

Feasting with the king of love and grace

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[0 : 0 0] Now, if you have your Bibles, perhaps you can open them with me to 2 Samuel chapter 9.! The Church Bible, that's page 312. As we join Mephibosheth feasting with the King of love and grace.

! So this morning, if you were here, you might remember that we talked about the idea of Jesus fulfilling. As Jesus said, He's come to fulfill the law and the prophets. We thought about the truth that every story whispers Jesus' name, anticipates His person, His work, in some way or other.

Well, this one, I think, doesn't whisper Jesus' name so much as shout it in such a way as to give us great reason to praise. As we meet a King full of love, steadfast love, full of grace, who welcomes a crippled man to his table and to feast with him, we're invited to see in anticipation the work of Jesus and the good news of the gospel. So for a few moments, we're going to spend some time here in 2 Samuel 9. We're going to see, first of all, this wonderful King of covenant love. David asked in verse 1, is there anyone still left of the house of Saul to whom I can show kindness for Jonathan's sake? Some of you may have read Marilynne Robinson's book, Gilead, a beautiful reflective story of the Reverend John Ames. And one of the central themes of the book is his desire to show love to a man called Jack. Jack was the son of his good friend. Jack was a very troubled figure. But the Reverend John Ames is determined to show kindness to Jack, offers grace and reconciliation, and looks to bring hope and healing at various points in the story and at great cost to himself.

Some ways it echoes what we have here. We find that David and Mephibosheth's father, Jonathan, have bound themselves together in an oath of love and friendship. And you find that in 1 Samuel 20.

And here is David, he's now established as the king, and he remembers that oath that he made. And that leads him to take action, to find and to show kindness to somebody in Jonathan's family.

[2 : 4 9] And so David says to Mephibosheth in verse 7, Remember that a king of Israel was God's man, intended to be the worship leader, leading the people in worship and inviting the people to praise their God. And David in this scene very much reflects God's covenant love. We discover all through the pages of the Bible that God is a covenant-making, God is a covenant-keeping God. Unique to Christianity is this commitment of a God to bind himself to a people. There is that rock-solid covenant faithfulness established in God's own words, His commitment that I will be your God and you will be my people. And we can trace that theme through the Bible and we recognize that God has this impulse within himself, saying to his people, we will be together forever. I am absolutely committed to showing you kindness, whatever it takes.

So it's this wonderful thing as we read the Bible, we discover here is our ultimate reality. Our ultimate reality is connected to relationship. That our God, the maker of heaven and earth, invites us into this beautiful, personal, committed, loving, eternal relationship. And David reflects that. Of course, at times he will be a covenant breaker if we know his story. Like us, we often break our covenant commitment. But we praise God that it is impossible. He will never break his covenant commitment. He will always keep it. So David reflects the character of God, reminding us of God's steadfast love. But David, as the king of steadfast love, also helps us to reflect forward, to think about God's greater king.

Remember the words of Jesus to his disciples, the night when he was about to be betrayed. As he prepared for the Passover, he said to them, I have eagerly desired to share the Passover with you. Why did he desire it so eagerly, that meal, that fellowship? Because he would use it to explain God's new covenant love. He would take the elements of the meal, the bread and the wine, and give us a picture of the gospel. Here is how committed God is to saving a people for himself. His own son comes, his body will be broken, his blood will be shed. He will demonstrate his sacrificial love on the cross. So we see in King Jesus, God's utterly determined commitment to show us kindness and steadfast love. So that by trusting in Jesus, you and I will always know God is with us and God is for us. And God is determined to remember us and show us kindness. The storyline of salvation, the storyline of God, can be captured in some simple words. God's saying to his people, I lost you, but I have won you back. And now you are mine forever.

So we meet in David, the king of covenant love. But we also see in the story of David and Mephibosheth, here is a king of amazing grace. And again, before we come to this story, somebody that helped me this week. So we like to watch the prison agency on a telly. Maybe some of you have seen it. It's a family business selling properties all over Paris, and now it's kind of international. Well, the last episode in the last series, the highlight in many ways for their story was when this family who runs a business, buying and selling properties, was visited by a chief from an Amazonian tribe. And it was amazing to think these guys who rub shoulders with celebrities and they sell multi-million pound houses, they were left stunned that this chief would come and visit them. And so they're talking on camera and say, normally he only meets with kings and presidents and he's coming to share lunch with us. And they're over the moon and they're shocked and they're stunned. Maybe we've had something of that experience when the cool kids invite you to sit at their table. Or the person that you think is so far above you and they notice you and they give you the time of day. I wonder if we think about how God operates.

Do we sometimes imagine that God is just there for the great and the good? Is God just there for people who have something to offer? Do we find it hard to believe that God would have interest, would notice and show favor to us? The beauty of our good news, and it's here in our story, is that the King extends love and grace to the lowest and to the least. And that means that everybody has hope. And we see it really clearly in the story of Mephibosheth. So let's think about Mephibosheth's story and how he sees himself and how that helps us to reveal, help us to see the nature of the King and His grace. So look with me first of all at verse 3 and verse 13. Here is the description given at the beginning and the end of the Mephibosheth story. Verse 3, Ziba answered, there is still a son of Jonathan, he is lame in both feet. And then verse 13, we find him feasting at the King's table and he was lame in both feet. Begins there and ends there. Why? To remind us that Mephibosheth brings nothing to the table.

