

Hated For Speaking The Truth!

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Preacher: Rev James Maciver

[0 : 00] Well, let's begin our worship this evening. We're singing in Psalm 106, Psalm 106 in the St. Psalms. That's from page 140, the tune is Ottawa. Praise the Lord, extol His goodness, for His love endures always. Who can tell His mighty actions or in full declare His praise? Blessed are those whose way is right, acting justly in His sight.

We're singing down to the end of verse 13, Psalm 106. Praise the Lord, extol His goodness. Praise the Lord, extol His goodness.

Praise the Lord, extol His goodness.

Thank you. Thank you.

Thank you. We have sinned just like our fathers. We have done what was not right.

[2 : 15] When our fathers wedded Egypt, they despised your peace of mind.

All your mercies, they ignored, at the Red Sea's firm, the Lord.

Yet for His men's sake, He saved them, and revealed His mighty hand.

By His word, the seed-hearted led them through us all dry land.

From the hand of the force set free, rescued from the enemy.

[3 : 28] Then in adversaries found there, not a single one survived.

So the people sang His praises, and His promises believed.

But His words made soon for God, and His counsel set an all.

Let's now call upon the Lord in prayer. Let's join together in prayer. Almighty and gracious God, as we come and as we bow in Your presence in prayer, as we lift up our voices in praise to You, as we hear Your word, and as we give our mind to its teaching.

O Lord, help us to believe all that Your word tells us about Yourself, about ourselves, about the world in which we live. Help us truly to relish in our hearts those things of salvation that it speaks about, and that it brings to us with Your own authority, and with that unerring authorship of Your Spirit.

[4 : 58] We give thanks, Lord, tonight that we come to worship You in a world that so largely ignores the importance of worshiping and acknowledging God. And we thank You for the testimony and the witness that this itself brings to the world.

For, Lord, we think perhaps that few people see us as we come to gather in church, and yet we know that there are those who take note of our comings and goings from these places of worship.

And we give thanks, O Lord, tonight for the opportunities that You give us to serve You and to testify to the world about You. And we pray that we may do this unashamedly, and in a way that would depend upon Your own blessing, so as to carry this further.

We give thanks, O Lord, for all Your goodness to us. We come before You as a people who know that Your goodness to us has been displayed in so many ways over so many years.

That You still continue to bless us. That You still continue to give us from Your Word that which encourages us. That You still continue to speak to us and to speak into our hearts.

[6 : 08] That You still continue at times to rebuke us, to bring us the reproof that Your Word itself contains. Help us, Lord, we pray, to receive all of these facets of Your truth in a way that would wholeheartedly acknowledge them as Your Word and as Your wisdom.

And we pray tonight as we gather here, O Lord, and as we are joined online by those who join us in that way. Help us, we pray together, as we come to worship the Lord.

Help us to look to You and to look to Your Spirit. We come, Lord, to use Your Word. We come to read Your Word and to hear its teaching. And we acknowledge, Lord, that we need the blessing of the author of the Word, Your Holy Spirit, whom You used to bring men of old, to bring these things together in these books that we have in our Bible.

We thank You for the wonder, O Lord, that down through many centuries, so You caused these things to be written and caused them to be brought together so that we have them now as Your Word in its wholeness.

We thank You for Your preservation of Your Word down through the years. We pray tonight that You would bless Your Word throughout the world in all the various languages into which Your Word has been translated.

[7 : 29] We pray that that work of translation will go on, that the work of Bible societies and other agencies that seek to bring Your Word before the world. Lord, we ask that they may be furthered in their attempts to bring Your Word into the public domain.

And we pray that every agency that is true to Yourself and to Your Word, that they will know Your blessing and Your continued provision for them to bring Your Word before the world.

And to translate it into the many languages that yet don't have a Bible in their own native tongue.

And Lord, we ask Your blessing to be with all attempts to bring that about.

We thank You for the way in which we gathered on Friday evening last to commemorate and to launch the new recordings of the New Testament.

And we pray that these may be widely used when they become finally fully available to us. We pray especially that they may be of use in our children's education.

[8 : 32] And that they may prove to be valuable materials for the teaching of our young people, the things of God, the teaching of Your truth. And we ask that they may be a blessing to many in the years to come.

And we pray, O Lord, that Your blessing will be with all Your people this evening. Once again, we remember fellow Christians in different parts of the world, very different to ours in their circumstances.

But yet we give thanks that You are able to deal with them and bring them the help that they require. Lord, we thank You that we call upon a God who is the commander of the universe, who has Himself the infinite wisdom and ability to do for us far more abundantly, exceedingly, than we are able to ask or think.

We thank You for the riches of Your grace, for the fullness, Lord, of Your blessing that You keep in store for those who fear You and love You. And we pray that out of that store this evening, there will be many who will come to be blessed and to be fed from Your truth.

And remember, we pray, those who carry Your Word into different parts of the world and face difficulties and trials beyond what we ourselves can experience. We ask that You would bless those whom we know ourselves, O Lord, who serve You in this capacity.

[9 : 54] We pray that You would grant blessing to Marsalee Campbell as she goes forth shortly to Bolivia to begin help with a new work there. We ask, O Lord, that You would bless her and keep her and use her.

