

A Seat At The Table

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[0 : 00] Some of you may have watched just a few weeks ago as President Trump did a similar address to that it wasn't technically a State of the Union. It was an address to the joint session of Congress, and throughout his very lengthy speech, he acknowledged a few guests that he had invited.

They were in the gallery, and if you watch, you recognize you'll remember what had happened. There were several of them that he went through at various points in his speech, and the point was to put a face on the issues, and then, of course, there were some other motives to that as well. For example, when he was pressing in the issue for his immigration policy, he recognized the family of a 12-year-old girl who had tragically been killed by an illegal immigrant. And by doing this, he put a face on the issue to try to gain support for what he's doing, help us understand the reality of the situation as he understood it to be. But he also gave himself an opportunity to extend a public kindness to the family of that 12-year-old girl who was in attendance.

[1 : 13] And in the case of that particular moment, the kindness was to simply rename a wildlife refuge after the name of the girl who enjoyed wildlife and was passionate about that during her lifetime.

Now, a lot of public figures will do this, won't they? And as they should do. And these are often actually quite touching moments for us. Remember, on that particular night especially, there was one moment with a little boy who had survived cancer that was just especially touching. But even the most genuine acts of kindness in instances like that have a deeply political motivation. These people are chosen for a reason.

Their circumstances provide a unique opportunity for the public figure to gain some political advantage in something that he wants to emphasize. And apart from that potential advantage, it's unlikely that they would ever receive the president's personal kindness.

[2 : 21] At least in a nationally televised speech. When we get to 2 Samuel chapter 9, we find a very powerful king showing extraordinary kindness to a subject of his kingdom.

But in this case, there is no conceivable benefit to motivate the king's act. His kindness was motivated instead by covenant love.

And this love was lavished not on a faithful friend, but on a potential enemy.

A potential threat to his very throne and to the throne of his children. It's one of my favorite stories in all of the Bible.

And it is so because it so beautifully pictures the kindness of God extended to you and me. Let's read it together.

[3 : 28] 2 Samuel 9 verse 1. And David said, Is there still anyone left of the house of Saul that I may show him kindness for Jonathan's sake?

Now there was a servant of the house of Saul whose name was Ziba. And they called him to David and the king said to him, Are you Ziba? And he said, I am your servant.

And the king said, Is there not still someone of the house of Saul that I may show the kindness of God to him? Ziba said to the king, There is still a son of Jonathan.

He is crippled in his feet. The king said to him, Where is he? Ziba said to the king, He is in the house of Machir, the son of Amiel, of Lodabar.

Then King David sent and brought him from the house of Machir, the son of Amiel, at Lodabar. And Mephibosheth, the son of Jonathan, son of Saul, came to David and fell on his face and paid homage.

[4 : 36] And David said, Mephibosheth. And he answered, Behold, I am your servant. David said to him, Do not fear. For I will show you kindness for the sake of your father, Jonathan.

And I will restore to you all the land of Saul, your father. And you shall eat at my table always. And he paid homage and said, What is your servant that you should show such regard for a dead dog such as I?

Then the king called Ziba, Saul's servant, and said to him, All that belong to Saul and to all his house I have given to your master's grandson.

And you and your sons and your servants shall till the land for him and shall bring in the produce that your master's grandson may have bread to eat. But Mephibosheth, your master's grandson, shall always eat at my table.

Now Ziba had 15 sons and 20 servants. And Ziba said to the king, According to all that my lord the king commands his servant, so will your servant do.

[5 : 52] So Mephibosheth ate at David's table like one of the king's sons. And Mephibosheth had a young son whose name was Micah. And all who lived in Ziba's house became Mephibosheth's servants.

So Mephibosheth lived in Jerusalem, for he ate always at the king's table. Now he was lame in both his feet. The impact of this story is magnified, I think, when we understand the historical context in which it took place.

And fortunately for us, 2 Samuel gives us a lot of context that helps us understand it. The book actually opens by describing the death of David's predecessor, we know to be King Saul.

But it actually took years for David to have a throne that was established in Israel, even after Saul's death. There was an ongoing struggle, an ongoing war, we might say, between those who were loyal to the house of Saul and those who were loyal to the house of David.

