

Gospel Meetings s.h.c.- 13 Beauty and the Beast

by Stan Ford

The sermon explores the story of Nabal and Abigail to illustrate the importance of character, the consequences of contempt, and God's claim on our lives.

Duration: 44:42

Scripture: Proverbs 23:26, Luke 23:34, Romans 10:13

Topics: "Gods Providence", "Heart Repentance"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher emphasizes the importance of responding to the truth found in Bible stories. He urges the audience to give their hearts to God and seek forgiveness. The preacher also highlights the story of David and Abigail, emphasizing the need to trust in God and submit to His will. He reminds the congregation of God's providence and protection, but warns of the consequences of rejecting His mercy. The sermon concludes with a prayer for the audience to not be like Nabal, but rather to be grateful and generous towards God.

Transcript

From England, Brother Ford. Thank you. I want to read a verse or two this morning, if I may, from 1 Samuel, chapter 25.

You will forgive me for starting to read before you take your seat, but it's just that took a little time to talk to the children, but I wanted to do that. 1 Samuel, chapter 25, if we may please. I would like to select just a verse here and there in the chapter.

Commencing reading in verse 2, there was a man in Maon whose possessions were in Carmel. And the man was very great, and he had three thousand sheep and a thousand goats, and he was shearing his sheep in Carmel. Now the name of the man was Nabal, and the name of his wife, Abagai.

And she was a woman of good understanding and of a beautiful countenance, but the man was churlish and evil in his doings, and he was of the house of Caleb. And David heard in the wilderness that Nabal did shear his sheep. And David sent out ten young men, and David said unto the young men, get you up to Carmel, and go to Nabal, and greet him in my name.

And thus shall ye say to him that liveth in prosperity, peace be both to thee, and peace be to thine house, and peace be unto all that thou hast. And now I have heard that thou hast shearers. Now thy shepherds, which were with us, we hurt them not.

Neither was there ought missing unto them of all the well they were in Carmel. Ask the young men, and they will show thee. Wherefore, let the young men find favour in thine eyes, for we come in a good day.

Give, I pray thee, whatsoever cometh to thine hand, and to thy servants, and to thy son David. And when David's young men came, they spake to Nabal according to all those words in the name of David and Seth. And Nabal answered David's servants, and said, Who is David? Who is the son of Jesse? There be many servants nowadays that break away every man from his master.

Shall I take my bread, and my water, and my flesh, that I have killed for my shearers, and give it unto men whom I know not whence they be? So David's young men turned their way, and went again, and came, and told him all these things." The Lord well blessed the reading of his word, and the portion of his word to which we will be making reference this morning. I was thinking of a title for what I wanted to talk about today. Last evening I had the privilege of being out at supper with some friends, and I said I was talking about this, and so we read together the portion last evening.

And I asked them what title they would give to it, and I got the answer almost immediately, as one said, well there's only one title for that. Beauty and the Beast. And that's what I want to talk about.

I want, it's not quite pantomime time yet, but nevertheless, I want to talk to you about Beauty and the Beast. I want to talk about the woman that married the wrong man. Now I think you will agree with me, there are lots of women that have married the wrong man.

Of course, I must say please, as a man there are lots of men that have married the wrong women. Maybe I ought to start there, almost in defense. I am certain that none of us could read casually the word of God without realizing there are a number of men in the bible who it appears married the wrong woman.

You couldn't read the book indeed that bears the tremendous name of one of the great prophets without realizing that. For as I turn the page of holy writ I begin to realize that there are stories about men, and if ever there was one it was Hosea who it appears married the wrong woman. You can't understand the book if you forget that.

I've got a strong feeling that some of you would think that Job married the wrong woman. At the time when he was in desperate need his wife turned to him and said, why don't you curse God and die? When I come nearer this age, oh I begin to find there are lots of men that have done just this. I was talking to a class in one of the schools today, or during the week, about English literature and I reminded them of Dickens, and I've got a strong feeling that none of us could understand the writings of Dickens if we forgot who he married.

