

June 28, 2020

Majoring in the Minors  
Obadiah: Family Feud  
Obadiah 8-15

**Opening Words:** Lost in the back of the Old Testament are the Minor Prophets. There are twelve in all. This is the list: Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Jonah, Micah, Nahum, Zephaniah, Habakkuk, Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi. In the traditional Hebrew canon, they are listed chronologically. Our canon is more concerned with length. Regardless, the order does not matter because each one is independent. It is important to note, they are not considered minor because they are not important. They are considered minor because they are brief in comparison to the Major Prophets, Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel. Many consider the Minor Prophets to be books of judgement. However, they are much more complex. They are books that paint a picture of God who never stops pursuing those who broke his heart.

This is sermon number four in my twelve-part sermon series, *Majoring in the Minors*. We began with the prophet Joel on Pentecost. He was the one who prophesied about the coming of the Holy Spirit. (Joel 2:28-29) Then, we looked at Hosea and God's relentless love. Two weeks ago, we look at Amos. He told us our worship must be authentic. In the next two weeks, we are going to look at Jonah, God's reluctant prophet. Today, we look at the shortest book of the Old Testament, Obadiah. It is only 21 verses long. Our scripture reading for today is Obadiah 8-15. Let me call this message *Family Feud*.

**Obadiah 8-15**     "In that day," declares the LORD,  
"will I not destroy the wise men of Edom,  
those of understanding in the mountains of Esau?  
<sup>9</sup>Your warriors, Teman, will be terrified,  
and everyone in Esau's mountains  
will be cut down in the slaughter.  
<sup>10</sup>Because of the violence against your brother Jacob,  
you will be covered with shame;  
you will be destroyed forever.  
<sup>11</sup>On the day you stood aloof  
while strangers carried off his wealth  
and foreigners entered his gates  
and cast lots for Jerusalem,  
you were like one of them.  
<sup>12</sup>You should not gloat over your brother  
in the day of his misfortune,  
nor rejoice over the people of Judah  
in the day of their destruction,

nor boast so much  
in the day of their trouble.  
**13** You should not march through the gates of my people  
in the day of their disaster,  
nor gloat over them in their calamity  
in the day of their disaster,  
nor seize their wealth  
in the day of their disaster.  
**14** You should not wait at the crossroads  
to cut down their fugitives,  
nor hand over their survivors  
in the day of their trouble.  
**15** "The day of the LORD is near  
for all nations.  
As you have done, it will be done to you;  
your deeds will return upon your own head.

Many years ago, before man walked on the moon, before a civil war threatened to divide America, or before Columbus discovered a New World, there was a man who spoke for God. His name meant "servant of the Lord," but we just call him Obadiah. He lived about 600 before the birth of Christ. His audience were the people of Judah, who were being attacked by the Babylonians. Even Jerusalem, The Golden City, was being attacked. However, the residents of Judah were not the only one receiving this judgement. The people of Edom were receiving the judgement too. God could not tolerate their arrogance and pride. The Edomites, living high in the mountains, did not just feel secure, but they felt superior. They did not just ignore the needs of Judah, they ransacked some of their cities too. The key to understanding this dark passage lays in answering this question.

Who are the Edomites? They are more than the citizens of the country on the southern border of Judah. It is more than politics. It is ancestry. Both the people of Judah and the people of Edom could trace their ancestry back to Abraham. Do you remember the story? God makes a great promise to Abram, later Abraham, that he will be the father of a great nation. That promise lived on the day Abraham and Sarah, his wife, welcomed their first born into the world, Isaac. In time, Isaac and his wife, Rebecca, had two sons Jacob and Esau. To say the least, those two brothers had a tense relationship. Esau traded his valuable birthright for a bowl of stew. In more time, Jacob and Esau have their names changed to Israel and Edom. Their families take their names, the Israelites and the Edomites. That means, the Israelites and the Edomites are family. That means the story of Obadiah is a family feud. The Book of Obadiah resonates with us because our society is filled with family feuds. How many can you count?

America is experiencing a family feud politically. There has always been a tension between the two political parties. That was a good thing because the right thing to do

was discovered in the compromise. Today, there is little compromise, so nothing is happening. Could it be America could save a great amount of money by holding the presidential election today? I am convinced most Americans know today who they will vote for in November. Are you going to vote for Donald Trump? Are you going to vote for Joe Biden? I am equally convinced the losing party will spend the next four years trying to get the winning candidate out of office. We have seen it with Donald Trump. We saw it with Barrack Obama. In the end nothing positive happens for the country because we are in the middle of a family feud politically. Sometimes, I forget we are all Americans.

America is experiencing a family feud racially. The death of George Floyd on May 26 has sent many in our country into a rage. The Black Lives Matter campaign is alive and well. It is the hot button topic across the country. The goal is to protect the African American community against police brutality. They are designed to be peaceful protests, but violence has been seen. Our country is divided over the issue across every demographic. Everyone has an opinion, and everyone thinks they are right. Could it be everyone is guilty? I do not want to make light of the situation, but we are in the middle of a great family feud racially. Sometimes, I forget we are all Americans. Closely related is the next issue.