And after Saul's death, the tribe of Judah anoints David to be king, but they're the only tribe to anoint David to be king and recognize and receive him as king.

[7 : 09] All the other tribes gather and they recognize one of Saul's other sons, Ish-bosheth. Ish-bosheth. And they anoint him to be their king.

And so, for a period of two years, David reigns over Judah and Judah alone. And during that two years, one of Saul's sons reigns in the other place. And there's constant friction between the two, as you might imagine.

War takes place and unfolds time after time. For two years, they fought. But we're told in chapter 3 and verse 1 that David grew stronger and stronger while the house of Saul became weaker and weaker.

Beginning in chapter 5, everything shifts. Ish-bosheth was killed and David was anointed king over all of Israel, which initiated a legitimate golden age of God's blessing to God's people.

David established Jerusalem as the center of worship. He did that in chapter 6 by bringing the Ark of the Covenant, the tent of God, and letting it rest in Jerusalem rather than where it had been previous.

[8 : 23] Establishing Jerusalem as the heart of the worship of Almighty God. And then in chapter 7, we read of God's covenant with David, that one day he would raise up offspring from David's seed, who would be a greater king than David.

Such a king that his throne would see no end. He would be an eternal king over God's eternal kingdom. And he would occupy the throne forever. And then we get to chapter 8, and we see that God gave David victory over all his enemies, who pressed against Israel literally from every direction.

He had them coming from the south. He had them coming from the east. He had them coming from the north. Pagan enemies. And in every situation, simultaneously, God gives victory to David and to his people.

And what's the point of all of that? What is it telling us? It's telling us that David was God's king. And that the Lord blessed his people through David in every possible way.

So that when we get to chapter 9, and we read of this particular story, we find clearly this comes at a time when David needs no advantage.

[9 : 43] He doesn't need to gain political clout. He's not trying to raise his poll numbers. It's as good as it gets for David. And it's as good as it gets for God's people at this time.

He had the favor of Almighty God resting on him. God was blessing everything that he did. But David was also the representative of God, meant to reflect God's righteousness and reveal the nature of God's kingdom.

But as God's representative, like the rest of us, David often fell short of that purpose.

In fact, just two chapters after this, we see David at his very worst in the scenario with Bathsheba. But here, in chapter 9, we see David at his very best.

This man who is to be the representative of God among his people, who is to point us forward to a greater king, whom God is blessing in every imaginable way, we can argue that in this moment, he does it best as God's chosen.

[11 : 04] So that if we want to see a glimpse of God's loving kindness, we can see it here in 2 Samuel 9.

If you long to get a taste of what God's eternal kingdom will be like, you get a taste of it here in 2 Samuel 9. If you hope to just gain a better understanding of the kind of king that Jesus is, this chapter will give you a lot to meditate on.

Now what I want to do is just kind of lead you on a march through the plot line of the chapter. We won't be able to stop and examine every detail. I'll leave that to you. We're going to look at the big picture here.

We want to see why. Why is this here? Why did God see fit to include this particular story of David? Out of countless others, why this one?

Why is it here? What are we supposed to understand? First thing I want you to see here is the king's search. The king's search. Let's just read verses 1 through 4 again.

[12 : 14] David said, Well, again, in the United States, we enjoy the peaceful transfer of power, typically, whenever one presidential administration transitions to another.

Historically speaking, that is quite unusual. You understand that. In the ancient Near East, whenever a king overtook another, his first step was eliminating every potential threat to his throne, which meant hunting down and killing the previous king's family, especially his children.

He would find his advisors, and he would eliminate them as well. Anyone who had a serious loyalty to the previous regime would be imprisoned or killed.

Anyone who might foment some kind of insurrection in the name of the previous king. The cultural expectation for David, cultural, was that he would kill the entire house of Saul.

And it is this expectation that overshadows this entire scene, this entire narrative, is founded upon that premise that what was expected of David is that in his search for whoever remains of Saul's family and Saul's lineage would be eliminated.

[14 : 28] And it's magnified by the fact that in the chapters leading up to it, there's this constant war, even after Saul's death between David and Saul's loyalists.

So when David asked if anyone from Saul's family was still alive, the expectation is that he's asking so that he might finish off any remaining threat to his own throne.

And surprisingly, David searched for Saul's remaining relatives, not to kill them, but to show him kindness.

