

MYOBia — 1 Kings 21:1-21a
Saint Marks UMC, Charleston, WV –
23 June 2013 – 5th Sunday after Pentecost

^{21:1} Now Naboth the Jezreelite had a vineyard in Jezreel, beside the palace of Ahab king of Samaria. ² And after this Ahab said to Naboth, “Give me your vineyard, that I may have it for a vegetable garden, because it is near my house, and I will give you a better vineyard for it; or, if it seems good to you, I will give you its value in money.” ³ But Naboth said to Ahab, “The LORD forbid that I should give you the inheritance of my fathers.” ⁴ And Ahab went into his house vexed and sullen because of what Naboth the Jezreelite had said to him, for he had said, “I will not give you the inheritance of my fathers.” And he lay down on his bed and turned away his face and would eat no food.

⁵ But Jezebel his wife came to him and said to him, “Why is your spirit so vexed that you eat no food?” ⁶ And he said to her, “Because I spoke to Naboth the Jezreelite and said to him, ‘Give me your vineyard for money, or else, if it please you, I will give you another vineyard for it.’ And he answered, ‘I will not give you my vineyard.’” ⁷ And Jezebel his wife said to him, “Do you now govern Israel? Arise and eat bread and let your heart be cheerful; I will give you the vineyard of Naboth the Jezreelite.”

⁸ So she wrote letters in Ahab's name and sealed them with his seal, and she sent the letters to the elders and the leaders who lived with Naboth in his city. ⁹ And she wrote in the letters, “Proclaim a fast, and set Naboth at the head of the people. ¹⁰ And set two worthless men opposite him, and let them bring a charge against him, saying, ‘You have cursed^l God and the king.’ Then take him out and stone him to death.” ¹¹ And the men of his city, the elders and the leaders who lived in his city, did as Jezebel had sent word to them. As it was written in the letters that she had sent to them, ¹² they proclaimed a fast and set Naboth at the head of the people. ¹³ And the two worthless men came in and sat opposite him. And the worthless men brought a charge against Naboth in the presence of the people, saying, “Naboth cursed God and the king.” So they took him outside the city and stoned him to death with stones. ¹⁴ Then they sent to Jezebel, saying, “Naboth has been stoned; he is dead.”

¹⁵ As soon as Jezebel heard that Naboth had been stoned and was dead, Jezebel said to Ahab, “Arise, take possession of the vineyard of Naboth the Jezreelite, which he refused to give you for money, for Naboth is not alive, but dead.” ¹⁶ And as soon as Ahab heard that Naboth was dead, Ahab arose to go down to the vineyard of Naboth the Jezreelite, to take possession of it.

¹⁷ Then the word of the LORD came to Elijah the Tishbite, saying, ¹⁸ “Arise, go down to meet Ahab king of Israel, who is in Samaria; behold, he is in the vineyard of Naboth, where he has gone to take possession. ¹⁹ And you shall say to him, ‘Thus says the LORD, “Have you killed and also taken possession?”’ And you shall say to him, ‘Thus says the LORD: “In the place where dogs licked up the blood of Naboth shall dogs lick your own blood.”’”

²⁰ Ahab said to Elijah, “Have you found me, O my enemy?” He answered, “I have found you, because you have sold yourself to do what is evil in the sight of the LORD. ²¹ Behold, I will bring disaster upon you.

I have an appointment with Dr. Mike Nunley, my ophthalmologist this week. In preparation for that examination, I have brushed up on my eye-doctor terms:

- **MYOPIA:** That is the doctor’s term for “near-sighted” – we can see things up close, but not far away, without glasses.
- **PRESBYOPIA:** That’s the “over 40 years of age” eye condition -- what Bing Crosby called “playing the trombone” in the movie “White Christmas,” where we take off our glasses to read things, and where we move the paper farther away from us to read from it.
- **HYPEROPIA:** That’s the doctor term for “far sighted” – we can see things far away, but not up close, without glasses.

I had to look up that last one on the internet. It’s not a condition I’ve ever had, so I can never remember its name. When I was doing my research, I found a new term; I’d never heard of it before. Maybe you haven’t heard it, either. It’s called:

- **MYOBia.** It’s spelled in your bulletin, as the sermon title. It’s a type of vision problem based on the acronym **MYOB** -- you know: **Mind Your Own**

Business. It's an affliction that can, in some circumstances, even be life threatening. **Let me give you some examples:**

Each Tuesday afternoon, a group of preachers meets together in my office. We have a specific formula for our meetings. We lovingly hold one another accountable, through confession, to a covenant we have all agreed upon, about keeping spiritual disciplines. And then we share in a discussion of our research on the lectionary scriptures for 12 days hence. Finally, we close with holy communion.