We thank You for the news that she brought us of that work. And we pray that You would continue to uphold and strengthen her faith. And we pray for our own Muriel as well, as she anticipates going back to Cambodia.

Lord, we pray that Your blessing will be with her in her preparations. We pray that You would grant to her, Lord, as she anticipates with a desire to go back to that work.

And we pray that Your blessing will accompany her in that work itself. And that all that she does there will know Your continued hand upon her. And all that she meets with and all that she does, Lord, in Your name, that it will be pleased, O Lord, You will be pleased to grant Your blessing to this.

Lord, we pray for our nation at this time, O Lord, when we find so much in our news about the impending election of a new leader for the SNP and potentially to be the first minister of Scotland.

[11 : 08] Lord, we pray that You would guide us as a people in that regard in our prayers, in our concerns, and especially those who have a direct hand in such an election.

We pray for the parliament itself, and we pray that You would grant them wisdom, Lord, to make the right decision. We pray again for Kate Forbes.

We thank You for her testimony, for the brightness of her witness, for her faithfulness to Your truth and to Your calling of her. We pray for her, for Your protection of her, for Your strengthening of her, for Your confirmation to her, O Lord.

Not only that she is where You have called her to be, but that You are her God and that she is precious in Your sight. And we pray that as she seeks to withstand the many different assaults from many angles that have been directed against her in past days.

Lord, make her strong, we pray, in the grace that is in Jesus Christ. And grant that to Thee witness that she is born and been witnessed to over the different types of media where that is brought to public notice.

[12 : 15] O Lord, we pray that that itself will prove to be a blessing and a means by which others will come to think deeply upon that position and relation to You throughout our land.

And will be used by You as an instrument towards reaching into the hearts and minds of people who may be very unfamiliar with the gospel. And yet know integrity and honesty when they see it. And we pray, gracious one, for Your blessing to continue to be with her. Remember all others in our parliament, both here in Westminster as well, who are Your people and who serve You in the ways in which they do.

Lord, we pray that You would keep them faithful. And we pray that their testimony publicly will be in accordance with Your truth, that You would grant them the grace, Lord, by which they will adhere to Your ways.

And not be brought aside by the subtleties of false teaching, by the subtleties of political pressure or any other way in which they may have these temptations placed before them.

[13 : 20] And we ask, O Lord, for Your people in public life everywhere, locally here as well as elsewhere, that they may know Your continued blessing upon them. And we ask, Lord, in our own community here locally, where we find increasingly a distaste for the gospel, where we find, O Lord, so few and high prominence in public life locally that are prepared to come to know You and to follow You and to commend You and to commend Your ways, even to the point of resisting them.

Lord, we ask in Your mercy that You would remember us as a people, that You would restore to us, Lord, a relish for Your Word, for Your day, for Your cause, for all the things that have prospered as in the past.

And we commit all of this to You and seek Your blessing. Lord, help us to believe that when we pray to You for these things, that You are a God who hears us and answers our prayer.

Help us not to be surprised or amazed when You show Your hand in those who stand for You publicly, and do so in a way that unashamedly confesses Christ.

We thank You for Your upholding of us at all times. Bless now those who can't be with us this evening. We pray especially for those who are ill, for those in hospital, for those in our care homes.

[14 : 44] We pray again for those who have had death in their experience recently in their families. Bless all these families, we pray, and all who have still the wound of mourning and loss and sorrow in their lives, though it be many years since their loved ones passed away.

Continue, we pray, to bless them and to comfort them. Receive our thanks now and pardon us and cleanse us from all our sin. We ask it in Jesus' name. Amen.

Let's sing again to God's praise this time. It's in Psalm 119. That's in the Scottish Psalter version 119 from verse 129. Singing that section to 136.

The tune this time is Ayrshire. Thy statutes, Lord, are wonderful. My soul them keeps with care. The entrance of Thy words gives light, makes wise who simple are.

Readings and singings this evening are particularly focused on the Word of God and the importance of the Word of God to us in our lives privately and publicly.

[15 : 51] And so we're following the psalmist here as he expresses to God how precious his Word is to him as he lives out his life in the presence of those who may well be his enemies.

So we'll sing the section, Thy Statutes, Lord, are wonderful. Thy Statutes, Lord, are wonderful.

Thy soul and feet will hear. The angels of Thy Word desire.

May twice decipher I. My mind, Thy heart, Thy open head, Have planted earnest me.

While after Thy commandment, Thy love exceedingly. Look on me, Lord, and merciful to have and to be true.

[17 : 30] As Thy heart, O Lord, are wonderful. As Thy heart, O Lord, are wonderful. To do to those Thy name who truly are.

O let my first steps in Thy Word arise, To your life shall order free.

Let no iniquity of shame No lenient over me.

From man's oppression save Thou need. So keep Thy laws, Thy will.

Thy faith be gone, Thy servant shy. Teach me Thy statutes still. Teach me Thy statutes still.

[18 : 52] Rev'ers, O waters, call my night. They run down when I saw.

Thy wicked men run on its day, And do not be thy law.

Now let's turn to read God's Word. We'll find it tonight in the first letter of Kings. First book of Kings, rather. The first book of the Kings, chapter 22.