This word for kindness, *chesed*, it's often translated as mercy or steadfast love. It refers to extraordinary kindness that isn't self-seeking.

It arises from personal affection and purity and goodness. John Woodhouse defines it this way, it is mercy and kindness shown toward one in need by one with the power to help, but not necessarily with any obligation to help.

[15 : 47] That's what's being communicated by this language here. There's three things about David's kindness, his search to show kindness that I think sticks out here that would be good for us to know.

First, his kindness was covenantal. His kindness was covenantal. He wasn't looking for political advantage, he wasn't looking for personal praise. His search to show kindness was motivated by covenantal love.

Specifically, specifically, over the covenant that he made with Jonathan, who was not only Saul's son and next in line for the throne according to Saul's lineage, but he was David's best friend.

David sought someone to bless out of his deep, covenantal faithfulness and love for Jonathan.

We remember that covenant from 1 Samuel chapter 20. Let me just read it to you. 1 Samuel 20, 14 to 17. This is Jonathan speaking. He says, If I am still alive, show me the steadfast love of the Lord.

[16:56] Same word as kindness here in 2 Samuel 9. Has said, show me the steadfast love of the Lord that I may not die. And do not cut off your hesed, steadfast love, from my house forever.

When the Lord cuts off every one of the enemies of David from the face of the earth, and Jonathan made a covenant with the house of David, saying, May the Lord take vengeance on David's enemies.

And Jonathan made David swear again by his love for him. For he loved him as he loved his own soul. What is the nature of this kindness being displayed?

He's not looking to gain advantage. He's being faithful to a covenant. Faithful to a covenant. A covenant of love. Second, his kindness is godly.

It's godly love. In verse 3, David speaks of this action when he speaks to Ziba. He doesn't say that I may show my kindness. He says that I may show the kindness of God to him is what he sought to do.

[18:08] He understood himself to be a conduit of God's steadfast love to others. The action, whatever it is that he would do, it would not merely be from David.

It would be God's favor supplied through David David's kindness, to someone from Saul's house. David's kindness, even in his own understanding, was meant to reflect the kindness of God. He was God's man. He was God's instrument. A man who had God's heart. And it's reflected at its best here. Third, his kindness was extraordinary.

It was extraordinary kindness. And we've touched on this already, but we find here that after consulting with Ziba, David discovered that one of Jonathan's sons had survived.

And everything we read here about this young man points to one thing. Shame. There is nothing good said about Mephibosheth here.

[19:16] Not because he wasn't a good guy, but because he would have been recognized in every possible way with shame. His disabilities crippled in his feet.

It's emphasized throughout the text. It's mentioned over and over. In fact, you'll notice, even when we get to the very end of the chapter, the very last thing that it says about Mephibosheth again is that he was lame.

He was crippled in his feet. It's emphasized. Why? Shame. Something that might have gained him pity in some regards in our culture garnered only shame in his own day.

But how he became crippled reminds us that this man was a potential enemy of God and of David. He was crippled by running for his life after Saul's death.

Just flip a couple of chapters back to chapter 4 and look at verse 4. Jonathan, the son of Saul, had a son who was crippled in his feet.

[20:28] And this is how he became crippled. He was five years old when the news about Saul and Jonathan came from Jezreel, that is their death, and his nurse took him up and fled and as she fled in her haste, he fell and he became lame and his name was Mephibosheth.

How did he even become lame to begin with? He wasn't born that way. He became lame because he was related to Saul and upon Saul and Jonathan's death, everybody expects whoever's coming next is coming after us and they get out of the house as quickly as they can.

Five-year-old Mephibosheth is picked up by his nurse and on the rush out, he falls and he breaks his legs. Another reminder of who he is.

He's a potential enemy. And then finally, what do we know about Mephibosheth from chapter 9 in this little section? Well, we learn about where he is currently and his location suggests a life of exile. Lodabar was somewhere in the Transjordan area, somewhere northeast of the Jordan River. We can approximate where it was but nobody really knows where it was and that is by design.

[21:55] Lodabar, it literally means no word. This is the kind of place that you went when you didn't want to be found. That's where Mephibosheth was, the grandson of the previous king.

He's in hiding. He's in exile. He is unwelcome in Jerusalem or anywhere near David and his kingdom.

