

Greed Consumes
1 Kings 21:1-21a
Galatians 2:15-21

A lady answered the knock on her door to find a man with a sad expression. "I'm sorry to disturb you," he said, "but I'm collecting money for an unfortunate family in the neighborhood. The husband is out of work, the kids are hungry, the utilities will soon be cut off, and worse, they're going to be kicked out of their apartment if they don't pay the rent by this afternoon." "I'll be happy to help," said the woman with great concern. "But who are you?" "I'm the landlord," he replied.¹

Greed consumes. There is a reason that the tenth commandment says, "You shall not covet your neighbor's house; you shall not covet your neighbor's wife, or male or female slave, or ox, or donkey, or anything that belongs to your neighbor."² When we covet what other people have, we are on a path that leads to harming others. When we take a look at this text in First Kings, we may first put the blame on Jezebel, and she certainly is to blame. But King Ahab is as much to blame as she is. It was his greed that got the ball rolling, and his misuse of power and authority that led to Naboth's death.

Using his position of power as king, Ahab tells Naboth that he wants to buy or trade Naboth's vineyard for one of his own. Sounds reasonable, but remember that we are not just talking about a simple piece of property. We are talking about God-given inherited land that Naboth was responsible for. There are more than simply familial ties to this land. Naboth, being a faithful Israelite, was using the land in accordance to God's purposes and with God's blessings. Ahab, wants to use the land for a "vegetable garden". Now on the surface one may wonder what is wrong with a vegetable garden. Well, nothing, in our day. But the reference of a vegetable garden here 1 Kings 21 is the same reference used in Deuteronomy 11:10 to contrast life in Egypt compared to life in the Promised Land. In other words, the purpose that Ahab wanted to use the land for was part of his pagan worship. Understanding this helps us better understand Naboth's response when he tells Ahab, "The Lord forbid that I should give you my ancestral inheritance." In other words, it would be compromising his faith in God to let Ahab get this land and use it for this purpose.

So alas, Ahab's greed consumes him and he becomes deeply depressed. I am reminded of those whose greed leads them to covet the things that other people have. George has a new car, Sally has a bigger house, Kelly has smarter kids, Justin has a beautiful wife, and Casey has a faster boat. When we let greed consume us we find ourselves dissatisfied with who we are and what we have. And getting what we want often leads to us wanting more and never being satisfied with what we already have.

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But the story doesn't end with Ahab's depression from greed. His wife, Jezebel enters the picture and uses Ahab's greed for self interest and destruction. Using Ahab's power, which he freely gives her, Jezebel makes up false accusations against Naboth and conspires a plot to have him killed. Successful execution of her plot brings her news that Naboth was stoned to death for his crimes and the door opens up for Ahab now own the land and use it as he pleases. The story of Ahab and Jezebel is nothing new. Persons from all time and ages have abused their power for greedy and selfish purposes. Government officials misusing power for their own gain and for the oppression of the less fortunate, law enforcement personnel getting carried away with their power over people, and other persons in official capacities taking trust and turning it into abuse, are all examples of misuse of power and greed. These are all Ahab and Jezebel scenarios and I am sure you can come up with more.

The corrupting effects of greed are all around us. Exuberant consumption is leading to the depletion of natural resources. Think about how greed has had its stake in the Deepwater Horizon fire and the oil spill that continues to harm the lives and livelihood of more persons and wildlife than we can fathom.

Or consider the role of greed in our current economic situation. Think of those who acquired more than they could reasonably afford and racked up debt they cannot pay off. Big homes, new cars, the best blackberry phones, and lots of toys are the marks of anyone considered successful. Greed consumes and in the end causes harm for everyone involved. This is what King Ahab and Jezebel found out in the end. The story did not end when they acquired Naboth's land. Their greed did not win in the end.

First Kings continues to tell us how the Lord told the prophet Elijah to go and prophesy to King Ahab and Jezebel and tell them how their days will end. Elijah tells Ahab, "I have found you. Because you have sold yourself to do what is evil in the sight of the LORD, ²¹ I will bring disaster on you; I will consume you, and will cut off from Ahab every male, bond or free, in Israel; and I will make your house like the house of Jeroboam son of Nebat, and like the house of Baasha son of Ahijah, because you have provoked me to anger and have caused Israel to sin. Also concerning Jezebel the LORD said, 'The dogs shall eat Jezebel within the bounds of Jezreel.' Anyone belonging to Ahab who dies in the city the dogs shall eat; and anyone of his who dies in the open country the birds of the air shall eat."³ Because of their greed and corruption, the Lord was angry with them and would bring justice to Naboth. They would have to pay for their actions.