And reading from the beginning. First Kings, chapter 22. We'll read the passage down to verse 28.

It's a lengthy passage, but there are important issues in it connected together. So we'll read these verses 1 to 28. For three years, Syria and Israel continued without war.

[20 : 03] But in the third year, Jehoshaphat, the king of Judah, came down to the king of Israel.

And the king of Israel said to his servants, Do you know that Ramoth Gilead belongs to us?

And we keep quiet and do not take it out of the hand of the king of Syria. And he said to Jehoshaphat, Will you go with me to battle at Ramoth Gilead? And Jehoshaphat said to the king of Israel, I am as you are, my people as your people, my horses as your horses.

And Jehoshaphat said to the king of Israel, Enquire first for the word of the Lord. Then the king of Israel gathered all the prophets together, About four hundred men, and said to them, Shall I go to battle against Ramoth Gilead, or shall I refrain?

And he said, Go up, for the Lord will give it into the hand of the king. But Jehoshaphat said, Is there not here another prophet of the Lord, of whom we may inquire?

And the king of Israel said to Jehoshaphat, There is yet one man by whom we may inquire of the Lord, Micaiah the son of Imla, but I hate him. For he never prophesies good concerning me, but evil.

[21 : 13] And Jehoshaphat said, Let not the king say so. Then the king of Israel summoned an officer and said, Bring quickly Micaiah the son of Imla. Now the king of Israel and Jehoshaphat the king of Judah Were sitting on their thrones, arrayed in their robes, At the threshing floor at the entrance of the gate of Samaria.

And all the prophets prophesying before them. And Zedekiah the son of Hinnana made for himself horns of iron, And said, Thus says the Lord, With these you shall push the Syrians until they are destroyed.

And all the prophets prophesied so, and said, Go up to Ramoth-Gilead and triumph. The Lord will give it into the hand of the king. And the messenger who went to summon Micaiah said to him, Behold the words of the prophets with one accord are favourable to the king.

Let your word be like the word of one of them, and speak favourably. But Micaiah said, As the Lord lives, what the Lord says to me, that I will speak.

And when he had come to the king, the king said to him, Micaiah, shall we go to Ramoth-Gilead to battle, or shall we refrain? And he answered him, Go up and triumph. The Lord will give it into the hand of the king.

[22 : 30] But the king said to him, How many times shall I make you swear that you speak to me Nothing but the truth in the name of the Lord? And he said, I saw all Israel scattered on the mountains, as sheep that have no shepherd.

And the Lord said, These have no master. Let each return to his home in peace. And the king of Israel said to Jehoshaphat, Did I not tell you that he would not prophesy good concerning me but evil?

And Micaiah said, Therefore hear the word of the Lord. I saw the Lord sitting on his throne, and all the host of heaven standing beside him, And he died on his right hand and on his left.

And the Lord said, Who will entice Ahab that he may go up and fall at Ramoth-Gilead? And one said one thing, and another said another. Then a spirit came forward and stood before the Lord, saying, I will entice him.

And the Lord said to him, By what means? And he said, I will go out, and I will be a lying spirit in the mouth of all his prophets. And he said, You are to entice him, and you shall succeed.

[23 : 37] Go out and do so. Now therefore behold, the Lord has put a lying spirit in the mouth of all these your prophets. The Lord has declared disaster for you.

Then Zedekiah the son of Hinnana came near, and struck Micaiah on the cheek, and said, How did the Spirit of the Lord go from me to speak to you? And Micaiah said, Behold, you shall see on that day when you go into an inner chamber to hide yourself.

And the king of Israel said, Seize Micaiah, and take him back to Ammon the governor of the city, and to Joash the king's son. And say, Thus says the king, Put this fellow in prison, and feed him meager rations of bread and water, until I come in peace.

And Micaiah said, If you return in peace, the Lord has not spoken by me. And he said, Hear, all you peoples.

May the Lord bless to us that portion of his word. Let's sing again in Psalm 37 this time. Psalm 37, and that's on page 252.

[24 : 50] The tune this time is rest. We'll sing verses 1 to 7. Amen.

For evildoers, fret thou not thyself unquietly. Now do thou envy bear to those that work in equity.

For even like unto the grass soon be cut down shall they.

And like the green and tender herb, they wither shall away. Set thou thy trust upon the Lord. And be thou doing good, and so thou in the land shalt dwell, and verily have food.

We'll sing six stanzas to the end of the verse mark seven. For evildoers, fret thou not. For evildoers, fret thou not thyself unquietly.

Nor do thou ever spread thou not thyself unquietly. Nor do thou envy bear to those that work in equity.

[25 : 50] For evildoers, fret thou not thyself unquietly. For evildoers, fret thou not thyself unquietly.

For evildoers, fret thou not thyself unquietly. For evildoers, fret thou not thyself unquietly. Nor beindoers, fret thou not thyself unquietly. For evildoers, fret thou not thyself unquietly. For evildoers, fret thou not thyself unquietly. By the wobbles, fret thou not thyself unquietly.

For evildoers, fret thou not thyself unquietly. For evildoers, fret thou not darn their■■■■s unquietly.

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And so thou in the land shalt dwell, and many have lain.

[27 : 03] Be like thyself, then God he'll give, thine heart's desire to lead.

