There was never anyone like Ahab

1KI 21:1-29

KV: 25a

There was never anyone like Ahab, who sold himself to do evil in the eyes of the Lord

Today we would like to think about Legacy. A legacy is what a person will be remembered for after they leave this world. It also included things they have left behind. For the very wealthy, that might include financial endowments or foundations, like the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation. More and more very rich people are leaving less to their families and more to Foundation. Legacy can include property, art collections, memoirs organizations, etc. But it can also include influence or example.

Last week, there was a lot of bad news, so I don’t know if you caught it or not.

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But, last week Los Angeles Celebrated Kobe Bryant Day. Kobe left a huge legacy as a basketball player and cultural icon--Including #Mamba Mentality and #Girl Dad

When players around the world and at every age and level take a last-second shot, do you know what they say? ”Kobe!”

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To leave a legacy means to put a stamp on the future, or to make a contribution to future generations. People want to leave a legacy because they want to feel that their life mattered. Leaving a legacy is not just for the very wealthy. In fact, there is a much greater legacy we can leave--that is a spiritual legacy.

In the passage, we find two very different legacies. The legacy of King Ahab and the Legacy of Nath the Jezrialite. Their legacies here are far more important than just worldly or human legacies. Their legacies have to do with their legacy before God! What kind of legacy do we want to leave in the eyes of God! That’s what we’d like to consider through today’s passage.

Let’s pray…

Today’s passage covers the incident of Naboth’s vineyard. This is a very significant incident because it sealed the legacy of both King Ahab and Naboth the Jeraelite.

So what kind of Legacy had Ahab left up until this point? In a previous chapter we learned that “Ahab ... did more evil in the eyes of the Lord than all those before him”--In context, he did more evil in the eyes of the Lord than all the kings of Israel before him.” He led Israel into terrible idol worship, including Baal worship. Despite his sins, the Lord repeatedly intervened in Ahab’s life to help him to know the Lord. God faithfully gave him the word of the Lord through his shepherd Elijah and other prophets. And, God sent many signs -- withholding the rain, sending the rain, sending fire from heaven, killing 450 prophets of Baal, and giving him military victories. Nothing worked! Ahab never stopped doing evil in the eyes of the Lord!

In the previous passage, one of the Lord’s prophets proclaimed the Lord’s judgement on Ahab, saying, “This is what the Lord says: ‘You have set free a man I had determined should die. Therefore it is your life for his …” Ahab didn’t acknowledge his sin, but went away sullen and angry. As you can see, his legacy was already not so good.

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*1-3: Some time later there was an incident involving a vineyard belonging to Naboth the Jezreelite. The vineyard was in Jezreel, close to the palace of Ahab king of Samaria. 2 Ahab said to Naboth, “Let me have your vineyard to use for a vegetable garden, since it is close to my palace. In exchange I will give you a better vineyard or, if you prefer, I will pay you whatever it is worth.” 3 But Naboth replied, “The Lord forbid that I should give you the inheritance of my ancestors.”*

Today’s passage covers the incident involving [Naboth’s vineyard].” The vineyard was close to Abab’s palace and King Ahab wanted to use it for a vegetable garden. He said to Naboth, (verse 2) “Let me have your vineyard to use for a vegetable garden, since it is close to my palace. In exchange I will give you a better vineyard or, if you prefer, I will pay you whatever it is worth.” But, what about the legacy of Naboth? What kind of legacy did he want to leave? (verse 3) He said, “The Lord forbid that I should give you the inheritance of my ancestors.”

How did Naboth reply? “The Lord Forbid!” Naboth could have made a lot of money, but he replied, “The Lord forbid!” In Leviticus 25:23 The Lord commanded the Israelites “The land must not be sold permanently, because the land is mine and you reside in my land as foreigners and strangers'' Naboth took God’s word very seriously and didn’t compromise the word of God. When he was tempted, he kept his identity in the Lord by obeying the word of God and not sinning.

