigail is phrasing her words.

This is funny. Because David actually hasn't done any of that yet. But she phrases her words like it's already happened. Like the Lord. He's already restrained David from his rash reaction.

That's a very clever move. She's expressing. I just have full confidence that this is. The Lord is going to do this. That you're going to do the right thing. And Abigail identifies the core mistake that David is about to make.

[25:56] Saving with your own hand. Maybe your translation says you know getting revenge or seeking vengeance. But it's literally saving yourself. He was about to handle Nabal's guilt.

And handle his own shame. Independently apart from the Lord. Using his own judgment. Using his own strengths. That is what Paul in the New Testament calls the flesh.

You saving yourself. Handling life out of your own strengths. Out of your own default. In your own wisdom. Saving yourself. And it was about to be an absolute disaster.

Often we want God to save us from our guilt. To grant us forgiveness. To wipe away all our sins. And rightly so. Often we want God to save us from our shame.

To cleanse us. And restore our sense of honor and dignity. And value. And rightly so. But the place where God starts. Is to save you from the ways that you save yourself.

[27:10] He calls you to repentance. To turn back. Let go. Of managing your shame. Let go of managing your sin.

The ways that you have always done. To let go. At a large scale. Of managing your eternal destiny. Of going through life.

And going to death. With a sense that I've got this sorted out. I'll just get to heaven. I kind of know what I'm doing. To let go. At the small scale.

Micro level. Of managing your guilt and shame. In all those little moments of life. God calls you. To let him. Be the one.

To make that call. That means going to the Lord first. Laying the situation out. Lord. What needs to be done? I need help.

[28:09] Rather than rushing to take action ourselves. Or rather than rushing away from the problem ourselves. Submit to his wisdom.

In how you are to be saved. That is why God sent his own son. Into the world. Jesus warned us. That we would.

Try. To save. Ourselves. That's his expectation. In Mark chapter 8. He says. For whoever. Would save his life. Who would save himself.

Will lose it. But whoever loses his life. For my sake. And the gospels. Will save it. For what does it profit a man.

To gain the whole world. And forfeit his soul. God has sent his own son. Jesus Christ. To save you from the ways.

[29:06] That you try to save yourself. He has also sent Jesus. To save you from the shame. That you experience. To save you from the shame.

That you experience. It is not God's will. That anyone should be stuck. Endlessly. And needlessly. In shame. It is God's will.

That they instead. Turn to him. And receive. The honor. And glory. Of the name. Of Jesus Christ. And he gives us. A little picture.

Of this. With the words. That Abigail. Has for David. Because she blesses him. She assures him. That the Lord. Is going to establish him. As king.

She adds in verse 29. If men rise up. To pursue you. And to seek your life. The life of my Lord. Shall be bound. In the bundle of the living. In the care.

[30:01] Of the Lord your God. And the lives. Of your enemies. He shall sling out. As from the hollow. Of a sling. And the Lord. Makes her words.

Come true. David. David. David can let go. Of his vengeance. The Lord. Has got the matter. Covered. The Lord.

Is the one. Who is going to handle. Nabal. And by the end. Of the story. Nabal is dead. The Lord. Took care. Of that. And the Lord's.

Way of saving David. Is far better. Than his own. Strategy. We already saw. What the consequences. Of David's strategy. Would have been. What a disaster. That would have been.

But look at the consequences. Of the Lord's. Strategy. Of salvation. Because David. Ends up. With the opportunity. To marry. An impressive woman.

[30:56] She's not only. Wealthy. And beautiful. But she's stunningly. Wise. And humble. She's got it all. The whole package. Abigail. Helped fulfill. The very blessing.

That she spoke. She ended up. Fulfilling it herself. By helping to establish. David's household. And so for you and me.

We too. Need to be shown. That same way. Of humility. That Abigail. Puts on display. Here. The humility. That Jesus Christ. Perfected.

As the only sinless man. Who ever lived. The only perfectly. Humble man. Who ever lived. The humility. That led him. To the cross.

That led him. To the place. Of lowest. Humiliation. And yet. That God. Vindicated him. Forever. In his resurrection.

[31:52] From the dead. As we read. In Romans chapter 10. The scripture says. Everyone who believes. In him. Will. Not. Be.

Put. To. Shame. For there is no distinction. Between Jew and Greek. For the same Lord. Is Lord of all. Bestowing his. Riches. On all who call on him.

For everyone. Who calls. On the name. Of the Lord. Will. Be. Saved. And it's the Lord. Who determines. How that's done. Not us.

God. Takes care. Of our shame. God. Bestows. The rich. Name. Of Jesus Christ. On everyone. Who truly. Believes.

In him. God. Has sent someone. To save you. From the shame. That you. Experience. And to save you. Forever. And in this story.

[32:50] From 1st Samuel 25. The Lord's salvation. Isn't just. For David. It overflows. It's for Abigail too. And for the rest of Nabal's household.