Thy way to God, go with interest, it bring to us shall be.

And thy come to the light, he shall thy righteous death display.

And he thy judgment shall bring forth, like noontide all the day.

Rest in the Lord, not patiently, wait for him, do not pray.

[28 : 15] For they who cross drink in his way, such that sin sin shall be.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Well, turn with me now, please, to 1 Kings chapter 22. We're going to look at certain aspects of this passage.

We can focus our mind on verse 8, and then see how other aspects of the chapter relate to that. So, 1 Kings 22, as we read in verse 8, And the king of Israel said to Jehoshaphat, There is yet one man by whom we may inquire of the Lord, Micaiah the son of Imla, but I hate him.

For he never prophesies good concerning me, but evil. I'm taking a sidestep tonight from our series in 1 Corinthians 15.

It's really in relation to the things that have been happening in our own nation over the last week or so. Just to look at these things, hopefully, in the light of this passage, in the light of Scripture, and to let the Word of God shine upon these events, which I think is always wise for us and good for us to do.

[29 : 34] We'll come back to 1 Corinthians 15, God willing, next time we come together in the evening. Well, this was an alliance doomed to failure, wasn't it?

This was never going to work, because here is an alliance between the king of Judah, Jehoshaphat, a good man with some failures, as we all have, a man who was by and large obedient to God and serving of God, but yet here made a very near fatal mistake for himself.

He very nearly got killed as a result, if you read down to the end of the chapter. And here he is himself coming to ally himself with one of the worst kings ever in the history of Israel.

At this time, the two nations, Judah and Israel, are often at war. But here is the king Ahab, and you notice in, go back just to chapter 21 and verse 25, you find a description there of Ahab in a summary fashion.

There was none like Ahab who sold himself to do evil in the sight of the Lord, whom Jezebel, his wife, incited. He acted very abominably in going after idols, as the Amorites had done, whom the Lord cast out before the people of Israel.

[30 : 55] Here was a wicked man, an evil man, a man who was opposed to God, a man who was opposed to God's people, a king who hated God, who hated the truth as God gave it to him whenever he heard it through faithful prophets, which was seldom.

Although, of course, we remember Elijah as well at this particular time in history. Well, this was an alliance that really was bound to failure from the very start.

Because what's happening here is that Jehoshaphat is really putting his politics above his piety.

He's putting his political situation before his own faithfulness to God.

Not the first time it happened. Certainly wasn't the last time it happened, and it still happens. Putting his politics before his piety. Putting his own political career before his relationship to God and to the truth of God.

And that's what you find happening in our own land as well. But there are, of course, exceptions, very prominently. The exception of Kate Forbes at this time.

[32 : 11] I don't want to focus too much on her at all, but nevertheless, it's important that we see what's taking place and give our support to those who are standing for God's cause.

And one of the reasons we admire Kate Forbes is by the grace of God. She's come to say, for example, she said when she was questioned about her view of same-sex marriage, her view of other issues in that ethical sphere, and she said, politics will pass.

Politics will pass. I was a human being before I was a politician. And she meant by that, I think, that whenever her political career is over, it's not going to change anything in terms of her relationship with God.

Politics will pass. And whatever political persuasion we're of, that's going to be the case. We're never to put our politics above our piety, above our principles, above our relationship with God. And it's important in all ages and for all age groups that our personal morality is the morality of the Bible.

[33 : 25] I say to the young folks here tonight, you're ethical, you're moral standing, you're the quality of your life as you want to live it out and as you're growing up in the world.

Make sure that it's the morality of the Bible. Don't be taken in by the kind of stuff you're listening to these days that you hear so often, that the Bible is completely irrelevant and outmoded and old-fashioned for these days, for 2023.

The Bible has always been directly relevant for every age of the world, and it will be so to the end of the world. And so, that's why we're saying to you, young people, that the Bible continues to be so centrally and foundationally important to your life.

And if you give in to the kind of pressure that you get, maybe from some of your own age group, it's not going to be a good thing for yourself or for the age group that you live in.

God has given you the advantage of being brought up in the church, in a church that believes the Bible, a church that values the Bible, a church that holds out the Bible as the Word of God.

[34 : 36] And it's an appeal to you all tonight, as we do at all times. Please take the Bible seriously. Please have the Bible as the foundation of your life morally and spiritually, because that's really what this passage is telling us about.

Micaiah, as we'll see, he was not prepared to turn aside from his obedience to God despite the pressures that were brought to bear upon him.

So, we're looking at two things. First of all, we're looking at Ahab and his advisors. He had 400 of them, at least 400 prophets, Ahab and his advisors.

And then secondly, we're looking at Micaiah and his God. Because it comes across in this passage as somebody who's standing on his own against Ahab and his advisors, and yet Micaiah has God on his side.

And as one of the Reformers once said, if you have God on your side, you're always in the majority, however many people are against you. The important thing is to have God as your support and on your side.

[35 : 43] That's what Micaiah really is in the chapter before us. He's a man who's standing very much on his own against the pressures of Ahab and his advisors, yet he continues to speak the truth as he knows it from God.

