

Introduction: It's fair to say most people want to live in peace so they can love their families, friends and neighbors. They also want the freedom to do what their faith teaches them is right, good and pleasing to God (Romans 12:1-2). Jesus spoke of the blessing of happiness that is upon people who are peacemakers: they will be called the children of God (Matthew 5:9). Since this is His seventh beatitude, we may conclude He views it as the most important one. [The eighth Beatitude, the number of new beginnings, presents a new covenant truth: People who obey Jesus, by grace through faith, can expect persecution; but, in their suffering for Him, they will be blessed beyond human understanding (Romans 8:35-39; 2 Corinthians 4:6-18).] *** Children of God enjoy His great life-changing, sacrificial love (2 Corinthians 3:18; John 10:14-18) when they submit to Him in humble, dependent, obedient faith. I recommend you re-read my September, 2020 *Vestry Voices* article: 'A three-fold relationship with the Triune God', for a deeper explanation of how anyone may enjoy God's amazing love. It is on the church website [fclintonma.org/wp/ -- click on Library/Archives (on the left side of the screen), hold for Documents, then click on Vestry Voices.] *** In our passages this morning, we see David attempting to make peace with the northern tribes who were loyal to Saul's son. David showed God's love to the men of Jabesh-Gilead, in the north, for their respectful burial of Saul's body. But, typical of self-serving people, Abner, the commander of the armies of Benjamin-Israel, engaged David's nephew Joab in a battle that caused many people to die. *** In our 'Song of Ascent' Psalm, written by an anonymous Temple priest-singer-songwriter, we hear from a man of peace surrounded by violent, lying men who are for war. *** With this introduction, we are ready to look at our passages.

I. David seeks Yahweh and is anointed king over his tribe; then, he blesses the men of Jabesh-Gilead, and seeks God's love for them.
(2 Samuel 2:1-7)

- A. After David laments Saul and Jonathan, he seeks specific direction from Yahweh; then he goes to Hebron where the men of Judah anoint him as their king. (*Verses 1-4a*)
1. Then, after this, David asked of Yahweh: Will I go up to one of the cities of Judah? Then Yahweh said: You must go up. Then David said: Where will I go up? Then He said: to Hebron. (*Verse 1*)
Asked Yahweh: After David wrote his lament for Saul and Jonathan, he asks Yahweh specific questions and is told to go to Hebron. This was where Abraham settled (Genesis 13:18) and was later given to Caleb (Joshua 14:13-15). It was in Judah, twenty miles south of Benjamin.
 2. Then David went up there, and also his two wives: Ahinoam, of Jezreel and Abigail, the widow of Nabal of Carmel and his men with him; David brought up everyone of his household, then they dwelt in the villages of Hebron. (*Verses 2-3*)
Two wives: We are reminded of David's two wives. His six hundred men also accompanied him. Such a large household needed a lot of territory on the outskirts of Hebron.
 3. Then the men of Judah came, and there they anointed David king over the house of Judah. (*Verse 4a*)
People anoint: David's fellow descendants of Judah confirmed Yahweh's previous anointing of him as king by Samuel (1 Samuel 16:1-13).
- B. When David is told the men of Jabesh-Gilead buried Saul, he sends them a message of blessing, seeking God's love for them. (*Verses 4b-7*)
1. Then they told David: The men of Jabesh-Gilead buried Saul; then David sent messengers to the men of Jabesh-Gilead, he said: You-all are being blessed by Yahweh, what you-all did: this steadfast love to your lord, Saul, when you buried him. (*Verses 4b-5*)
David blesses Saul's men: Jabesh-Gilead was the first town Saul rescued from the Philistines after he was anointed king of Israel (1 Samuel 11:1-11). It was about twenty-five miles north of Saul's hometown and twenty-five miles south of where he died.
 2. Now, Yahweh will do to you-all steadfast love and truth; and also, I will certainly do to you-all this (same) goodness [which you have done. (*Verse 6*)
Love and truth: David's word to them through his messengers (angels) is an assurance that their covenant God will give them His love and truth as a reward for their love to Saul, and he strongly vows he will do the same as Yahweh's representative.
 3. Now, your hands will be strong, and you-all must be valiant because your lord Saul is dead; and, also the people of Judah have anointed me king over them. (*Verse 7*)
Invitation: After blessing them in Yahweh's name, and vowing to love them in truth, David respectfully invites them to join with the people of his tribe to also make him their king. He is seeking unity of God's people so they may all be blessed together.
- Application:** We must apply this heart of David, God's heart (1 Samuel 13:14; Acts 13:22), to ourselves, as members of the world-wide Church of Jesus Christ, to seek blessing for our brothers and sisters in Jesus, overlooking differences, especially cultural; then we will be truly unified IN Jesus as a witness to an increasingly divided world!

II. Abner makes Saul's son king over the northern tribes, then encamps twenty miles from Hebron; he is confronted by Joab and many die; a priest who is for peace is distressed to live among men who are for war. (2 Samuel 2:8-17; Psalm 120(1-7))

- A. Abner sets Saul's son as king over the northern tribes, then goes to Gibeon where Joab, David's nephew, confronts him; after twelve men from each army kill each other, many of Abner's men die. (2 Samuel 2:8-17)
1. Abner, son of Ner, the commander of Saul's army, had taken Ish-Bosheth, Saul's son, and brought him over to Mahanaim, (there) he made him king over Gilead, Ashur, Jezreel, Ephraim, Benjamin and all Israel. (*Verses 8-9*)
Abner and Ish-Bosheth: David had sought Yahweh's direction to be anointed king over Judah. Now, Abner makes a political power play to keep his position as commander of Israel's army by installing the 'man of shame', Saul's surviving son, as king over the rest of Israel, from Jerusalem to Galilee.
 2. Ish-Bosheth was forty years old when he began to reign over Israel for two years. (*Verse 10a*)
Short reign: The Author of this story reinforces the rebelliousness of Abner and Ish-Bosheth by stating he had a short reign. (More on this next week.)

3. But the house of Judah had followed after David; and, the number of days David was king in Hebron over Judah was seven years and six months. (*Verses 10b-11*)

Judah and David: From this time until the Babylonian captivity, a descendant of David, from whom the eternal King would come (2 Samuel 7:1-13) always ruled Judah. Some were good and some bad.

4. Then Abner went out and the servants of Ish-Bosheth from Mahanaim to Gibeon. (*Verse 12*)

Abner to Gibeon: This was where Yahweh made the sun stand still for Joshua (10:7-14, also written in the book of Jashsar), and was in Benjamin (Joshua 18:21-25). It was twenty miles north of Hebron.

5. Joab, son of Zeruiah, and David's servants went out to confront them at the pool of Gibeon; then they sat down together; these by the pool at this side, and those by the pool at the other side. (*Verse 13*)

Joab: This confrontation was dangerous because it could escalate to violence. Joab was David's nephew, a 'maverick', who caused David much pain. David's peace invitation is rapidly unwinding!

Sometimes invitations to peace are met with warfare

6. Then Abner said to Joab: Let the young men arise and 'sport' before us; Joab said they will arise; then they arose, numbering twelve from Benjamin ... and twelve from David's servants; then each caught his fellow (opponent) by the head and (thrust) his sword in his fellow's side; then they fell down together (dead); then they called this place 'portion (of land) of (flint) knives'. (*Verses 14-16*)

Representative battle: Representatives of each side often fought to avoid war, as David did with Goliath (1 Samuel 17); and, Israel killed many Philistines after Goliath died. Here was a bloody 'draw'! All twenty-four young men died. Things are escalating from a peace proposal to war!

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7. Then the war was very fierce that day; Abner and the men of Israel were struck down before the servants of David. (*Verse 17*)

Full scale war: We know that Yahweh was behind the devastating defeat of Abner and his men because of Abner's self-serving political act. Abner refused David's offer of peace. His confrontation led to representative 'sporting' and then to full scale war with hundreds dying!

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Application: As disciples of Jesus, we must commit to being filled with the Holy Spirit so we can be the peacemakers Jesus said are blessed to be God's children; furthermore our peacemaking tools should be words of healing and reconciliation, rather than physical force, because force always tends to escalate (2 Corinthians 10:3-6).

- B. When a worship leader cries out to Yahweh in distress over lying men prone to violence, he is answered; he desires peace, but they are for war. (*Psalms 120(1-7)*)

1. { a song of ascents } To Yahweh in my distress I have cried, / then He answered me. (*Verse 1*)

Cry to Yahweh: This song was written by one of the two-hundred-eighty-eight priests David assigned to lead worship music in the Temple (1 Chronicles 25). Speaking for God's people he says he cried to Yahweh in personal distress and was answered. This is general, and no timeframe is given.

2. Yahweh, You must deliver my soul (life) from lips of lies / from (a) deceitful tongue. (*Verse 2*)

Request: Now he gets specific: He implores the covenant God of Israel to deliver his life from those who tell falsehoods and treacherous, deceitful lies about him.

3. What will be given to you and what will be added / deceitful tongue? // The arrows of a mighty man being sharpened / with (hot, burning) coals of (a) broom-tree. (*Verses 3-4*)

Question and answer: The singer now asks the deceitful person directly what he should receive for his evil words. He answers his own question by saying he should be shot by a warrior's sharp arrows, as a useless scrub bush that is only good for fuel for a fire.

4. Woe to me because I have sojourned in Meshech / I have dwelt with the tents of Kedar // Too long I have dwelt, my soul / with those hating peace. (*Verses 5-6*)

Haters: He now mentions living as a stranger in the northern lands near the Euphrates, and then he lived with Arabs in the Sinai Peninsula in a place called darkness. Everywhere he went he encountered people who hated peace. He is weary.

5. I (am for) peace / but when I will speak / they (are for) war! (*Verse 7*)

Man of peace: The man who had traveled much before he settled into leading Temple worship declares his desire for peace. He has tried to speak diplomatically for peace, but his 'neighbors' only want war.

There is something in human nature that pushes war and violence on peace loving people!

Peace is rare and fragile

Application: We must make it a high priority to petition God for spiritual strength to persevere for peace so we are not overcome by liars and violent men hating peace (Psalm 18:30-43). As we pray, we must patiently wait for the Lord to answer in His time and His way.

Conclusion: David seeks Yahweh and is anointed king over his tribe. David then blesses the men of Jabesh-Gilead, and seeks God's love for them. Meanwhile, Abner makes Saul's son king over the northern tribes, then he encamps twenty miles from Hebron. When he is confronted by Joab, many men of Israel die. A priest who is for peace is distressed to live among men who are for war.

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We are in a spiritual battle until Jesus returns!