

INI

St. Paul's Lutheran Church
2100 16th Street SW
Austin, MN 55912-1749
Pastor Ted Barthels
Sermon preached on
October 9, 2016
21st Sunday after Pentecost

Scripture Lessons: Ephesians 6:1-9; Luke 19:1-10

Hymns: 14; 777; 408; 453:2

Grace be unto you and peace from God our Father and our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen.

Sermon Text: 1 Kings 21:19-25

You shall speak to him, saying, "Thus says the LORD: "Have you murdered and also taken possession?" And you shall speak to him, saying, "Thus says the LORD: "In the place where dogs licked the blood of Naboth, dogs shall lick your blood, even yours.""

²⁰ So Ahab said to Elijah, "Have you found me, O my enemy?"

And he answered, "I have found *you*, because you have sold yourself to do evil in the sight of the LORD: ²¹ 'Behold, I will bring calamity on you. I will take away your posterity, and will cut off from Ahab every male in Israel, both bond and free. ²² I will make your house like the house of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, and like the house of Baasha the son of Ahijah, because of the provocation with which you have provoked *Me* to anger, and made Israel sin.'

²³ And concerning Jezebel the LORD also spoke, saying, 'The dogs shall eat Jezebel by the wall of Jezreel.' ²⁴ The dogs shall eat whoever belongs to Ahab and dies in the city, and the birds of the air shall eat whoever dies in the field."

²⁵ But there was no one like Ahab who sold himself to do wickedness in the sight of the LORD, because Jezebel his wife stirred him up.

(NKJV)

This is the Word of God.

Sanctify us, oh Lord, through Your truth. Your Word is truth.
Amen.

In Christ Jesus, God our Savior, dear fellow Redeemed:

INTRO: Gory Deaths --

I was looking through a small catalogue of church books and gifts this past week and was commenting to my daughter about things I found that I thought were perhaps less than tasteful, maybe even a bit tacky. One of these things that struck me was a Luther bobble-head doll. I really feel that the world can go on very nicely without a Luther bobble-head doll, or a beer koozie with a Luther quote imprinted on it. Yes, I'm sure that Luther drank some beer, and probably on a fairly regular basis, but really those were different times, and I'm sure we can find more appropriate ways to observe the 500th anniversary of the Reformation coming up next year than with a beer koozie.

Then in the books for youth section I found a new release about gory deaths in the Bible. Really, are we going to stoop to that to get the attention of the church's youth? However there are times when for our instruction in righteousness the Lord included in the scriptures the accounts of the terrible end that came to some people. These accounts were included to strike horror in the heart of the sinner. They were intended to remind us all that sin does not pay, indeed that "the wages of sin is death" (Romans 6:23)! And so we see in our text this morning that God sent His prophet to a powerful, but wicked, wicked man to remind him (and so also us) of the

THEME: Knowledge of God's Justice.

What does God know? It is the way of the world, it is the way of our own sinful flesh to dismiss what God knows. We live in denial. We don't actually want to think about it but be assured –

I. The Lord Knows.

That is the first lesson of our text; a lesson that was impressed upon Ahab's consciousness. There had not only been a string of kings in

the Northern Kingdom of Israel, but a string of dynasties. Some perhaps too short to really call dynasties, but the throne had passed through the hands of several families by the time Ahab's father, Omri, seized the throne. Omri was notable for building a new capital city for the Northern Kingdom. He purchased a hill and built the city of Samaria. However what the Lord found notable about Omri's reign was that he continued to follow in the way of Jeroboam I, who had built two altars to two calves in Bethel and Dan, and called them by the name of the Lord and drove the people of Israel to worship these idols instead of worshiping the Lord in Jerusalem. And so it went one king after another that the true worship of the true God was rejected in favor of this wicked idolatry.

When Ahab took the throne he went a step farther than Omri. He married a princess from Sidon named Jezebel and Ahab not only worshiped Baal the god of the surrounding heathens, but instituted that worship among the people of Israel, and built in Samaria, Israel's capital city, a temple to the female god of fertility, Asherah. Ahab supported Jezebel's campaign to kill all the prophets of the Lord, to silence the testimony of the true God from the presence of the Israel. Hundreds of prophets lost their lives. All this evil, and Ahab acted as if the problem wasn't that what he did was wicked and spiritually undermining Israel, but that Elijah the prophet was against him. He saw Elijah as a troublemaker.

Elijah had indeed announced a great drought that came upon the land of Israel as well as surrounding territories. And Elijah had been forced into hiding to avoid capture and death. However on this occasion God sent Elijah to appear before Ahab so that Ahab might understand that **the Lord knows!** Finally Ahab had filled up the cup of iniquity! It was the events surrounding Naboth's death that we might say were the final straw leading the Lord to proclaim through Elijah the judgment that would befall the house of Ahab.

It was just outside the window of the King's palace that a god-fearing man named Naboth had his vineyard. This vineyard which had been in Naboth's family since the days when the children of Israel entered the Promised Land. It was God's command that such possessions should remain within the family as a special inheritance. It was not to be sold, not to be lost from the family.

But Ahab coveted Naboth's vineyard, and when Naboth refused to sell because of the law of the Lord Jezebel arranged for Ahab to obtain it through a show of right. Naboth was falsely accused and executed for the sin of blasphemy, and then the king seized all Naboth's property. It was a perfect plan, well perfect in the eyes of Ahab and Jezebel, but the Lord knew how they had murdered Naboth. **The Lord knows!**

That is the first lesson we need to understand, the Lord knows all things. The Lord knows the intent of the heart. The Lord knows the evil that dwells in the hearts of all men. He knows our most secret sins. They cannot be hidden from the Lord.