Because like Abigail's household. God has sent. Someone. To save you. God has sent someone. To save you. Just like Abigail's household. David's response.

To Abigail. Confirms. That the Lord is at work. To save them. In verses 32. To 35. David said to Abigail. 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 working salvation. With my own hand. For as surely as the Lord. The God of Israel lives. Who has restrained me. From hurting you. Unless you had hurried.

[33:44] And come to meet me. Truly by morning. There had not been left to Nabal. So much as one male. Then David received from her hand. What she had brought him. And he said to her.

Go up. In peace. To your house. See. I have obeyed. Your voice. And I have granted. Your petition. So we see how God has moved.

Both Abigail. And David. To save. Her household. From their guilt. And in the same way. God has sent someone. To save you. From the guilt.

You have incurred. God has sent someone. To save you. From the guilt. You have incurred. You need the same four things. That God provided.

For Abigail's household. Here are the four things. He gave them. First in verse 24. Abigail goes as a substitute. For her son's sin. For her household's sin.

[34:40] She says. On me alone. My Lord. Be the guilt. She is a substitute. Who stands in the place. Of the whole household. Second in the same verse.

Abigail acts as an advocate. For her household. Please. Let your servant. Speak in your ears. And hear the words. Of your servant. Her household. Needed someone.

To advocate for them. And Abigail stepped up. As the advocate. Third. In verse 28. She asks for. Forgiveness. Please forgive.

The trespass. Of your servant. Notice that forgiveness. Isn't minimizing the sin. She does not minimize it. At all. It's saying. It is sin. It is trespass.

It is bad. Please forgive me. Please forgive us. She knows. They need forgiveness. And fourth. In verse 31.

[35:38] Abigail asks for. Remembrance. Remember. Your servant. She is asking David. To remember her. With favor.

On the day. He takes power. As king. You know what the really fun part is? She doesn't even have to wait that long. In less than two weeks time.

David has remembered her. With such favor. That he immediately asks her. To be his wife. He must have been very impressed. Whatever difficulties.

Whatever difficulties await them. In the years to come. It is clear. That Abigail. She has had. A massive upgrade. In the spouse department. Right? From a nasty abusive fool.

To a dashing cowboy warrior poet. Who is going to be king. A happy ending like that.

[36:35] You and I need it as well. We need the same four things. That Abigail's household needed. We need a substitute. To stand in our place.

Guilty for our sins. To take whatever punishment. We deserved. We need an advocate. Who has the ear of God.

Who has the heart of God. Who can speak on our behalf. And be heard. We need our sins to be forgiven. For our sins to be taken away from us.

Forever. And never counted against us. And we need remembrance. Before God. We need him to never let us go. But always hold us in his heart.

And always look on us. With favor. Forever. And you oh Christians. You have every one of those things.

[37:34] In Jesus Christ. On the cross. Jesus was your substitute. And now in heaven. He is your advocate.

Because of him. Your sins are forgiven. Forever. Because of him. You are remembered. Forever. Forever. Before the throne. Before the throne of God. Jesus. He is the humble. And wise. Son of God. He is the perfect one.

Who died. And rose again. For you. And Jesus Christ. He is the only way. To eternal life. No other name given.

By which we must be saved. As we read. In Romans 6. Verse 23. The wages of sin. Is death. But the free gift of God.

[38:33] Is eternal life. In Christ Jesus. Our Lord. In the greater David. God. There is good news.

Even though you have a guilt problem. There is good news. Even though you have a shame problem. There is good news. Even though you've lost yourself. In saving yourself.

The good news. Is that God has sent someone. To save you. From the ways you save yourself. The good news.

Is that God has sent someone. To save you. From the shame that you experience. The good news. Is that God has sent someone. To save you. From the guilt. That you have incurred.

And that someone. Is the wise. And humble. Son of David. That someone. Is Jesus Christ. Our King. And our God. So God saves those.

[39:30] Who don't. Save themselves. Because if you confess. With your mouth. That Jesus is Lord. And believe in your heart. That God raised him. From the dead.

You will. Be saved. Let me pray. Our God and Father. This is how you have always worked. Throughout all history. Culminating. In your son's advent on earth. It is he alone.

Who is our hope. Lord I know this morning. Some of us here. Have fallen back into the habit. Of trying to save ourselves. Oh deliver us Lord. From that.

Lord this morning. There. Are people here. Who. Whose life has been characterized. By saving themselves. Who have trusted in. Their own ability.

[40:26] To manage their shame. And manage their sin. Oh Lord God. May they repent. And turn. And trust themselves. And trust themselves. To Jesus Christ alone.

The only one. Who can truly save. He who is humble. And wise. And good. Deliver us. Oh Lord. I thank you.

That you have shown us this way. You are good. And you do good. Give us eyes to see it. Ears to hear it. Hearts to understand it. Amen.