What should I say of John Wesley? Can you understand him? The man that brought revival to the world and at 37 years of age decided he'd get married, and from that moment of time his wife never listened to him preach. From that moment of time she became an awful nagger, and even forged his signature when he wrote, or at least she said he wrote, to law and brought the first controversy in Methodist. Or there are lots of men that married the wrong women.

I say, there are lots of men married the right woman. I can see some of you ladies nodding your heads now. Oh my, I can, I can.

But here's a woman that married the wrong man. The Bible says of her, she was of a beautiful countenance, and her understanding was unsurpassed. Of him, it says, he was a churlish fellow, an evil in his doings.

Oh beauty, and the beast, and the beast. But as I look at the story, there are so many interesting facets to it that I feel this morning I must share it with you. I want to, if I may, first of all to talk about a great claim, and then I want to talk about a great contempt, and then I want to talk about a concerned call, a great call, and then I want to talk about a great conclusion.

First of all, let me say this about Nabal. You are aware of the fact that his name means fool. Abigail said this to David, as his name so is he.

And I've always been intrigued with that name. Haven't you? Fool. I mean, you imagine Nabal's mother pushing the pram down the road.

You know, the baby carriage you call it, don't you? I made reference to a pram in the week, and someone said whatever is that. Anyway, you imagine his mum pushing the baby carriage down the road. And like everyone, people will stop and look at that.

Ooh, a nice boy. Especially if he's in blue, then you know, don't you? What's his name? Fool. What? What? Fool.

I don't know why she ever gave him that name. But that was his name, and his wife said, as his name so is he, Abigail. Why, that's a lovely name isn't it? That's a lovely name.

Most of you fathers here would love to afford your daughter that, wouldn't you? But mum put her word in first. You know that Abigail simply means the father's love. And what father here, when he gave to his first daughter, would say, God, there's none like her.

Of course, when he woke up in the middle of the night with the elbow, your turn, you know, he knew there was none like her. But nevertheless, nevertheless, here's one who turned out like her name. And here's one who turned out like his name.

I wonder why it was she ever married him. Beyond I can't help but feel that it was one of those arranged marriages. I expect her dad said, cool, that's the fella to marry.

Do you know who he is? He's of the family of Caleb. Why, one of our great leaders. In my country, you know, she would have been called Lady Abigail.

And he'd have been called Lord Nabal. They were the leaders of the nation, and he came of a godly family. But listen, sir, listen.

Don't you come to me and start talking about how godly your father was. What I want to know is how godly are you? And Nabal was of the family of Caleb, the most wonderful of all families. And yet, look what he turned out to be.

Salvation doesn't run in the blood. Let's remember that. It runs through blood, but not in blood.

And here, this man, a rich man. Maybe her father said, he'll care for you, he'll be able to look after you. Look what he's got.

Why, here's a man who has so many sheep and so many goats. He's so rich. He'll be able to care for you.

But one day, they drove the sheep and they drove the goats away to Carmel. And this man, Nabal, left his servants. We never read he went there.

We never read he said to his men, now boys, you go and look after, and I'll join you. I've got one or two jobs to do about the farm. I'll join you.

Never read that. He sent his servants to Carmel. And please, Carmel was a place that at that time was surrounded by the Amalekites.

It was a place of danger, a desperate place. But David had left the area where King Saul was, and with 600 men, he had camped near Carmel. And away on the hillside, those shepherds caring for the sheep and watching over the goats, when the Amalekites came and tried indeed to fly or capture, David was there and he drove them off.

Those shepherds thanked that, and they said, all we've got to do is look after the sheep. We haven't got to depend. Why, we've got to look after them.

And that year was the finest year in Nabal's history. His sheep dropped their lambs and everything was well. His goats dropped their kids and everything was well.

And the milk from the goats and the sheep bringing their wool in there and their meat. This man Nabal had never been as rich in his life. And it was all because of them.

Shearing time came. They're going to turn the sheep over and shear them up. Now's the time when the men are going to get their wages.

They weren't paid every week then, you know, once a year. Given food during the year, but once a year they would get their money. And now it's shearing time.