There are two sides of this for the child of God. At times we wonder why the heathen, or the wicked prosper. We wonder why the Lord allows the wicked to succeed in all their wicked ways. We wonder if there is justice with the Lord. Perhaps the devil would sow some seeds of doubt or temptation in our hearts that we would stray from the paths of righteousness.

The Lord knows. People cannot hide their sins from the Lord. They are not "getting away with it" whatever that "it" may be!

The second aspect of this is that the Lord also knows everything that is going on within our hearts and lives. Not only is He aware of our worries and our heartaches, and yes, also our joys, but He is also fully aware of our sins, the full extent of our sins. In His grace the Lord does not deal with us according to our sins. More on that later. Right now the Spirit would impress upon us that we should be mindful of the fact that we are not hiding anything from the Lord. **We** are not "getting away with it" whatever that "it" may be.

With Ahab the Lord had Elijah clearly present --

II. The Lord's Judgment.

Now comes the part when Elijah gets gory. He makes it clear that Ahab will come to no good end. Indeed it is not Ahab alone that will die, but it will be the end of his house, every male descending from Ahab was to die. It would be the end of his line. So Ahab had provoked the Lord to anger! In the end Ahab would die in battle, a random arrow just shot in the air would find the gap in his armor

and he would die. They would drive his chariot back to Samaria and just as Elijah prophesied, the dogs would lick up his blood when the chariot was washed.

And what of Jezebel? The prophet had a word from the Lord concerning her death also. Indeed it would be even more gruesome. The dogs would eat Jezebel's corpse by the walls of Jezreel where they had their summer palace. When Jehu killed Ahab's son and took the throne he had Jezebel thrown down from her palace window and she was trampled by the horses and chariots of Jehu and his men.

Why does the Bible have to be so gory? A lot of people have a great deal of difficulty with all that gore! Should the Bible be rated R and reserved for mature adults? Is it meant to be titillating for those who like to think about pain and blood and death? Not at all. It is ugly because sin is ugly. The wages of sin is not at all pretty. Those who are thinking that human nature is basically good and life in this world is beautiful close their eyes to the horror that is sin and the kind of suffering and death, including eternal death that sin brings.

And the Lord is a just God. He is right in all His ways. And He visits the iniquity of the fathers upon the children to the third and fourth generations of those who hate Him (Exodus 20:5)! His justice comes upon those who do not believe who mock the Lord. Indeed Paul, makes that point very clear in –

Galatians 4:7-8 “Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, that he will also reap. ⁸For he who sows to his flesh will of the flesh reap corruption, but he who sows to the Spirit will of the Spirit reap everlasting life.”

It is clear from our text that the Lord does not dismiss sin as being trivial. He does not just forget about it. It may be in His time, according to His plan and purpose, but the justice of God will come upon those who sow to the flesh. They will reap corruption, the eternal corruption of death in hell, which is far more horrible than we anything we will ever see on earth, far more horrible than we can even imagine.

But God has no pleasure in the death of the wicked, as we read from the prophet –

Ezekiel 3:11 “As I live,” says the Lord God, “I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from his way and live. Turn, turn from your evil ways! For why should you die, O house of Israel?””

The Lord desires repentance not destruction and so --

III. The Lord Provides the Way of Escape.

He would not simply have us make amends ourselves. We could never succeed in that. He would have us turn away from evil and turn to the Lord. Only God can make that possible.

Since the Justice of God is absolute all sin had to be paid for. Each and every sin, your sin and my sin, had to be visited by the justice of God. And so it was that God sent His only begotten Son into the world that we might live through Him. He sent His Son into the world in the person of Jesus Christ who **“bore our sins in His own body on the tree, that we, having died to sins, might live for righteousness—by whose stripes you were healed”** (1 Peter 2:24).

This was the way of God’s grace for a fallen mankind, yes for all sin! We are justified. We are sanctified. We are separated from sin because all the accusations that could have been leveled against us were assigned to Jesus.

God deals with us in the magnitude of His grace, a grace beyond imagining. He clears our name. He clears us of all guilt and condemnation. He can’t and didn’t just deny His justice, but He satisfied divine justice for us and brought us the gift of life! We read in Colossians --

Colossians 2:13-14 And you, being dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, He has made alive together with Him, having forgiven you all trespasses, ¹⁴having wiped out the handwriting of requirements that was against us, which was contrary to us. And He has taken it out of the way, having nailed it to the cross.

It wasn't a nice death Jesus endured. It was horrible. It was ugly. It was gory. And it was for sin. It was our sin that made Jesus' death necessary, for God's justice was served once and for all. Jesus' merits and His atoning sacrifice satisfied God's wrath forever; we are saved!

By the Holy Spirit's working in our hearts and lives we know Jesus as Lord, and seek to serve Him and glorify His name before the world. We do this by pursuing righteousness and peace and treating our neighbor with love and respect.

So we learn a vital lesson from Elijah's visit with Ahab. It brings us knowledge of God's justice. It teaches us that sin is ugly, and brings a horrible death. However, we have also been brought the knowledge of God's grace in Christ. We have been brought to see the justice of God in the face of Jesus Christ. We have been delivered from a gory death, and have been presented with the gift of life for time and eternity. May we who have been made the recipients of God's amazing grace praise His name for all eternity.

AMEN.

“Now may the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that you may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.” Amen. (Romans 15:13)