

# Found: My Own Worst Enemy

*Ahab said to Elijah, “So you’ve found me, my old enemy!” “I found you,” Elijah said, “because you’ve enslaved yourself by doing evil in the Lord’s eyes.”* 1 Kings 21:20

Ahab was a powerful king of Israel. He had power and wealth and land and a palace. But he wanted more. Specifically, he wanted the vineyard next door. It belonged to Naboth. He offered to buy the vineyard or exchange it for a better vineyard. Naboth refused because it was his ancestral land. Furious, Ahab then allowed a wicked plot to falsely accuse Naboth of blasphemy (hmmm, the same false charge used against Jesus). Naboth was stoned to death, and Naboth grabbed the vineyard. That’s when God sent the prophet Elijah to confront the king and hold him accountable.

Who was the enemy here? Ahab sees Naboth as an enemy, standing in the way of the king getting what he wanted. As soon as Ahab creates that enemy, he starts the process of disinformation and murder. Naboth suffers from the terrifying enmity of power and greed in a high office. Ahab names Elijah, who speaks the true word of God, an enemy. An old enemy, in fact. Is it Elijah or God who is Ahab’s enemy in this? No, in the end, Ahab is his own worst enemy. He enslaved himself with evil.

We cannot help but see this story played out, large and small, in the world today. A war against the people in the land next door carried out with death and disinformation by a powerful leader. That is the large. The enemy is clear. There are also countless intimate acts of jealousy, aggression, lies, and abuse of power that go on all the time. In addition, we create our own narratives of who the enemy is to justify ourselves. It is not unusual to pull an Ahab move and see those who hold us accountable as our enemies. Where does that leave the command to love our enemies?

Our two scriptures this Sunday, 1 Corinthians 10:1-13 and Luke 13:1-9, both carry a message of accountability. Jesus counters assumptions about sin and punishment with a call to repentance. . .or else. Paul reminds the church that their baptism and worship does not mean they will not sin, or not be punished. We are our own worst enemies. Perhaps the “enemy” who holds us accountable is the one who loves us most.

by Rev Karen Oehl

*Lord, in your love  
and faithfulness I  
find a way out. By  
your Son, Jesus, you  
provide an exodus  
from my slavery to  
sin and death. Have  
mercy. Help—not  
just me, but others.  
Even my enemies.  
Amen.*

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