

The Kindness of the King

Text: 2 Samuel 2

Introduction: Imagine a man who ascends to the throne of his nation despite seemingly insurmountable odds. He's not a descendant of the current king, so he has no claim to the throne based on lineage. In fact, he's just a shepherd boy who doesn't even look like a king. But through a series of remarkable events, his reputation grows. He becomes a warrior, fighting the nation's battles and winning great victories.

All of this makes the current king deeply jealous. This young man, who didn't look like a king at all, begins to look more like a king every day. The people sing his praises instead of the king's. So, the king decides that the only way to stop him is to kill him.

So, the king sets out to do just that. But the king's evil plots are thwarted at every turn. Until one day when the king takes his own life because he's afraid of what his enemies might do to him if they capture him alive.

Now, the throne is vacant. Who will rule? This man? Or a descendant of the king? Initially, it's both. The man becomes king of a portion of the nation, while the king's son becomes king of the rest of the nation. This arrangement continues for several years until the son is murdered. At this point, the man becomes king of all the nation.

But what kind of king will he be? Conventional wisdom would say now that he has ascended to the throne of the entire nation, he should wipe out his political opponents and eliminate any potential threats to his reign. But what would a king who is committed to justice and equity do? That's the kind of king this man is.

That brings us to our text this morning. If you've been with us on our journey through 1 and 2 Samuel, you know that this man, this king, is David. In 2 Samuel 9, David discovers that there is a remaining descendant of Saul. And as a king who, as we saw last week, is committed to justice and equity, David shows him the kindness of the Lord.

We're in 2 Samuel 9. Go ahead and turn there in your Bible if you haven't already. It's on page 243 in the black pew Bible in front of you. If you don't own a Bible, we encourage you to take the pew Bible with you when you leave.

(Read 2 Samuel 9...Pray)

In 2 Samuel 9, we're going to see that **God's gracious King invites the shamed and outcast to dine at His table.**

The king in 2 Samuel 9 is David, and we see first that...

I. The King remembers the Lord's kindness (2 Sam 9:1-4).

A. Now, think about where we've been over the last few chapters of 2 Samuel.

1. David became king of all Israel in chapter 5.
2. He brought the ark of God to Jerusalem in chapter 6.
3. He sought to build a house for God in chapter 7, but instead, God promised to make David a house.
4. And in chapter 8, we saw kind of a summary of David's reign as king. He defeated Israel's enemies. He acquired land and wealth for Israel. And he administered justice and equity to all his people.
5. Now, as we come to chapter 9, the author of 2 Samuel zooms in on this one occasion from the reign of David. And in doing so, he passes over much from David's reign. There are undoubtedly many things from David's reign that the author could have chosen to tell us about. But he chooses this because of its theological significance.

B. Look at the question that David asks in verse 1. (Read vs.1)

1. Many of the key people from Saul's house are dead at this point. Saul died. His son Jonathan died. Saul's sons Abinadab and Malchi-shua are also dead. Abner, the commander of Saul's army, is dead. Saul's son Ish-bosheth is dead.

