**AP:** Envy poisons and jealousy kills—just as surely as it did with Ahab and Naboth. And as a result, God tells us not to obsess—not to chase after our “white whales” of envy and jealousy. But instead, he tells us to cast them aside. Imagine how different the book would have been had Ahab decided to give up the quest for Moby Dick Imagine how differently the Biblical Ahab’s life would have been if he’d only accepted that the land wasn’t his. Instead, evilness was born and lives were ruined.

**CS 3.1-2** ~ *If then you have been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God.****2****Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth.*

**CONCLUSION**

**ILL—Ahab’s Confession** (before his final chase, Ahab speaks about his wife and child; calls himself a fool for having spent 40 years chasing his “white whale”) Sadly, that evening confession didn’t change his mind, and his life and the life of those around him were ruined.

**1KN 21.20-24** ~ *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 will utterly burn you up, and will cut off from Ahab every male, bond or free, in Israel.****22****And I will make your house like the house of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, and like the house of Baasha the son of Ahijah, for the anger to which you have provoked me, and because you have made Israel to sin.****23****And of Jezebel the Lord also said, ‘The dogs shall eat Jezebel within the walls of Jezreel.’****24****Anyone belonging to Ahab who dies in the city the dogs shall eat, and anyone of his who dies in the open country the birds of the heavens shall eat.”*

I wonder if the Biblical Ahab awoke to the damage that his envy had. His obsession over his **“white whale”** cost him everything—his kingdom, his lineage, his wife, and his life. All for a vineyard. **Was it worth it?**

Tonight, I want you to take a moment and think of all that you have been given by our God. Don’t allow the blessings and gifts of others to distract—don’t pursue your **“white whales”**. But instead, see them for what they are—see their true **value** and don’t obsess over their **unattainableness**, for that will always give birth to envy and **evilness**. Learn to see all that you have—all that you’ve been given—as what it is: a gift from God. *Do not be deceived, my beloved brothers.****17****Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow due to change.****18****Of his own will he brought us forth by the word of truth, that we should be a kind of firstfruits of his creatures.***(JS 1.16-18)**

**PH 4.11-13** ~ *Not that I am speaking of being in need, for I have learned in whatever situation I am to be content.****12****I know how to be brought low, and I know how to abound. In any and every circumstance, I have learned the secret of facing plenty and hunger, abundance and need.****13****I can do all things through him who strengthens me.*

**INVITATION**

#465 [Exp-OTH] **Our White Whale** 2KN 21.1-24

11/12/2022 PC \_\_ Pchd

**PURPOSE:** To warn of the danger of obsession with the possessions of others.

**TRN TO 1KN 21**

**INTRODUCTION**

**ILL—Ghostbusters Christmas** (Dad liked to latch onto a common theme for Christmas presents; I made it easy—changed obsessions like socks; one year, it was Ghostbusters) There were three big things I wanted more than anything: a Ghostbusters Firehouse playset, a Proton Pack, and a Ghost Trap. Little did I know, I was not the only one—it was the Christmas of Ghostbusters, and everything was hard to come by.

**ILL—Moby Dick** (a book about **“obsession”**; the main character was a man named **“Ahab”**—a captain who was obsessed with tracking down his **“white whale”)** We share our heads at these kinds of obsessions, but in reality, we create them ourselves every Christmas season—and often, other times of the year, as well.

My folks managed to track down nearly everything. They had the Firehouse. They had the proton pack. They even had a few extra action figures to go along with them. But that Ghost Trap—it wasn’t anywhere. It was the **“White Whale”** of the Christmas season in my family—but unfortunately, it wasn’t something they were able to find. Looking back, I honestly don’t know if it had even been released yet. But it didn’t matter. To my little child brain, it was a necessity. **How could I play Ghostbuster, after all, without a Ghost Trap?**

 Christmas can be stressful for the parent. It can be so easy to tie up so much of your success as a parent in your kids’ enjoyment of their Christmas. You want to see the joy in their eyes as they open present after present. Having been on both sides of Christmas (child and parent), I feel like I grew up with great Christmases and that we’ve been able to help our kids do the same. And yet, I also remember the unspoken negative to Christmas—the first day back to school, when you hear all about what everyone else’s Christmas.

**“Little Billy got a Sega AND a Gameboy!” “Janey got three American Girl dolls!”** Suddenly, that feeling of appreciation and happiness that was so filling after Christmas morning begins to drain out of us. Rather than joy and contentment, we’re left with a different feeling all together. Christmas is generally expected to be a season of love, appreciation, and giving. But so often, it can also be a season with a different emotional core. This evening, I’d like for us to consider a far more common sin in America—one born from our own obsessions—our **“White Whales”**.

**BACKGROUND**

Tonight, I’d like us to look at another **“Ahab”—** the namesake for Herman Melville’s sailor. Like the sailor, he was obsessive, wicked, and unbalanced. And as we’ll see in today’s text, he had his own **“White Whale”**.

