

2 Samuel 14, Worldly wisdom

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[0:00] So we are in 2 Samuel chapter 14 this morning, 2 Samuel chapter 14. Before I read the passage for us, let me just give a few words of introduction.

What you need to know if you're new this morning or you're visiting or here for the first time, let me tell you that we are partway through a series in the book of 2 Samuel. We had a pause for the summer holidays and we are now back in 2 Samuel.

So I haven't just picked 2 Samuel chapter 14 at random, what we try and do as a church is work our way through the Bible together, taking each passage as it comes.

Our conviction is that as the Bible is opened and explained, we experience God speaking to us because this is not just human words. This is not just what people have thought.

This is what God himself has thought. And so our pattern as a church is just to take book by book and work our way through chapter by chapter. That's the sort of the common diet, if you like, on a Sunday morning.

[1:01] But before I read this passage, and in case you're new to it, it might just be helpful for me to give you a few words of introduction. 2 Samuel is the record of King David, King of Israel.

You might have heard of King David, Israel's most famous king. And 2 Samuel is the sort of the account about how David became king, what happened while he was king, and what it was like to live in his kingdom.

There's a historical record of that. But it's a mistake to think that 2 Samuel is just history. You know, this is not written so that you could pass a GCSE history exam.

You know when you had to remember all the dates for GCSE history or that sort of thing? And it's not that. It's not written so that you might just remember what happened in a kind of, these are important facts for you to know.

No, it's not that. It's better to think that 2 Samuel, he's a preacher. And what he's doing is he's taking these historical accounts of the life of David, and he's preaching them to you, to me, that we might learn not just about King David and life in his kingdom, but that we might learn about King David's God and life in his kingdom.

[2:10] So 2 Samuel is a preacher. He's got a message for us to hear. So with that in mind, I'm going to read to you 2 Samuel chapter 14. I'm going to read the whole chapter. I'm going to try and read it a balance between not being too fast, but not so slow that we're still reading at lunchtime.

So here we go, 2 Samuel chapter 14. Joab, son of Zariah, knew that the king's heart longed for Absalom. So Joab sent someone to Tekoa and had a wise woman brought from there.

He said to her, pretend you are in mourning. Dress in mourning clothes and don't use any cosmetic lotions. Act like a woman who has spent many days grieving for the dead. Then go to the king and speak these words to him.

Joab put the words in her mouth. When the woman from Tekoa went to the king, she fell with her face to the ground to pay him honour. And she said, help me, your majesty.

The king asked her, what's troubling you? She said, I am a widow. My husband is dead. I, your servant, had two sons. They got into a fight with each other in the field and no one was there to separate them.

[3:16] One struck the other and killed him. Now the whole clan has risen up against your servant. They say, hand over the one who struck his brother down so that we may put him to death for the life of his brother whom he killed.

Then we will get rid of the heir as well. They would put out the only burning coal I have left, leaving my, sorry, leaving my husband neither name nor descendant on the face of the earth.

The king said to the woman, go home and I will issue an order on your behalf. But the woman from Tekoa said to him, let my lord the king pardon me and my family and let the king and his throne be without guilt.

The king replied, if anyone, if anyone says anything to you, bring them to me and they will not bother you again. She said, Then let the king invoke the lord his god to prevent the avenger of blood from adding to the destruction so that my son shall not be destroyed.

As surely as the lord lives, he said, not one hair of your son's head will fall to the ground. Then the woman said, Let your servant speak a word to my lord the king.

[4 : 21] Speak, he replied. The woman said, Why then have you devised a thing like this against the people of God? When the king says this, does he not convict himself? For the king has not brought back his banished son.

Like water spilled on the ground which cannot be recovered, so we must die. But that is not what God desires. Rather, he devises ways so that a banished person does not remain banished from him.

And now, I have come to say this to my lord the king because the people have made me afraid. Your servant thought, I will speak to the king.

Perhaps he will grant his servant's request. Perhaps the king will agree to deliver his servant from the hand of men who is trying to cut off both me and my son from God's inheritance. Now your servant says, May the word of my lord the king secure my inheritance.

For my lord the king is like an angel of God in discerning good and evil. May the lord your God be with you. And the king said to the woman, Do not keep from me the answer to what I am going to ask you.

