

Third Presbyterian Church
Midweek Bible Study
1st Kings 21:1-29
WHY GOD??

1 Kings 21:1-29 (NIV)

¹ 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 fathers." ⁴ So Ahab went home, sullen and angry because Naboth the Jezreelite had said, "I will not give you the inheritance of my fathers." 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? 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 testify that he has cursed both God and the king. Then take him out and stone him to death." ¹¹ 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. ¹⁴ Then they sent word to Jezebel: "Naboth has been stoned and is dead." ¹⁵ 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. ¹⁷ 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. ²¹ 'I am going to bring disaster on you. I will consume 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 provoked me to 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 of the air will feed on those who die in the country." ²⁵ (There was never a man like Ahab, who sold himself to do evil in the eyes of the LORD, urged on by Jezebel his wife. ²⁶ He behaved in the vilest manner by going after idols, like the Amorites the LORD drove out before Israel.) 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."

Questions

1. How do most people feel about a bully who takes what he or she wants by force?
2. God is the same, yesterday today and forever. How does this truth inform our “Why did you let this happen, or where were you God when this happened?” kind of questions?
3. Explain in your own words what it means that God is Sovereign?
4. To what extent should rulers, bosses, or leaders be able to do whatever they want within the boundaries of their authority?
 - A. Please if you can speak theologically about the climate/culture that is being played out in society right now with the abuses of power that have gone on and are now being called to question. (“me too movement” “killing of unarmed black men” etc.)
5. Naboth stood by his commitment to what God had instructed him to do, even though the result was a sacrifice of monetary gain and eventually his life. What has been your greatest sacrifice for God when you had to turn down gain (money, job, etc.).
 - A. How did that make you feel?
 - B. Did this stand/sacrifice for God have an effect on others around you?
 - C. Share a moment where you didn’t listen to God and gave in to our desires for gain and describe what/how you learned from this experience.
6. It is very possible as we see in this account for an evil ruler to taint those he or she rules. With that in mind, how do we keep ourselves from being influenced by the sinful/evil cultures that exist on our jobs, schools or society?
7. Ahab considered Elijah his enemy as do many people will consider a godly person their enemy.
 - A. Explain why this is the case
 - B. Since you are a godly person what is your response to the fact that most people will consider you an enemy?
 - C. How do you still love them enough to witness to them by word and deed knowing they will attack you, have an agenda and or ulterior motive in their dealing with you?
8. Why does God sometimes hold back His hand of judgment when a truly evil person shows repentance?
 - A. How does this fact inform your attitude toward a truly evil person?
9. Evil will not ultimately win the war over good, however in this battle there are some causalities. Respond to the following:
 - A. In the war for ultimate good, you may be killed or lose your life.
 - B. In the war for ultimate good, a close relative may be killed or lose their life.

C. No matter what happens God is Sovereign and loss of life is a part of God's permissive will. (not that he wills death but allows it and we may never understand why one person over another person....please explain this truth and your believe about this truth.

10. Share your main takeaways from the Lesson/Sermon for this week.

The Terrible Crimes Against Naboth by Ahab and Jezebel: Facing Judgment Due to Horrible Evil, 21:1-29

(21:1-29) **Introduction:** Can an individual do so much evil that God will condemn the person to hell, to eternal separation from God? Is there in reality a judgment to be faced? Is there even such a place as hell? Many people believe not, for they deny God's very existence. And even some of us who believe in God do not believe in a future day of justice, that God is going to hold all people accountable for their behavior. Interestingly, most people do not think that God would ever reject them, not in the final analysis. Most people feel when the climactic day of judgment comes, God will accept them. Few people believe they deserve hell, that they have committed enough sin to be condemned by God.

Nevertheless, no matter what we believe or think, there is a day of justice coming. And according to the Lord Jesus Christ and Holy Scripture, there is a place called hell, a prison where all the lawless of this earth—all who have rejected the Lord and His commandments—will spend eternity. In fact, Christ Himself referred to hell more than did any other person in Scripture. And probably, He referred to hell more than any person in human history. Think about this fact: one of the major teachings of the Lord Jesus Christ is that there is a place called hell and there is a coming judgment. That day of justice will determine the fate of people, whether they will spend eternity with God or in the dreadful place or prison called hell.

Once again, can a person commit evil worthy of judgment and hell? This is the practical subject painted by the present Scripture. This is: *The Terrible Crimes Against Naboth by Ahab and Jezebel: Facing Judgment Due to Horrible Evil, 21:1-29*.

1. The sins of Ahab: greed and covetousness (vv.1-4).
2. The crimes of Jezebel: revenge and murder (vv.5-17).
3. The condemnation of Ahab and Jezebel: a picture of God's coming judgment (vv.18-29).