So, Ahab and his advisors, you see what's happening here, the context is given us as we look at Ahab and his advisors. Verses 1 to 6, and there's verse 3. The king of Israel said to his servants, Do you know that Ramoth Gilead belongs to me, to us, and we keep quiet and do not take it out of

the hand of the king of Assyria?

He said to Jehovah, Will you go with me to battle at Ramoth Gilead? In other words, he's saying, This land, this particular area of Syria, Ramoth Gilead, actually belongs to us.

And I want to take it back into our possession. So will you join me in trying to do that? Will you go with me to battle there, to get this back under our control?

There's very much aspects of that that remind you of what's happening in Ukraine, what's happening with Putin. He's been a kind of an Old Testament, Putin at that stage.

[36 : 53] He wants this territory for himself, and he wants others to join with him as far as possible to bring it back under his control. And that's why he's asking the king of Judah, Jehoshaphat, Will you join me in this?

Will you come to join me? If you go to the equivalent passage in 2 Chronicles chapter 18, it uses an interesting word that the king, Jehoshaphat, was induced or enticed into this relationship, into this alliance.

And that's an important word. He was taken in. He was taken aside. And that passage in 2 Chronicles 18 tells us that Ahab put on a great show. He made a great party.

He really entertained Jehoshaphat, and he fell for it. He fell into the trap. And so Ahab here calls his 400 prophets because Jehoshaphat in verse 8 there, Jehoshaphat is a little bit uneasy about just going along with Ahab's word.

He's saying, well, first of all, let's inquire for the Lord. Let's get a word from the Lord just to make this sure. I'd like to know what the Lord thinks about this. And of course, in those days, that was largely through prophets.

[38 : 04] So Ahab called his prophets. He gathered together the prophets, about 400 men, and he said to them, shall I go to battle against Ramoth Gilead or shall I refrain? And they said, go up, for the Lord will give it into the hand of the king.

He had an instant response on the part of the prophets. They say, yes, do this. Come on, go up. Of course you're going to win. You're going to take it back. The problem for Ahab is his prophets are false prophets.

His prophets don't know the Lord. His prophets are prophets that tell the king what he wants to hear. They're in his employ. They're in his payment. They actually are concerned only to give out something that will gratify the king.

Whether they're afraid of him or not, we don't know. But that's what they're there for, the 400 of them. They're all concerted together, and all they want to do is please Ahab. And they just give him things which they know he wants to hear.

It's not new there either, is there? Nothing new there either. That's the situation as it's described there. They are false prophets. Now you know that throughout the Old Testament and indeed into the New Testament, you have this constant tension between the false prophets and the true prophets of the Lord or the true apostles of the Lord.

[39 : 21] And when you go to the book of Jeremiah, for example, more than any other book in the Bible, I think he speaks about the false prophets. And the false prophets are saying to the people of Jeremiah's day, peace, peace.

Listen to what we're saying. This is what the guarantee of peace is. Never mind the likes of Jeremiah. Never mind this man that's so attached to the word of the Lord. We'll give you our opinion, and our opinion is the one you need to really take.

If you really are serious about peace, listen to what we're saying. Of course, Jeremiah knew. They were talking falsehood. They didn't know the mind of the Lord. And so, these 400 prophets, here they are, they come to Ahab and they say to him, go up.

You're going to be successful. Why should you hold back? Just do it. But, Jehoshaphat's still not very easy in his mind, is he?

Because he says, is there not another prophet, someone else here, a prophet of the Lord, of whom we may inquire? He knows the kind of man that Ahab is, and yet he's still prepared to go into an alliance with him.

[40 : 36] And so, he comes and says, is there anybody else here that can give us the word of the Lord just to offset it against these 400? And of course, Ahab comes and says, yes, there is.

There is one man here by whom we may inquire, Micaiah, the son of Imlah, but I hate him, for he never prophesies good concerning me, only evil.

And you see, what's happening in Ahab's mind is that he's really, he's putting truth and error the wrong way around.

What he's actually doing is for Ahab, as you find him here speaking about this Micaiah, he doesn't like Micaiah because Micaiah always speaks to him in the name of the Lord, the truth of the Lord. And Ahab hates the truth. The last thing Ahab wants is the truth of God. It's fine on the surface saying, yes, I want to know the Lord and His will and I want my prophets to actually give me the word of the Lord, but it's the word that he wants to hear.

[41 : 45] It's the word that will please him. He's very unhappy about it. He's scathing about it if somebody comes to him with a word from the Lord that's actually the truth. So that brings you to see Micaiah and his God.

That's the situation in which Micaiah is placed. That's Ahab and his advisors, but look at Micaiah and his God. Now, Micaiah only appears in this chapter and in the equivalent chapter in 2 Chronicles.

The only time it's mentioned in the Bible. And there's a point made by that itself and it's this, that although he's not prominent like Elijah or Elisha or Moses or somebody like that who is demonstrably and publicly powerful in the name of the Lord, yet Micaiah here, as he stands for the Lord, is doing just as important at work in many respects as the ones who are prominent in the ways of the Lord.

And it reminds you and I ourselves, even if we say, well, I can't do the kind of things that other people are doing for the Lord. I don't have the gifts that other people have that are more public, that are actually obviously more to the front, to the forefront of the cause of Christ.

