

**INTRODUCTION:**

Perhaps some of you here this morning have heard what I hope is the fictional story of one major company that went looking for a new marketing director, and after much advertising and many applications, they brought in three candidates for the final selection process.

- In that final meeting, the first man was asked a very simple question, “**What is 2 + 2?**”
- He was surprised, and he thought about it a little bit.
- He wondered if it might be a trick question, but he simply answered “4.”
- The Managing Director looked at the Board, shook his head, and the man was thanked for coming, but he was not the candidate they were looking for.
- The next one was also asked this very simple question, “**What is 2 + 2?**”
- This man also thought about it for a little while, also thinking it might be a trick question, but he replied that statistically, the answer would be a number somewhere between 3 and 5.
- The Managing Director once again looked at the Board, they were impressed, but this candidate was also ushered out.
- And then finally, the last candidate was also asked the very simple question, “**What is 2 + 2?**” And this man immediately replied, “**What do you want it to be?**”
- And he was hired on the spot.

We have a word for this in our modern society.

- We describe it as “**SPIN.**” According to *dictionary.com*, spin is defined as “...**providing an interpretation..., especially in a way meant to sway public opinion.**”
- It carries the idea of controlling or managing the way people think about some kind of public statement or event, just as a bowler or pitcher controls the direction of the ball with spin.
- And so we have a number of related words and phrases.
- A spin-doctor or spin-meister is someone who provides the spin.
- If you are familiar with the FOX commentator, Bill O’Reilly, then you are also familiar with what he refers to as “the no-spin zone.”
- Sometimes we also read about counter-spin, spin-lock (too much spin at the same time), or even a spin war.
- Spin may sometimes involve selectively presenting only the evidence that supports a certain position.
- It may involve non-denial denials or non-affirming affirmations.
- It may involve phrasing an issue in such a way that assumes something that has not yet been proven.
- It may involve euphemisms to disguise someone’s real agenda.
- It may involve disguising bad news by pushing it along with other more important or more favorable news.
- And so we are all familiar with spin.

I once read about an article in a newspaper which pointed out that linguists had voted “truthiness” as the word of the year.

- Truthiness is defined as, “**the quality of stating concepts one wishes or believes to be true, rather than the facts.**”
- According to Michael Adams, a professor at North Carolina State University who specializes in lexicology, the word truthiness means “**truthy, not facty.**”

- Runnerups included “**muffin top**” (the bulge of flesh hanging over the top of low-rider jeans), “**pope squatting**” (the practice of registering a domain name that contains the name of the pope, in hopes of making a profit on it), and “**sudoku**” (a Japanese number puzzle).
- But just the fact that “**truthiness**” has been recognized as the word of the year should remind us that we are living in a society of spin, where truth and facts are not always as connected as they should be.

This morning, though I would like for us to go to the Scriptures and study a man of tremendous courage when it came to telling the truth.

- Certainly there are several in this category.
- We can think of the prophet Nathan who stood before King David after telling the parable and said, “***You are the man***” (2 Samuel 12:7).
- We remember John the Baptist who stood before King Herod and said, “***It is not lawful for you to have your brother’s wife***” (Mark 6:18).
- Certainly there were others, but this morning I’d like for us to look at one of the great prophets from the Old Testament that we do not usually study very often.
- In fact, there are some Christians who have probably never even heard of this man.
- His name was Micaiah, and he has to have been one of the bravest and most courageous prophets in the entire Bible.
- The reason many people are not familiar with Micaiah is probably because he is generally overshadowed by two other very famous prophets: Elijah and Elisha.
- Micaiah lived in the Northern Kingdom of Israel, just as Elijah and Elisha did, and his story is found in **1 Kings 22**, right in between these other two prophets.

You may remember that when King Solomon died, the kingdom divided—ten tribes to the North (known as Israel), and two tribes to the South (commonly referred to as Judah).

- The ten northern tribes immediately started worshiping idols.
- And perhaps the worst king of the northern ten tribes was Ahab, who was influenced by his evil wife Jezebel.
- You probably remember the contest that Elijah had with the prophets of Baal.
- That happened during the reign of King Ahab.
- The prophets of Baal were defeated, and Jezebel called for the murder of the prophet Elijah.
- In the chapter right before the one we’ll be looking at this morning, the Bible says (in **1 Kings 21:25**), “***Surely there was no one like Ahab who sold himself to do evil in the sight of the Lord, because Jezebel his wife incited him.***”
- In **1 Kings 21**, Ahab and Jezebel had just finished conspiring to kill a man in order to steal his land. Ahab, then, was ruling in the North.

