

Kingdom Policy for the Disabled

2 Samuel 9:1-13

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Now if you have your Bibles with you or access to a pew Bible, turn with me to 2 Samuel chapter 9, 2 Samuel chapter 9. As we make our way through these books of 1 and 2 Samuel it occurs to me to say first of all that we'll be taking a break from Samuel as of this evening and during December in the evenings we will be engaged in some Advent themes on Sunday evening. We'll return to 2 Samuel chapter 10 sometime either towards the end of December or the beginning of January.

But secondly, we need to remember, in order to make sense of this chapter, we need to remember that David, who is now enjoying a time of relative peace — he is the king, reigning in the captured city of Jebus, that he has now called Jerusalem or the city of David — his kingdom has expanded north and south and west. David had made a promise to Saul, King Saul, before he died, that David would not wipe out Saul's family. It would have been standard practice in the ancient near east when one king was removed and another one put in his place that that king would remove all of the family members to prevent any kind of *coup d'état* or rebellion and that's what Saul is asking David for. And back in 1 Samuel, in 1 Samuel 18, 1 Samuel 23, 1 Samuel 24, you see these promises that David made to Saul and then, of course, to Saul's son and David's friend, Jonathan. David had made a covenant, a very solemn binding covenant, a promise to Jonathan. And now that David is enjoying this time of relative peace and prosperity, he suddenly remembers that promise.

And then if you turn back to 2 Samuel 5 and verse 8, at the time when David captured the city of Jerusalem, or Jebus as it was called, the Jebusites, the original inhabitants of the city of Jerusalem, had mocked David and they had said to David that the city of impregnable and that even the lame and the blind could defend Jerusalem against David. And after David captures the city he makes this statement. You see it there at the end of verse 8 of chapter 5 — “The blind and the lame shall not come into the house.” Now that's not meant to be an edict of David forbidding anyone who is disabled, who is dysfunctional, suffers from mobility dysfunctionality as we might say today. Rather, that is a statement about the Jebusites, the original dwellers of Jerusalem.

Now that's important to remember as we come to this chapter where we're going

to encounter a man indeed who has mobility dysfunctionality. His name is going to be Mephibosheth.

Now, before we read this passage, let's look to God in prayer.

Father, we thank You again for the Bible. We are a privileged people to live in a day and age where we have access to the Scriptures in print and in electronic form and in a multitude of ways whereby we might learn it and hide it within our hearts. We want to remind ourselves again that this portion of Scripture is Your Word. You caused it to be written. It is written in the way that You designed it to be written and written for our profit and for our learning and for our edification. So we would be attentive now to the voice of God as we read the Scriptures. We ask for Your blessing, in Jesus' name. Amen.

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?" And Ziba said to the king, "He is in the house of Machir the son of Ammiel, at Lo-debar." Then King David sent and brought him from the house of Machir the son of Ammiel, at Lo-debar. And Mephibosheth the son of Jonathan, son of Saul, came to David and fell on his face and paid homage. And David said, "Mephibosheth!" And he answered, "Behold, I am your servant." And 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 regard for a dead dog such as I?"

Then the king called Ziba, Saul's servant, and said to him, "All that belonged 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 fifteen sons and twenty servants. Then Ziba said to the king, "According to all that my lord the king commands his servant, so will your servant do." So Mephibosheth ate at David's table, like one of the king's sons. And Mephibosheth had a young son whose name was Mica. 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.

Well, so far God's holy and inerrant Word.

This is a beautiful story. It's an Old Testament story that depicts for us, perfectly, the Gospel, the loving kindness of God to such as you and me. There's an astonishing connection between this text tonight and this morning's sermon. Luke 14, the parable of the great banquet, or as Ligon called it, and I will always now call it, the parable of the great party. I was always nervous about using the word party in the pulpit, but Ligon has baptized that. We can have Christian parties! But you remember the text this morning — “to call the poor and the crippled and the blind and the lame.” And it's a perfect segue into this passage tonight.

David has been enjoying a time of relative peace and prosperity and suddenly he recalls a promise that he had made. The great question hanging over David is, “Will I be a promise keeper or will I be a promise breaker?” He inquires. He sends for a servant of the house of Saul, a man by the name of Ziba, and he inquires, verse 3 — “Is there not still someone of the house of Saul that I may show the kindness of God to him?” I take it that David was unaware of Mephibosheth's existence or whether he was alive or anything about him. Perhaps he had just forgotten about the promise. And now it was time to make good his promise to Saul and to Jonathan. There is this man, Mephibosheth. He's married. He has a son called Mica. And he's living in a place called Lo-debar. Lo-debar is to the east of the River Jordan. It's in the region that we would know today as Gilead. He had escaped there. He had gone there after the death of his father. His father was Jonathan, one of the four sons of Saul. You remember Saul and three of his sons, including Jonathan, had been killed in the battle of Gilboa against the Philistines. But one of the sons had obviously survived — Ishbosheth. Ishbosheth was murdered. He was murdered by two brothers. You'll remember we looked at the passage some weeks ago now. He was stabbed in his stomach in his own bed by these two brothers. And Mephibosheth's uncle is dead. You have to imagine the scene. David's men come to Mephibosheth's house. They knock on the door and they say, “David wants to see you.” His father has been murdered, his grandfather has been killed. I can't but imagine Mephibosheth thought, “This is it. This is how I'm going to die. I'm going to be taken to Jerusalem, the last surviving member of Saul's clan, and like the practice of the ancient near east, I'm going to be killed.” But David intends to keep a promise.

