

This morning we are continuing to go through the Life of David as recorded in 1 & 2 Samuel. To briefly recap the past few weeks: King Saul is dead. After 20 years in the wilderness, running for his life, David has returned to Israel to become the next king. David has put the Philistines in their place, he has united north and south into one kingdom, established Jerusalem as the capital city, and brought the ark of the covenant back. God reigns in Israel again, and all is good for David. He finally has peace. In chapter 7, God even promised to establish an everlasting kingdom through his descendants, which will be fulfilled in Jesus, the eternal King. We skipped over Chapter 8, which was an account of some of David's military victories. Let's pick it up in chapter 9:

**2 Samuel 9:1-13** - *David asked, "Is there anyone still left of the house of Saul to whom I can show **kindness** for Jonathan's sake?"* <sup>2</sup> *Now there was a servant of Saul's household named Ziba. They called him to appear before David, and the king said to him, "Are you Ziba?" "Your servant," he replied.* <sup>3</sup> *The king asked, "Is there no one still left of the house of Saul to whom I can show God's **kindness**?"* *Ziba answered the king, "There is still a son of Jonathan; he is crippled in both feet."* <sup>4</sup> *"Where is he?" the king asked. Ziba answered, "He is at the house of Makir son of Ammiel in Lo Debar."* <sup>5</sup> *So King David had him brought from Lo Debar, from the house of Makir son of Ammiel.* <sup>6</sup> *When Mephibosheth son of Jonathan, the son of Saul, came to David, he bowed down to pay him honor. David said, "Mephibosheth!" "Your servant," he replied.* <sup>7</sup> *"Don't be afraid," David said to him, "for I will surely show you **kindness** for the sake of your father Jonathan. I will restore to you all the land that belonged to your grandfather Saul, and you will always eat at my table."* <sup>8</sup> *Mephibosheth bowed down and said, "What is your servant, that you should notice a dead dog like me?"* <sup>9</sup> *Then the king summoned Ziba, Saul's servant, and said to him, "I have given your master's grandson everything that belonged to Saul and his family."* <sup>10</sup> *You and your sons and your servants are to farm the land for him and bring in the crops, so that your master's grandson may be provided for. And Mephibosheth, grandson of your master, will always eat at my table." (Now Ziba had fifteen sons and twenty servants.)* <sup>11</sup> *Then Ziba said to the king, "Your servant will do whatever my lord the king commands his servant to do." So Mephibosheth ate at David's table **like one of the king's sons.*** <sup>12</sup> *Mephibosheth had a young son named Mica, and all the members of Ziba's household were servants of Mephibosheth.* <sup>13</sup> *And Mephibosheth lived in Jerusalem, because he always ate at the king's table, and he was crippled in both feet.*

This passage highlights a short but powerful incident in David's life between David and a man named Mephibosheth. To best understand this passage, I want to answer three questions: **who is Mephibosheth? What does David give him? And**

**why does he give it to him?** And then we'll look at what this story has to do with our lives today.

### Who is Mephibosheth?

We first read about Mephibosheth in 2 Samuel 4, after his grandfather Saul and father Jonathan have been killed in battle:

*2 Samuel 4:4 - Jonathan son of Saul had a son who was lame in both feet. He was five years old when the news about Saul and Jonathan came from Jezreel. His nurse picked him up and fled, but as she hurried to leave, he fell and became crippled. His name was Mephibosheth.*

So at the age of 5, Mephibosheth was crippled when his nurse dropped him as they ran away in fear after the death of King Saul. Since that day, we find out in this passage that he was living with a random person in a place called Lo Debar, a Hebrew phrase which translates as “no pasture” in English. You can surmise that perhaps he was living in this remote place out of fear that the new regime would take his life. Maybe he had been told that David was the enemy, the reason his father and grandfather were dead. So maybe you can imagine how he would have felt when Ziba told him that the king wanted to see him.

### What does David give him?

What do you think Mephibosheth would have been expected to happen when he was called before King David? In those days, it was common for a new king to consolidate power and ensure the security of his position by wiping out any opposition, anyone who belonged to the previous king's line, anyone who might be a contender to the throne. I believe that when David sends for Mephibosheth, he would have certainly expected to be killed.

But David does not kill him.

<sup>6</sup> *When Mephibosheth son of Jonathan, the son of Saul, came to David, he bowed down to pay him honor. David said, "Mephibosheth!" "Your servant," he replied. <sup>7</sup> "Don't be afraid," David said to him, "for I will surely show you **kindness** for the sake of your father Jonathan. I will restore to you all the land that belonged to your grandfather Saul, and you will always eat at my table."* <sup>8</sup> *Mephibosheth bowed down and said, "What is your servant, that you should notice a dead dog like me?"*

David does not kill Mephibosheth. He tells him not to be afraid. And then he goes way beyond simply sparing his life. He **provides** for his needs by restoring his land and ordering Ziba and his family to farm the land for him so that he will always have food to eat. He **protects** him by declaring that he will always eat at the king's table. And he gives him an elevated **position**. In v. 11, it says that Mephibosheth ate at David's table like one of the king's sons. It is as if David, instead of killing Mephibosheth, has **adopted** him into His royal family. Instead of killing him, David gives Mephibosheth provision, protection, and position.