At the same time, there was a king named Jehoshaphat who was ruling in the South.

- Jehoshaphat was basically a good man and made a lot of good reforms.
- He had ordered that the pagan altars be torn down, he had ordered that the word of God be preached and taught, but unfortunately, in order to form an alliance, Jehoshaphat allowed his son to marry the daughter of Jezebel and Ahab—not a good combination.
- In fact, when this morning’s story is all over, another prophet will deliver a message to King Jehoshaphat and will say (in **2 Chronicles 19:2**), “***Should you help the wicked and love those who hate the Lord and so bring wrath on yourself from the Lord?***”
- In the New Testament, we are warned about the danger of being unequally yoked with unbelievers, and in **1 Kings 22**, we will definitely see an illustration of that danger.
- Because of this marriage, King Jehoshaphat made a state visit to King Ahab in the North—after all, they were in-laws.

- During this visit, King Ahab started complaining about the Syrian king, Ben-Hadad, who had not yet returned a city that he had captured earlier that he had promised to return, the town of Ramoth-Gilead.
- So the picture we are looking at this morning is of two kings—one evil and one good—as the wicked king is asking the good king to join him in battle for this disputed city. All of this brings us to **1 Kings 22**.

○

**I. As we look very carefully at this chapter, I'd like to start by considering the BEHAVIOR OF THE FALSE PROPHETS.**

Please notice with me the opening **12 verses**...

*1 Three years passed without war between Aram and Israel.*

*2 In the third year Jehoshaphat the king of Judah came down to the king of Israel.*

*3 Now the king of Israel said to his servants, "Do you know that Ramoth-gilead belongs to us, and we are still doing nothing to take it out of the hand of the king of Aram?"*

*4 And he said to Jehoshaphat, "Will you go with me to battle at Ramoth-gilead?" And Jehoshaphat said to the king of Israel, "I am as you are, my people as your people, my horses as your horses."*

*5 Moreover, Jehoshaphat said to the king of Israel, "Please inquire first for the word of the LORD."*

*6 Then the king of Israel gathered the prophets together, about four hundred men, and said to them, "Shall I go against Ramoth-gilead to battle or shall I refrain?" And they said, "Go up, for the Lord will give it into the hand of the king."*

*7 But Jehoshaphat said, "Is there not yet a prophet of the LORD here that we may inquire of him?"*

*8 The king of Israel said to Jehoshaphat, "There is yet one man by whom we may inquire of the LORD, but I hate him, because he does not prophesy good concerning me, but evil. He is Micaiah son of Imlah." But Jehoshaphat said, "Let not the king say so."*

*9 Then the king of Israel called an officer and said, "Bring quickly Micaiah son of Imlah."*

*10 Now the king of Israel and Jehoshaphat king of Judah were sitting each on his throne, arrayed in their robes, at the threshing floor at the entrance of the gate of Samaria; and all the prophets were prophesying before them.*

*11 Then Zedekiah the son of Chenaanah made horns of iron for himself and said, "Thus says the LORD, 'With these you will gore the Arameans until they are consumed.'"*

*12 All the prophets were prophesying thus, saying, "Go up to Ramoth-gilead and prosper, for the LORD will give it into the hand of the king."*

As we look back over these opening verses, we find a very basic principle, and that is: Truth is not necessarily found in large numbers.

- We find in **verse 6** that there were about 400 of these prophets who were telling King Ahab to go to battle.
- In fact, if we were to go to the parallel account in **2 Chronicles 18:21-22**, we would find that these 400 men are described as "*his prophets*."
- In other words, King Ahab owned these men.
- They had been bought and paid for—they were delivering his message.
- Who were these men? You might remember that when Elijah challenged the 450 prophets of Baal several chapters earlier, those 450 false prophets were killed.
- But in **1 Kings 18:19**, we also find that in addition to the 450 prophets of Baal, there were also, "*...400 prophets of the Asherah, who eat at Jezebel's table.*"
- Asherah was the female version of Baal, and apparently these 400 prophets were not directly involved in Elijah's challenge and therefore were not destroyed.

So when Jehoshaphat sees this unified prophecy, it was obviously quite impressive.