David says to his men, we've looked after those sheep. We've driven off the Amalekites. We've preserved those shepherds.

Just you go and courteously say to Nabal, Nabal, would you remember my men? Would you give us that which we have earned? I don't think any one of you here have any difficulty in seeing what's on my heart. Sir, this is a very favoured land, isn't it? This is a land that is rich in so many things. I look around this service and I looked very carefully at the Sunday school today.

I saw no pinched faces. I saw no clothes that were tattered. Would I be right in saying this, that of all the nations of the world, you live in one of the grandest of nations? God has blessed you, hasn't he? Oh, I have little doubt that some of you men will sit back and say, ah, but I've worked for what I've got.

So you have, and so you should. The Bible says that you shall live by the sweat of your face. Not even the sweat of your brow.

Anyone can sweat on the brow. Just get someone up against you a bit bigger than you and shake his fist at you, and you'll sweat on the brow. Well, you've got to work hard to sweat on the face, and the Bible says a man shall live by the sweat of his face.

Oh, I don't doubt for one moment what you've got you've worked for. You have a right to it. But sir, haven't you learnt that all God needs to do is to take away a little of your breath and you'll stop working? All God needs to do is, a little stronger than he's done it this year, make the sun to shine.

In the winter, make things a little bit rougher, so that crops are lost, so that markets fall through. How good God has been to us. And I suggest this to you this morning, that because of the goodness of God, because of his providence, he has a right to look at you and me and say, how about my portion? Now please, I'm not talking of money, I'm not speaking of things.

There's one thing all of you will acknowledge, that ever since you've been coming here, no one's ever asked you for a penny. And if they did, I'd be the first one out of this place. Like Mr. McKay many years ago, I stepped out to trust the Lord and I've never been in a service responsible for a service where they've taken a collection or asked anyone for a penny.

And God's kept me well, I had to go on a diet. He's done me well, don't you get away from that. I'm not talking about a collection plate, I'm saying that God's looking at you and he's saying, my son, give me thine heart.

My daughter, give me thine heart. He's asking of you what he asked of those who became the church at Corinth where it said, they gave first themselves to the Lord. God's looking at you and he says, I've blessed you.

In my providence, I bless you. How about something for me? The Lord put it this way, as he met a woman by the side of the well, he said, give me to drink. It's been easy for us to say, Lord give to us, give to us, but don't you forget the Lord is asking from you and me, give me to drink.

And while the story of the Samaritan woman is one of the loveliest gospel stories in the Bible, never forget it's the loveliest worship story. That's the story where Jesus said, the Father seeks us such to worship. Give me, give me.

So, there's a great claim. That great claim comes because of his providence. That great claim comes because of his protection.

He not only made Nabal rich, but he kept Nabal rich. He drove off the Amalekites. He never took any of the sheep or the goats.

He watched over and never hurt those shepherds. And I thank God that I have a God who in his providence has a right to make a claim on my life, but because of his protection has a right to make a claim on my life. I want to remind you there is someone much stronger than the Amalekites.

There is someone whose power is more devastating than the Amalekites. There is someone who will do me eternal damage. And you may call him what the Bible calls him.

You may call him Lucifer. You may call him Satan. You may call him the devil.

You may call him what the Bible calls him. But all of you will acknowledge this, that there is a power for evil. I said the other evening, and yet some of you were not there, so I dare say it again.

That I have a habit when speaking to a crowd of boys and girls as we had in the Sunday school today, I have a habit of looking at them and saying, now, I want all the boys and girls whose mummies had to teach them how to be naughty. I don't get many hands up. When you were children, your parents never had to teach you how to be naughty.

But is it not a fact that even in our children, you know, I think my grandchildren are better than yours? Of course they are. But I know this nation of mine, and every now and then I have to say, hey, if you do that again, I'm glad they don't do it again, because it would hurt me more than it hurt them. I only know this.

I only know that right from my youngest age, we find it so easy to do that which is evil. And yet God, in his mercy, has protected us from that evil one by sending his son to die on Calvary's cross, to bring deliverance for all who will trust him, to defeat the evil one for us. And because of his providence and because of his protection, he says, I have a claim on your life.