[9 : 21] Mephibosheth would be viewed as unimportant to others, maybe unimportant to himself. He's not going to add any value to David's retinue. He's not going to be the fighter. He's not going to be the powerful servant. He's always going to be dependent. He's lame in both feet. We're told where he lives. He's at the house of Machia, son of Amiel in Lo-debar, which means the place of no pasture, the place of no word. He lives in the wilderness, in other words. He's far from the places of power and influence. He's far from the throne, the palace, the kingdom. What about his view of his self? As David ushers him into his presence and as David begins to speak, Mephibosheth, verse 8, bows down and said, what is your servant that you should notice a dead dog like me? Compared to the glory of the King, he falls on his face. I'm a nobody. I'm a no-thing from a nowhere place, worthy of nothing. But when the King delights to show grace, when the King is absolutely committed to show honor, well, that changes everything. Verse 7, I will surely show you kindness.

I will restore you to all the land that belonged to your grandfather, Saul. Now he's going to get back this inheritance of the land, the inheritance that ultimately comes from God himself. It's as if he's been brought back into the community of God's people.

And more than that, David says to him, you'll always eat at my table. And in that moment, his identity is transformed. His status is changed. He's no longer living in the wilderness. Now he's sitting at the King's table. His life utterly transformed. And unlike the two-hour lunch that the Parisian agents got to enjoy with the tribal chief, for the rest of Mephibosheth's life, he will be enjoying the kindness of David the King. And that speaks to us of the loving heart of God.

And it speaks to us of the loving heart of King Jesus. King Jesus shows us God's kindness principally at the cross, where that great exchange takes place, where Jesus is loaded up with all our sin and guilt, and he pays the price in full, and we get the credit of his perfect righteousness.

Jesus comes on a mission to restore us to our inheritance, to our proper place, to life with our God, the life that we were made for. And the Lord Jesus, Jesus, he welcomes us to feast on God's grace. Like the father of Luke chapter 15, so glad to welcome and honor the prodigal son, so willing to welcome and receive the elder brother also, longing to show grace. And so our scene, it closes with a feast. Mephibosheth lived in Jerusalem because he always ate at the king's table. So we find ourselves thirdly feasting with the king of love and grace.

[13 : 16] And so there is joy. But we shouldn't miss the shock.

Because this isn't how life normally operated, and still isn't really how life normally operates. And so, you can well imagine people looking in on this scene, perhaps even some of the others at David's table, whispering to them, why is he here? Because a king would usually kill off any rivals in order to secure their power base. And this man Mephibosheth, he has absolutely nothing to offer the king, so why is the king giving when he's not going to get anything back? Perhaps they find themselves asking, well, I can understand he would invite him for a few days, show him a bit of kindness, but he's here again and again. Year after year, the king is so committed to showing him kindness.

Maybe it's a lot like the shock that Jesus created in his ministry. Why is he eating with tax collectors and sinners? Why does he enjoy spending time with them? Why do they gravitate to him and he to them?

And Jesus says, of course, that's why he came. He came to seek and to save the lost. But this scene of hospitality that we have here, a table of fellowship, a table of joy, the extension of love and grace, is the perfect image for capturing the love of God. Remember Jesus' parable? The king who prepared a great banquet of the love of God. And invitations are sent. This is a king who wants to give people the honor of coming to receiving of his treasure. Shockingly, some people reject and they don't enter. But the king's response was to say, my house must be full. So he sends his servants with the order, compel them to come in and did you notice who was first in line? It was the cripples. Compel the cripples to come in.

It's like David with Mephibosheth. Those who know that they don't earn it, they don't deserve it. You can imagine people struggling to believe it. The king says, compel them with my love and kindness so they can come and feast with me. Like King David does with Mephibosheth, Jesus does with you and I today. He invites us to come and to come again to his feast, to enjoy the privilege and the pleasure of his steadfast love, to experience his daily grace, to know his goodness and mercy, restoring our souls and following us all the days of our lives until the day when we sit at the king's table in glory.

[16 : 52] What happens when we feast? What happens when we take up the king's invitation? Well, I think there is a natural reaction and a response in where the king's blessing and the invitation then flows from us to others. I think as we feast on God's grace, it begins to change us as a church. That we would become more and more a community marked by deep joy.

Committed to practicing kindness, to offering hospitality and offering restoration, enabling people to experience something of God's grace through us.

By God's grace, this church, your life and mine, can become a safe space where the broken and the hurting, where the crippled and the lame can find hope and healing, can discover that God's grace and God's invitation is for them and where together we can taste and we can see that God is good. Let's pray together and give him thanks.