Naboth responded this way because he wanted to leave something of lasting value to the next generation. That something was his inheritance in the Lord. Typically, we think of an Inheritance as monetary or material goods handed down from one person to another. However, the biblical meaning is much deeper and includes much more. In Genesis, when Esau despised his birthright, he sold it for a single meal (GE 35:32-34). Later, when he wanted to receive God’s blessing, he could not. The Lord’s inheritance for the children of Israel was the land promised by God. The land was allocated tribe by tribe through Moses and distributed to each clan and family through Joshua. It was to be a lasting inheritance passed down from generation to generation. But, their inheritance was more than the land. It was tied together with other promises as well; such as to be God’s people and to be a Kingdom of Priests and Holy Nation (EX 6:7-8, 19:6). Through his inheritance, the Lord wanted to give his people all the blessings of the Kingdom of God.

Ahab offered Naboth a better vineyard. It’s been said that the better is the enemy of the best. God is the best, and whatever comes from God is the best. So when we are offered something seemingly better from this world, we need to recognize that temptation and overcome it. One of the ways we can do so is to always remember and greatly value all that we have been given by God, and to give thanks to God for those things. When Naboth was tempted, he was ready, because he kept the right value system. He knew that to sell his inheritance was to sell himself to do evil in the eyes of the Lord. The name Naboth means words or prophesies. Not only did Naboth obey the word of the Lord, but he relayed the truth of God’s word to Abab.

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*4-6: So Ahab went home, sullen and angry because Naboth the Jezreelite had said, “I will not give you the inheritance of my ancestors.” He lay on his bed sulking and refused to eat. 5 His wife Jezebel came in and asked him, “Why are you so sullen? Why won’t you eat?” 6 He answered her, “Because I said to Naboth the Jezreelite, ‘Sell me your vineyard; or if you prefer, I will give you another vineyard in its place.’ But he said, ‘I will not give you my vineyard.’” 7 Jezebel his wife said, “Is this how you act as king over Israel?*

Ahab went home, sullen and angry. Hmm, sounds familiar. This was Ahab’s habitual response to God’s word. He lay on his bed sulking and refused to eat. What was Ahab’s problem? Of course he had no strength to fight against his sinful desire, but why not? Ahab was still wavering between two opinions! Back in 1KI 18:21 *“Elijah went before the people and said, “How long will you waver between two opinions? If the Lord is God, follow him; but if Baal is God, follow him.”* When Ahab received God’s word, he should submit to God. He should not follow his sinful desire, but follow the word of the Lord--follow the Lord. This is what was wrong with Abab. But when his wife asked him what was wrong, “*Why are you so sullen? Why won’t you eat?” He answered her, “Because …* I said to Naboth, give me this, but he wouldn’t give it to me. Wow.

What did Jezebel say? Jezabel said, “Is this how you act as king over Israel?” What she meant was that a king is supposed to lord it over others--to take from others and be served by others. But, at the same time, what she said was pretty ironic. How was Ahab really supposed to act as king--especially king over God’s people Israel? What was his legacy as king supposed to look like? As we learned from our Summer Bible Conference, king equals servant, and lord of all equal servant of all. It is completely upside down from the worldly concept of a king.

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*Get up and eat! Cheer up. I’ll get you the vineyard of Naboth the Jezreelite. 8 ”So she wrote letters in Ahab’s name, placed his seal on them, and sent them to the elders and nobles who lived in Naboth’s city with him. 9 In those letters she wrote: “Proclaim a day of fasting and seat Naboth in a prominent place among the people. 10 But seat two scoundrels opposite him and have them bring charges that he has cursed both God and the king. Then take him out and stone him to death.”*