[5 : 23] Let my lord the king speak, the woman said. The king asked, Isn't this the hand of Joab with you in all this? The woman answered, As surely as you live, my lord the king, no one can turn to the right or the left from anything.

My lord the king says, Yes, it was your servant Joab who instructed me to do this and who put all these words into the mouth of your servant. Your servant Joab did this to change the present situation.

My lord has wisdom like that of an angel of God. He knows everything that happens in the land. The king said to Joab, Very well, I will do it. Go, bring back the young man Absalom.

Joab fell with his face to the ground to pay him honour and he blessed the king. Joab said, Today your servant knows that he has found favour in your eyes, my lord the king, because the king has granted his servant's request.

Then Joab went to Geshurah and brought Absalom back to Jerusalem. But the king said, He must go to his own house. He must not see my face. So Absalom went to his own house and did not see the face of the king.

[6 : 25] In all Israel, there was not a man so highly praised for his handsome appearance as Absalom. From the top of his head to the sole of his foot, there was no blemish in him.

Whenever he cut the hair of his head, he used to cut his hair once a year because it became too heavy for him. He would weigh it and its weight was 200 shekels by the royal standard. Three sons and daughters were born to Absalom.

His daughter's name was Tamar and she became a beautiful woman. Absalom lived for two years in Jerusalem without seeing the king's face. Then Absalom sent for Joab in order to send him to the king, but Joab refused to come to him.

So he sent a second time, but he refused to come. Then he said to his servants, Look, Joab's field is next to mine and he has barley there. Go and set it on fire. So Absalom's servants set the field on fire.

Then Joab did go to Absalom's house and he said to him, Why have your servants set my field on fire? Absalom said to Joab, Look, I sent word to you and said, Come here so that I can send you to the king to ask, Why have I come from Geshur?

[7 : 28] It would be better for me if I were still there. Now then, I want to see the king's face and if I am guilty of anything, let him put me to death. So Joab went to the king and told him this. Then the king summoned Absalom and he came in and bowed down with his face to the ground before the king and the king kissed Absalom.

As we start this morning to look at that passage, let me ask you a question. The question I asked to the children earlier, really. If you've fallen out with somebody, what do you do?

What do you do if you've fallen out with someone? You see, it's not uncommon, is it? Relationship problems exist wherever there are people. So what is it that you do when you've fallen out with others?

When it's tense? Yes, when you can't look each other in the eye? When crosswords have been spoken and there's a barrier between you? What do you do if it's more serious than just that? What do you do if your husband or your wife has been unfaithful to you? What do you do if your parents neglected you or abused you? What do you do if you've been accused of something that you didn't do or treated unfairly at work and lost your job?

[8 : 36] What do you do if you've been racially abused or excluded because your face doesn't fit? What is it that you should do? What do you do? Now we know, don't we, those aren't hypothetical questions.

I'm not asking those to say, listen, let's enter a pretend world where those kind of things happen. No, we live in a world where those things happen all the time. They happen to all of us, don't they? How do you fix problems like that?

Well, in a way, that is the question behind 2 Samuel chapter 14. In 2 Samuel chapter 14, the background is a massive relational breakdown. It's a bad one.

It's a relationship breakdown between a son and his father. And the backstory involves rape, murder, and neglect. So this is not kind of light stuff this morning. And 2 Samuel chapter 14 is an attempt to fix the relationship breakdown between the son and his father, between Absalom and David.

But what we'll discover as we go through it is that this attempt to fix it doesn't actually work. And it doesn't work because it's founded on flawed ideas, a faulty worldly wisdom, wisdom that can never actually address the big issue in the relationship breakdown.

[9 : 50] A worldly wisdom, if you like, that is massively popular, but ultimately doesn't fix anything. Now that's the background to the story. What I want to do before we kind of get into the detail of that is I want to retell you the story of 2 Samuel chapter 14.

Don't know if you're like me, but when you hear the Bible read, sometimes it's quite difficult to follow the story. So let me retell you the story of 2 Samuel chapter 14 so that we can get it in our minds what's going on.

The relationship breakdown, as I said, is between Absalom and his father, David. So you may remember that Absalom has killed his brother, a guy called Amnon.

He didn't kill Amnon without reason, though. Amnon had raped Absalom's sister, his own half-sister, Tamar. Absalom waited two years after that event to get his revenge on Amnon.

He eventually killed him at this sheep-shearing party. He gathered all of his brothers together, said, hey, you know, I'm shearing the sheep, let's have a party. And it was really a false pretense to get Amnon in the room so that when he got him, he could kill him.

[10 : 53] And that's what he did. Following the murder, Absalom fled to his grandfather's house, his maternal grandfather's house, which was just over the northern border of Israel, where chapter 13, verse 38, tells you, just before our passage, that he was staying there for three years.

Three years in exile. And verse one of our passage tells you this morning that Joab, who is the commander of David's army, his kind of right-hand man, if you like, Joab knows that David is still thinking about that event three years later.

It's not that surprising when you think about it, is it? I think sort of relationship problems or difficulties are the most difficult thing to get out of your mind, aren't they?

And David is still chewing over this heartbreak. It's not going to pass easily. I don't think you should read chapter 14, verse one, as seeing that David is full of sympathy, though, for Absalom.

The word long is not actually there in verse one in the original. English translators have added it just to try and make the English flow a bit better. But the sense really is more that David is on Absalom.

[12 : 06] His heart is weighed down by him. He is thinking on him. David can't shake the sadness of Absalom. It's like a thing that he is carrying around, a relational pain that wakes him up at night, that is there with him in the morning, takes up that mental processing space, chewing it over and over.

And because of that, Joab, as David's right-hand man, goes, well, I'm going to help out, David. I'm going to fix that problem for him. And to accomplish his plan, he takes a woman from Tekoa, a wise woman, you're told, to come and speak to the king.

Now, Tekoa is south of Bethlehem. Bethlehem is south of Jerusalem. So it's kind of near enough for the woman to get to Jerusalem and speak to David, but it's far enough away so that her story could be made up and David wouldn't know about it.

So this nameless woman comes and speaks to David. Now, this is not unusual, right? So David as the king would listen to the complex legal cases in the kingdom.

If you had a simple case, you'd take it to the elders of your town, they would agree it for you. You know, I've parked my camel on a double yellow line. What are you going to do?

[13:18] Well, there's a ticket, right? That would be solved by them. But something more complicated, you had to take up the courts. And the highest court is the court of the king. And so this case is brought before David.

It wasn't unusual for him to listen to complex cases. But this woman's story is particularly complicated. Her husband is dead. Her two sons have got into a fight and one of them has killed the other.

Now, justice would demand that the murderer be put to death for his crime. That's what the leaders of her town were responsible for doing. And verse seven tells you that the whole clan have risen up against the woman in order to enact justice like that.

But clearly then, if they did that, it would leave this woman in a perilous position because her husband's dead, one of her sons is dead. And if the other son is killed in justice for what he has done, it would lead her with nobody to provide for her, no protector, no heir, no family line.

It would essentially leave her destitute. David listens to the woman's case and tells her in verse eight that essentially it's going to take some time to think about her case. So go home and wait for the verdict. Of course, though, there's no son, is there?

[14:25] She's not actually a desperate widow. She's there for something else. So she presses him further for an immediate answer in verse nine. So much so that David gives his verdict, telling her that her son should not die and that he has the protection of the king.

He ends up repeating the point twice just to make it super clear to her. But by verse 12, David's answer is clearly not enough because actually it's not really why the woman is there, is it? The woman has a further point to make and reveals her true agenda.

She says, you know, why if this is the case, if this is the answer you're giving me for this case, why is it that Absalom is still in exile for murdering his brother Amnon?

Why won't you bring Absalom back from his banishment? Now, it's quite clever, really, when you think about it, isn't it? The way the story is set up is clever.

It even, her story even sounds a bit like a story you might have heard in the Bible about Cain and Abel, right? When God didn't enact the death penalty against Cain for killing Abel, but instead put a mark on him so that no one would touch him.

[15:27] But however clever the story is, David sees right through her, doesn't he? He sees Joab pulling the strings in verse 19. Aha, I know why you're here, he says. This is Joab trying to fix the Absalom problem, isn't it?

So much so that she says, oh yes, you have the wisdom of an angel in verse 20 to David. You really know what's going on in your kingdom, don't you? Before in verse 21, David then speaks to Joab and says, listen, okay, bring Absalom back to Jerusalem, but he must never see my face. He's not allowed to enter the palace. He mustn't come in here. He can go to his own home. So Joab brings Absalom back to Jerusalem and for a while, everything seems as though it's going okay, but not for long because Absalom is not happy about being in Jerusalem, but not being allowed to see David's face.

So he calls Joab to tell him that he's not happy and Joab just buttons him on his mobile phone. I just ignore him. I don't ignore Absalom. So Absalom does what you do when anybody buttons you on their mobile phone.

You set fire to his crops. Yeah, that's how you get his attention. So that's what he does. And Joab goes, hang on a minute. Why are you doing that? He says, well, I called you and you didn't answer. So he comes in and says, listen, I want to see David.

[16:38] If I don't get to see David's face, I might as well be in banishment. It's like banishment by any other name. And so Joab goes to David to see if Absalom can come into his presence, which

he does at the end of the chapter as David kisses him and is seemingly at least reconciled with his oldest son and heir to the throne.

Now that is the chapter in a nutshell. Now it might seem as you just glance through it like that, that Absalom appears at the end to be reunited with David. The family seems to be stable again. And perhaps that's what Joab thought. You know, perhaps Joab's patting himself on the back going, I'm the fixer. I have nailed this right now. And that's great. But actually, as you read the story more carefully, that is not what's happening at all.

Instead, what you'll find in the story is it's hinging around this word wisdom. Okay? The woman from Tekoa, you're not given her name, but she's called a wise woman. David is called a man of wisdom in verse 20.

But what it turns out is that there is in 2 Samuel chapter 14 a kind of fatally flawed wisdom, a worldly wisdom. And I want to try and show you that.

[17 : 41] Let me try and show you that in three ways. The first thing to see is this, that worldly wisdom, the wisdom of 2 Samuel 14 uses feelings to deny truth. That's how you know that the wisdom here is not good.

Now, if you've been here for the series on 2 Samuel, then the chapter might be sort of vaguely familiar. You know, someone standing in front of King David with a made-up story trying to change his mind.

If you know the story of David and Bathsheba and the prophet Nathan coming to David to try and convict him of that sin, it might be familiar to you. That's in chapter 12. Nathan the prophet made up a story about a guy with a sheep that got killed by a rich man.

If you don't know it, you can go and look at it in chapter 12. And the similarities are clear. Both stories are trying to pull on David's knowledge of the scriptures, trying to get him to come to a certain conclusion.

Like I said before, here is the story of Cain and Abel in Genesis 4 where there's a biblical precedent for not enacting capital punishment. But despite the similarity between those two occasions, actually there's a massive difference.

[18 : 46] You see, in chapter 12, David is full of sinful passion for this woman Bathsheba. He is lustfully desirous of this beautiful woman Bathsheba.

He longs for her so much so that he takes her to himself. He sleeps with her and gets her pregnant and kills her husband. Right? And Nathan the prophet comes and tells that story to arouse David's conscience to what his feelings have led him to do which is wrong.

And here in this story, it is the opposite way round, isn't it? Here in chapter 14, David's conscience is firmly settled against Absalom which is why he's still in exile.

David in chapter 14 has been doing the right thing. David knows that Absalom has done wrong and that this premeditated killing of Amnon was a short circuit of justice. Justice which David had failed to or been unwilling at least to enact.

But still it was not to be taken on by Absalom. So for Absalom to be in exile was a fitting thing. So notice that the woman's story is trying to do the opposite of Nathan's story.

[19 : 52] The woman's story is trying to pull on David's feelings to make him do something which is wrong, untrue. The story of the sons is designed to make David pity Absalom and lead him to believe that exile is harsh or unfair.

to think that maybe it would be okay just to let Absalom off even though it wasn't. See here's the twist of worldly wisdom. You know God's wisdom sends Nathan to stop a sinner in his tracks while worldly wisdom does the opposite of that.

It seeks to short circuit justice when it feels a little harsh. You see one is an act of mercy and love. The other is an act of manipulation and self-interest.

and that's the warning to you here. The warning is that there is a kind of wisdom in the world a worldly wisdom that simply cannot handle the truth.

It can't. More specifically it can't handle the fact that the truth does not necessarily feel good all the time. Do you know what I mean? Here the truth of Absalom's exile did not feel good to David and so the worldly wisdom of human hearts seeks to change the truth in order to make it accommodate our feelings editing God's plans and God's truth accordingly.

[21 : 15] Now you don't need me to tell you now hopefully that that is exactly what the world is still doing isn't it? This is very contemporary. We live in a world of Joab's worldly wisdom don't we?

We live in a world that loves to edit truth by feelings over and over and over and over again. Think about what Jesus says in John 14 when he tells the disciples I am the way the truth and the life no one comes to the Father but by me.

You know worldly wisdom hears that goes what really? That's really the truth? No one comes to God except through the Lord Jesus Christ? Is that really right?

It doesn't feel like that does it? You mean do you mean to say that my lovely non-Christian neighbor my neighbor who's nicer than quite a lot of my Christian friends the one who looks after my cat while I'm away who took in my Amazon parcel yesterday?

You mean to say that they're going to hell? That doesn't feel right. That doesn't feel true. Just because they don't trust in Jesus? Are you sure?

[22 : 17] Surely we have to find a different reading of the word no one don't we? So worldly wisdom sets about unpicking the uniqueness of Christ because it doesn't just feel right. But 2 Samuel chapter 14 says listen beware of that worldly wisdom.

I'll give you another example can't you? What about the Bible's teaching on marriage to mean that all sexual activity outside of the marriage of a man to a woman is wrong and immoral?

I mean you really think that? You really think that? Is that how the world feels? Does that mean that loving same-sex couples or those cohabiting that all sexual activity outside of human marriage, the marriage of a man to a woman, all of that is wrong?

Are you sure? Is that really? You can't believe that. That doesn't feel right, doesn't feel loving. So we bend the truth to match what we feel. All the time we do it.

Worldly wisdom where feelings override the truth because they can't handle the truth. And so consciences are compromised. And that's why the wisdom of Joab here is never going to fix the problem because it can't face up to the truth.

[23 : 24] Second thing though here, there's a worldly wisdom which is impressed by appearances. Impressed by appearances. I think this is almost amusing here in the passage but if you notice that verses 25 and 27 are sort of out of place, aren't they?

If you look down at your Bible you'll notice that there is a strange detail here. Why in all that's happening are you told in great detail about Absalom's appearance? You are told about the weight of Absalom's hair.

Absalom cut his hair once a year and it weighed two kilograms. I mean I think these are some of the most offensive verses in the Bible. I mean I find this very difficult to accept.

Imagine having two kilos of hair. I would be grateful for a few grams of hair, right? But why is this detail in here? I mean if you look at the passage, verses 24 and 28 would go perfectly well together. The writer is putting this in. Why the interruption? Well I think because they're another example of the fact that there's a twist on wisdom here. If you jump back a few pages in your Bible to 1 Samuel chapter 16 you'll notice this why.

[24 : 29] So just over a few pages back to 1 Samuel chapter 16. This is when David is chosen to be king in 1 Samuel chapter 16. 1 Samuel chapter 16 verse 6.

It will come on the slide behind me as well. Let me read those verses to you. When they arrived, Samuel who's the prophet saw Eliab and thought surely the Lord's anointed stands here before the Lord.

But the Lord said to Samuel do not consider his appearance or his height for I have rejected him. The Lord does not look at the things people look at. People look at the outward appearance but the Lord looks at the heart.

When Samuel was going to anoint David as king he was really impressed by his brothers. They're tall, handsome, got a great voice, luscious hair.

Surely, surely this is who God wants to be king. And God says no, you're looking at it as man looks at it. I am looking at the heart. Now you come back to 2 Samuel chapter 14.

[25 : 30] Don't you see that this is an exact example of that kind of worldly wisdom? That's what's happening here. The narrator is telling us that Israel are doing the opposite of what God does. God looks at the heart. Israel are impressed with two kilos of hair.

It's really laid on thick as well, isn't it, in verse 25. In Israel, there was not a man so highly praised for his handsome appearance as Absalom. From the top of his head to the sole of his foot, there was no blemish in him. That's one good-looking guy, isn't it?

There is not a guy in the room who matches up to that. But the heart of Absalom, which we have seen and will see again, is selfish and arrogant, opposed to David and opposed to the Lord. There's more than this as well.

I think you can probably make a pretty good case that hairy men in the Bible and Samson. Perhaps the writer had them in mind. It's also, though, a point of forward to how Absalom will die.

You don't know how Absalom dies. I'm not going to give it away to you. You can have to read on in 2 Samuel, but it is connected to his hair. That will come in a few weeks. There's also something here as the mention of three sons and a beautiful daughter called Tamar.

