

**“God’s Heroes Have Courage”**  
Sermon by Lisa Crismore  
July 8, 2018 – John Knox Presbyterian Church

**1 Samuel 25:2-35**

<sup>2-3</sup> There was a certain man in Maon who carried on his business in the region of Carmel. He was very prosperous—three thousand sheep and a thousand goats, and it was sheep-shearing time in Carmel. The man’s name was Nabal (Fool), a Calebite, and his wife’s name was Abigail. The woman was intelligent and good-looking, the man brutish and mean.

<sup>4-8</sup> David, out in the backcountry, heard that Nabal was shearing his sheep and sent ten of his young men off with these instructions: “Go to Carmel and approach Nabal. Greet him in my name, ‘Peace! Life and peace to you. Peace to your household, peace to everyone here! I heard that it’s sheep-shearing time. Here’s the point: When your shepherds were camped near us we didn’t take advantage of them. They didn’t lose a thing all the time they were with us in Carmel. Ask your young men—they’ll tell you. What I’m asking is that you be generous with my men—share the feast! Give whatever your heart tells you to your servants and to me, David your son.’”

<sup>9-11</sup> David’s young men went and delivered his message word for word to Nabal. Nabal tore into them, “Who is this David? Who is this son of Jesse? The country is full of runaway servants these days. Do you think I’m going to take good bread and wine and meat freshly butchered for my sheepshearers and give it to men I’ve never laid eyes on? Who knows where they’ve come from?”

<sup>12-13</sup> David’s men got out of there and went back and told David what he had said. David said, “Strap on your swords!” They all strapped on their swords, David and his men, and set out, four hundred of them. Two hundred stayed behind to guard the camp.

<sup>14-17</sup> Meanwhile, one of the young shepherds told Abigail, Nabal’s wife, what had happened: “David sent messengers from the backcountry to salute our master, but he tore into them with insults. Yet these men treated us very well. They took nothing from us and didn’t take advantage of us all the time we were in the fields. They formed a wall around us, protecting us day and night all the time we were out tending the sheep. Do something quickly because big trouble is ahead for our master and all of us. Nobody can talk to him. He’s impossible—a real brute!”

<sup>18-19</sup> Abigail flew into action. She took two hundred loaves of bread, two skins of wine, five sheep dressed out and ready for cooking, a bushel of roasted grain, a hundred raisin cakes, and two hundred fig cakes, and she had it all loaded on some donkeys. Then she said to her young servants, “Go ahead and pave the way for me. I’m right behind you.” But she said nothing to her husband Nabal.

<sup>20-22</sup> As she was riding her donkey, descending into a ravine, David and his men were descending from the other end, so they met there on the road. David had just said, “That sure was a waste, guarding everything this man had out in the wild so that nothing he had was lost—and now he rewards me with insults. A real slap in the face! May God do his worst to me if Nabal and every cur in his misbegotten brood aren’t dead meat by morning!”

<sup>23-25</sup> As soon as Abigail saw David, she got off her donkey and fell on her knees at his feet, her face to the ground in homage, saying, “My master, let me take the blame! Let me speak to you. Listen to what I have to say. Don’t dwell on what that brute Nabal did. He acts out the meaning of his name: Nabal, Fool. Foolishness oozes from him.

<sup>25-27</sup> “I wasn’t there when the young men my master sent arrived. I didn’t see them. And now, my master, as GOD lives and as you live, GOD has kept you from this avenging murder—and may your enemies, all who seek my master’s harm, end up like Nabal! Now take this gift that I, your servant girl, have brought to my master, and give it to the young men who follow in the steps of my master.

<sup>28-29</sup> “Forgive my presumption! But GOD is at work in my master, developing a rule solid and dependable. My master fights GOD’s battles! As long as you live no evil will stick to you.

If anyone stands in your way,  
if anyone tries to get you out of the way,  
Know this: Your God-honored life is tightly bound  
in the bundle of God-protected life;  
But the lives of your enemies will be hurled aside  
as a stone is thrown from a sling.

<sup>30-31</sup> “When GOD completes all the goodness he has promised my master and sets you up as prince over Israel, my master will not have this dead weight in his heart, the guilt of an avenging murder. And when GOD has worked things for good for my master, remember me.”

<sup>32-34</sup> And David said, “Blessed be GOD, the God of Israel. He sent you to meet me! And blessed be your good sense! Bless you for keeping me from murder and taking charge of looking out for me. A close call! As GOD lives, the God of Israel who kept me from hurting you, if you had not come as quickly as you did, stopping me in my tracks, by morning there would have been nothing left of Nabal but dead meat.”

<sup>35</sup> Then David accepted the gift she brought him and said, “Return home in peace. I’ve heard what you’ve said and I’ll do what you’ve asked.”