At this point, Jezebel took leadership over the matter. She said, *“I'll get you the vineyard of Naboth the Jezreelite.”* and she *“wrote letters in Ahab’s name … placed his seal on them, and sent them to the elders and nobles who lived in Naboth’s city with him.* Ahab did not show appropriate leadership. He did not keep his position as king. He became the puppet of his wife and submitted to her in doing evil. Jezebel came up with a totally diabolical plan. In the letters to the elders and nobles she said, *“Proclaim a day of fasting and seat Naboth in a prominent place among the people. 10 But seat two scoundrels opposite him and have them bring charges that he has cursed both God and the king. Then take him out and stone him to death.”*

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*11-13 So the elders and nobles who lived in Naboth’s city did as Jezebel directed in the letters she had written to them. 12 They proclaimed a fast and seated Naboth in a prominent place among the people. 13 Then two scoundrels came and sat opposite him and brought charges against Naboth before the people, saying, “Naboth has cursed both God and the king.” So they took him outside the city and stoned him to death.*

If that isn’t shocking enough, the elders and nobles did exactly as she said. They all bowed their knees to Baal and kissed him. They showed no shame in doing evil at all. What happened to Naboth reminds us of the greatest legacy of all--what happened to our Lord Jesus Christ. “A day of fasting”, “a prominent place among the people”, scoundrels bring false changes against him, accusing him of subverting the government--accusing him of blaspheming God, and of course killing him--an inocent man. Naboth was a martyr. He died for his faith (pause) and for his obedience to the word of God. He was one of the 7,000 in Israel who had not bowed down to Baal, that the Lord spoke of to Elijah (1KI 19:18). 2 Timothy 3:12 says, “ ... everyone who wants to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted.”

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*14**Then they sent word to Jezebel: “Naboth has been stoned to death.” As soon as Jezebel heard that Naboth had been stoned to death, she said to Ahab, “Get up and take possession of the vineyard of Naboth the Jezreelite that he refused to sell you. He is no longer alive, but dead.” 16 When Ahab heard that Naboth was dead, he got up and went down to take possession of Naboth’s vineyard.*

As soon as Jezabel heard from the elders and nobles of his town that Naboth was dead, she said to abab, *“Get up and take possession of the vineyard of Naboth the Jezreelite that he refused to sell you. He is no longer alive, but dead.”* So ahab went down to take possession of it. Jezebel and Ahab also didn’t show any shame for the sin they had committed in the eyes of the Lord.

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*9 Then the word of the Lord came to Elijah the Tishbite: 18 “Go down to meet Ahab king of Israel, who rules in Samaria. He is now in Naboth’s vineyard, where he has gone to take possession of it. 19 Say to him, ‘This is what the Lord says: Have you not murdered a man and seized his property?’ Then say to him, ‘This is what the Lord says: In the place where dogs licked up Naboth’s blood, dogs will lick up your blood—yes, yours!’” 20 Ahab said to Elijah, “So you have found me, my enemy!” “I have found you,” he answered, “because you have sold yourself to do evil in the eyes of the Lord.*

“Then the word of the Lord came to Elijah …” Something more to add to Ahab’s legacy. The Lord saw Ahab’s sin to murder Naboth and take his property, the Lord sent Ellijah to meet him. He was to say, *This is what the Lord says: Have you not murdered a man and seized his property?’ In the place where dogs licked up Naboth’s blood, dogs will lick up your blood—yes, yours!’”* The Lord sent Elijah to point out Ahab’s sin and to pronounce God’s judgment on Ahab. What Ahab had done was not hidden from God.

But how did Ahab respond to Elijah? As soon as Ahab saw he, he said to him “So you have found me, my enemy!” Ahab was a terrible Bible student. He was hiding from his shepherd, and when his shepherd found him he called him his enemy. But it was really Ahab that had become the enemy of God. JM 14:4 says, *You adulterous people, don’t you know that friendship with the world means enmity against God? Therefore, anyone who chooses to be a friend of the world becomes an enemy of God.* If you become the enemy of God, can you win? You cannot win! You will lose. You will be destroyed. Our legacy should not be that of the enemy of God, by becoming friends with this world. Instead, it should be to choose God, and stand on God’s side!