### Why does David do this?

There is a word that shows up three times in this passage, translated as kindness in v. 1, 3, 7. It is the very important Hebrew word *Hesed*. What is *hesed*? Covenantal love. Steadfast, loyal love, marrying both intimacy and unswerving commitment. It's the covenantal love that God has for His people. And it's the covenantal love that David and Jonathan, Mephibosheth's father, had for each other. Remember that after David killed Goliath:

*1 Samuel 18:3-4 - And Jonathan made a covenant with David because he loved him as himself. <sup>4</sup> Jonathan took off the robe he was wearing and gave it to David, along with his tunic, and even his sword, his bow and his belt.,*

Jonathan recognized God's anointing on David, and gave him his robe and sword. He was essentially laying down his rights to be the next king and offering his allegiance to David. And they made covenants with each other:

*1 Samuel 20:14-15 - But show me unfailing kindness like that of the LORD as long as I live, so that I may not be killed, <sup>15</sup> and do not ever cut off your kindness from my family-- not even when the LORD has cut off every one of David's enemies from the face of the earth."*

*1 Samuel 20:42 - Jonathan said to David, "Go in peace, for we have sworn friendship with each other in the name of the LORD, saying, 'The LORD is witness between you and me, and between your descendants and my descendants forever.'" Then David left, and Jonathan went back to the town.*

They had committed to show love and kindness to each other and to each other's descendants, no matter what happened. And so, for the sake of Jonathan, David brings Mephibosheth into his royal house, adopting him as one of his own.

**Nice story, you say. But what does it have to do with me? Everything.**

## 1) This story points us to the gospel of God's hesed towards us

Mephibosheth was born into a royal line. But he lost that place and lived crippled, as a potential enemy of the king. But the King, instead of treating him as an enemy and killing him, brought him in as one of his own, adopting him as a child, providing what he needed and protecting him. Why? Because David had a friend named Jonathan who gave up his throne so that David could have it.

Our story is more similar than you may think. Like Mephibosheth, we should have been children of the King, but we lost our status through the sin of our ancestors, and now are morally crippled, exiled from God's royal family, unable to bring ourselves back to the King.

***Ephesians 2:1-5** As for you, you were dead in your transgressions and sins, <sup>2</sup> in which you used to live when you followed the ways of this world and of the ruler of the kingdom of the air, the spirit who is now at work in those who are disobedient. <sup>3</sup> All of us also lived among them at one time, gratifying the cravings of our sinful nature and following its desires and thoughts. Like the rest, we were by nature objects of wrath. <sup>4</sup> But because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, <sup>5</sup> made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions-- it is by grace you have been saved.*

But just as Jonathan gave up an earthly throne for David, Jesus gave up a heavenly throne for us. David was changed by the sacrificial, covenantal love of his friend Jonathan, which allowed him to treat Mephibosheth not as the world would treat him, but instead to treat him with hesed, loving-kindness.

As Paul writes about Jesus' love for us:

***Romans 5:6-10** - You see, at just the right time, when we were still powerless, Christ died for the ungodly. <sup>7</sup> Very rarely will anyone die for a righteous man, though for a good man someone might possibly dare to die. <sup>8</sup> But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us. <sup>9</sup> Since we have now been justified by his blood, how much more shall we be saved from God's wrath through him! <sup>10</sup> For if, when we were God's enemies, we were reconciled to him through the death of his Son, how much more, having been reconciled, shall we be saved through his life!*

We have been adopted into God's family, just as Mephibosheth was into David's family.

***Ephesians 1:4-6*** - For he chose us in him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight. In love <sup>5</sup> he predestined us to be adopted as his sons through Jesus Christ, in accordance with his pleasure and will-- <sup>6</sup> to the praise of his glorious grace, which he has freely given us in the One he loves.

## 2) God's hesed towards us empowers us to give the same to others

Let's talk a little about covenantal love, love that is both committed and intimate, in our day and age.

There are two main kinds of relationships we have in this world: consumer relationships and covenantal relationships. In a consumer relationship, I am in that relationship as long as you give me good merchandise for a fair price. But if my needs aren't being met, I am out, because in a consumer relationship, the services are more important than the relationship.

In a covenantal relationship, on the other hand, I am committed to you, and I am willing to sacrifice my needs in order to sustain the relationship. I promise to serve and stay committed, even when the relationship is not meeting my needs.

One of the things you may notice is that more and more, relationships that should be covenantal are becoming consumer. Marriage. Hooking up – sex without commitment. Living together – intimacy without whole life commitment. A love that truly loves is willing to bind itself, to promise, to obligate itself so that the other may stand securely in that love.

Divorce. There are Biblical reasons for divorce. But “my needs aren't being met” or “I'm just not in love with you any more” are not Biblical reasons. Marriage is not a consumer relationship, where we stay in as long as we are getting good services for a fair price. And as we come to see how our God has committed himself to us, laying down his life for us, continually forgiving us, we are empowered to do the same.

***Ephesians 5:21-27*** - Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ. <sup>22</sup> Wives, submit to your husbands as to the Lord. <sup>23</sup> For the husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the church, his body, of which he is the Savior. <sup>24</sup> Now as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit to their husbands in everything. <sup>25</sup> Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her <sup>26</sup> to make her holy, cleansing her by the washing with water

*through the word, <sup>27</sup> and to present her to himself as a radiant church, without stain or wrinkle or any other blemish, but holy and blameless.*

We see this lack of commitment, this desire to keep the options open, in other realms as well that may not be covenantal, per se. In jobs, with people bouncing around, always looking for a better job instead of committing. And we see it in church. Commitment and sacrifice vs. church-shopping. **Commit to each other. Commit to small groups. Commit to serving in ministry.**

Consumer relationships are all about keeping options open, and not committing. Covenantal relationships may look like too much sacrifice, but they lead to deeper intimacy and deeper joy. The more you experience God's hesed, the more you can serve and commit instead of only being a consumer.