- In terms of religion, it is hard to get 400 people to agree about anything!
- So these 400 men presented a unified front.
- They all taught and believed the same thing.
- In a similar way, we look around us at some of the huge denominational groups.
- For the most part, I would say that most denominations are made up of good and decent and hardworking people.
- I don't think they wake up in the morning looking for ways to deceive people.
- But is the unified message of 400 people necessarily the truth?
- What about the theory of evolution?
- The recent surveys seem to tell us that a majority of those in the scientific world are basically united in their understanding that the human race has evolved over millions of years.
- It is easy to be intimidated by the numbers, but here we have a great example of how mistaken people can be.
- There were 400 people who were telling Ahab and Jehoshaphat to go for it, and in just a few minutes, we will find that the ratio is 400:1.

Thankfully, in spite of those odds, King Jehoshaphat was not completely convinced.

- After all, these were not prophets of Yahweh, they were prophets of the Asherah.
- So in **verse 7**, we find that Jehoshaphat asked for a prophet of the Lord.
- King Ahab's response to this request is rather interesting.
- Apparently, he and Micaiah have a history together.
- King Ahab does not say that Micaiah is dishonest.
- He does not say that Micaiah has been wrong in the past.
- But King Ahab's only complaint is that Micaiah "...*does not prophesy good concerning me, but evil.*"

King Ahab is guilty of what many people today are guilty of.

- We might refer to it as "**selective listening.**"
- Sometimes we have the tendency to only listen to those things we want to hear.
- Have we ever felt that we needed a message from the Lord on some issue...but we are afraid of what the Lord's answer might be?
- Have we ever made up our minds on something...and then have we gone looking for approval?

In a similar way, Jehoshaphat wanted to hear a good message, he wanted the Lord's approval...but there was something nagging at him that just wasn't right.

- Perhaps he could tell that there was some spin involved.
- Notice in **verse 11** that one of the prophets even had a graphic illustration.
- This man had made horns of iron, and he was physically illustrating how King Ahab would gore the Arameans.

First of all, then, we have considered the behavior of the false prophets, and we have seen that although they were unified and very dynamic in their presentation, truth is not always assured by large numbers.

**II. As we go back to 1 Kings 22, let's go on and notice THE COURAGE OF MICAIAH.**

Let's look together at **verses 13-23**...

*13 Then the messenger who went to summon Micaiah spoke to him saying, "Behold now, the words of the prophets are uniformly favorable to the king. Please let your word be like the word of one of them, and speak favorably."*

*14 But Micaiah said, "As the LORD lives, what the LORD says to me, that I shall speak."*

*15 When he came to the king, the king said to him, "Micaiah, shall we go to Ramoth-gilead to battle, or shall we refrain?" And he answered him, "Go up and succeed, and the LORD will give it into the hand of the king."*

*16 Then the king said to him, "How many times must I adjure you to speak to me nothing but the truth in the name of the LORD?"*

*17 So he said, "I saw all Israel Scattered on the mountains, Like sheep which have no shepherd. And the LORD said, 'These have no master. Let each of them return to his house in peace.'"*

*18 Then the king of Israel said to Jehoshaphat, "Did I not tell you that he would not prophesy good concerning me, but evil?"*

*19 Micaiah said, "Therefore, hear the word of the LORD. I saw the LORD sitting on His throne, and all the host of heaven standing by Him on His right and on His left.*

*20 "The LORD said, 'Who will entice Ahab to go up and fall at Ramoth-gilead?' And one said this while another said that.*

*21 "Then a spirit came forward and stood before the LORD and said, 'I will entice him.'*

*22 "The LORD said to him, 'How?' And he said, 'I will go out and be a deceiving spirit in the mouth of all his prophets.' Then He said, 'You are to entice him and also prevail. Go and do so.'*

*23 "Now therefore, behold, the LORD has put a deceiving spirit in the mouth of all these your prophets; and the LORD has proclaimed disaster against you."*

Notice back up in **verse 13** that the messenger went to go get the prophet Micaiah, and as he brings him back, he gives him a stern warning.

- The messenger basically says, **"Micaiah, in this city, truth is determined by majority rule. Truth is something we vote on around here, and the vote earlier this morning was 400 to nothing, so don't you blow it by getting anyone upset around here! You need to just agree to what we have already said."**

And again, it is so sad that people today are basically doing the same thing.