2. It's reasonable for David to wonder, "Is there still anyone left of the house of Saul?" (vs. 1a).
 3. But why does David want to know? Perhaps because anyone left of the house of Saul might be considered a threat to David and his kingdom. That would be the most logical reason why David would ask a question like this.
 - a. Self-protection and even perhaps vengeance.
 - b. Saul had tried to kill David on numerous occasions.
 - c. Ish-bosheth had prevented David from becoming king of all Israel.
 - d. If there's someone else left from the house of Saul, they might try to lay claim to the throne.
 - e. And even if not, this is David's opportunity to enact vengeance upon Saul's house for all the trouble that Saul and his house had caused him.
 4. But what does David say? Why does he want to know if there is still anyone left of the house of Saul? Look at the text. (Read vs. 1)
 5. Jonathan was Saul's son, but he was also David's best friend. They loved each other. In fact, they made a covenant with one another in 1 Samuel 18. And in chapter 20, Jonathan said to David, "If I am still alive, show me the steadfast love of the LORD, that I may not die; and do not cut off your steadfast love from my house forever, when the LORD cuts off every one of the enemies of David from the face of the earth" (1 Sam. 20:14-15).
 6. Even Saul had said to David in 1 Samuel 24, "Swear to me therefore by the LORD that you will not cut off my offspring after me, and that you will not destroy my name out of my father's house" (1 Sam. 24:21). And the text says that "David swore this to Saul" (1 Sam. 24:22).
 7. David is undoubtedly remembering both his promise to Saul and his promise to Jonathan as he asks, "Is there still anyone left of the house of Saul, that I may show him kindness for Jonathan's sake?"
 8. The keyword in David's question is the word that is translated "kindness." The word in Hebrew is *hesed*. It's the word that Jonathan used in 1 Samuel 20 when he said to David, "Show me the steadfast love of the LORD" (1 Sam. 20:14). One commentator notes that *hesed* is "mercy, kindness shown toward one in need by one with the power to help, but not necessarily with any obligation to help" (Woodhouse, 610.)
 9. David is not asking his question in verse 1 out of obligation. He's the king. He doesn't have any obligation to the house of Saul. But he desires to show the kindness of the Lord to Saul's house for Jonathan's sake.
 10. I love what John Woodhouse says about David's question. He says it "indicates: (a) David's faithfulness to his word to Jonathan (this was a king who kept his promises); (b) the kind of king he intended to be (this was a king who showed kindness); (c) something of the very character of God (this king was like God himself in his kindness)" (Woodhouse, 258).
- C. So, David has asked his question, and now, beginning in verse 2, we're told about a servant of the house of Saul named Ziba.
1. They brought him to David, and David asked him, "Are you Ziba?" And Ziba responded, "I am your servant" (vs. 2).
 2. Now, you can imagine what all must have been going through Ziba's mind at the time. Why has he been summoned by the king? This can't be good. He likely doesn't know yet about the whole kindness thing. He was a servant of the house of Saul. Does David intend to enact vengeance on the house of Saul through Ziba? Ziba doesn't yet know. But I imagine he was fearing the worst as we all likely would in such a situation.
 3. But look at what David said next in verse 3. (Read vs. 3a)
 4. To which Ziba responded, "There is still a son of Jonathan; he is crippled in his feet" (vs. 3b).

5. You have to wonder what was going through Ziba's mind. Did he believe David's stated intention of showing the kindness of God, so he told him about Jonathan? Or was he just truthfully answering the question he was asked out of fear for his own life? We don't really know.
6. We do know, as we'll discover later in 2 Samuel, that Ziba was not telling David the whole truth about Saul's house. There were other surviving members of Saul's family. The impression given to David is that Jonathan's son was the only one left of Saul's household.
7. Perhaps Ziba's mention of this son of Jonathan's disability was intended to communicate to David that he was not a threat to David's kingdom just in case that was actually what David was concerned about.
8. After hearing of this living son of Jonathan, David asked, "Where is he?" (vs. 4a).
9. To which Ziba responded, "He is in the house of Machir the son of Ammiel, at Lo-debar" (vs. 4b).
10. Again, we don't know if Ziba believe David's stated intentions, but if David actually intended harm to the house of Saul, Ziba just sold-out Jonathan's son and the man Machir with whom he was living.
11. I want you to note the name of the city where this son of Jonathan was living. Lo-debar. It was a location on the east side of the Jordan River, perhaps not far from Mahanaim. The name likely means "no pasture." We can't say for certain, but it seems that perhaps the name of the place where this son of Jonathan is located is intended to communicate the situation in which he finds himself. He's a descendant of King Saul, but he finds himself far from Jerusalem, the seat of King David's government.
12. And not only that, but he is wholly dependent on this man Machir with whom he is living because he is crippled in his feet.

But something is going on here. David is up to something. The King remembers the Lord's kindness. Next, we see that...