I'm not like that. The Lord is saying, I don't want you to be like that. What I'm saying is, what he's saying to you is, whatever he has given you to use, use it. Whether it's prominent or not. Here's a man who's faithful to the Lord, facing all of these pressures.

[43 : 09] He's not really a man who's given to being in the public eye, it seems, from this passage. And yet, here he is, presenting the will of God to 400 of Ahab's prophets and to Ahab himself.

Now, you don't have to be, you don't have to be prominent. You don't have to be to the fore publicly. Wherever God has placed you in life, that's where you serve him.

Whatever your view is of how he has endowed you or otherwise, or how you compare with other people or otherwise, what the Lord is calling for you to do is to use what he's given you, where he's placed you, and to do that in dependence upon himself.

And you can see Ahab's hatred of the truth, as we're seeing here, Micaiah and his God. But then, you see, as the narrative moves on, this is what Ahab says, I hate him, for he never prophesies good concerning me, but evil.

And you see, what Ahab is doing is he's calling good what pleases himself. And he's calling what is a word from the Lord through the likes of Micaiah as evil.

[44 : 29] He's turned his own world upside down because he is so much against God and in favor of just hearing something that flatters himself. And you know, that's still the truth.

That's still true of the world in which we live. How many times over the last week have you read something, whether on Twitter, Facebook, news reports, or whatever, wherever you've seen it, but you've seen more than once, I'm sure.

The idea, the statement, something like, here is someone who believes the Bible literally, something that's not fit for this century, something that's not fit for 2023.

How can anyone who actually believes these things be thought of as a suitable leader of a country in this day and age? Well, Micaiah faced that. Micaiah faced that same philosophy.

Micaiah faced the same thing as he faced Ahab and these false prophets who would say, no, your version of the word of the Lord, that's completely outdated. What we want is people who are actually progressive.

[45 : 38] People are progressive and don't actually have that old-fashioned way, this is what the Lord is saying, this is the word of the Lord. You see, Ahab really calls good what pleases himself.

That's what's suitable. That's what fits with the society he wants. That's what really is so much different to the likes of Micaiah.

And what Micaiah says to him, oh, that's evil. That's not good. That's bad. Don't want to hear that. That's not suitable. That's not relevant. That doesn't fit the situation at all.

Put that behind you. Give me something that's up to date. Something that pleases myself. Something that flatters my human ingenuity. And that's Ahab's hatred of the truth. And that's countered by Micaiah's love of the truth. There's an attempt, you see, in, incidentally, Micaiah's name actually means who is like the Lord.

[46 : 51] Who's like Yahweh or Jehovah. That's interesting that that's the meaning of his Hebrew name Micaiah. Who is like the Lord? And, you know, if people were really taking account of names in those days as they often did, here is Ahab knowing who Micaiah is and what he stands for.

And there before him in the very person and the name of Micaiah is this great question that he should really be facing. Who is like the Lord? And that comes across to ourselves, doesn't it? Who is like the Lord? That's what we're standing for. The uniqueness, the greatness, the glory of this God we worship unlike any other, superior to any other, above everyone else, and alone worthy of our worship.

Well, here is a first attempt, you see, in verse 9, if you read these verses from verse 9, Jehoshaphat said, let not the king see. So then the king of Israel summoned an officer and said, bring quickly Micaiah, the son of Imlah.

So he's going to send a messenger to get Micaiah wherever he is to come to where the king and where Jehoshaphat are. But meantime, what does he do? What does Ahab do?

[48 : 12] Well, he calls these prophets of the Lord. They were sitting, these kings, two of them were sitting on their thrones, arrayed in their robes, very grand. And then this man, Zedekiah, one of the false prophets, the son of Hananah, he made for himself horns of iron.

And he said, thus says the Lord, with these you shall push the Syrians until they are destroyed. And all the prophets prophesied so. They said the same thing and said, go up to Ramoth, Gilead, and triumph, the Lord will give it into the hand of the king.

See what's happening? They're trying to actually put on such a show and such a persuasive show, such a thing for Jehoshaphat that will persuade him and really bring his mind to be confirmed that, yes, these people are telling you the truth.

You see, they want to do it before Micaiah comes. Because when Micaiah comes, Ahab knows full well he's not going to go along with us. He's not going to go along with us, Sharad, at all.

And so he wants, as far as possible, that Jehoshaphat will be convinced what Ahab is doing is a good thing. What these prophets are saying is really the truth from God. And he wants to persuade Jehoshaphat, you can easily, you can very readily go along with this.

[49 : 34] It's fine. Everything's okay. This is the way to go. And that's why he has this performance. And you know, that's what's really serious.

We know that the truth of God will always be opposed by what is not true, by false teaching, by heresy, by what is completely at odds with the Word of God.

We know that that's what's going to happen. We know that that's what's happening now. We know it happens in every generation to some extent. But what you find here is a step further than that. The serious thing is that truth is now, the false rather, is now seeing itself as being the true.

These people look to be themselves. Perhaps they are just convinced. That's what happens, you see, when you give yourself over to the lie, when you give yourself over to be swallowed up by the heresy that you yourself are promoting.

Eventually, you come to believe it. And eventually, you come to believe that this is in fact the truth. That this is really superior to anything the likes of Micaiah is saying. And here are these 400 people going through this performance headed up by Zedekiah, the son of Henanah.