[26 : 34] Tamar is given the same name as his sister who was attacked in chapter 13. It's a sign, I think, that those events are still fresh in Absalom's mind. By the time you get to chapter 18, you find that Absalom has no heir, by which I think you're to presume that his sons, his three sons, have died.

You see, here's the point. Worldly wisdom would rather look good than do the right thing. That's the point, isn't it? Worldly wisdom would rather swap deep truth for shallow appearance.

So much so that murder in 2 Samuel chapter 14 is covered by good looks, by glorious locks of hair and stunning good looks. And it happens all the time, doesn't it?

It's why kind of wicked and deceitful politicians can still get a really popular following because we would rather work on appearances than we would on what is right.

But notice that this appearance over reality is absolutely no help in the face of relational breakdown. Absalom's good looks are never going to atone for the fact that he's killed his brother.

[27 : 37] The royal photos will look miles better with Absalom in them, right? Because he's the best looking guy in the family. But the relational tension will not go away. It's still there. You see, Joab's worldly wisdom really can only ever tell David and Absalom, listen, I know that you guys have got a problem with each other, but can't you just fake it?

Can't we just take a selfie and smile, post it on Instagram, everyone will think we're all right? Can we just do that? You'll look great. You'll look great. Let's do it. It has no other option.

Listen, I want you to face this this morning. Think back to how we started. The wisdom of the world has nothing to offer you in the face of the relational breakdown that you feel and experience every single day of your life.

It has nothing to offer you because there's a price for every relational breakdown, isn't there?

Justice is demanded by Absalom's murder of Amnon.

For a wife to reconcile with an unfaithful husband, for a brother to forgive his sister who has hurt him, there is a hurt that needs to be absorbed. There is a truth that needs to be dealt with.

[28 : 44] There is the fact that something has been done wrong. Someone has abused you, mistreated you, looked over you because of the color of your skin.

There is a price to be paid for. Justice is demanded because of that. And all the world can say to you is, smile, let's take a nice looking selfie and everything will be okay. It has nothing to offer you when it comes to justice.

All they can do is fake it and pretend it's okay. So it leaves you with nowhere to take the ache, the tears, the pain. Joab says, listen, I know it's difficult but it looks good, doesn't it?

But it doesn't deal with a problem. Which brings us to the final point this morning which is this, worldly wisdom ignores God's king. What you cannot help but miss in these chapters is that great King David is basically a passenger.

David in 2 Samuel 14 is the one who's not doing anything. Joab is kind of captain of the ship. He's manipulating David with this woman at Tekoa. Absalom is then manipulating Joab going as far as burning his crops to get his own wear.

[29 : 54] Interestingly, in the passage, the only mention really of the Lord as well is in his relationship to David. David is like an angel of the Lord in verse 17 and verse 20. And he's recognized in verse 16 as the holder of the covenant heritage of God.

But for all that, David in chapter 14 is not leading. He's not being kingly. He's not being listened to. Worldly wisdom is leading the way in chapter 14. The king is silent.

That should be a kind of pointer to you that not all is well in chapter 14. But let me show you something brilliant about this. If you've zoned out for a moment, just tune back in because this is, I think, the brilliance of 2 Samuel chapter 14.

You and I are reading this account probably three and a half thousand years or so after it happened. You and I know, don't we, that God's king is not really King David. King David is, if you like, a prototype, a type of the real king of God's people who is the Lord Jesus Christ, the one who is the ultimate person who has a good heart, yeah, a heart after the Lord because he is God in flesh, God the eternal son come down, born as a baby, living, dying for us.

So we know that, don't we? So think of a time then when, when God's real king, God's king Jesus is a passenger of worldly wisdom in the same way as 2 Samuel chapter 14.

[31 : 16] Can you think of a time when King Jesus, the real king of God's people is treated like David where he's manipulated and twisted and pushed into doing all sorts of things?

Can you think of a time like that? Do you see the Jewish leaders and the Roman rulers and the puppet kings conspire to drag King Jesus out of Jerusalem and nail him to a cross?

I don't think that's the ultimate victory of worldly wisdom. That is the ultimate victory of feelings tripping over justice. We're jealous of this man Jesus. Let's put him to death.

