

The king: small start & gracious character

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[0 : 00] In 1995, I discovered this week, there was an American man called Jeff who quit his job to start a new business on the internet to sell books.

! In 1995, that was a big risk. The internet wasn't what it is today. And so, Jeff decided to take that risk.

He had a small sort of startup budget, but that budget wasn't going to last him forever unless he was going to make money. And he wanted to set up an office for himself and his few employees, but even that was going to take a big chunk out of the budget.

Particularly when they went to a hardware store to look for some desks, and they were looking at some very expensive wooden desks, and they thought, we can't afford these, really. We'll have no money left.

And so instead, they came up with a makeshift option. They bought a wooden door and some four wooden posts, and they built themselves a desk out of the door and the wooden posts, which cost just \$40 in American money and a couple of hours of labor.

[1 : 26] Much cheaper than buying a brand new desk. The business had a slow start, a very slow start.

Apparently, there was a computer set up with a bell to ring any time a book was bought. And any time it happened, they would gather around, the small team would gather around and look at what book.

And because only nerdy people really had the internet in 1995, it was generally quite a highbrow book. And they looked at who would be interested in this from where in America?

So Stanley in Ohio, why is he buying this book? And it got them very excited. But then one day, that bell kept ringing and ringing and ringing.

The business had suddenly taken off. Books were being bought all the time. And in the end, one staff member unplugged the computer because the sound of the bell was rather annoying.

[2 : 28] The company in question with these makeshift desks was the little-known company, Amazon.

It was little-known then. It's everywhere now, isn't it? Amazon started off so small and insignificant and it's become so big.

And I think what we're seeing in 2 Samuel 2 is a very small beginning for something that, as we heard with the children, is going to become very big.

A very small beginning to something that will become very big. Last week, we saw that King David, well, he's not quite king yet.

David was in mourning for his predecessor, King Saul, and his son, Jonathan. And now that time of mourning is over.

[3 : 28] We read this in verse 1. In the course of time, David inquired of the Lord. I'm going to pause there because reading a little commentary on this, that word inquire is quite interesting.

The word inquire or ask comes from a root word which has the word Saul in it. Because Saul is the king that the people asked for.

David here is the king who asks of the Lord. It's a really interesting detail, isn't it? Already, David is being presented as a better king.

Better than Saul because he's actually communicating with the Lord. He's saying, Lord, where shall I go? And as we hear the Lord's answer, we see the king's small beginning.

The king's small beginning. He's being sent to a place by the Lord called Hebron.

[4 : 42] The end of verse 1. And there, according to verse 4, he will be made king. Then the men of Judah came to Hebron. And there they anointed David king over the tribe of Israel.

It's a small start. He's been anointed king of God's people, God's people Israel. But here in Hebron, he's only being made king of a little tribe, one tribe, Judah.

It's a very small beginning to his reign as God's anointed king. But it's also incredibly significant. It's incredibly significant because this place he's sent to, Hebron, is a significant place. It's always good to actually pause when you see a place name in the Bible and think, what's the significance of this place name being there?

I have to confess, nine times out of ten, I will read a place name and think, well, that's interesting, carry on. But actually, it is important to pause and think, why is this place mentioned?

[6:02] Hebron's really important because it's mentioned early, very early in the life of Israel. Remember, Israel began with one man and his wife, Abraham, or Abram, as he was called first of all.

Genesis 13, verse 18. So, Abram went to live near the great trees of Mamre at Hebron, where he pitched his tent.

There he built an altar to the Lord. That's the first place he sort of sets up camp after the Lord had shown him the promised land that his people would inherit.

But the place is even more significant than just Abraham pitching his tent up there. Genesis 49, towards the end of the book of Genesis, we read this.

Then he gave them these instructions. I am about to be gathered to my people. This is Jacob speaking. Bury me with my fathers in the cave, the field of Ephron the Hittite.

[7:09] The cave in the field of Machpelah near Mamre in Canaan. Well, we read Mamre's at Hebron. Mamre in Canaan, which Abraham brought along with the field as a burial place from Ephron the Hittite.

There Abraham and his wife Sarah were buried. There Isaac and his wife Rebecca were buried. And there I, Jacob, buried Leah. The field and the cave in it were brought from the Hittites.

What's that saying? The patriarchs, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, were all buried in a cave at Hebron. It's a significant place. These are the people that God had made big, big promises to. Big, big promises that there's going to be blessing for you and your descendants.

I'm going to do wonderful things through your family line. And so this then is linking David with the patriarchs, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

[8:19] And then as we saw with the children earlier, it links Abraham, David, and Jesus together.

