

The Kindness of the King

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[0 : 0 0] want to follow along. 2 Samuel chapter 9. David asked, is there anyone still left of the house of Saul to whom I can show kindness for Jonathan's sake? Now there was a servant of Saul's household named Zeba. They summoned him to appear before David and the king said to him, are you Zeba? At your service, he replied. The king asked, is there no one still alive from the house of Saul to whom I can show God's kindness? Zeba answered the king, there is still a son of Jonathan. He is lame in both feet. Where is he? the king asked.

Zeba answered, he is at the house of Machir, son of Amiel in Lodabar. So King David had him brought from Lodabar from the house of Machir, son of Amiel. When Mephibosheth, son of Jonathan, the son of Saul, came to David, he bowed down to pay him honour. David said, