

Thought for Sunday 18th April 2021
Pastor Gordon Hamilton

2 Samuel 2:1-32

We know that back in 1 Samuel 16 Samuel anointed David. At that point David was just a shepherd boy, the youngest of Jesse's sons. He was not the rightful heir to the throne, and even when Samuel went to Jesse's home, Samuel thought it would most probably be Eliab, Jesse's eldest son, but God said no, God looks at the heart. In our passage today we see that although Samuel had anointed David all those years ago, David wasn't anointed as a king, more as a pretender. Now Saul is dead, now the people felt they needed to anoint him as their king. There was a problem, it was a divided nation, there were twelve tribes which had split their loyalties, some for Saul, some for David, and although Saul was now dead, there were those who supported Saul's son to take over as king. David finds out Jabesh Gilead's men had buried Saul, David sends them a greeting (V5); *'The Lord bless you for showing kindness to Saul your master by burying him'* and then goes on to say, *'the house of Judah has anointed me king.'* But the transition of power was not going to be that easy. David still had to be recognised as the true pretender to the throne. Nothing changes, does it? It still means that men, and women, are willing to fight to see their wishes come to pass. I am sure we all thought that the scenes in Northern Ireland 20+ years ago had come to an end, but over the past few weeks it has all returned, maybe the reason for the fighting is different, but what we see on our televisions looks no different. We see people who arrange peaceful protests being taken over by people using different tactics, and using violence to try and get their point across. We are all aware of the Coliseum in Rome, and so will be aware of gladiators fighting each other, to the death, and gladiators fighting lions, just to show how manly they are but we are travelling back several centuries. According to verse 12; *'Abner son of Ner had taken Ish-Bosheth and made him king of Israel.'* But Abner and Joab, David's commander, (v13) met at the pool of Gibeon, one on one side, and the other on the other side of the pool, verse 14 tells us; *'Abner said to Joab, 'Let's have some of the young men get up and fight hand to hand in front of us.'* So they counted out twelve each, and verse 15 tells us; *'each man grabbed his opponent by the head and thrust his dagger into his opponents side, and they fell down together.'* Nothing changes, does it? On 28th June 1914 a Bosnian Serb nationalist shot and killed Archduke Franz Ferdinand of Austria and his wife Sophie, what followed were the deaths of 15 to 22 million military personnel and about 23 million wounded military personnel. One Bosnian Serb changed the lives of millions of people. In the First World War, commanders of both the allies and the German armies lined up against each other and with guns and bombs killed each other, and both sides just kept bringing more and more men to fight, they called them cannon fodder. That war went on for 4 years and the Second World War was similar, only that lasted six years, and the estimates of fatalities are anything from 50 to over 80 million people. Fortunately the battle we are talking about here in 2 Samuel 2 did not affect so many people in the short term, but we need to be aware that our actions will affect people we are not even aware of, so let's make sure our actions are for the positive good for mankind. According to verse 17, this was just one day, but Abner and the men of Israel were defeated by David's men. A couple of years ago my step-son gave me a book for Christmas or my birthday, I cannot remember which, it was about the battle of the Somme and it gave quite a detailed account of the battles. The rest of this chapter is similar and when we get to verse 30 we find out that David lost 19 of his men, whereas 360 Benjamites were killed. Why do we insist on fighting and killing just to show how strong we are, or how great we are. 379 people, most probably men, died in the cause. Was it their argument? Or were they just obeying orders? Verses 18-25 tell of more killing. Finally in verse 26 we read; *'Abner called*

out to Joab, 'Must the sword devour for ever? Don't you realise that this will end in bitterness? How long before you order you men to stop pursuing their brothers?' then verse 27 says; 'Joab answered, 'As surely as God lives, if you had not spoken, the men would have continued the pursuit of their brothers until morning.' And verse 28 ends; 'nor did they fight any more.' That might have been the end of it for the time being but chapter 3 begins; 'The war between the house of Saul and the house of David lasted a long time.' I know that I am eternally thankful that I was born after the end of World War 2, and that conscription had finished by the time I was old enough, therefore I never had to go to fight. I pray we can all sing this hymn. Amen.

When peace, like a river, attendeth my way,
When sorrows like sea billows roll;
Whatever my lot, you have taught me to say,
It is well, it is well with my soul.

It is well with my soul.
It is well, it is well with my soul.

Though Satan should buffet, if trials should come,
Let this blest assurance control,
That Christ has regarded my helpless estate,
And has shed His own blood for my soul.

It is well with my soul...

My sin—O the bliss of this glorious thought!—
My sin, not in part but the whole,
Is nailed to The cross, and I bear it no more,
Praise the Lord, praise the Lord, O my soul!

It is well with my soul...

For me, be it Christ, be it Christ hence to live:
If Jordan above me shall roll,
No pang shall be mine, for in death as in life
You will whisper Your peace to my soul.

It is well with my soul....

But, Lord, 'it's for You, for Your coming we wait,
The sky, not the grave, is our goal;
O trump of the angel! O voice of the Lord!
Blessed hope, blessed rest of my soul!

It is well with my soul....

And Lord, haste the day when the faith shall be sight,
The clouds be rolled back as a scroll;
The trump shall resound, and the Lord shall descend,
Even so, It is well with my soul.

It is well with my soul...