Matthew 1, verse 1. Let me remind you of those words. The beginning of the New Testament. This is the genealogy of Jesus, the Messiah, the son of David, the son of Abraham.

They're all linked. God's purposes were being worked out. It's not an accident that David is instructed by God to go to Hebron.

It might be a small start, but it's loaded with great significance. As indeed, when you read through the early chapters of Matthew, Jesus makes a small start, doesn't He?

A little baby born in a little town of Bethlehem to a little engaged couple. Who knew that that would be bringing about the kingdom of God, which is going to last forever as David was promised?

[9:36] That's what God does in the world. He starts small and builds big. Hannah, the mother of Samuel, who 1 and 2 Samuel are named after.

Samuel, that final prophet, prophet kind of leader of God's people before they had kings. Hannah prayed after she was given Samuel her son, which in itself was an answer to her prayers.

Hannah prayed these words at the beginning of 1 Samuel. The Lord sends poverty and wealth. He humbles and He exalts. Hannah is, in her prayer, is showing God's works in this world.

He raises the poor, the little poor people from the dust. He lifts the needy from the ashes. And what does He do? He sits them in important places.

As He is with David. David, the shepherd boy out in the fields. He was very little and small compared with his big, strong brothers who Samuel looked to anoint as king.

[11:09] But no, David was being raised up to sit on a throne. And this is how God works even today. Thinking about our own selves.

When we came to the Lord Jesus, not many of us were particularly big and important in the world's eyes. We come as humble sinners to the great God Almighty.

And yet, what does God do with us? He raises up with Christ. And He seats us with Him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus.

In other words, in Christ, we are seated in heaven. We might be struggling on earth below, but we're also seated in heaven. God raises poor and humble people.

Sinners like us who don't deserve any place before His throne. But raises up with Christ. He does mighty works in small and weak people.

[12:27] Secondly, the King's gracious character. The King's gracious character. They say that the first 100 days of someone being a ruler, like a president, prime minister, the first 100 days is really important.

It sets the tone of what's to come. And so how does David's first days begin? Told this, halfway through verse 4, After he's been anointed king over the tribe of Judah.

When David was told that it was the men from Jabesh-Gilead who had buried Saul, he sent messengers to them. Let's stop there. What's this about Jabesh-Gilead?

Who were the people from there? Well, they were people who were very loyal to Saul. And it's shown in that they were the ones, when Saul had died, to go into Philistine territory, enemy territory, risking their lives doing that, and taking Saul's body, we presume headless body, given his head was cut off and paraded around Philistine streets.

Sorry if that's put you off your lunch. They took his body and they buried it. They gave the Lord's anointed king, Saul, a decent burial.

[13:58] And David's impressed with them that they would do that. That they would honor Saul in that way.

And so, verse 5, David says to them, The Lord bless you for showing this kindness to Saul, your master, by burying him.

The word kindness comes from the word steadfast love. We sometimes sing or read in the scriptures, the steadfast love of the Lord never ceases.

He's abounding in steadfast love. And that's the love that the new king of Judah, David, is showing to these people. And it's quite extraordinary love.

Because the men of Jabesh Gilead haven't shown that love to David. They've shown it to Saul. Saul, who we reminded ourselves last week, Saul, who had once thrown spears and tried to kill David.

[15:08] They've not been loyal to David at all. They've been loyal to Saul. To David's enemy. But God's anointed king. Why would David be kind to them?

He has no particular reason to. They haven't been kind to him. I think what we're seeing in David is he's showing grace to them. Here's one commentator, John Woodhouse.

What he says on this, David's message to those who had every reason to regard him as their enemy was about the grace of God. David didn't have to be interested in these people.

They weren't David loyalists. They were Saul loyalists. He says, No, may you know the kindness, the grace of God. Isn't that amazing?

That's a good first thing to read of David as he becomes king of God's people. He's a gracious king.

[16:18] It's not the way our world rulers work, usually, is it? The way the world is to seize power. Crush your rivals. Demand loyalty.

That's how thrones are secured. But in here, in this fragile little kingdom, the true king wins allegiance, not by force, but by showing grace.

May you know the steadfast love of the Lord. And it's the kind of grace that the Lord Jesus, David's greater son, shows to his people.

Romans 5, in the New Testament, reads this, But God demonstrates his own love for us in this. While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

For if while 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?

[17:27] If you're here this morning and you're not yet a Christian, these verses actually say you're, before you become a Christian, you're an enemy of God.

You're a sinner. That's what sinners are. We say, No, God, I'm in charge, not you. But God is full of loving kindness, and so whilst we were enemies of God, sinners, God, in his son, the Lord Jesus Christ, died for us.

