

We have all had occasions when you stood before individuals with power, and there are times when you are the only person who could, who is able to speak truth to power.

Do you remember the scene in the Wizard of Oz, after the 4 finally made their way along the Yellow Brick Road to the Emerald City, and the All Powerful Oz orders that before granting them an audience they must complete an act of heroism?

The Prophet Nathan was faced with an even more intimidating problem. King David was the real King, Ordained by GOD, the beloved King, and David was All Powerful. He did not need others to decide, he had absolute immunity. As a child David defeated the Philistine Goliath and cut off his head. David had been Supreme Commander of his own Army fighting against and defeating King Saul and the Army of Israel, David defeated the one the Nation chose to follow instead of GOD because Saul was their greatest. David was King of all Israel and Judah. David had built a fortified Capital of Jerusalem, David lived in a Palace, and had received the Promise from GOD that his descendants would always sit on Israel's throne. David had taken Bathsheba because he wanted her, after he got her pregnant, David ordered her husband abandoned to be killed, and David took Uriah's wife as his own. As GOD's Prophet, Nathan knows he must speak TRUTH TO POWER, but how do you get Absolute Power to listen? Nathan tells a Parable to the King.

"A rich man had everything he could desire; while a poor neighbor had only one little lamb, he loved so much, he fed her from his table, and she slept in his bed with his children. One night, the Rich man wanted a feast and unwilling to take from his own possessions, he killed the neighbor and took the man's ewe lamb for his hunger." As Supreme Judge in the land, David was outraged and orders that that Rich Man's sentence deserves death! And Nathan says to the King: "Thou art the Man!"

I recall preaching this text, when our children were 3 and 5, and the youngest named NATHAN, slid off the pew during the Scripture reading, such that when repeatedly I preached "THOU ART THE MAN" he stood in front of me and repeated those words back "Thou Art The Man." While I had no Bathsheba, the sting of those words from my own child struck me more sharply than any challenge in all of life.

The conclusion of this story is so simple we almost miss it, but the Prophecy here changes everything about faith. Nathan replied: "GOD has forgiven you! GOD has taken away your sin. You are not going to die. But because you have shown UTTER CONTEMPT for the LORD, the son born to you shall die." There are consequences. David will live, but the child will die. David takes off his Kingly robes, donning Sackcloth and Ashes, to weep and pray for the salvation of the child. When finally the child does die, NO ONE is willing to tell the King. If this was how David acted when the child was sick, how would he behave knowing of the death of the child? But perceiving the death, David goes in and washes his face, dresses in his Kingly robes and returns to being King. And David ends this story by stating: "When there was a chance, as long as the child lived, I wept and prayed in atonement; but after the child died, there was nothing more to do, and I returned to a life of faith and responsibility."

The Gospel of John is also about convincing people to listen, but instead of A King, the ones with the power to believe are the people. So how do you convince people of their need, our need to believe? The Gospel John was writing of the Life of Jesus was long after the Old Testament, after writing of all of the Epistles, after Matthew, Mark, Luke & Acts, as such John allows Jesus to turn an idea over and over to explore all facets.

Recall that first, the people in Jesus' hometown refused to listen to him, and he could do nothing.

He sent out his disciples to preach and heal in his name, and thousands returned with them.

Jesus fed them with the ideas of the Sermon on the Mount: Blessed are the Poor, blessed are the Meek, Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for Righteousness...

Then, Jesus feeds 5000 men, plus women and children with 5 loaves and 2 fish.

Then, Jesus challenged their behavior for SEEKING SIGNS,

then Jesus challenges them for only SEEKING CARBs ignoring the BREAD OF ETERNAL LIFE!

Once they are totally caught up in Jesus' Teaching, once they are LISTENING to HIM, SEEKING JESUS, wanting to grasp his Parable of BREAD, and SIGNS...

John claims they asked him the core question of faith. What is the question asked in the Gospels: WHAT MUST I DO TO HAVE ETERNAL LIFE? To have the Water that flows up to ETERNAL LIFE? To have the BREAD that Never Spoils? HOW DO WE GET TO HEAVEN? What Must We DO To Do The Works GOD Requires? The answer is as old as Adam & Eve's purpose being in the Garden. "THE WORK OF GOD IS THIS: TO BELIEVE IN THE ONE GOD HAS SENT, HE IS THE BREAD OF LIFE."

I would like to close this morning, sharing something I was reminded of in our Bible Study this week, with a very pertinent application from one of our members' father, hopefully speaking truth to you.

What is the origin of the war in the Holy Lands in the Middle East? According to Genesis, GOD tired to have Adam & Eve be Companions, in true Communion with GOD and each other.

When they both sinned, how did they respond: "The woman you gave me, She did it!" GOD, it's your fault! God tried again with Cain & Able, again with Noah and his family.

Finally, GOD began anew with ABRAM & SARAH, promising that if they would trust GOD going where GOD would lead, GOD would give them all they desired, a Great Name, a Great Inheritance of Land, and as many generations after them as Stars in the Heaven and Sands in the desert.

After years, of following, ABRAHAM & SARAH HAVE NO CHILD. So Sarah takes her slave and forces her husband upon HAGAR to get the Child Sarah desires. Except after that child is born, a Miracle occurs and SARAH gives birth to a Child of Abraham. Then, when her child Isaac is weaned, SARAH is jealous of HAGAR and her first born ISHMAEL, so forces them to be sent away.

The descendants of SARAH through ISAAC are the Ancient Nation of Israel.

The descendants of HAGAR through ISHMAEL are the MUSLIM people.

One of our Fathers, a Teacher told the story of 1948 this way. In recent centuries the Jews were a scattered people with no homeland, no Nation of their own. During WWII, 6,000,000 Jews from all across the world had EVERYTHING TAKEN from them, and were put to death. England at the end of the War recognized their need to get out of COLONIALISM, so gave to the United Nations one of England's former colonies, ignoring the reality that there were families who had lived there for hundreds of years, who were displaced to create this new Nation of Israel. SO Imagine, that the United Nations decided that instead of JUDEA, the place would be the State of PENNSYLVANIA, which had been a Colony given by the King to WILLIAM PENN. All of the people of Pennsylvania, the place of our 1st Continental Congress and The Liberty Bell, all of the Steel and Coal Industry, ALL must be abandoned for another people to be relocated there; a people of a different religion and language. How would you feel? And if the people who came there, then reached out to take surrounding land for settlements?

But I believe the most amazing story of all of those about ABRAHAM and his descendants, came when ABRAHAM eventually died. ISAAC reached out to his brother ISHAMEL, and the two came together, and together they buried their ancestor.