

Day 36 – Mar. 20

The bible seems to go out of it's way to confirm that nothing good happened in this time of Israel's history without a lot of violence and bloodshed. And indeed, it probably didn't. I hear again and again a hidden desire for a cleaned-up, G-rated, Disney-fied version of these events. But while the violence, cruelty, and gore is hard to stomach at times, it is probably still a scrubbed depiction of events. Anyone who's seen a war movie, watched a medieval drama, or heard of Game of Thrones knows that war is a violent, cruel, gory thing. And the bible is not squeamish about that part of our history.

David is finally upon the throne of Israel as well as Judah, but getting there has not been easy. Years of war with Saul's house has left the troops wounded, the commanders tired, and the country in fear. But as if channeling his father, Saul's son Ishbosheth grows ever more fearful to the point of paranoia and accuses his own general Abner of treason. Abner finally gives up any hope of good coming from Saul's line, and turns his efforts to giving David the kingship of Israel. But it is not to be, as Abner is killed by David's general not as part of the war but over a personal grievance. And against all expectation, David mourns him like a brother.

Two other leaders of Saul's raiding parties sneak in to King Ishbosheth's home and behead him, taking his head to King David as a trophy and proof of their allegiance. Proud to be the ones who have ended King Saul's line, they brag to David to win his favor. And against all expectation, David has them killed for raising a hand against the house of Saul, God's Anointed.

David keeps on acting against expectations, ours and everyone else's. And this is significant. When we follow God's law instead of human law, we will find ourselves acting against expectations. In fact, when we are truly devoted to God instead of to our own desires, we will think, believe, and behave against the expectations of those around us. We will not seek the next promotion unless God calls us to. We will not gossip about our neighbors, family members, or coworkers, nor will we want to. We will begin to see others as God sees them, and when they become as beloved to us as they are to God, we will truly live against expectations. And because we are not Kings, this may cause us difficulty or even harm. But even that won't stop us from living as God lived, seeing as God sees, and loving as God loves. Because it is God who first acts against expectations. We are simply following suit.