
The Kindness of the King

2 Samuel 4:4; 19:30

Introduction We jokingly talk about the “Hallmark” holidays...

Today we have dedicated parents and children to the Lord. We want to honor mothers and Christian ladies...

Great stories can be great lenses through which we can see the character and the greatness of God...

And I thought that today I would show you the kindness of our great King through the lens of the kindness of King David. Let’s take up God’s Word and walk through the story of this cripple man with a strange name, Mephibosheth.

Mephibosheth Lamed

2 Samuel 4:4

Jonathan, the son of Saul, had a son who was crippled in his feet. He was five years old when the news about Saul and Jonathan came from Jezreel, and his nurse took him up and fled, and as she fled in her haste, he fell and became lame. And his name was Mephibosheth.

How he came to his condition.

Who He Is

It is very important for us to know who he is. He is: the grandson of Saul and the son of Jonathan.

We need a bit of the story to fill in the background. Saul was the first king of Israel. He had a son, named Jonathan. Because of Saul’s sin, God planned to remove him from the kingship. God had anointed David to be king. But David was a soldier in Saul’s army, a singer in Saul’s household and the best friend to Jonathan. And Saul was jealous of him. So Saul tried to kill him, hounding him all over Israel and Philistia.

We are immediately confronted with the potential for a dilemma – now that David is King, how will he treat the descendents of Saul? What will he do to ensure that his own regency is never threatened by claims to the throne by a future son of Saul?

How He Came to be Crippled

The story here is set against the final climatic battle in which Saul was defeated and he and Jonathan, his son and friend of David, met their deaths. Here is a five year old child, snatched up in haste by a nurse fearing for life and reckless of limb who drops him and cripples him. In the moment of King David’s ascension and victory upon the death of Saul and Jonathan, Mephibosheth was lamed.

Mephibosheth Elevated

2 Samuel 9:1-13

How he came to the King's palace...

The Intention of the King

(v.1-4)

And David said, "Is there still anyone left of the house of Saul, that I may show him kindness for Jonathan's sake?" ² 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." ³ 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." ⁴ 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."

David announces his intention to do good for someone in Saul's household on account of his love for Jonathan. He calls for and asks Ziba, Saul's household servant who tells him about Mephibosheth.

The Summons by the King

(v.5-6)

⁵ Then King David sent and brought him from the house of Machir the son of Ammiel, at Lo-debar. ⁶ 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."

David enquires as to where Mephibosheth is staying. He sends and has him brought before him. When Mephibosheth comes, he bows low before David, acknowledging him as the true king. David calls him by his name and he responds in humility, identifying himself as David's servant.

The Blessing from the King

(v.7-12)

⁷ 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." ⁸ And he paid homage and said, "What is your servant, that you should show regard for a dead dog such as I?"

⁹ 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. ¹⁰ 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. ¹¹ 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. ¹² And Mephibosheth had a young son, whose name was Mica. And all who lived in Ziba's house became Mephibosheth's servants.

David blesses Mephibosheth out of kindness and generosity.

- FOR THE SAKE OF HIS LOVE FOR ANOTHER (v.7-8) – David will bless Mephibosheth because of his love and friendship with Jonathan. This great mercy fuels wonder because of the helpless and low estate of the one blessed – he is “a dead dog.”
- RESTORING HIS FAMILY WEALTH AND POSITION (v.9-10) – Mephibosheth is given back all the wealth and servants that Saul had. This would have made him enormously wealthy, but without title.
- TREATING HIM AS HIS OWN SON (v.11-12) – So here is the scene every evening around the supper table. There is David and all his sons – strong, strapping, handsome young men and Mephibosheth – crippled, yet loved and accepted and honored.

The Focus because of the King (v.13)

¹³ So Mephibosheth lived in Jerusalem, for he ate always at the king's table. Now he was lame in both his feet.

Just to be sure that we get it – here is the grand and glorious kindness of the king. Mephibosheth, the cripple, always at the king's table – not as a servant, but as a son.

And so it is with us. Dead dogs, sinners that we are, crippled by sin are all accepted at the High King's table because of His great love for Another and on account of and in behalf of Him, we are treated like sons. This, when we respond as humble, self-denying servants, is our great privilege – not to make much of us, but to make much of the King.

Mephibosheth Slandered

2 Samuel 16:1-4

How he came to disgrace...

This is surely one of the saddest days in David's life. Absalom, his much loved son, has rebelled against him and led an uprising to overthrow him. Chapters 15-16 relate David's flight from Jerusalem and the people he meets along the way. One of them is Ziba, the household servant of Saul assigned to Mephibosheth.