I don’t know if you have seen the new documentary out on Fred Rogers. I highly recommend this documentary called “Won’t You Be My Neighbor.” Fred Rogers was an ordained Minister of the Presbyterian Church. His pulpit was not your normal pulpit. It was the television and his congregation was children. He believed that children’s feelings were just as important and deep as adults’ feelings. Fred took great risks. He would talk to children about difficult topics. He didn’t sugar coat things but talked to the children on their level. He took an entire week talking about death. He took an entire week talking about divorce. There was one clip shown in the movie that showed Daniel, the tiger puppet, talking with Lady Fairchild about assassination. This was when Bobby Kennedy was shot. Fred had this amazing way of taking these difficult topics and sharing them with children in very simple way.

He also was a peacemaker. When the United States was facing racial tensions between the white people and the African American people, Martin Luther King Jr. had just been shot and people

were taking bleach and pouring it in the public pools so the African American people would get out and leave. Fred Rogers introduced a new character to the neighborhood. His name was Officer Clemmons. One day when Officer Clemmons came to visit, Fred was soaking his feet in a kiddie pool in the backyard and invited Officer Clemmons to soak his feet right next to him. This sent a message of unity and peaceful community despite your skin color.

Today in our scripture from 1 Samuel, Abigail is our main character. She is a risk taker. She is a peacemaker. She is a messenger from God. And through it all, she has amazing courage. I will be honest. I did not know very much about Abigail until she was found in our Vacation Bible School Hero Central curriculum this summer. Abigail is quite a character and it is no wonder why we found her labeled as one of God's Heroes.

When she finds out that her evil husband, Nabal has enraged David and his men by refusing to share his food with them. She sets out to set the record straight. It is clear that she goes without her husband knowing it. She takes a huge risk by going against her husband. This man is rich and I am sure commands a lot of power. She also has no idea how David will receive her. She assumes that he is out for blood and plans to kill her husband, his men and possibly her.

So, she goes to her servants and asked that they pack up a great feast of dressed sheep to cook, fine wine, raisin and fig cakes and fresh baked bread. This huge amount of food is gathered and put on donkeys. Abigail, herself, could have taken the black stallion or the charging white horse but instead chooses to meet David on an humble donkey. This must have sent a message of humility when she came toward David. She comes with a gift of a peace offering. Then, she takes the blame for Nabal's actions.

She says, "Please forgive me. Forget what Nabal did. He was foolish. I will take the blame for what he did." Usually, we think of courage as being strong enough to stand up for ourselves and fight for what is right. When do we consider having courage to take the blame for someone else's faults? It is totally against our human nature isn't it?

Last week, Tom shared in his sermon on vulnerability that we spend so much time blaming each other. It is all over social media where this person is blaming this person and that person is blaming that person. We don't have the courage to be vulnerable and take responsibility for our own actions.

Abigail takes it one step further and is willing to take the hit for what Nabal did and seek forgiveness. Scripture tells us that she was beautiful and intelligent. It is no doubt that David is captivated by Abigail's beauty but it is her wisdom that opens up his heart to listen to her request. She tells him that he should not harm Nabal because of what he did. He will be the future prince of Israel and he does not want this violent act to be held against him. Abigail sends the message from God that David should not act out with anger but trust God that there will be justice. David will soon be the master of God's kingdom and God will stand by his side.

David is grateful to Abigail for helping him see that he should not repay evil with evil but instead to repay evil with good. David realizes that God has saved him from making a big mistake with the help of Abigail. He responds with a blessing. Listen now to his blessing.

*"Blessed be GOD, the God of Israel. He sent you to meet me! And blessed be your good sense! Bless you for keeping me from murder and taking charge of looking out for me. A close call! As GOD lives, the God of Israel who kept me from hurting you, if you had not come as quickly as you did, stopping me in my tracks, by morning there would have been nothing left of Nabal but dead meat."*

Our Vacation Bible School theme scripture for the week was “Do good – Seek peace – And go after it!” Abigail had great courage to seek out peace. She didn’t shy away from it. She relied on God to give her the courage to go after what was good for others and herself. During the week of VBS, we talked about heroes. We think of heroes having large muscles and people who have the power to leap tall buildings in a single bound or to fly to infinity and beyond. God’s heroes are everyday people like you and me. We are God’s heroes. God gives us the courage to do amazing things. What does that courage look like?

- Having the courage to go to someone and tell them that they are about to make a big mistake
- Having the courage to open up your heart and listen, being able to change your actions.
- Having the courage to repay evil with good.
- Having the courage to take a risk by standing up for something you believe God is calling you to do
- Having the courage to take the blame for someone else’s faults
- Having the courage to be a peacemaker by seeking peace and going after it.

Thanks be to God for the story of Abigail and her courage that shows us how to live out our faith in God. Amen.

Benediction for the end of the service – this is a body prayer so you will need to be standing. Clench your hands into a fist, Take your arms and cross them. Bend your body so that you are curled with your head bowed.

Gracious God sometimes we are all tied up with fear. We are facing difficult things in our lives. Help us to know that having courage is not the same as not being scared. Sometimes being scared is a completely appropriate way to feel! Gracious God grant us courage through your love and never failing presence. We open up our hands and bodies reaching them up to the sky. We imagine the loving hand of God holding us every minute, every second, and being there to fill our hearts with love, with hope, and with courage. Amen.