

Sermon Outline
Burton Memorial United Methodist Church
“Am I an agitator, judgmental punisher, or peacemaker?”
(Part III of “Which one am I?”)
January 18, 2025

Scripture

Matthew 5:9
1 Samuel 25:1-38

Core Idea and purpose

Core theological ideas from earlier sermons in the series:

- (01/04/2026) Personal holiness is having a heart full of faith, hope, and unconditional love. Holiness is synonymous with Christlikeness.
- (01/11/2026) God invites all of us to salvation (the wedding banquet) but to participate we must repent and cooperate with the Holy Spirit so God can change our hearts.

Core theological idea: God call us to be peacemakers. Are we willing to risk it all, like Abigail, to be a peacemaker?

Challenge/purpose: To encourage people to risk being a peacemaker.

The Sermon

Our Savior and Lord, Jesus Christ, calls us to be peacemakers. He says, “Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God.” It’s probably best to understand this blessing in the context of what we call the Beatitudes. We find the beatitudes in Matthew 5:2-10. We read them as part of our call to worship. Each line that began with, “Blessed are...” is a beatitude.

The beatitudes is a list of progressive blessings. One blessing leads to the next blessing.

The first three beatitudes teach us how to enter the Kingdom of Heaven. When we are poor in spirit, we humbly know that we are sinners in need of God’s grace. This leads us to mourn our sinful nature. As we mourn, we realize that our only hope is to be meek enough to receive God’s forgiveness and surrender to God’s loving will. In this way we are comforted and become citizens of the Kingdom of Heaven.

The 4th, 5th, and 6th beatitudes teach us how to pursue holiness. Remember holiness is having the same heart as that of Jesus Christ. It’s having a heart full of faith, hope, and unconditional love. After we meekly surrender to God’s loving will, we develop a thirst and hunger for righteousness. The Holy Spirit begins to change our hearts, so we become more righteous. As we become more

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righteous, we start to naturally show mercy because we begin to love people unconditionally. As this happens, our hearts become purer - becoming full of nothing but faith, hope, and unconditional love.

The last two beatitudes teach us how God uses us. The purer our hearts become – the more Christlike we become – the more God uses us as peacemakers. However, not everyone will appreciate our peacemaking efforts, so we will receive some measure of persecution. Some of us will receive a lot of persecution while others will receive a little persecution, but we will all receive some persecution if we are serious about becoming peacemakers.

So, to be a peacemaker, as Jesus calls us to be, we must be willing to take risks. We see this in the story about David, Nabal, and Abigail.

Nabal was a rich landowner with 1,000 goats and 3,000 sheep. He reminds me of Ebenezer Scrooge before the visit of three ghosts. He was mean, surly and cared about nothing but wealth. His wife, Abigail, was kind and sensible. She had a good head on her shoulders.

While Nabal's servants were shearing sheep at Carmel, David and his band of 600 men camped nearby. They never bothered or threatened Nabal's men. They even provided security for Nabal's sheep by acting as a wall around Nabal's sheep and men.

Now, even though Nabal never asked David to provide security for his sheep and men, David assumed that Nabal owed him something. That was a big assumption. David should have asked Nabal if he wanted extra security. In this way, he set the conditions for an explosive situation.

Have you ever done anything like this? Have you ever done something nice for someone and assumed they owe you something? When we do that, we are kind for wrong reasons. We are to love people, not because we want a reward, but because it's simply our nature to do so. Remember what Jesus says in Matthew 5:46-47, “For if you love those who love you, what reward do you have? Do not even the tax collectors do the same? And if you greet only your brothers, what more are you doing than others? Do not even the Gentiles do the same?”

So, in expectation of a reward, David sent ten of his men to receive food, water, and supplies from Nabal. When they arrived and asked Nabal for food and supplies, Nabal responded that he didn't know David and never made any agreements with David. So, even though David and his 600 men protected his wealth, he didn't owe David a dime. Nabal told the ten men that they were not getting anything. This makes Nabal the agitator in the story. Although,

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technically, Nabal did not owe David anything; by refusing to respond to David and his 600 men with kindness, he created an explosive situation. When people are kind to us, we ought to respond with kindness. Nabal was a rich man; he could have given David and his men something.

When David received Nabal’s answer, he overreacted. He at once strapped on a sword and told 400 of his men to strap on a sword. They started to march towards Nabal’s household. They were ready to fight!!!

Most of us have been there. Somebody mistreats us or doesn’t pay back a favor. We respond with anger and, like David, become the judgmental punisher. We want to make that person pay. This is where the peacemaker comes in.

One of Nabal’s men reported to Nabal’s wife, what was going on. At this point, Abigail had three options.

Option 1: Abigail could warn her husband Nabal. He would have prepared his men. A big, bloody fight would happen, and many men would die because the two men in charge had big egos. In this scenario, Nabal would have likely won because David would have lost the element of surprise. So, Abigail would have remained rich and married to Nabal.

Option 2: Abigail could have left in time to avoid the coming battle without warning her husband. Upon her return, she could have gone with the winner. In this scenario, David and his men would have likely won, and Abigail would have been with David.

