

In Nomine Iesu

The Fifteenth Sunday after Trinity 2026

Trust the Creator, not the creation – 1 Kings 21:1-16

“Now Naboth the Jezreelite had a vineyard in Jezreel, beside the palace of Ahab king of Samaria. And after this Ahab said to Naboth, ‘Give me your vineyard, that I may have it for a vegetable garden, because it is near my house, and I will give you a better vineyard for it; or, if it seems good to you, I will give you its value in money.’ But Naboth said to Ahab, ‘The LORD forbid that I should give you the inheritance of my fathers.’ And Ahab went into his house vexed and sullen because of what Naboth the Jezreelite had said to him, for he had said, ‘I will not give you the inheritance of my fathers.’ And he lay down on his bed and turned away his face and would eat no food.

But Jezebel his wife came to him and said to him, ‘Why is your spirit so vexed that you eat no food?’ And he said to her, ‘Because I spoke to Naboth the Jezreelite and said to him, “Give me your vineyard for money, or else, if it please you, I will give you another vineyard for it.” And he answered, “I will not give you my vineyard.”’ And Jezebel his wife said to him, ‘Do you now govern Israel? Arise and eat bread and let your heart be cheerful; I will give you the vineyard of Naboth the Jezreelite.’

So she wrote letters in Ahab's name and sealed them with his seal, and she sent the letters to the elders and the leaders who lived with Naboth in his city. And she wrote in the letters, ‘Proclaim a fast, and set Naboth at the head of the people.’ And set two worthless men opposite him, and let them bring a charge against him, saying, “You have cursed God and the king.” Then take him out and stone him to death.’ And the men of his city, the elders and the leaders who lived in his city, did as Jezebel had sent word to them. As it was written in the letters that she had sent to them, they proclaimed a fast and set Naboth at the head of the people. And the two worthless men came in and sat opposite him. And the worthless men brought a charge against Naboth in the presence of the people, saying, ‘Naboth cursed God and the king.’ So they took him outside the city and stoned him to death with stones. Then they sent to Jezebel, saying, ‘Naboth has been stoned; he is dead.’ As soon as Jezebel heard that Naboth had been stoned and was dead, Jezebel said to Ahab, ‘Arise, take possession of the vineyard of Naboth the Jezreelite, which he refused to give you for money, for Naboth is not alive, but dead.’ And as soon as Ahab heard that Naboth was dead, Ahab arose to go down to the vineyard of Naboth the Jezreelite, to take possession of it.”

Grace be to you and peace from God the Father and from our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, the God of Elijah and of all the faithful of Israel. Dear fellow redeemed:

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Three months ago we heard: “If you don’t read the Old Testament in the light of what God said to the serpent, ‘I will put enmity between you and the woman and between your offspring and her offspring; he shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise his heel,’ it will never make sense to you. The Old Testament will seem to be merely a collection of logically disconnected stories about Israel and the rules God gave them long ago.” Why is this so? Because the Old Testament is **most definitely not** a set of logically disconnected stories; it is a unified whole with one overall focus, as Jesus said to religious leaders of His own day: “You search the Scriptures because you think that in them you have eternal life; and **it is they that bear witness about me**, yet you refuse to come to me that you may have life.” (John 5:39-40) The Old Testament is always and everywhere all about Christ, the promised Savior of Israel and the world. And this does not mean that the promised Savior is only spoken of here and there in the Old Testament Scriptures. No, He is everywhere, whether in the foreground or the background. Even

where He does not seem to be, He is the context. Without Him, the Old Testament is not the love letter of grace and forgiveness that God has been communicating to humanity from the beginning of time. Let us consider this today in the light of the text before us.

I

When Ahab told Naboth that he wanted to acquire his property because it adjoined his palace, Naboth replied, “The LORD forbid that I should give you the inheritance of my fathers.” With that Ahab sulked away like a spoiled child. Why? Because he had no right, even as king, to take Naboth’s inheritance by purchase or trade. This he knew in his conscience as calloused as it was. He knew it was contrary to the command God had given His people. God gave Canaan as an inheritance to Israel both as a nation and as individuals. Each Israelite had received a plot of land within the boundaries of his tribe’s allotted portion. The plot was to remain in the possession of that family until the fulfillment of God’s purpose in promising Abraham’s descendants this land. That is why Leviticus 25:23 says, “The land shall not be sold in perpetuity, for the land is mine.” That is why, in the Jubilee Year, which was every fiftieth year, land that had been given over to another was to be returned to its original owner.