There was a preacher in our group – he's not with us anymore – who had this strange little habit. At some point during our time together – EVERY SINGLE TIME WE GOT TOGETHER – he would fall asleep, while sitting there. We all noticed it. None of us ever said anything about it. To him or to one another – that is, until after he died in his sleep, from possibly sleep apnea. After that, we all had to process the fact that by MINDING OUR OWN BUSINESS, and being polite, we had never said anything to him, that might have saved his life. We realized that while he maybe had sleep apnea, we all had **MYOBia**.

Different story. Different setting: It was in a church to which I was appointed quite some time ago. In this little church, there was a married couple, who was going through a divorce. The wife had custody of their teenage daughter, and the father had visitation every other weekend. So the daughter would sit with a different parent on alternating weekends in Sunday morning worship.

One thing was as regular as clockwork: on every other weekend, this pubescent 14 year old girl would be sitting in the front row with her father. He would have his arm around her shoulder throughout the worship, and then, as soon as the sermon started, he would begin to grope his daughter – in ways that were entirely inappropriate except in illegal films. Every other week, the choir and I would be subjected to watching this.

I went to my District Superintendent and described the situation to him. I asked my District Superintendent what he thought I should do. He told me, "**Mind your Own**

Business. You could cause a lot of trouble in the church if you said anything.” I said, “But it’s wrong what’s going on!” And he said, “**Mind your Own Business.**”

I confess to you: I don’t always do what my District Superintendent tells me.

Different story. Different setting: It was in my former career, when I was gainfully employed as a public servant, in a county courthouse. I had someone come to my office, and make a complaint to me about another elected public official. The complaint, if true, involved conduct of an unethical, and indeed illegal behavior. I investigated it. My investigation revealed that the allegations appeared to have a basis in fact. I spoke to another elected county official. He told me: “**Mind Your Own Business.** If you don’t rock the boat, you have a bright, wide-open, career in public service ahead of you. Just **Mind Your Own Business.**”

MYOBia. It’s a condition that is often undiagnosed. It sometimes can run in epidemic conditions. It can sometimes be life threatening.

Different story. Different setting: Queen Jezebel came to two friends of mine, and asked them to make up a story about this fellow named Naboth. She told them exactly what to say and what to do. This Naboth guy was a “nobody.” He didn’t have any family. He didn’t have any political power. He was just a “nobody.” On the other hand, Queen Jezebel was a “somebody.” You certainly did not want to get on her wrong side. My two friends said that they would do what she told them to do.

It seemed wrong to me. Yeah, this “Naboth” was a “nobody,” **EXCEPT** that he was a beloved child of God, precious and beautiful to behold, in God’s eyes. I told my friends that they ought not do what Queen Jezebel asked of them. They told me that I should **MIND MY OWN BUSINESS.**

Today’s scripture lesson is not a pleasant one. It’s a whole lot easier to deal with when we **limit it** only to “**bad people**” in a **different time**, a **different place**, a **different setting**, than in our own lives.

We like “polite” a lot.

- We don’t like it when some people always butt in to other people’s business, where they don’t belong, not for any particular good, except that they just like to control other people’s lives better than they are able to control their own.
- Some people are mean-spirited busy bodies, who cause all kinds of trouble.
- Some people are polite, sweet, sufferers of **MYOBia**, and never say a word about all kinds of bad things going on. They refuse to “get involved,” unless it’s about them. They “go along” and “get along.”
- These are not easy issues. Sometimes, most of us go both ways.

Martin Niemoller was a German submarine captain during the Great War of 1914-18. After being ordained a Lutheran minister, Niemoller tried to live the quiet life of a parish pastor. But then came the Barmen Declaration of 1938, which led a number of German Christians to form the Confessing Church – a Protestant Church that decided to stand up to the government and to speak prophetically against the government’s actions.

Niemoller was accused of not being patriotic. He was accused of being a traitor to his country, and later he was imprisoned in a Nazi concentration camp, from which he wrote his famous statement:

When Hitler attacked the Jews, I was not a Jew; therefore, I was not concerned. And when Hitler attacked the Catholics, I was not a Catholic; and therefore, I was not concerned. And when Hitler attacked the unions and the industrialists, I was not a member of the unions and I was not concerned. When he attacked the homosexuals and lesbians, they were on society’s margins, and I was not concerned. Then, Hitler attacked me and the Protestant church—and there was nobody left to be concerned.

- Some people are mean-spirited busy bodies, who cause all kinds of trouble.

- And some people are polite, sweet, sufferers of **MYOBia**, who never say a word about all kinds of bad things going on. They refuse to “get involved,” unless it’s about them. For them the word “**JUSTICE**” reads “**JUST US.**”
- These are not easy issues.

And so, **in the Name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit**, I ask you:

How’s your Vision?