At least that's what he believes. So what do we know about the grandson of Saul? Well, he lived a life of shame in exile as an enemy of the king.

This, this is the one that David determined to show the steadfast love of the Lord to. Second, let's look at the king's encounter.

So we see his search. Let's look at his encounter in verses 5 to 8. Start with verses 5 and 6. Then king David sent and brought him, that is Mephibosheth, from the house of Machir, the son of Amiel

at Lodabar.

[23 : 00] And Mephibosheth, the son of Jonathan, son of Saul, came to David, fell on his face and paid homage. David said, Mephibosheth. He answered, Behold, I am your servant.

Now you can imagine Mephibosheth's anxiety when David's representatives arrive at his hideout in Lodabar.

He must surely have expected this to be the end. Judgment day for Mephibosheth as he might have feared for many years, maybe up to two decades at this point.

It had finally arrived. All he could do was plead for the king's mercy. And that's exactly what he did. He makes it to David, he stands before the king and he immediately falls on his face, prostrate before the king and we're told that he pays homage, he gives honor to the king and he declares, Behold, I'm your servant.

[24 : 10] I don't want your throne. I'm not serving Saul. I am your servant. What is this? It is a plea for mercy. His words, his actions, they're all recognizing that David is the true king of Israel in hopes that the king who has all the power would grant him mercy in this moment.

Again, John Woodhouse so helpfully, he remarks here that David's kingdom would be one in which those with reason to be his enemies would receive kindness if only they received him as their king. And that's exactly what Mephibosheth is doing. He falls on his face. He understands his unworthiness. He understands the situation. He understands what David would be justified, culturally speaking, would be justified in doing.

And he pleads for mercy. Look at verse 7. David said to him, Do not fear. I will show you kindness for the sake of your father, Jonathan.

And I will restore to you all the land of Saul, your father. And you shall eat at my table always.

Always. Now I wonder what came first.

[25 : 41] Shock. Confusion. Skepticism. Here's Mephibosheth.

He's been in hiding. Now he's summoned to the king. There's no indication that he has any understanding as to why he's being summoned.

He probably expects he's about to lose his life and probably his son as well. But what he hears is those gracious words that we so often read in the scripture.

Don't be afraid. The one who has the power to do whatever he wants to Mephibosheth says, don't be afraid. Do not fear.

He must have expected the sentence of death. What he actually experienced however was loving kindness. Surprising. Unexpected.

[26 : 46] Don't be afraid Mephibosheth. I mean to show you kindness for the sake of the covenant I made with your dad. And then David reveals the fruit of that kindness.

What exactly does he mean to show kindness? And he mentions two things. The restoration of Saul's estate to Mephibosheth. But then even greater is this lifelong seat at the king's table.

The one who had lived in exile would be brought near to the king. He who had nothing but shame would be given more honor and wealth than he would have ever imagined.

He who was considered an enemy would now feast every day at the table of the king. And he would receive all of this not because of anything that he had done but solely on the basis of the covenant love of the king.

Mephibosheth receives the fullness of mercy and grace in that moment. And how does he respond? Verse 8 He paid homage and he said what is your servant that you should show regard for a dead dog such as I?

[28 : 14] As Mephibosheth pleads for mercy what he wants is to live. what he gets is far more than that. And then he displays this utter humility knowing that he was unworthy of all that the king promised to him.

And his language is familiar. It's similar to what David said to God after God made a covenant with him earlier in the book. just flip over to chapter 7 and look at verse 18.

God gives this amazing covenant with David and then look and of course everything that follows in that chapter is David's response and prayer. Just look at verse 18. Chapter 7 verse 18.

Then King David went in and sat before the Lord and said Who am I O Lord God? What is my house that you have brought me thus far? Similar to what Mephibosheth is now recognizing in chapter 9 and verse 8.

What is your servant? Who am I David? That you would show this kind of regard for me. It gives us a deeper look into what moved David to act with such kindness.

[29 : 29] He did for Mephibosheth what God had done for him. Those who truly know the love of God will show the love of God to others even their enemies and that's what we see coming forth in David's life.

