

Some 'Splainin to Do!

October 23, 2016

I Samuel 19:8-17; Luke 13:10-17

The First U.P. Church of Crafton Heights

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It is a fixture of my childhood. I remember sitting on the sofa with my grandma watching reruns of *I Love Lucy*. If you remember Lucille Ball, you'll remember her character as the good-hearted but clueless woman whose antics often put her and her friends into awkward situations. And do you remember her husband calling on the phone or stepping into the apartment, discovering her shenanigans, and then calling out, "Luuuuuucy! You got some 'splainin to do" in his rich Cuban accent?



It was funny – really funny. Her character is clearly a ditzy woman who is hopelessly inept who cannot help but leap out of the frying pan and into the fire in episode after episode. Fortunately for her, she has a husband who can come in and sort things out, help her cover over her mistakes, and make things right again. Do you remember that? *I Love Lucy* was the most-watched show in the 1950's, and really shaped American culture for years.

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As we continue our exploration of the life of the biblical hero David, we find ourselves in the midst of a story where a woman is being called on the carpet by a man who has power and authority over her. In today's reading, we meet a young woman named Michal.

At the end of chapter 18, we learn that the daughter of King Saul had fallen for young David in a big way, and that gave Saul an idea as to how to get rid of his rival. Saul lays out a trap for the young lovers: he tells David that he's willing to "give" his daughter to David because, after all, there's no way that a poor

shepherd boy could afford the marriage price that was customary for a royal wedding. The only thing that David has to do is go out and single-handedly slay 100 Philistines, the sworn enemies of Israel. Saul has got to be thinking, “Oh, wow, this is too easy! After all, *nobody* kills a hundred Philistines! They will wipe the floor with him and I’ll be rid of him forever!”

David confounds the plan, however by slaying not merely the requisite 100 enemy soldiers, but by overcoming 200 of them. He wins the girl and Saul’s hatred and fear of David only increases.

Today’s reading takes place after the wedding, and if you think you’ve got problems with the in-laws, well, just be glad you’re not David. Michal was there to save David’s life, and if you read the text just right, you can hear Saul calling Michal into the house, yelling, “Michal, you got some ‘splainin to do!”



¹Michal’s answer is a little puzzling at first. In verse 11, she’s warning David to get out of Dodge as fast as he can, and yet in verse 17 she looks her father in the eye and says, “What could I do, daddy? That mean man threatened to kill me!”

That only makes sense if the backdrop to this story is a culture wherein women are essentially powerless to stand up to the men in their world. What else could she say? He was the King, he was her father, and he was a he. Her hands were tied.

One important thing that this part of the David story reveals to us is that Michal loves David so much that she saves his life. Michal keeps David alive *so that* he is able to live into the promises that God has for him. What would have happened, do you think, to Israel if David had not been warned and therefore was murdered that night? How would the Bible and the story of

¹ Illustration from the Maciejowski Bible, c. 1250, France.

God's people be different if, instead of showing up in all the Psalms as well as the books of Samuel and Chronicles, David was just a three paragraph mention – a potential rival who was quickly dismissed?

What if Jesus was *not* the Son of David? How would history be different?

Michal's bravery and quick thinking led her to take action that averted such an alternate history. She kept David alive and therefore kept the promise alive. And for that, people of faith should offer thanks.

Allow me to pause for a moment and invite you to reflect on this. My sense is that nobody in this room has had your life saved by a spouse who stood between you and a murderous father-in-law, then helped you climb out the window, and then made up a pretend you and hid it in the bed. This part of the story has little in common with our experience.

However, I would suggest that each of you knows someone who has believed in you when you didn't or couldn't believe in yourself. You know someone who has kept the promise of hope alive in your life when you couldn't see it for yourself. There is someone who has stuck their neck out for you, challenged you, loved you, saved you, and in fact has *kept* you so that you were free to become a better person. Am I right?

Who is that person in your life? Take a moment to give thanks to God for those who have carried us, believed in us, held us up when all we were able to do was sink down.

And you think, "Yes, Dave, that's nice. I do have those people in my life, but you're still getting off track here. This Bible passage is whack. Saul and David have no right to shuttle Michal around like she's yesterday's double coupon deal at the Giant Eagle. This is a horrible way to treat someone."

It is. And it seems even worse when we are immersed in a culture like our own, where women are subjected to abuse or unwanted contact with all manner of television personalities and athletes and politicians and business leaders. We read the newspapers and we cringe; we open the Bible and we see the same behaviors, and it's just hard to take.

It is. Because Michal *was* treated wrongly. There is no justification for treating another human being like a piece of property or a pawn in a chess game.

One of the reasons that I know it's so wrong is because I can compare the way that Michal was treated by the men in her life with the way that Jesus treated the women in his. Lindsay read for you the story of a woman who had suffered horribly for 18 years.