In 1932, President Roosevelt made a speech in Pittsburgh. In that speech he advocated drastic cuts in public spending. Four years later, 1936, he was going to go back to Pittsburgh to advocate the very opposite. He asked his advisor, “How can I do this?” His advisor said to him, “Just say you never made a speech in Pittsburgh in 1932.” We're familiar with that in the world of politics. Keep them honest! Do they keep their promises? We've somewhat grown accustomed to the whole thing. Lots of promises are made but we hardly expect them anymore to be kept. Is David going to be a promise keeper?

He brings Mephibosheth to his palace in Jerusalem. He says to Mephibosheth

four things. Mephibosheth bows with some awkwardness. He's lame in both his feet. He says to Mephibosheth, "I'm going to restore to you all the land that belonged to your grandfather, Saul." That's one. "Secondly, I'm going to give you the right to board at my table, to eat at my table, always." Now, just a footnote — some commentators think that in a negative way, that the promise to Mephibosheth that he would board at David's table always was to keep Mephibosheth under house arrest so that he could keep an eye on him. Well, I think I'm with the more positive interpretation. David is keeping his promise to Saul's grandson and he's saying to his grandson, "You're going to eat at my table for the rest of your life." He gives to Mephibosheth material wealth — servants, Ziba, his fifteen children — commands these servants to till the ground and bring the produce to Mephibosheth so that he would have bread to eat. He's overcome. He says in abject humility in verse 8 — "What is your servant that you should show regard for a dead dog such as I?" He got what he didn't expect. He expected to be killed I think and he got lavish provision. He got grace. He received the loving kindness of God.

I want you to imagine the table, David's table. There's David, and there's Amnon, David's eldest son and his half-sister Tamar. You'll remember, Amnon will rape Tamar. Tamar was undoubtedly extraordinarily beautiful. There's Absalom, Tamar's full brother. And you know what it says about Absalom - that from the crown of his head to the sole of his feet there was no blemish in him. And then there's Joab, a nephew of David and the captain of David's army — bronzed in the sun and muscular to boot, and eventually there'll be Solomon at this table. And imagine hobbling into this room, barely able to walk, Mephibosheth, every day for the rest of his life.

Now those of you who know 2 Samuel know that there's a little footnote. Things don't work out quite as planned. Ziba, perhaps resenting the kindness that had been shown to Mephibosheth, and not perhaps to him, accuses Mephibosheth of treachery. It's all false, but David initially believes it. All that's for next year. Just go with the flow now, because everything is wonderful. David is treating this man with extraordinary grace.

Now look at verse 3 — "Is there not still someone of the house of Saul that I may show the kindness of God to him?" You know it's this word, *hesed*. It's a great little word, *hesed*. It's a Hebrew word. It's one of those neon light words in the Old Testament. It's a word that describes the loving kindness of God. That's how the King James rendered *hesed* — the loving kindness of God, the unfailing love of God, the enduring love of God, the covenant love of God. It's more than love. It's covenant love; it's loyalty love; it's faithful love; it's love that keeps a promise; it's love that makes and keeps promises. It's a word that's ascribed to God Himself.

In Exodus 34, well, turn with me — Exodus 34, one of those great pivotal passages in the book of Exodus. Exodus 34 and verses 5 through 7. This is

Moses now making the new tablets on which the Commandments are going to be written. And in verse 5, "The Lord descended in the cloud and stood with him there and proclaimed the name of the Lord." God's giving His name and you know that in Hebrew to give your name is to declare your character. This is what God is like. Verse 6 — "The Lord passed before him and proclaimed, 'The Lord, the Lord, a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger and abounding in -'" now what version are you using? "Abounding in *hesed*; abounding in steadfast love." That's the kind of love. Look at verse 7 — "Keeping" - same word *hesed* — "Keeping steadfast love for thousands." This is the kind of God He is and David is saying, "Can I show God's kindness, the kindness of God, can I show the kindness of God to one of Saul's servants?"

