

## **The Kindness of the King**

2Samuel 9:1-13

Luke 15 records one of the most well-known parables of Jesus, the parable of the prodigal son.

It is a story about a man with two sons and one day the youngest son decides to leave home.

He says to his father, "...give me the share of property that is coming to me."

That is a command which is upside down and disrespectful in itself, but when we consider for a moment what is being commanded it is extremely offensive.

He tells the father to divide his assets and give him his share.

When does the property of a parent typically get divided between the children?

That typically happens when the parent dies.

So the tone of the command is, "I wish you were dead, now give me my money!"

That is exactly what the father in the story does and the young man goes to a 'far country' and spends it all.

When all his money runs out and times are hard he ends up working for a foreigner feeding pigs.

He is so hungry that the slop that he is feeding the pigs looks appetizing to him.

A Jewish listener would hear that and think the son has sunk as low as he could sink.

Now what do you think his listeners would think at this point in the story?

I'm guessing they were thinking, "That boy is getting what he deserved!"

If we are honest, we might be thinking that too.

Having sunk as low as he did a thought pops in the young man's mind.

"My dad's servants have it way better than this. I'll go back to my father and say 'I am not worthy to be called your son. Treat me as one of your hired servants.'

He knows his father is kind to his servants, and at this point he would be thrilled to be treated that good.

So he goes back and the bible says that 'while he was still a long way off his father saw him, ran to him, embraced him and kissed him.'

The boy gives his speech about becoming a servant, but his father restores him as his son.

Why does Jesus tell that story? He tells that story to teach us about the kindness of God.

We are the younger son, we have gone away from the LORD loving our sin more than Him.

If, however, we come to our senses and realize how good God is, turn from our foolishness and come to Him then He embraces us as sons and daughters.

The King of the universe shows us kindness that we do not deserve.

[That is worth thinking about and that is the subject of our text this morning **2Samuel 9:1-13**. In this passage king David has a desire to show kindness to anyone who is still alive from the house of Saul. Just like the father in the parable of the prodigal son, the kindness David shows here is unusual and I believe shares a good deal in common with the kindness of God. I believe there are at least three important lessons for us in this text because the kindness of King David points us to the kindness of the King of Kings. Here is the first lesson, that...]

**Point #1 – God’s kindness is rooted in His covenant keeping. (Verses 1-4)**

When we think of God’s love we must also think of God’s faithfulness to the promises He has made.

At the beginning of chapter nine we find David enjoying a period of great success in his life.

His throne is firmly established, he has won a number of victories over foreign enemies, and both he and the nation have seen their wealth increase dramatically.

Multiple commentators point to this period as the high watermark of David’s kingship.

With everything seemingly good in the kingdom the king asks a question here in chapter nine **verse 1**.

If we hear that question with the ears of worldly wisdom it makes no sense.

The house of Saul had made themselves David’s enemies for many years, why in the world would he want to show ‘kindness’ to someone from that family?

The end of the verse tells us, it says he wants to show ‘kindness for Jonathan’s sake.’

Jonathan was one of Saul’s sons, a man of faith and courage. He also became David’s best friend and many years before David became king he made a covenant (that is a solemn promise) with Jonathan.

Listen to what Jonathan said to David all those years ago.

*“If I am still alive, show me the steadfast love of the LORD, that I may not die; and do not cut off your steadfast love from my house forever, when the LORD cuts off every one of the enemies of David from the face of the earth.” (1 Samuel 20:14-15)*

Jonathan asks David to promise to show him and his house ‘steadfast love’, that phrase translates the Hebrew word ‘hesed’ which is the exact same word translated here in verse 1 as ‘kindness’.

David is thinking here of keeping his covenant with Jonathan and he is active in doing so. (**Verses 2-4**)

*Unless David had told someone, no one would have known about the promise he made to Jonathan.*

No one is seeking him out demanding that he keep his promise, he does this freely according to his own desire.

It is also noteworthy to see that the one who is left to show kindness to brings nothing to the table other than the fact that he is Jonathan’s son.

He is crippled in his feet and in the ancient world that would have severely limited his ability to provide for himself and would have made it next to impossible to serve in the military.

That reality is demonstrated in the fact that he has become a part of someone else’s house, a guy named Machir whose name means ‘sold’, and that house is located in a place called ‘Lo-debar’ which means either ‘not a pasture’ or ‘no word/thing’.

The son of Jonathan is a man in need and the only reason David has to show him ‘the kindness of God’ is the covenant he made likely before Jonathan’s son was even born.