That's amazing grace. We've done nothing to earn that. We should be thrown away by the Lord.

We didn't want to know him, and yet Jesus died for us in our place. That's grace. That's loving kindness. And in Jesus, the risen, eternal son of God, the king, over a kingdom that will last forever,

he says to enemies, like you and me, he says, come and find life in me.

Come and find a place in my kingdom. And if you want to know more about that, if you want to know more about Jesus and the grace, the life that he offers to us, please do chat with someone after the service, or find me after the service.

[19 : 01] I would love to tell you more about Jesus and this wonderful grace. Because the choice of whether we follow Jesus as king or not is one we all have to make.

We can't stay neutral to God's king, and neither can people here in this passage. And we see a rival king, an arrival kingdom to David being set up in this little passage.

Thirdly, the king's kingdom cannot fail. Meanwhile, Abner, son of Ner, the commander of Saul's army, had taken Ish-bosheth, son of Saul, and brought him over to Mahana, I can't say that word.

He made him king over Gilead, Ashuri, Jezreel, and over Ephraim, Benjamin, and all Israel. Abner, who was high up in Saul's army, doesn't want to follow David, who he knows should be king.

I say that because of chapter 3, verse 9 and 10. Chapter 3, verse 9, Abner is speaking to himself, and he says, may God deal with Abner, be it ever so severely, if I do not do for David what the Lord promised him on oath, and transfer the kingdom from the house of Saul, and establish David's throne over Israel and Judah.

[20 : 44] But instead here, even though he knows that, he's saying, I'm going to set up another king. I'm going to set up Saul's son, last remaining relative, Ish-bosheth.

I'm going to set him up to be a king. And really, he's a kind of puppet king because Abner's the one who really wants to be in control of things going on.

And it's not long before there's then very violent opposition to David's kingdom. Verse 17, a summary of a little battle that takes place.

The battle that day was very fierce, and Abner and the Israelites were defeated by David's men. Opposition arises. A new, another rival king is set up in the place of David, God's true king.

Things are getting rocky. But God's king, God's true king, and his kingdom cannot fail.

[21 : 52] The opposition comes, the battle is fierce, but David's men win. David's kingdom here doesn't look particularly in a strong place.

I know they've won this little battle. But David's only king of one tribe. Ishbosheth's king of all Israel. And David doesn't go in at the start of his reign all guns blazing, does he?

He goes in with showing tender kindness. It all does look a little bit frail. But God is ensuring David's king and his kingdom do not fail.

The opposition comes, David and his team win. So as we draw to a close on these things, let's remember who this king is.

Let's remember David is the Lord's anointed. who begins here with his ascension. I say that because verse 1 and 2 have the words go up three times.

[23 : 17] Verse 1, in the course of time, David inquired of the Lord, shall I go up? The Lord said, go up. Verse 2, so David went up.

This is David's ascension. David's ascension to the throne. An ascension in the Bible is a word which we usually associate with the Lord Jesus.

The Lord Jesus who ascended as the risen king of the kingdom that David was promised that would never fail.

Acts 1, verse 9, and when Jesus had said these things as they were looking on, he was lifted high and a cloud took him out of his sight. And if you want to know where he went, Daniel 7 helps us to see that.

And behold, with the clouds of heaven there came one like a son of man, the Lord Jesus. and he came to the ancient of days and was presented before him and to him was given dominion and glory and a kingdom that all peoples, nations, and languages should serve him.

[24 : 32] His dominion is an everlasting dominion which shall not pass away and his kingdom one that will not be destroyed. David's ascension to the throne might look very small and insignificant there in that tribe of Judah but it's leading us to the king who will reign on David's throne forever, the Lord Jesus Christ whose dominion shall have no end.

and we can rejoice today if we're in the Lord Jesus Christ that we're part of this kingdom, this kingdom that is so secure that will never have an end.

No matter what lengths others might go to to destroy this king and his kingdom, we have an eternal security in him that can never be shaken.

And so as we were praying for these Christians in Nigeria we pray knowing that they are eternally safe with the Lord Jesus Christ in his kingdom.

As we were praying about the break-ins in our own church building over recent months and we feel unnerved by it and the city mission they felt very unnerved by it.

[25 : 55] we can praise him that we are part of an eternally secure kingdom that no matter what people may try and do to the Lord Jesus and his people it will be okay.

The Lord Jesus reigns and he reigns forever and we are eternally secure in him. There will be rocky times ahead. There will be rocky times ahead for David and his kingdom.

It won't all be straightforward but Jesus reigns now and forever and his kingdom cannot fail.

Let's respond by singing this hymn. respond by singing this hymn.