Recap of 3/22/26 message by Steve Plank
("God's Plan Prevails) 2 Samuel 17:15 – 18:18:

God is not yet done with David; He is still working to preserve David's throne. The sons of Abiathar and Zadok warn him to cross the Jordan river as soon as possible. David crosses and makes his way to Mahanaim. He still has many friends in Israel. Men come to join his army which has grown from about 600 to some thousands. Others provide food and supplies.

Absalom, following the advice of Hushai instead of Ahithophel, gathers a large force and pursues. David divides his army into three parts under the command of Joab, Abishai, and Ittai. He gives orders to "deal gently" with Absalom for David's sake. Understandably, David is averse to grieving another child's death, regardless of what Absalom has done. David's forces are victorious and a common soldier encounters Absalom stuck in a tree. He is unwilling to harm Absalom against the king's wishes. Joab has no such compunction. He and his armor bearers kill Absalom, thus ending the coup.

Ahithophel, distraught because his advice is not followed, puts his house in order and takes his own life. Suicide is mentioned several times in the Bible, and it is always seen as an act of desperation or overwhelming guilt. Roman culture considered death an escape, freedom from despair. As Christ followers, we understand that death is an enemy, the result of sin. Freedom is found in Jesus Christ alone. Though we should not fear death, we ought never seek it.

Because suicide stems from hopelessness, Jesus, our living hope, is the antidote. Ask God to open our eyes to hopelessness so we can introduce those people to Jesus, in whom they will find reason to live. This may include reminding our brothers and sisters in Christ of who they are in Him.

If we are the ones battling hopelessness, we must not isolate. Instead, double our efforts to get and stay connected to our church family. Abide in the love of God by following His commands. Draw close to Him; it is always a place of joy, hope, and peace.