America is experiencing a family feud historically. On June 19, protestors in San Francisco tore down the statue of Ulysses S. Grant, the 18<sup>th</sup> president of the United States who led the Union Army to victory in the Civil War. It was all part of the Black Lives Matter campaign. The schools in California must not be particularly good. I was taught Grant help end slavery as general and did his best to help rebuild the south as president. Grant's statue illustrates the point there are many who are trying to rewrite history. I understand we should not glorify our past sins or misdeeds. I also believe we should learn from the past, not worship the past. How do you feel about rewriting history? I am going to Mount Rushmore in September. I hope I get there before they sandblast it. Two of the four men on that statue owned slaves. We are in the middle of a great family feud historically. Sometimes, I forget we are all Americans.

America is experiencing a family feud over co-vid 19. Everyone seems to have an opinion, and everything is hard. Everyone who has ever driven by a hospital has an opinion. Some believe we are rushing back into the world too fast. This will cause another outbreak of the Coronavirus and more will suffer and die. This group is terrified. Others believe the whole Coronavirus issue is an election year stunt. It will be forgotten as soon as the election is over. This group is cynical. If you want to upset everyone bring up the topic of masks. Some believe they should be mandatory. Some believe they should be optional. Social distancing is enough. It is a family feud that is going to come to our church. Someday, we are going to return to our building. Do you want to let the terrified group set the rules? Do you want the cynical group to set the rules? I believe we let the governor and the Ohio Department of Health set the rules.

We are in the middle of a great family feud over co-vid 19. Sometimes, I forget we are all Americans. Let me just give you one more.

The United Methodist Church is experiencing a family feud over sexually. It is the issue that just will not go away. One camp believes our denomination should swing the doors open wide to the LGBTQ community, including officiating at LGBTQ weddings and ordaining LGBTQ individuals. The other camp believes we should slam the door of the LGBTQ community, we will not officiate at their weddings nor ordain a LGBTQ individual. Both sides claim to be Biblical and both sides claim to be right. The whole thing is exhausting. I had a hard-enough time just liking girls. The United Methodist Church is in the middle of a great family feud sexually. Sometimes, I forget we are all Christians. I could go on, but I will not. Could it be 24/7 news is dividing America with their bias reporting? Many have stopped watching the news because they are tired of the family feuds. If that makes you think say, **"Amen!"** This is the point.

Somethings do not change. We are living in the middle of a family feud. Obadiah who lived 600 before the birth of Christ and was in the middle of a family feud. The Edomites became so preoccupied with the events of their day, Judah's devastation at the hands of a foreign power, they forgot what was important to God. What was important to God was their shared common ancestry with the Israelites. Could it be we have become so preoccupied with the events of our day, politics, racism, history, co-vid 19, and sexuality, we have forgotten what is important to God? It is not that those issues are not important. It is that those things are not the most important thing to God. What is the most important thing to God in our time? Jesus!

Last Sunday morning, I was walking through the building on my way to the parking lot for worship. I thought the building was empty, so I was surprised to find a shadowy figure down one of the hallway ways. Since the person was walking into the District Office, I guessed it was our District Superintendent Abby Auman. I was right. It was the first time I had seen her in the building since the pandemic began in March. I called out, "How are you?" She responded, "I am good. I on my way to the Black Lives Matter rally in Canfield. We are going to stand in front of the Methodist Church, then we are going to welcome their new pastor, Ivy Smith." She is the first black woman pastor in the history of that congregation." I said, "I will pray for her." I hope I did not sound cynical. I did not mean it that way. I have prayed for every pastor at Canfield since I have been here. On my way home, I drove by the rally. The local media reported sixty people attended. Someone told me everyone was white. It was peaceful. They were just holding signs and yelling at passing cars. It did not make much of an impression on me.

The next morning, I received a text. This is what the text read: YESTERDAY, ABBY AUMAN, DISTRICT SUPERINTENDENT OF THE MAHONING VALLEY DISTRICT OF THE UNITED METHODIST CHURCH, WAS SPOKESPERSON FOR CANFIELD'S UMW JOINING IN WITH CANFIELD'S BLACK LIVES MATTER PROTEST, IN LIGHT OF WELCOMING

THEIR FIRST BLACK, FEMALE REVEREND, DR. IVY SMITH. I THOUGHT CHURCHES WERE NOT SUPPOSED TO GET INVOLVED IN POLITICS. I responded: I'M NOT SURE HOW TO RESPOND. ABBY IS MY BOSS AND I HAVE NO CONTROL OVER HER. SHE WOULD CALL HER PROTEST SOCIAL JUSTICE, NOT POLITICAL. OBVIOUSLY, MANY PEOPLE IN OUR COUNTRY WANT CHANGE. That opened the door to some wonderful conversation. I ended the dialogue with this text: I LOOK FORWARD TO THE DAY JESUS IS OUR ONLY ISSUE. The response was: ME TOO. Are you looking forward to the day Jesus is our only issue? Can I ask you a question?

Why did you come to church today? It is a fair question. Did anyone come to church today to hear my political views? Did anyone come to church today hear my opinions about racism? Did anyone come to church today to hear my views on historical statues? Did anyone here today come to church to hear my opinions about the Coronavirus? Did anyone here today come to church to hear my opinion about LGBTQ? None of those important complex important issues are why you can to church today. You came to church today because you want to hear about Jesus. That is a good thing because Jesus is the most important thing to God. Jesus said it best of himself, *"I am the way, the truth and the life. No one comes to the father except through me."* (John 14:6) And, all of God's people said, **"Amen!"**