1. (21:1-4) Greed, Example of— Covetousness, Example of— Behavior, Childish, Example of— Immaturity, Example of— Ahab, Character - Nature of— Ahab, Sins of: the sins of Ahab included greed and covetousness. Sometime after the victory over Syria, Ahab and his infamous wife Jezebel were spending time in their summer palace located in Jezreel. Next to the palace was a vineyard that caught the eye of the king, and he began to covet the vineyard. Going to Naboth, the owner, Ahab requested the right to purchase the vineyard, offering either to pay for it or else to exchange a better vineyard for it (1 Kings 21:1-2). But Naboth rejected the offer because the vineyard had been part of his family's inheritance for generations (1 Kings 21:3). Notice the angry, disappointed, and childish reaction by Ahab: he went home and went to bed, turning his face to the wall, sulking, pouting, and refusing to eat (1 Kings 21:4).

Note this fact: Ahab's desire for the vineyard was not wrong, nor was his offer to purchase the property. What was wrong was his coveting the field, the greed that filled his heart. Moreover, his selfish disposition stirred childish and immature behavior within him. Apparently, such shallow and immature reactions were a trait of Ahab's character or personality.

Thought 1. Greed and covetousness are forbidden by God. Covetousness is even named and condemned by one of the Ten Commandments. A person who covets will take advantage of other people in order to get more and more. It is covetousness and greed that cause...

- a landlord to rent property that needs repair or to charge too high a price for the rental property
- a contractor to take shortcuts in his building project
- a repairman to use secondhand replacement parts or to perform a mediocre job
- an employee to abuse his employer by doing personal tasks when he or she is supposed to be on the job
- a man or woman to lust after the wife or husband of someone else
- a person to lie, steal, or cheat in order to get what he desires
- companies to overcharge for their products and to steal ideas, plans, or products from other companies
- politicians and other leaders to make false promises and to misuse their authority for their own personal interests and cravings

Covetousness and greed can affect any area of our lives, for these two terrible evils arise out of the heart. It is from within the heart that lusts and sinful desires originate. Listen to what God's Holy Word says about these two terrible evils:

"And he said unto them, Take heed, and beware of covetousness: for a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth" (Luke 12:15).

"But fornication, and all uncleanness, or covetousness, let it not be once named among you, as becometh saints" (Ephes. 5:3).

"Mortify therefore your members which are upon the earth; fornication, uncleanness, inordinate affection, evil concupiscence, and covetousness, which is idolatry: For which things' sake the wrath of God cometh on the children of disobedience" (Col. 3:5-6).

"Not given to wine, no striker, not greedy of filthy lucre; but patient, not a brawler, not covetous" (1 Tim. 3:3).

2. (21:5-16) Revenge, Example of— Murder, Example of— Sins, Listed, Revenge— Jezebel, Sins and Evil of: the crimes of Jezebel included revenge and murder. Remember that Jezebel was a tyrant who was completely given over to evil. Throughout her reign as queen, she launched a purge to eliminate the prophets and the worship of the LORD from the land of Israel. The depth of her sinful, evil heart is exposed by Scripture in the following event:

1. When Jezebel walked into the bedroom of the palace and found Ahab sulking, pouting, and refusing to eat, she became very disgusted (1 Kings 21:5-7). When she asked her husband what was wrong, Ahab explained his desire for the vineyard and Naboth's refusal to sell the property to him. Note that he said absolutely nothing about Naboth's reason for keeping the property in his family, nothing about its having been in the family inheritance for generations.

Being totally fed up with Ahab's weak, immature, and childish behavior, Jezebel questioned if this were any way for a king to act. She ordered him to get up, eat, and cheer up, for she would get the vineyard for him.

2. Taking immediate action, Jezebel devised a wicked plot against Naboth's life (1 Kings 21:8-10). She wrote a command to the officials of the city where Naboth lived and ordered them to plot his execution. Note that she used the king's name and the imperial seal to indicate that the command was coming from the king's full authority and power (1 Kings 21:8). In the letters, she suggested that the *pretense of religion* be used by proclaiming a day of fast for the citizens of the city (1 Kings 21:9; Judges 20:26; 1 Samuel 7:5-6; 2 Chron. 20:2-4). In ancient times, a day of fasting was sometimes set aside in order to show concern that a criminal or some other evil threatened the city.

But in addition to using the *guise of religion*, Jezebel suggested using the *formality of justice* by bribing two false witnesses to charge Naboth with treason (Exodus 22:28; Leviticus 24:16). Finally Jezebel suggested that the officials, after finding Naboth guilty, take him outside the city gates and stone him to death.