*That is very much like our relationship with the LORD.*

We are like Jonathan’s son, people in need with nothing to offer God.

The first thing I wrote down in my study notes and I began look intently at this passage is, “Am I Mephibosheth?” I didn’t take long to be reminded that my situation before LORD is far worse than this man with crippled feet.

We don’t come to God with power, wisdom, goodness, or beauty.

We have weakness, wretchedness, and rebellion.

There is no earthly reason, not one for the LORD to show kindness to us and yet He does!

He does because He is faithful to His promises.

[My favourite picture of that in the Bible is God’s covenant with Abraham. The LORD has Abraham divide animals in two and lay the pieces opposite one another. That was a common way kings and people in the Ancient near east made covenants with one another. They would walk between the pieces as a way of saying the one who breaks this covenant will be like these

animals. In God's covenant with Abraham only God walks between the pieces. The LORD swears by Himself to do the things He has promised.]

God's love, another way of saying that would be His covenant faithfulness, is based on His faithfulness to Himself.

It is impossible for anything to be more certain than that.

This is why God promises a redeemer right from the very beginning in Genesis 3:15.

This why the bible speaks of God loving His people before 'the foundation of the world.'

Because God's kindness, His covenant faithfulness, His love is based on His covenant with Himself which stretches all the way into eternity past.

[I heard a seminary professor on a podcast say that he tells his students that God can never stop loving those that belong to Christ because He never started. That is a head scratching way of saying that the kindness/love of God never had a beginning because God has always been faithful to Himself. That is the foundation of God's love and it unshakable and amazing. David points us to that in his desire to show God's kindness to Jonathan's son. Here is something else the kindness of the king points us too, that...]

## **Point #2 – God's kindness produces restoration. (Verses 5-8)**

One of the lessons living in this fallen world teaches us is that something has been lost and the only hope in the face of that is a God who has promised to fix what has gone wrong.

Look with me at verse 5 and the first part of verse 6. (Verses 5-6a stop at 'homage')

In order to us to appreciate what happens here we have to appreciate how easily this situation could have been completely different.

When a king in the ancient world sends for someone that person is compelled to come.

The only way to refuse such a request would be to have sufficient strength or influence to resist the king and as we have seen already Mephibosheth has neither of those.

Given how powerful David had become, he has no choice but to appear before the king.

The other thing that is important to consider is what would often happen to the heirs of defeated kings.

That is the whole reason Mephibosheth became lame in the first place.

When news came to Jezreel that Saul and his sons, including Jonathan, had fallen Mephibosheth's nanny picked up the 5 year old boy to flee and in her hurry he fell and acquired his lifelong injury.

The only possible reason for her urgency is that she perceived the boy's life to be in danger.

It was common in those days for one who was taking over someone else's kingdom to eliminate all the descendants of the defeated king.

That has to be in the mind of the son of Jonathan here and that is likely implied in his falling on his face before the king.

With his face to the ground, this is what happens...**verses 6b-8**

*Talk about getting the opposite of what you would expect.*

I love those words that the king speaks to Mephibosheth. He says, "Do not fear, for I will show you kindness."

Again it is the Hebrew word *hesed* which is kindness/compassion/love displayed in covenant faithfulness.

How is he going to show that kindness? By giving to Jonathan's son all the land that belonged to his grandfather king Saul.

We can only guess as to how much land that is, but given that Saul was king and what we are told in verse 10 it was a sizeable portion.

Besides getting all of Saul's land, he will be welcomed at the table of the king 'always'.

It is doubtful that Mephibosheth could remember much if anything from belonging to the royal house of Saul.

All he knows is living in obscurity in someone else's house and now everything that had once belonged to his family is restored to him.

[I think about something like that happening when people spell my name wrong. For some reason a lot of people want to spell my last name 'Sealey' and I have often replied, "It is just 'Sealy' just like the mattress". Most of the time when I say that I think to myself, "How cool would it be to find out that the mattress family are long lost relatives?" Maybe I could get a family discount on a king size bed!]

Mephibosheth here goes from being, as he describes himself 'a dead dog', to having all the property of his grandfather 'restored' to him.

Again, the kindness of King David reminds me of the kindness of the LORD.

One of the central themes of the gospel of Jesus Christ is restoration.

If we set our minds to how much is lost in this world on account of our disobeying the LORD we would be overwhelmed in fairly short order.

We see the loss right in the beginning of the Bible. When Adam and Eve rebel against God's command what happens? They get kicked out of the Garden of Eden and the whole world comes under the curse of death. Humanity literally lost the world and became outcasts from God.