But David and Mephibosheth together exemplify the only true response to the kindness of God. Humble worship.

recognizing that they are owed nothing of what they're receiving. They're worthy of the opposite of what they're receiving and yet in grace God shows them amazing extraordinary covenant kindness. kindness. And what is their response? Who am I? Not it's about time you came to your senses and did this.

No. Who am I that you would do this for me? Those who do not worship suggest that they have not come to understand the steadfast love of the Lord.

[30 : 55] Because to truly understand who you are in relationship to God will produce only one thing humble worship.

But those who recognize their true unworthiness before a holy God will burst forth in humble worship and praise as they acknowledge and experience his unexpected extraordinary kindness to them.

What does your worship suggest? Does it suggest you have known the kindness of God? Third, we see the king's kindness.

We've seen his search. We've seen his encounter with Mephibosheth and now we see the details of his kindness. Verses 9 to 13, let's read them together.

Then the king called Ziba, Saul's servant, said to him, All that belong to Saul and to all his house I've given to your master's grandson. You and your sons and your servants shall till the land for him and shall bring in the produce that your master's grandson may have bread to eat.

[32 : 12] But Mephibosheth, your master's grandson, shall always eat at my table. Now Ziba had 15 sons and 20 servants indicating substantial wealth for a servant.

Then Ziba said to the king, According to all that my lord the king commands his servants, so will your servant do. And here's the summary of it all. So Mephibosheth ate at David's table like one of the king's sons.

And Mephibosheth had a young son whose name was Micah. And all who lived in Ziba's house became Mephibosheth's servants. So Mephibosheth lived in Jerusalem, for he ate always at the king's table.

Now he was lame in both his feet. So in these final verses, David repeats the promise to Ziba, whom he designated to be Mephibosheth's chief servant.

He, his 15 sons, and his 20 servants were to become the caretakers of what is now Mephibosheth's estate, while Mephibosheth himself remained close to the king.

[33 : 19] And then the narrator expounds on the details of David's kindness. I think there's five things worth noting. First, most profoundly, Mephibosheth was given a seat at David's table.

This is intimacy. This is blessing that cannot be exceeded. But this time, there's a different note. It's not only that he will sit at the table, he will sit at the table as if one of the king's sons. The grandson of David's greatest enemy became as one of David's own children.

Amazing. Second, there's a statement here about Mephibosheth's young son Micah. It's just a quick statement and it moves on, but why is it here? This whole ordeal, it was not just about an act of kindness to a disabled man who showed no reasonable threat to the throne.

I mean, who's really going to be afraid of Mephibosheth? Micah. But that's not what this kindness is about. Included in this kindness is his own family. Micah ensured the survival of Saul's line, which did pose a significant threat to the future of David's throne.

[34 : 48] So why would David show such kindness to someone who was such a potential threat? The only answer for that is that he had his own faith.

David fully trusted that God would be faithful to his covenant. The covenant that he gives to David in chapter seven when he says there will be no end to your throne.

There's going to be an offspring that comes from you David and he's going to be perfect he's going to reign forever he's going to bring my kingdom in a way that you wouldn't even imagine David and David says I believe you David has no fear of Micah David has no fear of anyone else that would

come from Saul's line not because humanly speaking they wouldn't be a reasonable threat but because David trusted God he trusted!

God's covenant And therefore he showed great faithfulness to the covenant that he made not only to Jonathan but also to Saul that he would not bring an end to his progeny this was an act of faith from beginning to end amazing third Saul's servants were made Mephibosheth servants meaning Mephibosheth shame was turned to honor there's much more we could say about Ziba I'll restrain myself at this point but it would be worth you looking into number four Mephibosheth was brought out of exile to live the rest of his days in David city Jerusalem where the presence of God was now where the king was enjoying his seat at the king's table and then finally the final note we're reminded once again of his own disability the king doesn't heal his legs he just brings him to the table anyways in the narrative this disability it represents brokenness it represents shame it represents sin

Mephibosheth isn't brought to the king's table because of his disability he was brought to the king's table in spite of his disability that's the idea being pressed This is not a come as you are situation this is a come in spite of who you are situation the one who was despised by his culture was loved by his king and in this way David's best moment gives us a beautiful picture of Christ eternal kingdom in which the outcast are welcomed and the lame leaped for joy which brings us to our final consideration why is this here it's a great story but is that all it is is it just meant to encourage us that there is goodness in the world despite how much wickedness we see well no