**BD1: The Value of Our White Whales**

**ILL—Moby Dick** (Captain Ahab of the *Pequod*; sailing in a quest to locate the famed white whale; had bit his leg off at the knee; becomes the focus of every waking minute of his life) **What sense does this make? How in the world did he expect to ever encounter (let alone defeat) such an animal in the great expanse of the sea?** I don’t know about you, but if I encountered a while animal that bit off my leg, the last thing I’d do is offer it the chance to take the rest of me! But **“obsessions”** aren’t logical—they’re emotional. And rather than seeing his escape from his previous encounter with the whale as a blessing, he sees it as a curse—and he becomes obsessed with getting revenge on this wild animal.

**1KN 21.1-2** ~ *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.”*

**EX:** Ahab, the Israelite King, had a similar obsession—in his case, it was with a vineyard. It was beautiful—the grass notably greener than his own vineyard. And it was *right next door*. So, he goes to his neighbor, Naboth, and asks for it—offering to trade it for money or for another vineyard. One that, he at least claims, is of greater value (of course, the question is, **greater value to whom?** Certainly not Ahab!).

**Was it really prettier? Was it really more valuable? Was it really better? Honestly, who knows?** And that’s how it is with our obsessions—our **“white whales”**. Some people are obsessed with a title, with a house, with a yard. From the outside, it’s as ridiculous as that **“White Whale”** or **“Naboth’s Vineyard”**—it seems random to us. The **value of our White Whales** is often far more bound up in emotion than in reality. But it doesn’t change the fact of our obsession with it.

**AP:** Oh, if only we could truly see with unbiased eyes the real value of the things that we are so willing to obsess over and fret over and base our entire lives over. We will often fixate on a title (a literal word), our homes (a physical bit of land), our cars (a hunk of steel, grease, and oil), and status (something that only exists in our own mind, and shifts with the wind). To us, these things seem so valuable. But in reality, the value is often only in our own minds—and we’ll often cast off things of true value for them!

**MT 6.19-21** ~ *“Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal,****20****but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal.****21****For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.*

**BD2: The Unattainableness of Our White Whales**

As the story tells, the old sailor had had a leg fashioned from the jawbone of a whale as a sign of his obsession—and he then led the crew on a doomed quest for revenge. Over the course of the story, we see crew members and ships consumed and destroyed by the whale and the sea. Time and time again, Ahab fails. And his life and the life of the people around him suffer for it.

**1KN 21.3-4** ~ *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.*

**EX:** The Ahab of the Bible, similarly, tries and fails to achieve his **“White Whale”**. He’s obsessed with the vineyard, and he’s willing to sell something that is objectively more valuable in order to get it. But there’s a problem: the owner, Naboth! He won’t sell it—because he recognizes it belongs to his family—passed on through the Old Testament inheritance laws set up back in the time of Jacob. Try as he may, his **“white whale” is unattainable**.

**AP:** The same is often true with our own **“White Whales”**. We create these **unattainable** goals—we see the wealth of friends, family, and strangers, and we want them. We obsess over them. And our appreciation twists into jealousy and envy—in the case of Ahab, he wouldn’t eat, he likely couldn’t sleep. He was distraught over what he couldn’t have. He was king! He had practically everything! And all he cared about was the one thing he didn’t have. And we follow a similar path.

**PV 14.30** ~ *A tranquil heart gives life to the flesh, but envy makes the bones rot.*

Like Ahab, we often focus on what we don’t have—we focus on our image of the valuable that someone else has, and it twists us like a pretzel. In so doing, we find ourselves sick and envious over what others have.

**PS 73.1-3** ~ *Truly God is good to Israel, to those who are pure in heart.* ***2****But as for me, my feet had almost stumbled, my steps had nearly slipped.* ***3****For I was envious of the arrogant when I saw the prosperity of the wicked.*

**BD3: The Evilness Born From Our White Whales**

**ILL—The Final Chase** (whale bites his small craft in two; next day, three additional crafts smashed with their lines tangled and Ahab’s prosthetic leg is lost; finally, the Pequod, itself, destroyed, Ahab dragged away by the whale) The result of the captain’s obsession is the lost of dozens of lives and multiple vessels. Lives and families ruined, all because of his obsession.

**B.ILL—Jezebel’s Plan** (sees her husband’s sorrow, comes up with a plan; hires a couple of men to claim they heard Naboth blaspheme God and the king) *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.* (**1KN 21.12-13**)

**EX:** Ultimately, we see that Ahab takes the opportunity to buy the land now that its rightful owner has died. What a terrible **evilness is born from Ahab’s “white whale”**! From his obsession, his envy, damage and death come. And this is the rule, not the exception! For, by nature, **evilness is born from our “white whales”**, too. Not always in as dramatic of a fashion as with Ahab, but we see marriages ruined when men obsess and become envious over other women, families are neglected when—in order to **“keep up with the Joneses”**—we work double and triple shifts to help pay the bills, and we see peace ruined when jealousy and envy removes any chance to create peace and friendship between different groups and individuals.

**LK 12.33-34** ~ *Sell your possessions, and give to the needy. Provide yourselves with moneybags that do not grow old, with a treasure in the heavens that does not fail, where no thief approaches and no moth destroys.****34****For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.*