The Declaration told the King (v.1-3)

When David had passed a little beyond the summit, Ziba the servant of Mephibosheth met him, with a couple of donkeys saddled, bearing two hundred loaves of bread, a hundred bunches of raisins, a hundred of summer fruits, and a skin of wine. ² And the king said to Ziba, “Why have you brought these?” Ziba answered, “The donkeys are for the king's household to ride on, the bread and summer fruit for the young men to eat, and the wine for those who faint in the wilderness to drink.” ³ And the king said, “And where is your master's son?” Ziba said to the king, “Behold, he remains in Jerusalem, for he said, ‘Today the house of Israel will give me back the kingdom of my father.’”

Ziba meets David, loaded down with supplies. He is ingratiating himself into David's favor. David enquires as to where Mephibosheth is. Ziba reports that he is waiting in Jerusalem thinking that maybe, now, he will get the kingdom back.

The Decree by the King**(v.4)**

4 Then the king said to Ziba, “Behold, all that belonged to Mephibosheth is now yours.” And Ziba said, “I pay homage; let me ever find favor in your sight, my lord the king.”

David responds by transferring the wealth and position of Mephibosheth to Ziba. If Mephibosheth was going to treat his kindness this way, and Ziba is willing to take the risk to identify with David, then maybe Ziba deserves the governance of Saul’s inheritance.

Ziba responds with apparent humility and appropriate subservience. As the story is unfolding, we at this point would think, “What a jerk Mephibosheth is.” This is exactly what the author wants us to feel – to see the fleeing king whose kindnesses are spurned and bounty scorned by one so freely blessed.

Mephibosheth Restored**2 Samuel 19:24-30**

How he came back to his former condition...

Now David has been returned to Jerusalem as the rebellion has been put down and Absalom defeated and killed. This chapter presents to us the same people as in chapter 16, just in reverse. Except, instead of Ziba, here is Mephibosheth.

The Evidence for the King**(v.24-25a)**

24 And Mephibosheth the son of Saul came down to meet the king. He had neither taken care of his feet nor trimmed his beard nor washed his clothes, from the day the king departed until the day he came back in safety.

What a bedraggled sight he must have been. Dirty clothes, tangled, unkempt beard, uncared-for feet – he is picture of abject poverty, deprivation and sadness. We are told that he has not cared for himself at all since the king left – the first hint that Ziba may not have been telling the truth.

The Examination by the King**(v.25b)**

25 And when he came to Jerusalem to meet the king, the king said to him, “Why did you not go with me, Mephibosheth?”

Can you see a sternness in his face, a hardness in his words? “Why did you not go with me? After all my kindness to you – why would stay? But, why are you such a mess?”

The Explanation to the King

(v.26-28)

²⁶ He answered, “My lord, O king, my servant deceived me, for your servant said to him, ‘I will saddle a donkey for myself, that I may ride on it and go with the king.’ For your servant is lame. ²⁷ He has slandered your servant to my lord the king. But my lord the king is like the angel of God; do therefore what seems good to you. ²⁸ For all my father’s house were but men doomed to death before my lord the king, but you set your servant among those who eat at your table. What further right have I, then, to cry to the king?”

In simple words, Mephibosheth relates the story. Ziba had deceived them both. He had told Mephibosheth he would prepare for the trip and then left Mephibosheth there. Then he had lied to David and slandered Mephibosheth.

But here is the humility and submission of Mephibosheth. David is like the angel of the Lord – he is free to do what he pleases and Mephibosheth trusts him to do what is right. He casts himself entirely on the character of David. But he knows that he is a man after God’s own heart. He sees through David to the greater David, the angel of the Lord, the Son of God.

He makes no claim to the king. He is but a humble and undeserving supplicant. He has no right to the king’s merciful blessing or magnificent bounty. What he had received had been utterly freely and undeservedly given. What complaint could he make now?

The Expressions by the King

(v.29-30)

²⁹ And the king said to him, “Why speak any more of your affairs? I have decided: you and Ziba shall divide the land.” ³⁰ And Mephibosheth said to the king, “Oh, let him take it all, since my lord the king has come safely home.”

David responds by dividing the inheritance between Ziba and Mephibosheth. Now that might strike us as being unfair – but, he is still being kind and generous. Mephibosheth is right in that he deserves nothing – and is being given out of sheer grace.

But, O what words from Mephibosheth. He doesn’t need the inheritance – all he wants is that the King is home.

Reflect and Respond

Portrays ...

- Our inability
- The grace and compassion of the King
- The kindness to us on behalf of the Another.
- Our placing as sons at the King's table
- Our often slandered case
- Our present grief in the King's absence
- Our future joy at the King's return.

Motivates ...

- Compassion on the needy which causes action
- Satisfaction in Christ.