²The day that she met Jesus, she was set free by an act of miraculous healing. When this occurs, she does the exact right thing: she praises God for the movement of the Spirit and celebrates her restoration to the fullness of her own life. It is a beautiful thing, and everyone there agrees...

Everyone, that is, except the men who are in charge. Their reaction is the exact opposite. The leader of the synagogue immediately begins to shame the woman for being healed. Instead of celebrating her restoration to a vibrant life, he calls her out in front of the community and attempts to publicly humiliate her for having the nerve to be healed on the wrong day. He does everything in his power to remind her that she is nothing, she is no one, she is insignificant.

But Jesus... oh, sweet Jesus... Jesus shut that man up and put an end to the man-splaining of the day. He named the gifts of relief, release, and healing, and proclaimed that these things were always in order, and therefore not to be bound by any human

² Jesus Heals The Woman With a Disabling Spirit, From the so-called "Two Brothers Sarcophagus" - mid-4th century, in the Vatican Museum.

regulation or timing. And, then, best of all, he turned to the woman and he called her out.

And did you hear what Jesus called her?

“Daughter of Abraham”, he said. In the presence of these men who puffed and preened and as Pharisees and Sadducees and Doctors of the Law were so proud to call themselves “Sons of Abraham”, he called her a “daughter of Abraham”. For the first time in the entire Bible, a Jewish man (Jesus) looks at a Jewish woman and says, “You are a daughter of Abraham. You belong. You matter. This is your place, too.” The phrase “Son of Abraham” shows up in many places in scripture, but this is the only place in the entire Bible where that phrase is used - and that is incredibly significant.

And note, too, that Jesus did not call this woman “the” daughter of Abraham. No, she is “a” daughter. Because there are others, don’t you know?

It is a statement that is incredibly empowering to that woman. It is equally infuriating to the men who think that it is their job to control and corral the women. And it is liberating for the crowd of onlookers who have been raised to think that there is such a thing as a first class follower of God and a second class follower of God; all their lives they’ve been led to believe that there is a hierarchy within the faithful, and men are on top and women are not. And here, Jesus says, “no. That’s not it at all.” Jesus repudiates the culture of Saul that would treat women as objects to be owned, trinkets to be adorned, or vessels for male pleasure or satisfaction.

You, woman in the synagogue: you are a daughter of Abraham. And you, Michal, daughter of Saul and wife of David: you are a daughter of Abraham. And you, every female child to come forward during the children’s sermon: you are a daughter of Abraham.

The Good News of the Gospel today is that God's promises are for all of us. The covenant includes us equally. That's the truth. That's always been the truth.

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I opened this message by reminding you of that famous phrase from the *I Love Lucy* show: "Luuuuuuucy! You got some 'splainin to do!" I'm just curious: how many people in the room, like me, remember Ricky Ricardo calling out to his wife like that? I didn't see you sitting on the sofa with my grandma, but do you remember that?

No, you don't.

You can't remember that, because he never said it. You can comb through all the episodes of *I Love Lucy* and you will never hear Desi Arnaz' voice uttering those words. It's just like people who "remember" Darth Vader saying "Luke, I am your father", or Rick Blaine saying to the piano player in *Casablanca*, "Play it again, Sam." Some psychologists call this the Mandela Effect, and it refers to a large number of people who share the same false memory. None of those things ever happened, even if you are sure you "remember" them from the movie.

And it struck me this week that if I can "remember" something that didn't happen, then it can only follow that some of what I "know" is wrong. And therefore, perhaps, some of what "everybody knows" is also wrong.

Let *that* roll around in your brain for a few moments. How much of what you "know" is not true? Because we are shaped by a culture, because we are children of an age and inhabitants of a particular world-view, it is very probable that we think we "know" things that never happened and are not true.

For instance, as you were growing up, what were you taught about other races, or other nationalities, or other religions? What did you "know" about Latinos or Asians or Irishmen or Muslims?

And in the circles in which you walk and spend your time, what does “everybody know” about those groups, or about Jews or elderly people or feminists or homosexuals or Presbyterians?

You see, in David’s day and in Jesus’ day, some of what “everybody knew” was flat-out wrong. Women are not subservient or second-class. There is not a “pecking order” or hierarchy when it comes to participating in the grace of God.

This week, ask God to help you see what is really true: what is eternally true; what is God-honoring, neighbor-loving, sin-defeating, wall-destroying, prejudice-dashing, scapegoat-freeing, life-giving truth. And may God correct us in our mis-remembering and bring us to a deep awareness of and appreciation for the other; may God give us the willingness and the strength to stand up for and stand alongside of those who have been wrongly silenced or marginalized. May all our remembering point us toward the One who called himself the way, the truth, and the life. Thanks be to God, Amen.