This is appearances winning over hearts, isn't it? Jesus is naked and bleeding and mocked by the people. I don't want anything to do with him. He looks terrible. What is going on when that happens to the Lord Jesus?

Let me tell you something fantastic. In that moment when worldly wisdom seems to be winning, what you are witnessing is the wisdom of God in providing atonement for relational breakdown.

[32 : 19] That's what you're seeing. So much so that the worldly wisdom of the crowd that nails Jesus to a cross of shame does not defeat Jesus but glorifies him. As in his sacrifice on the cross he is providing the means for relational forgiveness and atonement.

Not so much to be able to bring Absalom back from exile with his grandfather but bringing sinners back from exile into relationship with the God who made them so that people like you and I who have sinned against God and fallen out with him and broken our relationship with him might be brought back into relationship with the God who made us through the atoning power of Jesus on the cross.

Even at the point when he was a passenger of worldly wisdom. Jesus dying in our place paying the cost of justice facing up to the hard truth.

This is the very definition of not putting appearances above truth and reality as Jesus the bleeding dying suffering one naked on a tree is the most beautiful wonderful and glorious saviour.

It's hard to capture this but try with me if you can in the face of the tragic relationships in 2 Samuel chapter 14 all Joab can do is fake it and cover it over. He just can't go deep enough to solve the problem between Absalom and his father David.

[33 : 43] He had no means to provide justice for Absalom's wickedness and reconciliation for David's love. All he had was shallow solutions for deep problems and it's always the way in the world.

The worldly wisdom will take in the face of the relationship problems that we all suffer from the world will just say oh just forget about it. Just go on a nice holiday buy yourself something new pretend it doesn't happen but you know it doesn't work and you know it doesn't work because you still wake up thinking about them it's still chewing you up inside.

But then in the great triumph of God's glorious wisdom Jesus dies on the cross seemingly the victim of this kind of fake it and cover it up world but he hangs there because the Jewish leaders were so jealous of him but in those moments as Jesus breathes his last he accomplishes relational harmony not only between God and men but between brothers and sisters men and women as he provides the means for us to forgive one another.

1 Corinthians chapter 1 verse 25 puts it like this because the foolishness of God is wiser than human wisdom and the weakness of God is stronger than human strength.

Here's the point as simply as I can try and put it this morning relationship breakdown comes with a price a cost a justice. So with us and God if you're not a Christian you will never know the God who made you without coming through the only one who can pay the price for your reconciliation.

[35 : 15] That remains true even when you're a Christian and it's true also in our relationships with one another. That only Christ has the resources for you to forgive another. Only Christ can offer you the deep solution because only he has the capital if you like to pay the price for justice and truth.

Perhaps this morning you know that there is someone that you've fallen out with. Maybe it's a small maybe it's a petty matter or maybe it's a really big deal maybe it's as big as Absalom and David

here.

What do you do? Let me say to you the only thing you can do is come to the Lord Jesus Christ and find in him all the resources that you need for forgiveness and grace so that you can move towards another person and say with genuineness without covering everything over with genuineness you can say to them I forgive you I love you because Jesus has paid the price of justice that our relationship reconciliation requires and he did it on the cross.

And maybe in some of these situations reconciliation like that won't be possible because the other person won't speak to you or won't engage with it. What comfort is there then? Well you know don't you you and I live in a world where the wisdom of God can take the worldly wisdom the folly of man and use it to accomplish his great purposes.

So you don't need to be afraid you need to trust the Lord and press on because in this world God can be trusted even to accomplish his great purposes through the tragedy of our worldly twisted wisdom.

[37 : 01] Let's pray together as we close. Let me just leave a bit of quiet for you to pray in your own hearts. Maybe come to the Lord with a situation or a problem that's troubling you.

Thank the Lord that he alone has the resources to help you face it. Heavenly Father we want to say thank you for Jesus.

Thank you that in Jesus we can face truth and reality and find grace and mercy resources to forgive one another reconciliation with you.

Thank you that in the end the twisted worldly wisdom of 2 Samuel chapter 14 does not win but your wisdom is stronger than the wisdom of man.

thank you that your weakness is stronger than our greatest power. So thank you that we can trust you and turn to you. Our Lord please we pray might we be a church that love one another because we find the resources for loving one another in the Lord Jesus Christ and his work for us on the cross.

[38 : 37] In his name we pray. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.