[50 : 49] And there is the lie. There is the falseness. There is the heresy parading itself as the truth, believing itself to be the truth. And that's when it gets really serious.

Because that's what we're facing in our generation. We're not just aware of a clash between that which is false and that which is true. We're aware of the false passing itself off as the true. We're aware of church people being taken in by the false because they've come to believe that it's the true. And it doesn't matter whether they're moderators or bishops or archbishops or priests or ministers whatever they are.

Once you start believing that the false is the true you have a real crisis. And you have a crisis because people are going to follow that because it's a lot easier than to stand where Micaiah is standing and actually say no this is the truth.

This is what God is saying. That's where it's a challenge. That's where it's difficult. That's where you really need the grace of God to steal you. And especially when you're outnumbered 400 to 1.

[52 : 09] And that's why Paul wrote as he did to the likes of Galatians. Listen to what he says in the first chapter verses 6 to 10. I am astonished that you are so quickly deserting him who called you in the grace of Christ and are turning to a different gospel.

Not that there is another one but there are some who trouble you and want to distort the gospel of Christ. But even if we or an angel from heaven should preach to you a gospel contrary to the one we preached to you let him be accursed.

As we have said before so now I say if anyone is preaching to you a gospel contrary to the one you received let him be accursed.

As strong words as even an apostle could write. Why? Why is he so vehement? Why is he using such language? Because he knows that something is happening that's going to destroy the gospel. That's going to get people's minds to think that the false is actually the true. When you go through the the New Testament you'll find that the second last book of the Bible the book of Jude very short book but a very important dynamic book in its own right and Jude tells those who are receiving his letter as to why he's chosen to actually write in the way he does.

[53 : 39] I meant to write to you he said about a common salvation. You're going to write something of a treatise whether it be justification or whatever but he said I found it necessary to write to appeal to you to contend for the faith that was once for all delivered to the saints for certain people have crept in unnoticed who were already designated for this condemnation ungodly people who pervert the grace of our God into sensuality that's right up to date isn't it?

Who pervert the grace of God into sensuality and deny our only master and lord Jesus Christ? And that's you see what's happened it's come from within when the people of the church when the ministers of the church when the bishops of the church when they actually come to believe the false to be the true this is what happens it spreads like a poison and it weakens the cause and it becomes totally ineffective of changing people's lives I remember one time when I was doing agriculture and my father said when you go back to the college this was on holiday and he said ask one of the folk in the college of agriculture they ask them if they know what's happening to the potato plants because there's a little worm that's been growing up inside the potato stalks and it kills off the plant and see if you can find out what that is so I went and asked one of the lecturers what this was and he said

I know what that is that's the rosy rustic moth and when it lays its eggs and develops into a larvae the larvae of the rosy rustic moth it burrows inside the potato stem it works its way it eats its way up the inside of the stem and eventually of course the plant dies there's no growth so there's no product that's what false teaching does it doesn't come out unashamedly and say look at me I'm false teaching it's like the rosy rustic larvae it gets inside and it starts eating from within and before you know it the plant is beginning to die and if it's not changed it will die and here is the first attempt to take Micaiah aside to take him out of the equation to knock out what he's going to say but of course the next attempt is the man who went to fetch

Micaiah in verse 15 this is what you read there in verse 15 here's the man who went to Micaiah when he'd come to the king he said to this man who was sent as a messenger to win Micaiah over he said to him now all of these prophets of the Lord all these prophets have said the one thing and I want you you should really just comply with that all of these prophets have said favorable to the king in verse 13 behold the words of the prophets with one accord are favorable to the king let your word be like the word of one of them and speak favorably you can just always picture that you can always picture this man coming to Micaiah and really putting his arm around him on his shoulder and saying now look Micaiah all of these the 400 of them unanimously have come to speak favorably to the king why should you be a fool and go differently why should you say something different to them what's the point of making trouble for yourself and danger for yourself just actually go along with what they're saying for the moment you can keep your own views to yourself you can believe what you do believe you can go on believing what you want to believe but just keep it quiet for the moment will you he's trying to actually bring him alongside so that he won't be a troublemaker but he meets as much as the

Lord lives what the Lord says to me that will I speak what the Lord says to me that will I speak and that's what we're committed to it doesn't matter whether we in pulpits or whether we're serving the Lord in whatever way we're serving him whatever we have as a privilege of upholding the truth of

God when the world comes and says look just go along with this why do not fall in with the majority surely they can't all be wrong these 400 and you as one person you're going to stand surely you're not going to say I'm actually of Lord that I believe it doesn't matter what anybody tells me this is where I stand this is what I'm going to stand for and that's what Kate Forbes is doing in her own sphere of serving God where she is that's why it's difficult that's why it's difficult for [59 : 03] Micaiah he's facing the prospect as it turned out indeed he's facing the prospect of imprisonment which is what happened he knows he's going to face real difficulty if he stands up and says this but he did and the attempt failed to take him aside and there's his answer in verse 14 as we said as the Lord lives what the Lord has said that I will speak that I will speak what is it that gives a person to be loyal to the truth of God well in a word it's love for God if you love God you will love his truth if you love the Lord you will stand up for his truth if you love the Lord you will not give away his truth for a mess of pottage for political whatever advantage but this is the new tolerance you see this is the new type of tolerance we are told is what we need to follow in our generation you accept all moral positions as equals that's a new way relatively new way of looking at tolerance because tolerance in the old sense of the word tolerance was