Option 3: Abigail becomes a peacemaker. Becoming a peacemaker was the riskiest option. If she was an unsuccessful peacemaker, her husband, Nabal, would have accused her of being disloyal. So, assuming Nabal survives the fight, he would have likely divorced her and left her destitute. Of course, if Nabal dies, she would have been left without a husband and destitute. Either way, if she failed as a peacemaker, she would be destitute and without a husband.

It is dangerous to be a peacemaker. It makes us vulnerable. Often, people on both sides of an argument hate us when we act as peacemakers.

God, however, wanted Abigail to be a peacemaker. We know this because Jesus tells us, “Blessed are the peacemakers...” So, without telling her husband, she packed up 200 loaves of bread, 2 skins of wine, 5 dressed sheep, 5 seahs of roasted grain, 100 cakes of raisins, and 200 cakes of pressed figs – enough food

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for all of David’s men to have a feast – got on her donkey and rode out to meet David and his men.

When she met up with David and his men, they were itching for a fight. But Abigail approached them with humility. She understood Proverbs 15:1, “A soft answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger.” So, she got off her donkey, bowed down before David, and put her face to the ground. This act of humility made the tense situation a bit calmer.

After bowing in front of David, Abigail continued to show humility and said, “On me alone, my lord, be the guilt. Please let your servant speak in your ears and hear the words of your servant. ²⁵ Let not my lord regard this worthless fellow, Nabal, for as his name is, so is he. Nabal is his name, and folly is with him. But I your servant did not see the young men of my lord, whom you sent. ²⁶ Now then, my lord, as the Lord lives, and as your soul lives, because the Lord has restrained you from bloodguilt and from saving with your own hand, now then let your enemies and those who seek to do evil to my lord be as Nabal. ²⁷ And now let this present that your servant has brought to my lord be given to the young men who follow my lord. ²⁸ Please forgive the trespass of your servant...”

David responded to Abigail’s humility with humility and said, “Blessed be the Lord, the God of Israel, who sent you this day to meet me! ³³ Blessed be your discretion, and blessed be you, who have kept me this day from bloodguilt and from working salvation with my own hand! ³⁴ For as surely as the Lord, the God of Israel, lives, who has restrained me from hurting you, unless you had hurried and come to meet me, truly by morning there had not been left to Nabal so much as one male.”

If, like Abigail, we are willing to show humility, we too can be peacemakers.

So, we read this story and wonder, “At this moment, which one am I?” Am I Nabal – the agitator. Am I David – the judgmental punisher? Or am I Abigail – the peacemaker?”

I invite everyone here to think about these questions for one minute. If you conclude that you are Abigail-the peacemaker, give thanks to God for helping you to pursue holiness. If you are Nabal or David, talk to God about it. The Lord will bring you back on the journey towards holiness.

[After a minute of quiet time]

Let’s pray.

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Sermon Outline

- I. Our Savior and Lord, Jesus Christ, calls us to be peacemakers.
 - A. He says, “Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God.”
- II. It’s probably best to understand this blessing in the context of what we call the Beatitudes.
 - A. We find the beatitudes in Matthew 5:2-10.
 - B. We read them as part of our call to worship.
 - Each line that began with, “Blessed are...” is a beatitude.
- III. The beatitudes is a list of progressive blessings. One blessing leads to the next blessing.
 - A. The first three beatitudes teach us how to enter the Kingdom of Heaven.
 - When we are poor in spirit, we humbly know that we are sinners in need of God’s grace.
 - This leads us to mourn our sinful nature and receive God’s forgiveness, which gives us comforts.
 - As we mourn, we realize that our only hope is to be meek enough to surrender to God’s loving will.
 - B. The 4th, 5th, and 6th beatitudes teach us how to pursue holiness.
 - Remember holiness is having the same heart as that of Jesus Christ.
 - It’s having a heart full of faith, hope, and unconditional love.
 - After we meekly surrender to God’s loving will, we develop a thirst and hunger for righteousness.
 - The Holy Spirit begins to change our hearts, so we become more righteous.
 - As we become more righteous, we start to naturally show mercy because we begin to love people unconditionally.

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- As this happens, our hearts become purer - becoming full of nothing but faith, hope, and unconditional love.

C. The last two beatitudes teach us how God uses us.

- The purer our hearts become – the more Christlike we become – the more God uses us as peacemakers.
- However, not everyone will appreciate our peacemaking efforts, so we will receive some measure of persecution.
 - Some of us will receive a lot of persecution while others will receive a little persecution, but we will all receive some persecution if we are serious about becoming peacemakers.
- So, to be a peacemaker, as Jesus calls us to be, we must be willing to take risks.

IV. We see this in the story about David, Nabal, and Abigail.

A. Nabal was a rich landowner with 1,000 goats and 3,000 sheep.

- He reminds me of Ebenezer Scrooge before the visit of three ghosts.
- He was mean, surly and cared about nothing but wealth.
- His wife, Abigail, was kind and sensible. She had a good head on her shoulders.