*Even the best of the servants of the LORD, when they are summoned before the throne of God in the Scriptures, they are fearful.*

But what do we hear God say time and again to those He loves that are trembling before Him?

He says, "Fear not" or "Do not be afraid." Why? Because of His kindness.

And what is the promise for those born again, forgiven, and made new through faith in the life, death, and resurrection of Christ?

The promise is Jesus is coming again to make all things new and His people will live on the New Earth.

The creation will be restored to the people of God.

Wow!

[That is what the kindness of God does. That is not just something that happens in the future, it is something that begins when we are born again by the power of the Holy Spirit. The power of the gospel can break addiction, it can heal broken hearts, it gives hope to the hopeless, and a family to the orphan. In Christ we are welcomed the banquet table of heaven. That is the kindness of the LORD. That is really good, but there is still one more lesson for us to see here. God's kindness is rooted in His covenant keeping, it produces restoration, and thirdly...]

### **Point #3 – God's kindness is ongoing. (Verses 9-13)**

The LORD's graciousness towards His people never stops and that is very good because there will never come a day, even into all eternity future, when our need for Him will come to an end.

*The question that immediately comes to mind from David giving this land to Mephibosheth is, "How is he going to work and maintain the land given his physical condition?"*

David answers that question right way in verse **9-10**.

As ruler over all Israel David is exercising his rights as king to give Mephibosheth the land that once belonged to his family and he is using that same authority to

command Ziba, his sons, and his servants to work the land given to Saul's grandson.

At first glance we might think that Ziba is getting a bad deal here, but it may very well be the opposite.

Yes Ziba, his sons, and servants would be working the land for the benefit of Mephibosheth, but they are also going to be sustained by that same land.

*That is hinted at in David's reason for having them work the land. He says work the land and bring in its produce 'that your master's grandson may have bread to eat' and then right away he says, 'But Mephibosheth...shall always eat at my table.'*

Why does Ziba need to work to provide Mephibosheth food if he is always going to be eating at the king's table in Jerusalem?

The Hebrew word translated 'bread' here has a broader meaning than just a literal loaf of bread.

It means provisions, or as Carl Keil says, "bread here is a general expression referring to the necessities of life.

Meaning whatever the land produced would provide economic gain for Mephibosheth.

The only way Ziba could keep on doing that is if he and his house were also sustained by what the land produced.

*Look at how Ziba responds and the result in verses 11-13.*

His response to the king seems to be wholehearted. He sees himself, his sons, and his servants as servants of the king and he is willing to do what he has been commanded.

So the king commands his servants for the good of the one whom he has invited to his table and the result is that Mephibosheth continually benefits from the land and he is 'always' at the king's table.

The writer again reminds us that his condition remains unchanged at the end of verse 13 as he says 'Now he was lame in both his feet'.

Why say that again? To remind us that every day when Jonathan's son comes to the table and every time the land restored to him produces life giving things through the work of the king's servants it is because of the king's kindness to this man.

[Remember when the Israelites were in the desert? Why were they there? Because they didn't listen to God. How many times did they grumble, complain, and disobey while they were in the desert? Even though that was the case they still found manna every morning. Time and again God met their need because of His kindness.]

That is true of God's kindness towards those who are in Christ!

How kind has God been to us who believe? He has opened our eyes to our sin and led us to the cross and empty tomb to Jesus so that instead of being cast out of His presence He welcomes us like sons and daughter for the sake of Christ.

Jesus a number of times in the New Testament compares the kingdom of heaven to a banquet to which we are invited.

Jesus gave the church a clear picture of that when He instituted communion.

We call it the Lord's Table. Every believer is invited again and again to eat the bread and drink the cup remembering the LORD's death until He comes.

We come to that table anticipating a future banquet. Have you ever thought about how long you will be welcome at that table?

If you belong to Jesus you will be welcome there forever according to God's kindness.

*Did you know that just as David commands servants for the good of Mephibosheth, God commands his servants for the good of his people?*

Hebrews 1:14 says the LORD sends angels for the sake of 'those who are to inherit salvation'

God in His kindness commands the angels for our good.

That is amazing.

If we can see ourselves rightly, if we can see that spiritually speaking we are like Mephibosheth then we will be able to see the kindness of the Lord and we will be able to see that His kindness towards us is relentless.

*Do we have a sense of our need this morning?*

If we do then we will cling to Christ by faith because it is only for His sake that God shows us kindness.

His kindness rooted in His covenant faithfulness which stretches into all eternity past.

His kindness that takes people broken by sin and restores us.

His kindness which goes on and on forever.

Always welcome at His table because of the kindness of the King.