

1 Samuel 25

- 2** A certain man in Maon, who had property there at Carmel, was very wealthy. He had a thousand goats and three thousand sheep, which he was shearing in Carmel.
- 3** His name was Nabal and his wife's name was Abigail. She was an intelligent and beautiful woman, but her husband was surly and mean in his dealings—he was a Calebite.
- 4** While David was in the wilderness, he heard that Nabal was shearing sheep.
- 5** So he sent ten young men and said to them, "Go up to Nabal at Carmel and greet him in my name.
- 6** Say to him: 'Long life to you! Good health to you and your household! And good health to all that is yours!
- 7** " 'Now I hear that it is sheep-shearing time. When your shepherds were with us, we did not mistreat them, and the whole time they were at Carmel nothing of theirs was missing.
- 8** Ask your own servants and they will tell you. Therefore be favorable toward my men, since we come at a festive time. Please give your servants and your son David whatever you can find for them.' "
- 9** When David's men arrived, they gave Nabal this message in David's name. Then they waited.
- 10** Nabal answered David's servants, "Who is this David? Who is this son of Jesse? Many servants are breaking away from their masters these days.
- 11** Why should I take my bread and water, and the meat I have slaughtered for my shearers, and give it to men coming from who knows where?"
- 12** David's men turned around and went back. When they arrived, they reported every word.

Matthew 17:24-27

The Temple Tax

- 24** After Jesus and his disciples arrived in Capernaum, the collectors of the two-drachma temple tax came to Peter and asked, "Doesn't your teacher pay the temple tax?"
- 25** "Yes, he does," he replied. When Peter came into the house, Jesus was the first to speak. "What do you think, Simon?" he asked. "From whom do the kings of the earth collect duty and taxes—from their own children or from others?"
- 26** "From others," Peter answered. "Then the children are exempt," Jesus said to him.
- 27** "But so that we may not cause offense, go to the lake and throw out your line. Take the first fish you catch; open its mouth and you will find a four-drachma coin. Take it and give it to them for my tax and yours."

At Morning Prayer some little time ago we steadfastly read our way through a large chunk of the Old Testament, in particular the life of King David. One story stuck out.

He was living more like Robin Hood than a king-in-waiting and all manner of people were drawn to him, he literally had band of merry men.

Not to put too fine a point on it, they lived as raiders, pillaging neighbouring tribes and making a living of sorts doing to others what had been done to them. It was a lawless time and David often left no-one alive to tell the tale.

However, David and his men offered a kind of protection to the Jews that lived nearby without stealing from them or molesting them or troubling them.

So, when shearing time came David sent some men to the wealthy Nabal to ask for favour – to ask for food and drink and supplies.

Nabal is incredibly wealthy, but he didn't get that way handing out to the likes of David. In rather insulting terms he told them to clear off.

David had a short fuse. He'd asked nicely. He wasn't going to ask twice. The possibility of bloodshed was very real indeed.

Nabal was married to Abigail who had intelligence to spare compared to her husband.

V14 One of the servants told Abigail, Nabal's wife, "David sent messengers from the wilderness to give our master his greetings, but he hurled insults at them.

Yet these men were very good to us. They did not mistreat us, and the whole time we were out in the fields near them nothing was missing.

Night and day they were a wall around us the whole time we were herding our sheep near them.

Now think it over and see what you can do, because disaster is hanging over our master and his whole household. He is such a wicked man that no one can talk to him."

Abigail acted quickly. She took two hundred loaves of bread, two skins of wine, five dressed sheep, five seahs of roasted grain, a hundred cakes of raisins and two hundred cakes of pressed figs, and loaded them on donkeys.

Abigail goes to David and offers these gifts and with wise words and persuasion averts what would otherwise have been a disaster...but disaster does come.

When Nabal is told he has a heart attack and dies about ten days later.

The moral of the story is...Ladies if you've given away a great deal of food break it to your husband gently.

Church congregations by and large don't like sermons on giving if the tone of the thing is to suggest that the financial viability of the church is your responsibility and yours alone.

As if somehow, you haven't done enough and really you ought to do a great deal more.

I wouldn't like that either particularly as I'm aware of the astonishing generosity the church family have shown to our Transforming Trinity project.

Giving a lump sum, or annually or every month to this once in a 150 year project is going to have an impact on ordinary funds.

And it has but not just because money is being diverted that way, but because our focus has been the project.

We've broken even every year just as we set out to do, but this year a combination of events leaves us well behind the funding curve.

Our church wardens and Amanda have emailed the church family about it; you have the information.

So, it's a particular set of circumstances.

It's not been our focus.

Amazing generosity has been shown towards the project.

A big increase in outgoings and a flat income as some have moved away or died, and suddenly we are in the red.

Have you ever had a conversation, and you try to identify when something took place or when someone died or moved away.

And you think it was only last year, or maybe the year before and suddenly discover it was four years ago.

No. What? As long as that?

I have to admit that when Katherine and I talked about our giving it was that kind of conversation. When did we last look at it, or think about it, or increase it?

To be honest. Ages ago.

In the story of David, Abigail and the wicked Nabal, the servant says to Abigail

Now think it over and see what you can do, because disaster is hanging over our master

And that's what Katherine and I are going to do.

Think it over and see what we can do. And I would invite you to do the same.

And in doing so be aware that some miracles are a collective set of actions rather than one single act.

Together, what we can do is think about it, see what we can do and do it.

I'm sure that if what you give is loaves of bread, skins of wine, dressed sheep, roasted grain, raisins and figs...we'll find a way of paying the parish share with it somehow.

Think it over. See what you can do.

It is our responsibility, and funding to pay the ordinary bills isn't as exciting as funding the project, but everything we do is enabled by ordinary faithful giving.

Having said that some miracles are the sum of the collective set of actions – let's not neglect miracles themselves.

The Gospel story is a private miracle between Jesus and Peter. The tax collectors want to check Jesus is paying the temple tax and Jesus makes the remark that the son

of the King should be exempt – and that’s exactly who he was, son of the most high God.

BUT – we’ll pay the tax.

And how do they do that? Peter is sent to catch a fish and is told he will find a four-drachma coin in its mouth.

I know that Mark Hewson goes fishing. Occasionally he sends me a picture of himself holding up some huge fish which is clearly saying “put me back, put me back.”

I don’t think he’s ever found a coin in its mouth.

God can provide. God can intervene. Not so that we avoid our responsibility, even Jesus paid up the temple tax, but to demonstrate his Sovereign gift of love.

Out of the blue, a charity we didn’t know existed, but we have since discovered has a link to us has generously given to our funds. As I heard about this, I felt the hand of God and the encouragement. We have a target and we’re already well on the way.

This church is funded by us...but we are not alone, and we’ve had one miracle already.

Let’s pray.

Lord, we ask for wisdom and the commitment to think it over and see what we can do.

Where there are conversations between spouses, may they be fruitful and not lead to any tension.

Increase in us a love for your church and being the body of Christ. Increase in us the joy of being church and fulfilling your purpose. Grant us we pray the miracles we can provide and those from your hand. We ask this in Jesus name. Amen

Revd. Jon Hutchinson, 19 October 2025