3. Just as Jezebel commanded under the king's authority, the officials of the city carried out the reprehensible orders (1 Kings 21:11-14). They used the false pretext of a religious fast, showing concern that some criminal was loose in the city. Hypocritically—desperately—the officials declared that the hand of God's judgment would fall upon them unless the criminal was exposed. In addition, they used the formality of justice (1 Kings 21:13). Two scoundrels were bribed to make false charges against Naboth, making a mockery of the justice system. As a result, the officials executed an innocent man under the false charges commanded by Jezebel.

The officials then reported their treacherous act of murder—the horrible and unjustified murder—to the queen (1 Kings 21:14). After hearing the report, Jezebel at once instructed Ahab to get up and to take possession of the vineyard. Obeying her instructions, he traveled down to the vineyard and took possession of the field he had so selfishly coveted (1 Kings 21:15-16).

Thought 1. Jezebel is the very epitome of wickedness. Consumed by evil and corruption, she found it easy to seek revenge and to take the life of an innocent man. It did not matter to her that she took a man's life just to secure a piece of land so her husband could plant a garden. What a shocking abuse of power!

When people strike out against us or fail us or disappoint us, we must seek peace and not retaliation or revenge. As we walk through life day by day—whether at work, in restaurants, in carpools, in retail stores, in businesses, in schools, in church, or anywhere else—we are often offended by what other people say or do. Even on a national level when enemies threaten our country, we must not immediately retaliate and seek vengeance. As Christian believers, we are to first seek peace.

But note this fact: we are never to indulge nor give license to evil. We are always to confront evil with justice, for love demands it. We are not to allow evil to run wild, causing injury, pain, suffering, destruction, or death to any person or animal or business or organization. Peace should always be the objective with our neighbors, whether they are living next door, working beside us, or residing in another nation of the world. But if our neighbors reject the message of peace, we must execute justice without seeking personal retaliation or revenge. God allows us to defend ourselves, but always in a spirit of understanding, love, and justice.

Retaliation and revenge can consume our hearts, causing us to forget peace, love, and justice. As a result, we sometimes find ourselves striking out in bitterness, hostility, and injustice. But a heart that is acceptable to God is one that seeks peace and brotherly compassion and justice among all people everywhere. A godly heart never seeks retaliation or revenge.

1) Listen to what God has to say about revenge and retaliation.

"But I say unto you, That ye resist not evil: but whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also" (Matthew 5:39).

"Recompense to no man evil for evil. Provide things honest in the sight of all men." (Romans 12:17).

"If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men" (Romans 12:18).

"Let us therefore follow after the things which make for peace, and things wherewith one may edify another" (Romans 14:19).

"See that none render evil for evil unto any *man*; but ever follow that which is good, both among yourselves, and to all *men*" (1 Thes. 5:15).

"Follow peace with all *men*, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord" (Hebrews 12:14).

2) Listen to what God says about murder.

"For this, Thou shalt not commit adultery, Thou shalt not kill, Thou shalt not steal, Thou shalt not bear false witness, Thou shalt not covet; and if *there be* any other commandment, it is briefly comprehended in this saying, namely, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself" (Romans 13:9).

"Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are *these*; Adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, Idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, Envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like: of the which I tell you before, as I have also told *you* in time past, that they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God" (Galatians 5:19-21).

3. (21:17-29) Judgment, Surety of— Condemnation, Example of— Ahab, Condemnation of— Jezebel, Judgment and Condemnation of: Elijah pronounced God's condemnation upon Ahab and Jezebel. The hand of God's coming judgment was to fall upon them. Scripture graphically describes the terrifying fate that was to fall upon both Ahab and Jezebel.

1. God issued a summons to Elijah the prophet: he was to go and confront Ahab to expose his sins (1 Kings 21:17-18). And note where Ahab was: in Naboth's vineyard, where the king had gone to take possession of it. Elijah was to charge Ahab with two crimes: murder and theft of property. After laying out the charge, the prophet was to pronounce the coming justice of God upon the king. Dogs were to lick up the blood of Ahab just as they had Naboth's blood. No matter where Ahab was, he would not be able to hide nor to escape the coming judgment.

2. As Elijah was approaching Ahab for the encounter, Ahab called out, addressing the prophet as "my enemy" who had found him (1 Kings 21:20). In a very straightforward response, Elijah declared that, yes, he had found Ahab because the king had sold himself out to do evil. In the eyes of the LORD he had committed the most horrible evil, that of murder and of stealing an innocent victim's property.