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*21 He says, ‘I am going to bring disaster on you. I will wipe out your descendants and cut off from Ahab every last male in Israel—slave or free. 22 I will make your house like that of Jeroboam son of Nebat and that of Baasha son of Ahijah, because you have aroused my anger and have caused Israel to sin.’ 23 “And also concerning Jezebel the Lord says: ‘Dogs will devour Jezebel by the wall of Jezreel.’ 24 “Dogs will eat those belonging to Ahab who die in the city, and the birds will feed on those who die in the country.”*

The Lord’s judgement was to bring disaster on Ahab. The Lord was going to wipe out his descendants, and make his house like the houses of Jeroboam and Baasha. Jeroboam and Baasha were two earlier kings of Israel the Lord destroyed because of their sins. But, Ahab never learned from what had happened to them. He never took warning. Now the same thing was going to happen to him and to his household. It was because Ahab aroused God’s anger and caused Israel to sin. The Lord would also bring judgment on Queen Jezebel. Dogs would devour Jezebel by the wall of Jezreel.

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Let’s read verse 25 together. T*here was never anyone like Ahab, who sold himself to do evil in the eyes of the Lord, urged on by Jezebel his wife.* This is Ahab’s final legacy before God. This is what he left the world and what he’ll always be remembered for. But what does it mean that there was never anyone like Abab? Does this mean there was never anyone evil like Ahab? No, there were lots of people--there have been lots of people more evil than Abab. But there was never anyone who sold himself like Ahab did--who sold their identity in the Lord like Ahab did. Ahab sold his identity as a believer in the Lord. He sold his identity as a child of God created in the image of God. He sold his identity as an Israelites one of God’s chosen people. He sold his identity as a king of Israel; called to be the servant of all. He sold his identity as a husband and a father. Ahab sold his inheritance in the Lord, including all the promises and blessings of the kingdom of God. By selling himself, Ahab sold all that God invested in his life--all the words of the Lord, all the works and miracles of God and all the mercy and grace the Lord God had ever poured into his life. He sold it all to do evil in the eyes of the Lord. And for what? A stupid vegitable garden. In this way, Ahab ended up spiritually bankrupt before the Lord.

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Verse 26 says, *He behaved in the vilest manner by going after idols, like the Amorites the Lord drove out before Israel.*

Ultimately, Ahab sold his relationship with the Lord for worthless idols. He left a legacy of idol worship.

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*27 When Ahab heard these words, he tore his clothes, put on sackcloth and fasted. He lay in sackcloth and went around meekly. 28 Then the word of the Lord came to Elijah the Tishbite: 29 “Have you noticed how Ahab has humbled himself before me? Because he has humbled himself, I will not bring this disaster in his day, but I will bring it on his house in the days of his son.”*

When Ahab heard the words of the Lord’s judgment through Elijah, *“he tore his clothes, put on sackcloth and fasted. He lay in sackcloth and went around meekly. 28 Then the word of the Lord came to Elijah the Tishbite: 29 “Have you noticed how Ahab has humbled himself before me? Because he has humbled himself, I will not bring this disaster in his day, but I will bring it on his house in the days of his son.”*

This time, Ahab humbled himself before God. The Lord noticed what Ahab did and delayed God’s judgment upon his life. God is merciful even to the unrighteous. I don’t know if Ahab really repented. But, at least he acknowledged God humbled himself, which is the first step toward repentance. To repent fully also included repenting practically. To turn from idol worship, and to pay back those we have wrongs.

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In conclusion: Abab left a very sad legacy. He didn’t leave anything to the next generation, but a lot of pain and suffering. On the other hand, Naboth left a glorious legacy. Although he might not have been able to leave his descendents physical property. However, he left a great spiritual inheritance--the inheritance of the kingdom of God.

What do you want your legacy to be?

Let’s fill in the blanks. There was never anyone like \_\_\_\_\_

Who \_\_\_\_\_\_

I want mine to be, there was never anyone like Robert who was changed by God

One word: there was never anyone like ...