B. While Nabal’s servants were shearing sheep at Carmel, David and his band of 600 men camped nearby.

- They never bothered or threatened Nabal’s men but provided security for Nabal’s sheep.
- They provided security by acting as a wall around Nabal’s sheep and men.

C. Now, even though Nabal never asked David to provide security for his sheep and men, David assumed that Nabal owed him something.

- That was a big assumption.

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- David should have asked Nabal if he wanted extra security.
- In this way, he set the conditions for an explosive situation.
- Have you ever done anything like this?
 - Have you ever done something nice for someone and assumed they owed you something?
 - When we do that, we are being kind for the wrong reasons.
 - We are to love people, not because we want a reward, but because it's simply our nature to love people.
 - Remember what Jesus says in Matthew 5:46-47, “For if you love those who love you, what reward do you have? Do not even the tax collectors do the same? And if you greet only your brothers, what more are you doing than others? Do not even the Gentiles do the same?”
- D. So, in expectation of a reward, David sent ten of his men to receive food, water, and supplies from Nabal.
 - When they arrived and asked Nabal for food and supplies, Nabal responded that he didn't know David and never made any agreements with David.
 - So, even though David and his 600 men protected his wealth, he didn't owe David a dime.
 - Nabal told the ten men that they were not getting anything.
 - This makes Nabal the agitator in the story.
 - Although, technically, Nabal did not owe David anything; by refusing to respond to David and his 600 men with kindness, he created an explosive situation.
 - When people are kind to us, we ought to respond with kindness.
 - Nabal was a rich man; he could have given David and his men something.
- E. When David received Nabal's answer, he overreacted.

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- He at once strapped on a sword and told 400 of his men to strap on a sword.
- They started to march towards Nabal’s household.
- They were ready to fight!!!
- Most of us have been there.
 - Somebody mistreats us or doesn’t pay back a favor.
 - We respond with anger and, like David, become the judgmental punisher.
 - We want to make that person pay.
 - This is where the peacemaker comes in.

F. One of Nabal’s men reported to Nabal’s wife, what was going on. At this point, Abigail had three options.

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- Option 2: Abigail could have left in time to avoid the coming battle without warning her husband.
 - When she returns, she could go with the winner.
 - In this scenario, David and his men would have likely won and Abigail would have been with David.
- Option 3: Abigail becomes a peacemaker.

G. Becoming a peacemaker was the riskiest option.

- If she was an unsuccessful peacemaker, her husband, Nabal, would have accused her of being disloyal.
 - So, assuming Nabal survives the fight, he would likely divorce her and leave her destitute.
- Of course, if Nabal dies, she is left without a husband and destitute.

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- Either way, if she fails as a peacemaker, she is destitute and without a husband.
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 - It makes us vulnerable.
 - Often times, people on both sides of an argument hate us when we act as peacemakers.

H. God, however, wanted Abigail to be a peacemaker.

- We know this because Jesus tells us, “Blessed are the peacemakers...”
- So, without telling her husband, she packed up 200 loaves of bread, 2 skins of wine, 5 dressed sheep, 5 seahs of roasted grain, 100 cakes of raisins, and 200 cakes of pressed figs – enough food for all of David’s men to have a feast – got on her donkey and rode out to meet David and his men.

I. When she met up with David and his men, they were itching for a fight.

- But Abigail approached them with humility.
 - She understood Proverbs 15:1, “A soft answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger.”
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- This act of humility made the tense situation a bit calmer.

J. After bowing in front of David, Abigail continued to show humility and said, “On me alone, my lord, be the guilt. Please let your servant speak in your ears and hear the words of your servant. ²⁵Let not my lord regard this worthless fellow, Nabal, for as his name is, so is he. Nabal^[d] is his name, and folly is with him. But I your servant did not see the young men of my lord, whom you sent. ²⁶Now then, my lord, as the Lord lives, and as your soul lives, because the Lord has restrained you from bloodguilt and from saving with your own hand, now then let your enemies and those

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who seek to do evil to my lord be as Nabal.²⁷ And now let this present that your servant has brought to my lord be given to the young men who follow my lord. ²⁸ Please forgive the trespass of your servant...”

K. David responded to Abigail's humility with humility and said, “Blessed be the Lord, the God of Israel, who sent you this day to meet me! ³³ Blessed be your discretion, and blessed be you, who have kept me this day from bloodguilt and from working salvation with my own hand! ³⁴ For as surely as the Lord, the God of Israel, lives, who has restrained me from hurting you, unless you had hurried and come to meet me, truly by morning there had not been left to Nabal so much as one male.”

V. If we are willing to show humility, like Abigail, we too can be peacemakers.

A. So, we read this story and wonder, “At this moment, which one am I?” Am I Nabal – the agitator. Am I David – the judgmental punisher? Or am I Abigail – the [peacemaker]?”

B. I invite everyone here to think about these questions for one minute.

- If you conclude that you are Abigail-the peacemaker, give thanks to God for helping you to pursue holiness.
- If you are Nabal or David, talk to God about it.
 - The Lord will bring you back on the journey towards holiness.

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Let's pray.