[38 : 19] I think it's more than that on the one hand it is an example of how God's people are to display God's character to the world David is God's representative to God's people he is to show forth the character of God in the way that he rules and reigns over Israel David was kind because God is kind and if like David we are to be people with God's very heart we must learn to show extraordinary kindness and covenantal love even to those who hate us this is precisely what Jesus commanded Matthew 5 in the Sermon on the Mount Jesus says you've heard it said you shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy but I say to you love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you why

Jesus says so that for the purpose that you may show that you are sons of the father in heaven now why does he say that he continues because the father who is in heaven makes his son to rise on the evil and on the good and he sends rain on the just and on the unjust for if you love those who love you what reward do you have Jesus says do not even the tax collectors do the same and if you greet only your brothers what more are you doing than others do not even the Gentiles do the same you therefore must be perfect as your father is perfect now there is something in that for us David as

God's representative demonstrates God's kindness even to his enemies there are also times he demonstrates God's justice to his enemies in this case we see his kindness and then Jesus says just like God is kind you are to be kind if you're going to come after me you're going to have to be kind you're going to show grace and mercy and love just like the father does and what is it that the father does even those who are evil Jesus says even those who are unjust he feeds them he sends rain so that their crops will grow and so that they can survive he people that are persecuting those who love God God pours out his kindness on them and here we are deciding that we're going to isolate from everybody imaginable who doesn't think like us and isn't like us and doesn't love God like we love God that is not what Christ did and it's not what he calls us to do and David in his best moment shows us that even thousands we need to take that away in this in this passage but that's not the primary purpose of this passage it's a useful application it's not the main one there's a greater purpose to this text it points us to the extraordinary kindness of God in the gospel of Jesus Mephibosheth was only a potential enemy of David what we find is that he was not actually a real threat was he he's a potential enemy turns out he wasn't an actual enemy however all of us by our very nature are true enemies of

God not potential it's what we are we're set in rebellion against him we're set in rebellion against his rule over us but out of his covenant love displayed and promised through the centuries God sent his son Jesus so!

[43 : 05] so that he might redeem us from our sin take away our shame freely give us the blessings of his kingdom and give us a seat at his table as his sons and daughters forever God not a potential enemy an actual enemy so great is his love for us that David can only point us toward it he can't give us the fullness of what it is but that's exactly what David was meant to do he's meant

to point us forward to something greater he's not to show the fullness of what that is he's just to point us to something greater than himself and that greater thing was a person Jesus Christ the son of God who came to make his enemies his sons in the primary application of this text if you're trying to insert yourself somewhere to figure out where you fit in this dynamic we're not

David we're Mephibosheth Titus chapter 3 4-7 but when the goodness and the loving kindness of God our Savior appeared has said he saved us not because of works done by us in righteousness not because we were worthy of it not because we earned it not because there was just something special about us that wasn't special of others no but according to his own mercy according to his own chesed by the washing of regeneration and the renewal of the Holy Spirit whom he poured out on us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior why so that being justified by his grace we might become heirs sons daughters and what is it that we are granted as heirs the hope of eternal life Paul said I could take you to dozens of passages that say the same exact thing in the New Testament what's it all about it's pointing us back to passages like this we're not meant to go to this text and think David was awesome we're meant to walk away from this text saying God is kind what a God that he would do this for us Spurgeon always had a helpful quip and he does in relationship to Mephibosheth he says Mephibosheth was not an attractive guest at the royal table yet he had an open invitation because King David could see in his face the features of his beloved Jonathan and like Mephibosheth the Lord invites us to share intimately with him because he sees in our countenances the remembrance of his dearly beloved

Jesus such is the love that the father bears to his only begotten that for his sake he raises his lowly brothers and sisters from poverty and exile to enjoy the king's court and noble rank and royal provision a king's table is a noble hiding place for lame legs lord help the lame to leap like the deer and satisfy all your people with the bread of your table so good why is it here it's here to point us to the kindness of God in the gospel of Jesus by his death and resurrection God makes his enemies his sons and Christ kingdom is one in which those with reason to be his enemies receive his kindness if only they receive him as their king and those who will do that through repentance and faith will always eat at the king's table what what