But wait, the story doesn't end there either. The text goes on to say that Ahab believed Elijah and felt horrible for his actions. He took repentant action and gave a public viewing of his guilt and sin. For this, the Lord showed mercy upon him and lightened the earthly punishment Ahab would receive for his actions.

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Prayer:

Holy Lord,

May we learn from the mistakes of Ahab and Jezebel. May we recognize when we are tempted by greed and learn ways to focus less on what others have that we don't. Help us to be grateful for what we already have and use what we have to glorify you. In Jesus name we pray. Amen.

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Greed Consumes
1 Kings 21:1-21a
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A lady answered the knock on her door to find a man with a sad expression. "I'm sorry to disturb you," he said, "but I'm collecting money for an unfortunate family in the neighborhood. The husband is out of work, the kids are hungry, the utilities will soon be cut off, and worse, they're going to be kicked out of their apartment if they don't pay the rent by this afternoon." "I'll be happy to help," said the woman with great concern. "But who are you?" "I'm the landlord," he replied.¹

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Prayer:

Holy Lord,

May we learn from the mistakes of Ahab and Jezebel. May we recognize when we are tempted by greed and learn ways to focus less on what others have that we don't. Help us to be grateful for what we already have and use what we have to glorify you. In Jesus name we pray. Amen.

Greed Consumes
1 Kings 21:1-21a
Galatians 2:15-21

A lady answered the knock on her door to find a man with a sad expression. "I'm sorry to disturb you," he said, "but I'm collecting money for an unfortunate family in the neighborhood. The husband is out of work, the kids are hungry, the utilities will soon be cut off, and worse, they're going to be kicked out of their apartment if they don't pay the rent by this afternoon." "I'll be happy to help," said the woman with great concern. "But who are you?" "I'm the landlord," he replied.¹

Greed consumes. There is a reason that the tenth commandment says, "You shall not covet your neighbor's house; you shall not covet your neighbor's wife, or male or female slave, or ox, or donkey, or anything that belongs to your neighbor."² When we covet what other people have, we are on a path that leads to harming others. When we take a look at this text in First Kings, we may first put the blame on Jezebel, and she certainly is to blame. But King Ahab is as much to blame as she is. It was his greed that got the ball rolling, and his misuse of power and authority that led to Naboth's death.

Using his position of power as king, Ahab tells Naboth that he wants to buy or trade Naboth's vineyard for one of his own. Sounds reasonable, but remember that we are not just talking about a simple piece of property. We are talking about God-given inherited land that Naboth was responsible for. There are more than simply familial ties to this land. Naboth, being a faithful Israelite, was using the land in accordance to God's purposes and with God's blessings. Ahab, wants to use the land for a "vegetable garden". Now on the surface one may wonder what is wrong with a vegetable garden. Well, nothing, in our day. But the reference of a vegetable garden here 1 Kings 21 is the same reference used in Deuteronomy 11:10 to contrast life in Egypt compared to life in the Promised Land. In other words, the purpose that Ahab wanted to use the land for was part of his pagan worship. Understanding this helps us better understand Naboth's response when he tells Ahab, "The Lord forbid that I should give you my ancestral inheritance." In other words, it would be compromising his faith in God to let Ahab get this land and use it for this purpose.

So alas, Ahab's greed consumes him and he becomes deeply depressed. I am reminded of those whose greed leads them to covet the things that other people have. George has a new car, Sally has a bigger house, Kelly has smarter kids, Justin has a beautiful wife, and Casey has a faster boat. When we let greed consume us we find ourselves dissatisfied with who we are and what we have. And getting what we want often leads to us wanting more and never being satisfied with what we already have.

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But the story doesn't end with Ahab's depression from greed. His wife, Jezebel enters the picture and uses Ahab's greed for self interest and destruction. Using Ahab's power, which he freely gives her, Jezebel makes up false accusations against Naboth and conspires a plot to have him killed. Successful execution of her plot brings her news that Naboth was stoned to death for his crimes and the door opens up for Ahab now own the land and use it as he pleases. The story of Ahab and Jezebel is nothing new. Persons from all time and ages have abused their power for greedy and selfish purposes. Government officials misusing power for their own gain and for the oppression of the less fortunate, law enforcement personnel getting carried away with their power over people, and other persons in official capacities taking trust and turning it into abuse, are all examples of misuse of power and greed. These are all Ahab and Jezebel scenarios and I am sure you can come up with more.

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