3. Then, without hesitating, Elijah pronounced the divine sentence of God upon Ahab (1 Kings 21:21-22). Disaster was coming upon Ahab personally and upon his descendants and dynasty. Tragedy would consume both him and his descendants. Every last male in Israel who was a descendant of Ahab would be cut off— whether slave or free. His house or dynasty was to suffer just as Jeroboam's and Baasha's had, because he had provoked God's anger by his wickedness and by causing the Israelites to sin (1 Kings 14:10; 15:28-30; 16:3-4, 11-13). By being a stumbling block of evil, Ahab was to suffer the terrifying justice of God.

4. After pronouncing judgment upon Ahab and without giving the king time to respond, Elijah pronounced the judgment of God upon Jezebel (1 Kings 21:23). The queen was to be eaten by dogs beside the wall of

Jezebel. Jezebel would not escape the hand of God's justice, for she stood guilty of terrible evil in purging the land of the LORD's prophets and of the worship of His Name.

5. All who belonged to Ahab would suffer disgraceful deaths (1 Kings 21:24). The corpses of all who lived in the city would be eaten by dogs, and those who lived in the country would have their corpses consumed by the birds of the air.

6. Elijah pronounced three reasons for God's judgment upon the king (1 Kings 21:25-26). The evil of Ahab surpassed that of all men. He was the very epitome of evil:

- a. He had sold himself to do evil, and he had allowed his wife Jezebel to influence and urge him on in his wicked ways.
- b. He had lived the life of an idolater, a false worshipper just like the Amorites whom the LORD had driven out of the promised land.
- c. He had become a stumbling block to the Israelites, causing them to sin and to engage in idolatry and false worship. He had failed to set an example of righteousness before the people and failed to institute social and religious reforms that would have turned the people back to the LORD (1 Kings 21:22).

7. Stricken with utter terror, Ahab showed an outward remorse by tearing off his clothes, putting on sackcloth, and fasting. But note this fact: he was reacting to the divine decree, not genuinely repenting of his wickedness nor turning from his idolatry. Neither was he willing to return the stolen property to the family of Naboth.

8. Nevertheless, the LORD demonstrated compassion and mercy by summoning Elijah and informing him that he would delay His sentence upon Ahab. He would not execute justice upon the house of Ahab until his son took the throne. God's compassion and mercy were being shown because Ahab had humbled himself to some degree before the LORD. Note how this is a strong demonstration of God's eternal mercy and compassion, ever longing for people to repent and return to Him—even those who are terrible sinners living corrupt and immoral lives (2 Peter 3:9).

Thought 1. The major lesson for us is the surety of God's judgment. His judgment is inevitable. If we live lives of sin, wickedness, and evil, we will bear the hand of God's justice. Just as God predicted that judgment would fall upon Ahab and Jezebel, so it fell. Because of their brutality and horrible evil, they both bore the terrifying justice of God. Even today, while this material is being written, Ahab and Jezebel are still suffering eternal separation from God and His holy presence, suffering in a place or prison that the Lord Jesus Christ called hell. And they will suffer there for all eternity. For once we are born into this world, we never cease to exist. First, we exist upon this earth, and then after death, we continue to exist either with God in heaven or without God in hell. In this life there is only one place where we can live: on this earth. But in the next life, there are two places where all of mankind will spend eternity: either in heaven with God or in the prison of hell separated from God.

Where we spend eternity is determined by how we live while upon this earth. If we live wicked and disobedient lives, then we follow in the footsteps of Ahab and Jezebel and will join them in hell. But if we follow after Christ, living righteous and holy lives, we will live in heaven with God throughout all eternity. We will join Elijah and all the other prophets of God and all believers who have trusted the LORD from the beginning of human history. Listen to what God's Holy Word says about the coming judgment:

"I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance: but he that cometh after me is mightier than I, whose shoes I am not worthy to bear: he shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost, and *with* fire: Whose fan *is* in his hand, and he will thoroughly purge his floor, and

gather his wheat into the garner; but he will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire" (Matthew 3:11-12).

"But I say unto you, That whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart. And if thy right eye offend thee, pluck it out, and cast *it* from thee: for it is profitable for thee that one of thy members should perish, and not *that* thy whole body should be cast into hell" (Matthew 5:28-29).

"The Son of man shall send forth his angels, and they shall gather out of his kingdom all things that offend, and them which do iniquity; And shall cast them into a furnace of fire: there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth" (Matthew 13:41-42).

"And if thine eye offend thee, pluck it out, and cast *it* from thee: it is better for thee to enter into life with one eye, rather than having two eyes to be cast into hell fire" (Matthew 18:9).

"Then shall he say also unto them on the left hand, Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels" (Matthew 25:41).

"And if thy hand offend thee, cut it off: it is better for thee to enter into life maimed, than having two hands to go into hell, into the fire that never shall be quenched" (Mark 9:43).