I have all these different views confronting me I have my own belief I have my own view but tolerance means I'm allowed to keep that view without actually having to say that every other single view is of equal validity but here we are seeing in our nation some people actually saying here is a woman who does not actually believe that same sex marriage is the right thing for human relationships here is a woman who says that she doesn't believe that females ought to be ordained to office in the church here is a woman who confines herself to the ethics of the Bible and you know this is then the reaction of the world of most of the world the reaction is well that person isn't fit to lead a nation if she doesn't accept every point of view of equal validity ignorance that's tyranny if I have every single view set before me that people think and if

I'm told you know the only way that we can accept you as a leader in political life is if you say of all of these views whether it's on marriage or human relationship or whatever if you actually come to say I accept that they are all equally valid that's tyranny that's not liberty of conscience that's not freedom at all I'm reading through a book just now which by Don Carson has the interesting title of the intolerance of tolerance and this is really where I found that definition or rather this kind of idea that tolerance has changed in meaning from the way that it used to be in the older days and Carson writes about one of the most central myths of our time and he explains that he says according to this myth a society is likely to be most tolerant if it holds to flexible non dogmatic notions of truth conversely a society is likely to be most intolerant this is a myth he say one of the central myths of our time conversely he says society is likely to be most intolerant when it holds to absolute truths such as the bible which is absolute truth truths that are inflexible and unbending but he says the reality of the situation is just the opposite of what we have been led to believe put simply tyranny is not the inevitable outcome of an absolutist view of truth but is rather the product of relativism although views count the same likewise tolerance arises not from relativism but from the very thing that our society anathematizes the belief in absolutes the belief in absolutes

God God's truth God's law word the old tolerance he goes on to say is the willingness to put up with to allow and to endure people with ideas and ideas with whom we disagree the new tolerance is the social commitment to treat all ideas and people as equally right except for those who disagree with this view of tolerance and that's the world that Kate Forbes is facing that's the world in which she has to present consistency to absolute truth that's why she needs our prayers our support our ongoing encouragement of it whatever the outcome of the election is she's in the public domain public view and public target now and will be from now on but let's not fool ourselves time has passed

I'm going to finish with this my Kai I knew one thing that Ahab didn't and you know it makes all the difference in the world to a human being and it's this my Kai I knew that whatever outcomes may be in anyone's life or in anyone's progress in life God is in charge and if God has actually determined something if God has purposed something to come to pass that will come to pass whatever attempts are made against it and if God has determined or purposed or willed something will not come to pass whatever attempts are made to bring it to pass they will fail my Kai I knew that Kate Forbes knows that she's committed to the God who is governor over all things in all of human life and so must we be and we must not forget that what really lies behind all of this very much is similar to indeed what the Lord prayed in his prayer in the upper

[66 : 08] Roman John 17 and this is what the Lord said and this is what really in many ways a key to it all to what you're seeing happening at the present time and indeed a key to similar things down through the ages well here is what the Lord said in John 17 and at verse 14 I have given them your word and the world has hated them because they are not of the world just as I am not of the world I do not ask that you take them out of the world but that you keep them from the evil one they are not of the world just as I am not of the world sanctify them in the truth your word is truth I have given them your word therefore the world hates them because they are not of the world just as I am not of the world and the interesting and important thing is when the

Lord went on in his prayer he didn't ask that the Lord would take them out in fact he specifically said I do not pray that you would take them out of the world why did he pray that he would not take them out of the world should that be easier for them yes of course it would but they are his lights in the world they are the conscience of the world and the Lord is not going to remove the conscience of the world just because it's being attacked I don't pray I pray that you would don't pray that you would take them out of the world but that you would keep them from the evil one that you would shield them and guard them against the evil that faces them that's our prayer for ourselves that's our prayer for Kate that's our prayer for all who stand publicly and seek to be true to God and that's what this passage itself is setting out if you want a heading for our study this evening it's what I've given you on the bulletin sheet hated for speaking the truth may God bless these thoughts on his word to us we'll now conclude by singing from Psalm 25

Psalm 25 that's on page 30 the tune this time is Finart singing from verse 16 to the end of the psalm turn to me Lord show me your grace I suffer pain and loneliness the troubles of my heart have grown deliver me from my distress look on my pain and suffering forgive all my iniquity see how my foes have multiplied how fierce their hatred is for me and so on to the end of the psalm to God's praise turn to me Lord show me your grace I suffer I suffer pain and lonely care that all my heart have grown deliver me from my distress rest look on my pain and suffering forgive all my iniquity see how thy holds the mountain defied how fierce their hatred is for me

O God my life and rescue thee and let me not be good to share for thy take refuge in you Lord from those who destroy my name because I hope in you alone let our right best protect me still from all their troubles of thy

God redeem your people Israel I'll go to the main door after the benediction now may grace mercy and peace from God the Father the Son and the Holy Spirit be with us now and evermore Amen amen and to my love you you