You see, just as the kingdom of David, which God had established in Israel, was not like the other kingdoms around them, so the land of Israel was not like that of the other lands around them. For Israel was both a visible, physical reality and an unseen spiritual one. The promise of the Messiah, who would save His people, was to give them a land that would never be taken from them. And this promised land was given both to the nation as a whole and to each individual. This promised land of course would not ultimately be on earth but in heaven or, as the letter to the Hebrews speaks of it, it would be “the city that has foundations, whose designer and builder is God.” (Hebrews 11:10)

When the northern kingdom broke away from the southern kingdom, Jeroboam did not follow the will of God. Instead, he established his kingdom in direct opposition to the command of God. He did not understand or believe Israel to be the peculiar kingdom that God gave to David. So, Jeroboam established his kingdom only to preserve his own rule. In other words, he intended to build a house, a dynasty, of his own on his own that would endure like the house God had promised to build for David. It didn’t work. And so, the northern kingdom would pass from one king to another, one royal house to the next, until at last God Himself brought an end to the entire northern kingdom itself.

By the time Ahab became king, his was already the fifth dynasty to rule in Israel. His father, Omri, in order to preserve his own dynasty, married his son, Ahab, into a royal family of the Phoenicians, the Canaanites. To be sure Omri was a clever man, and his plan was a much more promising attempt to preserve his house than the previous four dynasties had tried, but ultimately doomed to failure for the same reason ... because it was not built on the promises of God, but on the thoughts and efforts of men.

It is not surprising that Ahab would lean on the wisdom of his father and trust the same power to preserve his kingdom, his Canaanite wife. She surely knew this. That is why on seeing Ahab sulking over Naboth’s refusal to sell his inherited land, she mockingly asked him, “Do you now govern Israel? Arise and eat bread and let your heart be cheerful; I will give you the vineyard of Naboth the Jezreelite.” As bad a king as Ahab was, he still had a conscience, which is why Elijah kept coming back to him to remind him how much more trustworthy God’s word was than anything of man. Jezebel had no such conscience. She was thoroughly Canaanite in all of her thinking. She would give Ahab the property that God forbade him to take. She would give him someone else’s inheritance in defiance of the will of the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

II

We are often horrified in our day to see the depths to which people go to preserve what they think belongs to them by right, whether it is the honor God gave to their father and mother, the life He gave to their neighbor, the spouse – whether present or future – He gives to their neighbor, the wealth however great or small He gave to their neighbor, or the good name He gave to their neighbor that they are so willing to tarnish. In other words, people who look at the commandments of God, the same commandments Ahab and Jezebel knew and dismissed, disregard, dismiss, or twist to their preference. And so, like Jezebel, who arranged the murder of Naboth to further her own power and prestige in the eyes of her husband the king, they perceive only the physical and visible things of the world, which, to be sure, are gifts that God has bestowed on us. But such gifts are only part of the Creator's creation and as such only temporary. We cannot hold on to them forever. Ahab died. Jezebel died. And then what? They had nothing.

This account in the Scriptures is a bleak and depressing one if we consider it only for what it says, only for what is recorded in these verses. For it shows us both a king and kingdom without hope, without promise. It shows us the terrible consequences of the sin of Jeroboam, which the Old Testament refers to more than thirty times to emphasize the vast and catastrophic difference between the kingdom of grace God established and promised to David and all who, like him, are people “after the heart of God,” and the kingdom founded by Jeroboam and all who, like him, seek their assurance and comfort in the creation and not the Creator. The Creator promised to our first parents and all their offspring a Child who would come into the world and crush the the head of the serpent who first tempted them to trust what their eyes told them instead of what their ears heard the Creator say and promise.

Israel had the example of Noah, of whom Scripture says, “By faith Noah, being warned by God concerning events as yet **unseen**, in reverent fear constructed an ark for the saving of his household. By this he condemned the world and became an heir of the righteousness that comes by faith.” (Hebrews 11:7) Surely Ahab knew who Noah was, how he trusted God, and was saved where others did not trust Him and lost everything. Yet in his foolish weakness after Jezebel's murderous deed, Ahab simply “arose to go down to the vineyard of Naboth the Jezreelite, to take possession of it.” So greatly did Ahab covet Naboth's vineyard that he could see nothing else of greater value.

Dear friends, we too may be tempted as Ahab was, sulking as he did that we cannot have what we wanted. We may desire something or someone so greatly that we cannot see anything else as having value. We may consider that our lack of possessing what we desire makes our life empty and meaningless. And that may tempt us to disregard God and His promises. But what will the end of that be? Ahab and Jezebel show us what is missing in that kind of thinking ... **who is missing** in that thinking.

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The Apostle Paul in his 2nd Letter to the Corinthians advised them to “look not to the things that are seen but to the things that are unseen. For the things that are seen are transient, but the things that are unseen are eternal. (2 Corinthians 4:17-18) In other words he urged them to listen to the promises of God and believe them. As the Epistle to the Hebrews says, “Faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things unseen. For by it the elders received a good testimony.” (Hebrews 11:1-2) By faith in God's promise of a Savior from sin, death, and hell the promised land of heaven is yours, and will never be taken away. Amen.

Soli Deo Gloria