I have a claim on your life. There is something else in this story, it doesn't fit in very well in my alliteration, I confess, but nevertheless, it's there. And this is what I want to remind you of, not only of the providence of God, and not only of the protection of God, but I want to remind you of the punishment of God.

As soon as David heard that Nabal said, who is this David? I'm not going to give him anything. David said to his men, gird your swords, gird your swords. And he went to bring punishment upon Nabal.

And my friends, it is appointed unto man once to die, and after this to judge. Never let us forget that God is merciful. God is loving.

His providence and his protection have been showered upon us. But if we reject his mercy, there is but his punishment. The last time I was away in Botswana, I saw something that has stayed with me, and I find it very, very difficult to forget it.

I don't really want to forget it, but I find it difficult to. It's always coming back to me. I went with dear brother Jim Lake away into the heart of Botswana, into an area that's as primitive as it's possible for any country in Africa to be.

There he had a little clinic, and whenever he went once a week to this clinic, the Africans from around would gather. He'd minister to them. I had a little service before the start of the clinic, and of course, having to speak through interpretation.

I don't speak that language. I can speak about 10 languages, but I can't manage that. I'm quite a linguist, really.

I can speak English, and American, and Canadian, and Australian, and New Zealand, and, you know, any sort of language that's English I can manage. I can manage, but I couldn't speak this, and I had to speak through interpretation, and there was a crowd of these African ladies, mainly, and children. At the close, there was a wee little lad, about four years of age, and he looked desperate, so pained, so hot.

Jim, can you do anything for that lad? He said, that lad will be dead in three months. Well, what's the matter? We said, it's nothing, but we can't cure him. That lad should go and live, but that mother has taken

that led to the witch doctor, and the witch doctor has said, don't you take the missionary message.

They're trying to bring that child of yours under their influence. I'll give him something that'll make him well, and that lad is suffering with consumption, and we can remedy it. If only he'll take the drugs.

Today, I'll give his mother the drugs, and she'll take them and throw them away. Not dying because it has consumption, but dying because it has consumption. There's not a man or woman here who'll be shut out of heaven because you're a sinner.

Not a man or woman. Maybe there's some men and women, gods and his mercies, that we might have to thank. David comes down, or sends his men down, and says, give me, I make a claim.

He refused the claim. I will not. He could have entered, as a friend of David, into the blessing of the one who was to be the king of Israel.

He could have had a post, no doubt, high in the cabinet of David's country. He said no to David, and he had but the punishment that David was to meet out, unless something was done. A great claim, a great contempt.

You see, that contempt didn't just start when David said, give me. I want you to notice that this contempt started first for God's law, for God's love, for God's life. God's law had said something of him, or said something to him, had placed before him, his law, a standard of living, my umbrella, a standard.

But this we're told of this man, verse 3, he was churlish. Verse 17, he was evil. Verse 36, he was bad-tempered, or rather, I'm sorry, verse 3, he was churlish and evil.

Verse 17, he was bad-tempered. Verse 36, he was drunken. First of all, he was churlish.

Maybe an old English word we don't use quite so frequently. We still use it, but not quite so frequently. But you know what it means.

I suppose we would express it this way. He was sour, sour, churlish. Plenty getting up in the morning, a lovely girl like Abigail, and having to look at a like that across the table.

I mean, it's enough to turn the milk sour, make your cornflakes uneatable. But that's what he was. He was unpleasant.

I say, would you notice he was evil? Well, most people who are evil are unpleasant, and you know why, don't you? Because, within every one of us, there is something that no doctor has ever seen with an X-ray. No surgeon has ever been able to cut out with a knife. It can't be measured.

It can't be weighed. But every one of us has got it. We call it a conscience.

Now, it's no good saying you haven't got a conscience, because if you do say it, the very next second you know you'll have one, because you've told another one. One of the best definitions that was given of a conscience was given by dear brother Duffy, who served God in China for many, many long years. He was translating into one of the Chinese, uh, the new texts.