- In the realm of religion, the majority still rules.
- In our pluralistic and democratic society, the voice of the people can drown out the voice of God.
- But God is still speaking through the Scriptures, and those who respect the authority of this book can still be pleasing to God.

But in those days, let's notice Micaiah's response to the messenger.

- Micaiah says, **"As the Lord lives, what the Lord says to me, that I shall speak."**
- We are a little surprised, then, by what we find in the very next verse.
- As King Ahab poses the question, **"What is 2+2?"** Micaiah responds in a way that is worthy of that third job applicant! **"Whatever you want it to be."**

Micaiah could see that King Ahab's question was not sincere, and so he responded with an insincere answer.

- He could see that the entire scenario was a joke, it was a charade, he could tell that he was dealing with an unreasoning animal and that he was not going to win this argument, and so he answered appropriately with a sarcastic answer of his own.
- Micaiah gives King Ahab the only answer he deserves as he basically says, **"Go ahead. Do whatever you want to do. It is all going to turn out great."**

What I find amazing here is that King Ahab could see through it.

- King Ahab could see that he was being made fun of.
- It is rather ironic that an evil king asks for approval, he gets it, and then he argues with the answer!
- In other words, even Ahab knew in his own heart that he was about to make a terrible decision.
- And so the king refuses to accept the prophecy.
- It's amazing that he didn't just take the "Yes" and go on from there.

Nevertheless, at this point, Micaiah changes his tone and gives a solemn and simple answer, "*I saw all Israel scattered on the mountains, like sheep which have no shepherd....*"

- Ahab turns to Jehoshaphat and says, "*I told you so.*" "*Did I not tell you that he would not prophesy good concerning me, but evil?*"
- Neither answer was acceptable to Ahab.

But Micaiah was just getting started.

- The prophet goes on to explain that it was Ahab's time to go.
- The cup of God's wrath was full, and God was using those 400 false prophets to convince King Ahab to go into battle and die.

And so we find that regardless of what others were saying, the prophet Micaiah spoke the truth.

- Sometimes we also need to stand alone.
- We may be the only one in our family, for example, who believes Peter's statement (in **Acts 2:38**) that baptism is "*for the forgiveness of sins.*"
- We may be the only ones in that high school AP Biology Class who believe that God created the world in six literal 24-hour days.
- In a marriage, we may be the only one who sees the value of bringing the children to Bible class every Wednesday.
- But let us always remember that God alone makes a majority, and it does not matter how many people stand with us.

**III. As we go back to 1 Kings 22, I'd like for us to notice not only the behavior of the false prophets and the courage of Micaiah, but let's also look at HOW THE PEOPLE REACTED TO MICAIAH'S MESSAGE.**

How did things end? First of all, for Micaiah—how was he rewarded for telling the truth? Let's look together at **verses 24-28...**

*24 Then Zedekiah the son of Chenaanah came near and struck Micaiah on the cheek and said, "How did the Spirit of the LORD pass from me to speak to you?"*

*25 Micaiah said, "Behold, you shall see on that day when you enter an inner room to hide yourself."*

*26 Then the king of Israel said, "Take Micaiah and return him to Amon the governor of the city and to Joash the king's son;*

*27 and say, 'Thus says the king, "Put this man in prison and feed him sparingly with bread and water until I return safely.'" "*

*28 Micaiah said, "If you indeed return safely the LORD has not spoken by me." And he said, "Listen, all you people."*

We find that Micaiah was first rewarded by being hit in the face and then publicly reprimanded.

- We are not always rewarded for telling the truth.
- It is rather amazing that people can get so upset when they are told what they need to do.
- They would rather hear error and be happy than to hear the truth and have their feelings hurt.

- We remember the Apostle Paul's frustration with the Christians in Galatia.
- At one point in his book to those people, he said in **Galatians 4:16**, "*So have I become your enemy by telling you the truth?*"
- In some situations, the answer to that question seems to be "Yes."
- Those 400 prophets were offended at Micaiah's message.

Ahab then orders that Micaiah be thrown in prison with nothing but bread and water until he returned safely from the battle.

- Micaiah then makes a statement for the benefit of those who remain.
- Ahab would not benefit from this warning, but perhaps the others might remember.

How does the story end? Let's look together at the next paragraph—**verses 29-38**.