God has been so kind to us. He's showered us with loving kindness if we're Christians tonight. He's kept His promise. He will always keep His promise. Do you remember in Gethsemane, Jesus, He says to His Father, "Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from Me. Father, is it possible?" And His Father says to Him, "No, My Son. It isn't possible." And Jesus says, "Father, why isn't it possible?" And the Father says, "Because we promised. We made a covenant in the councils of eternity to redeem a people for ourselves. You promised to be the Mediator. You gave Your word. You'd be the covenant mediator." And Jesus says, "But they hate Me." "I know, My Son, but we promised." "How far should I go? Father, how far should I go?" "To the end, My Son, to the very end." Having loved those whom He called His own, He loved them even to the end. He showered upon us loving kindness.

We are recipients of the loving kindness of God in the Gospel. David is showing kindness to someone who is disabled. It's a picture of the Gospel because that's what we are. Ligon said so this morning so I can say it about you - poor and lame and blind and crippled. Oh, we may be big shots in this world, but before the bar of God's justice we are hell deserving sinners to whom in the Gospel God has shown loving kindness, loving kindness.

We, we sit at our Father's table every day. We picture it here, every so often in the course of our year, we picture it when we have the Lord's Supper and there will be a table here. And we sit around this table, the Lord's Table we call it. It's a little picture of the Gospel. We come and feast, party he called it. That's it, isn't it? We party in the house of God. We feast at the Lord's Table every day — blind and poor and crippled and lame. And He calls us — do you know what He calls us? Sons, children of God, members of the family of God, heirs of God, joint heirs with Jesus Christ. That's what He calls us.

David - do you see the Gospel logic? Do you see the Gospel grammar in this passage? David has been a recipient of grace. David understood *hesed*. David understood loving kindness. God had been good to him. In the Gospel, God had forgiven him his sins. God had made him a son of God. David understood that, and now he's saying, "Because God has shown this kindness to me, how can I

show kindness to others?”

You see, there's always that question. If I know Jesus Christ, I know my sin is forgiven, if I know *hesed*, if I know the loving kindness of God, so what? What's my responsibility now in this world? What's my responsibility in the church? What's my responsibility in the office? What's my responsibility in the neighborhood in which I live? Listen to Micah 6:8. You know the verse. It's a well-known verse. “He has shown you, o man, what is good. And what does the Lord require of you? To do justly and” — listen - “to love mercy.” It's *hesed*. It's this word, the loving kindness of God. To love the loving kindness of God, to love the Gospel so much you want to share it, you want to share that loving kindness that you have received.

So I want to challenge you and I want to challenge myself tonight from this passage, this Old Testament Gospel picture. Is there someone we need to show loving kindness to? Maybe it's been on your mind for a while and you just haven't done it. Well, it's time to do it, to write that little note, to invite them to lunch, to do whatever it is that the Holy Spirit leads and guides you to do. And you do it out of gratitude. You do it because your heart is full and overflowing. Your cup is brimming over. Because God has been so good to you, you can't help it. You've just got to be a bestower of that good.

You know, you see another picture of this in the New Testament when Jesus is having the last encounter with His disciples. It's the last thing He does. It's the thing they'll always remember.

I always remember the last conversation I had with my grandfather. I was five years old. He made this very emotional speech and I remember bits of it. He gave me a fountain pen and he told me to write. I was only five. I have never forgotten it. It was a Parker, green fountain pen. I'll never forget it. I saw him just about thirty minutes before he died. It's over fifty years ago.

And Jesus is saying, “I want to show you the Gospel and I want to show you what you must do with the Gospel.” So what does He do in the Upper Room? He takes off His outer garment and wraps a towel around Him and gets a bowl of water and He gets down on His knees. This is Jesus, this is the Son of God, this is the One who made everything as Ryan was talking about tonight. He made everything. He's on His knees before the disciples and He's washing their feet. He's being a servant. He's showing loving kindness. And He says to them, “As I have done for you, you do to others. A new commandment I give you,” He says, “that you love one another.” Well, it's not new in the sense that there wasn't that commandment in the Old Testament. There was a commandment in the Old Testament to love one another. What's new about it is the picture that Jesus is showing. The Son of God is behaving like a servant. He says, “I want you to be like that.”

My dear friends, God has been so immensely good to us in the Gospel. Now here's the challenge — to whom and in what circumstance are we going to demonstrate that to others? Because when grace enables me to live like that, it's evidence that true grace is operating in my heart. This is a question for you — is there not, is there not someone that I may show the loving kindness of God to him?

Let's pray.

Father, in the quietness now of the close of this day, by Your Spirit, You may have already challenged some of us with specificity in response to that question. And with all of our hearts we want to be doers and not just talkers, but we want to be doers of Your Word. So grant it, for Jesus' sake. Amen.

Please stand. Receive the Lord's benediction. Grace, mercy, and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ be with you all.

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