He came to the word conscience, and he asked his academic advisor what a conscience was, and the good brother said, sir, we don't have a Chinese word for conscience, but he said it's like a round wheel

with spikes on it, and when you do something wrong, Mr. Duffy thought, well, that's a good definition. He was just turning away when his advisor said, Mr. Duffy, if it goes round too often, the points wear off, and he said, this man was churlish and evil, and he continued like that because he'd done it so often. But not only that, he became a drunkard, bad-tempered and drunk.

I'll say no more, say no more. He had a contempt for the law of God. Hold the things that he did against the Ten Commandments, and see where he sat.

He had a contempt for the love of God, but love was seen in David's caring for him, as I've already said, it was seen in David's driving off his enemies, and yet he had a contempt for that love. Why? He said, who is this David? His own servants said David was a wall unto them. That's interesting, isn't it? That's interesting.

You Bible lovers, you know why I'm thinking now, don't you? You know I've gone back into the great prophecy of Isaiah in chapter 60. His wall shall be called salvation. Oh friend, he said he was a wall unto us, and yet he showed contempt for that wall.

Drove away the enemy, drove off those wild beasts that would bring damage to the sheep and goats, and I have a God who offers us salvation, that'll be as a wall unto us. But he showed a contempt for it, and he showed a contempt also for David's life, didn't he? In the words I've already quoted from verse 10, he says, who is this David? Who is this son of Jesse? There'll be many servants nowadays that break every man from his master. Contempt for his life.

Friend, I don't believe any one of you would come here this morning if you had that sort of contempt for the life of great David's greater son. But I do want to remind you again to go back to my umbrella story with the children. He is a standard, he has set to us a standard for our living, and if we refuse him, and we refuse that shelter that he is, and that support that he's willing to be, then I suggest to you we are showing contempt for his life.

But enough about the beast. I've talked too much about him. Let me talk about beauty.

Or I'd rather talk about, about Abigail. What a lovely, you know, don't misunderstand me. I'm well satisfied with the names that my children gave for my grandchildren.

Well satisfied. You see, my favorite Lady Bible character is Joanna, the wife of Tudor Herod Stuart, who I preach a sermon about him if I carry on, or her if I carry on. And so they called one of my children Joanna.

Rebecca is all the 24th, and they called another one Rebecca. At all. So I'm well satisfied the names, but I would love them to have called one of them Abigail.

Oh, I would. I think it's a beautiful name, Abigail. And what a character, a beautiful character, and such an understanding.

And here she was, she heard, she heard of this claim that was made on her, on her family, on her husband, upon her servant. And oh, praise God, she had such a concern that she made a great call. She said, there's only one thing I can do.

I have a concern for myself. I have a concern for my husband. I have a concern for my helper.

A concern for herself. Oh, praise, she did realize that if something wasn't done, if this claim of David wasn't met, then they would lose everything they had, and as a chance she may also lose her life. And I think it's important to be sure.

Some of you were here during the week when I preached on God's heaven. Some of you were here when I preached on God's hell. May I remind you, please, we need to be concerned.

If there is a verse that ought to be ringing in our ears this day, please, from the bottom of my heart, she had a concern for her husband. I like that, don't you? Fancy a concern for that sort of thing. Ladies, you are just wonderful.

That anyway, if it had been me, I'd have said, hey, who are you meeting? You know what she did? She came out to meet David, and she started straight away by saying, David, David, I'm sorry, I didn't know what you were going to say. You've got it. Look, I bought a lot.

His name is truly just like his name. David, slay me, kill me. But she came out to David, and oh, she made her call, and the first thing she said was just this.

She dared say to David, David, I want you, let me just turn the verse over. She said, David, I want you to do something. I pray thee, verse 28, I pray thee, forgive the trespass of thy handmaid.

Now, that's the way of salvation, to start there. She didn't try and excuse, she didn't stand up and say, well, it wasn't me, it was Nabal. It wasn't me, it was the servant.

They never gave you, David, I didn't know anything about it. Soon as I heard, look what I bought. She didn't do that.