II. The King promises the Lord's kindness (2 Samuel 9:5-8).

- A. The text tells us in verse 5 that David sent and brought the son of Jonathan to Jerusalem.
 1. But that's not exactly how the biblical author says it, is it? Look at verse 5. (Read vs. 5) The emphasis at this point is on where David brought him FROM rather than where he is bringing him TO.
 2. Without giving away too much too early, but to go ahead and get you thinking in the right direction with regard to 2 Samuel 9, this ought to make us think about from where our King has brought us. The Apostle Paul writes in Ephesians 2, "And you were dead in the trespasses and sins in which you once walked, following the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience—among whom we all once lived in the passions of our flesh, carrying out the desires of the body and the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, like the rest of mankind" (Eph. 2:1-3). As you can see, our situation was much worse even than this son of Jonathan who has been residing in a borrowed home in Lo-debar.
 3. But David brings him to Jerusalem, and the text says, "And Mephibosheth the son of Jonathan, son of Saul, came to David and fell on his face and paid homage" (vs. 6a).
 - a. We talked about how Ziba might have felt about being summoned by King David. Think about how this son of Jonathan might have felt.
 - b. He probably doesn't know about his father's covenant with David. He was too young when Jonathan died for his father to have told him about it.
 - c. But he probably does know that there had been conflict between David and the house of Saul.

- d. And now David is king. And King David has summoned him. Surely, he wonders what David's intentions are for him.
- e. But despite whatever trepidation he might have felt, we see here that he came before David, fell on his face, and paid homage. This was an appropriate response for someone coming before the king.

- 4. And how did David respond? "Mephibosheth!" (vs. 6b). He called him by name. We only have text. We don't have an audio recording. But I don't think it was "Mephibosheth!" (with a strong guttural sound to it). I think it was "Mephibosheth!" (with an excited tone).
- 5. To which Mephibosheth responded, "I am your servant" (vs. 6c). He submitted to David as king.
- 6. Mephibosheth had to be still unsure of the whole situation. What will David do? What are his intentions? This was undoubtedly a tense moment in the heart and mind of Mephibosheth.

B. But then David speaks again in verse 7. (Read vs. 7)

- 1. David first says, "Do not fear" (vs. 7a).
 - a. This is significant because it reminds us of other times in the Bible where the words "Do not fear" or "Do not be afraid" are spoken to someone who seemingly has every reason to be afraid.
 - b. Perhaps the most prominent instance of these words being spoken to someone in the Bible is when the angel Gabriel appeared to Mary to announce that she would give birth to the Messiah (Lk. 1:30).
 - c. And then again when the angels appeared to the shepherds to announce the birth of Jesus, they said, "Fear not" (Lk. 2:10).
 - d. After His resurrection, Jesus told the women who came to His tomb, "Do not be afraid" (Matt. 28:10).
 - e. Mephibosheth is instructed here not to be afraid because he is about to experience the kindness of the Lord through His anointed King.

- f. And I want to say to you this morning, Christian, do not be afraid. You too are a recipient of the kindness of the Lord through His anointed King. Whatever you are facing in your life, do not be afraid. Trust in the kindness of the Lord to you.

- 2. We see here that David makes three promises to Mephibosheth.
 - a. First, "I will show you kindness for the sake of your father Jonathan" (vs. 7b).
 - b. Second, "I will restore to you all the land of Saul your father" (vs. 7b).
 - c. And third, "You shall eat at my table always" (vs. 7c).
- 3. All three promises are significant. Mephibosheth had not done anything to earn or deserve David's kindness. Rather, it was for the sake of his father Jonathan. Woodhouse notes, "It is not unusual for promises in the Bible to be 'for the sake of' something greater than and beyond the one who receives the promised kindness" (Woodhouse, 261). In fact, the kindness we have received from the Lord is not because of anything we have done to earn or deserve it. It is for the sake of Jesus because through faith, His righteousness has been credited to our account.
- 4. The promise of the land did not mean the land over which Saul had ruled. Rather it was the personal, private land possessed by Saul.
- 5. But the promise that should really stand out to us here is the promise "And you shall eat at my table always." This promise is repeated a few more times before the end of the chapter. This is more than mere physical provision. This is relationship. David invites Mephibosheth to eat at his table.
- 6. Mephibosheth responds in verse 8. (Read vs. 8)

7. You can imagine how overcome with gratitude Mephibosheth must have felt. He understood that he didn't deserve David's kindness. He called himself a "dead dog." He doesn't say, "It's about time you figured out how important I am, David. I'm the grandson of Saul. You owe me your kindness." No, he understands very clearly that David doesn't owe him anything. All that David is now promising to him is an act of grace.
8. Goshen, this is a picture of how we must come to Jesus. We can't come to Jesus thinking that we are deserving of His kindness. No, we are like dead dogs. We, because of our sin, don't deserve anything that God would give to us except His wrath. Yet, in His great mercy and grace, He has chosen to extend His kindness to us in the person of His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. And to receive His kindness, we must humble ourselves before Him as Mephibosheth does before David here in verse 8 of 2 Samuel 9.

We've seen that the King remembers the Lord's kindness. And He promises the Lord's kindness. Finally, let's see that...

III. The King extends the Lord's kindness (2 Samuel 9:9-13).

- A. First, we see that David made arrangements through Ziba to ensure that Mephibosheth's needs were met (vs. 9-12). (Read vs. 9-12)
 1. David puts his good intentions toward Mephibosheth into action.
 2. He gives Mephibosheth his grandfather's farmland just as he promised. But of course, Mephibosheth is in no position to work the land. He was lame in both his feet. So, David instructs Ziba and his family to work the land on Mephibosheth's behalf and ensure that Mephibosheth's needs are met.
- B. But it's more than that, isn't it?

1. We already saw in verse 7 that David promises, "And you shall eat at my table always." Now, in verse 10 we read, "But Mephibosheth your master's grandson shall always eat at my table." Then verse 11, "So Mephibosheth ate at David's table, like one of the king's sons." And verse 13, "So Mephibosheth lived in Jerusalem, for he ate always at the king's table."
2. Do you see that? Mephibosheth is treated like a royal son. In the world's eyes, Mephibosheth is a nobody from nowhere with nothing to offer. And David treats him like a son. He invites him in. He welcomes him to eat at his table.
3. I'm reminded of the parable Jesus told in Luke 14 that was read for us during our Scripture reading this morning. A man gave a great banquet, but everyone he invited determined that they had more important things to do than attend the man's banquet. So, what did he do? He said to his servant, "Go out quickly to the streets and lanes of the city, and bring in the poor and crippled and blind and lame." The servant followed his master's instruction, but there was still room. So, the master said, "Go out to the highways and hedges and compel people to come in, that my house may be filled."
4. The parable is a picture, brothers and sisters, of the way we must come to the Lord Jesus. If we think we've got it all together. If we think we are self-sufficient on our own. If we think that God would be lucky to have us. We'll never come to Jesus as He requires of us. In humility. In repentance. In faith. But if we see ourselves as spiritually poor and crippled and blind and lame, then we're right where God wants us. Ready to receive His extravagant mercy and grace and kindness to us in Jesus.
5. Once we recognize ourselves as spiritually poor and crippled and blind and lame and wholly dependent on Jesus, this has massive implications for our ministry to others, doesn't it?

6. **See, David's actions here in chapter 9 toward Mephibosheth flow out of his commitment to justice and equity that we talked about last week. Chapter 9 is not what we would expect from someone of David's stature, but it's a picture of Jesus and His care for those who are shamed and outcast. And as we seek to follow Jesus, it's a picture of how we ought to think of those in society who are shamed and outcast. If God's anointed welcomes those who are shamed by the world, then we must do so as well.**

Conclusion: In 2 Samuel 9, David is not merely fulfilling the letter of his promise to Jonathan. Mephibosheth is not merely tolerated. He's not just given provisions. He's invited into a relationship with David. Eating is a powerful symbol of friendship. That was true then, and it's still true today (Chester, 82).

The beauty of the gospel is that Jesus does not merely tolerate us. He invites us into a relationship of intimacy and friendship. And He has given us a powerful picture of that in the Lord's Supper. See, David invited Mephibosheth to dine at his table. And in doing so, he pictured what His greater Son Jesus would do in establishing the Lord's Supper meal whereby we are invited to dine at Christ's table. Jesus says to us this morning, "Eat at my table."

Not because we deserve to eat at His table. We don't. We are spiritually poor and crippled and blind and lame. But that's the point. God extends His mercy and grace and kindness to us in Christ.

God's gracious King invites the shamed and outcast to dine at His table.