*29 So the king of Israel and Jehoshaphat king of Judah went up against Ramoth-gilead.  
 30 The king of Israel said to Jehoshaphat, "I will disguise myself and go into the battle, but you put on your robes." So the king of Israel disguised himself and went into the battle.  
 31 Now the king of Aram had commanded the thirty-two captains of his chariots, saying, "Do not fight with small or great, but with the king of Israel alone."  
 32 So when the captains of the chariots saw Jehoshaphat, they said, "Surely it is the king of Israel," and they turned aside to fight against him, and Jehoshaphat cried out.  
 33 When the captains of the chariots saw that it was not the king of Israel, they turned back from pursuing him.  
 34 Now a certain man drew his bow at random and struck the king of Israel in a joint of the armor. So he said to the driver of his chariot, "Turn around and take me out of the fight; for I am severely wounded."  
 35 The battle raged that day, and the king was propped up in his chariot in front of the Arameans, and died at evening, and the blood from the wound ran into the bottom of the chariot.  
 36 Then a cry passed throughout the army close to sunset, saying, "Every man to his city and every man to his country."  
 37 So the king died and was brought to Samaria, and they buried the king in Samaria.  
 38 They washed the chariot by the pool of Samaria, and the dogs licked up his blood (now the harlots bathed themselves there), according to the word of the LORD which He spoke.*

We find that the two kings go up to battle, but Ahab, at least, seems to be just a little bit worried.

- Ahab plans on going to battle in a disguise, but somehow he talks Jehoshaphat into going in looking like a king!
- For someone who did not believe in God's word, Ahab was taking some extreme measures... just in case.
- The enemy had been instructed to only kill the king of Israel, so they head straight for Jehoshaphat (the only one who looks like a king), but the parallel account in **2 Chronicles** tells us that Jehoshaphat cried out to the Lord and the Lord turned the enemy away.

And then, in a move that puts our modern guided missiles to shame, in a move that makes our smart bombs seem primitive, a certain insignificant soldier raises his bow, he shoots at random, and according to **verse 34**, that arrow strikes the king of Israel in a joint in his armor.

- It reminds us of **Hebrews 4:12-13**, "*For the word of God is living and active and sharper than any two-edged sword, and piercing as far as the division of soul and spirit, of both joints and marrow, and able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart. And there is no creature hidden from His sight, but all things are open and laid bare to the eyes of Him with whom we have to do.*"

- No matter how hard we may try to hide in our disobedience, there is no armor, there is no bunker, and there is no shield that can protect us from the word of God.

The king died that day, and we close in **verse 38** with something rather disgusting.

- On their way home, the soldiers stop by the chariot/harlot wash, and the dogs lick up the blood from the bottom of that chariot.
- But this statement is more than gross—it is the fulfillment of another prophecy.
- Back in the previous chapter, in **1 Kings 21:19**, on the day that Naboth was killed so that King Ahab could take his vineyard, Elijah made a prediction: *“Thus says the Lord, ‘In the place where the dogs licked up the blood of Naboth the dogs will lick up your blood, even yours.’”*

### **CONCLUSION:**

King Ahab was a victim of what we might describe as “**selective hearing.**”

- He was a victim of his own spin.
- He refused to listen to the word of God, so he surrounded himself with those people who would only tell him what he wanted to hear.

On the other hand, the prophet Micaiah did not deviate from the truth, regardless of the consequences.

- He could not be bribed; he could not be threatened into lying.
- Micaiah tells us this morning that we will not be judged based on whether we converted thousands of people to the Lord.
- But we will be judged by whether we tell people the truth.
- In fact, in terms of converting people to the truth, as far as we can tell based on this passage, Micaiah was a total failure.
- Ahab did not listen, and neither did the good king Jehoshaphat, but in the eyes of God, Micaiah was one of the greatest prophets in the Old Testament.

As long as this world stands, people will read the account of Micaiah and know that we must have that same kind of courage.

- *“As the Lord lives, what the Lord says to me, that I shall speak.” (1 Kings 22:14)*

### **INVITATION:**

There may be someone here this morning who has been resisting the word of God.

- Maybe you know that God has told us in the Scriptures to turn away from sin and be immersed in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of past sins.
- Maybe you have had people in your life like those 400 prophets.
- This morning, we would like to invite you to listen to prophet number 401.
- We would invite you to listen to God’s word.

### **Comments or Questions?**

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