She came out, and she said, I pray thee, forgive my trespass. That's always the start of blessing, when we come to the Lord and ask Him to forgive our sin, when we don't try and blame someone else for the position we're in. What a call, forgive my trespass.

And the wonder is this, that while she went on making the finest of all speeches, I want to make a suggestion to you. You know, I'm ever so sorry, but I see my time's gone, and the children will be coming out of Sunday school, and everybody just started. So, I want to make a suggestion to you.

I want to ask you something. Would you go home and read the 25th chapter of 1 Samuel? When I was first converted, elders in our fellowship, every year, used to have a week's meetings for the young men that teach them how to preach. Maybe they didn't do it very well, so I wouldn't have run out of a time.

But there it is. But one of the things I can remember one of our elder suggestions suggesting was this. I want you, as much as you can, to commit to memory the great speeches of the Bible.

Not the great sermons of the Bible, the great speeches of the Bible. And I remember him suggesting that the greatest speech in the Old Testament was Abigail's speech before David. We see what a call she made.

She starts off by asking for forgiveness, and all she goes on to exhort David to praise God for him and for all he's done. She then enters into a worship of that David. And this is what God is asking you this morning.

How about you? He makes a claim on your life. Are you going to respond? Are you going to say, yes, I will? I'll trust thee, Lord. I'll give to thee my life.

But if there was a great claim, and a great contempt, and a great concern, and a great cause, hallelujah, there was a great conclusion. Now, Navel died. He was stricken with a stroke.

That's what he had. But this is interesting, isn't it? Please, this is interesting that although he was smitten, and he was like a stone, yet the Bible says this. Oh, hearken to this.

The Bible says, uh, here we are now. I've got to look at you, you must pardon me. Ah, there we are, verse 39.

And when David heard that Navel... No, before that, please, verse 37. And it came to pass in the morning, when the wine was gone out of Navel, and his wife had told him these things, that his heart died within him, and he became as a stone. And it came to pass after ten days.

Don't you tell me God doesn't love you. Don't you dare, sir. This filthy creature of a man was stricken down with a stroke.

God could have taken his life in punishment there and then. But he waited ten days, still giving him chance to repent and ask for forgiveness. Don't come to me and say, well, he had a stroke, he couldn't do anything.

My wife's father died as the result of a stroke. He lay in hospital for a long while, and the last days he was completely unconscious. I got a little worried for Mary, as she wouldn't leave his bedside.

She was there in the hospital day and night for days. One day I called in, and I spoke to Dad, and got no reply. And I said, Mary, let's quote the 23rd Psalm.

And she stood on one side of the bed, and I stood on the other. And together we quoted, The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want. And suddenly Dad sat up in bed.

He hadn't moved for days, and he put his hands straight up in the air, and his face shone like Stephen's book, it shone like an angel. He never said a word. But I've learned this in my experience, and I'm sure all of you that minister to the sick have learned this, that sometimes a person can be cut off from any link with human beings, and yet there's still a link with the Lord.

I believe that this man Caleb was left, it's the only purpose God did leave him. Not that he was going to get better, he was receiving the punishment of his deeds. God was giving him the chance of salvation, of asking for forgiveness.

Today he's giving it to you. My friends, aren't Bible stories wonderful? Aren't they filled with truth? But they are filled with truth that we may respond to that truth. God says to you today, my son, my daughter, give me thine heart.

His providence and his protection has surrendered you day by day. Calvary bespeaks his love. Will you make a call on his name and ask for his forgiveness? The navel died, but Abigail became the wife of David.

It's going to be grand if we trust our David to be linked with him eternally. Just this morning there's someone, and you are willing and waiting to give your life to the Lord. Why not do it after this service? I'm going to close in prayer.

I've gone over my time five minutes, but I'll be gone tomorrow. Let me please say, if there's someone here, and I believe there are, and you want to settle this matter, come to the front, give me a chance to speak English, and the Lord bless you. Shall we pray? O God and Father, for the many stories in thy word, thank you for the story we've fought off today, so instructive, thank you.

Grant that we may not be navels, fools. Grant that we may be those loved of the Father, as we give to he who has provided all things for us. That would be

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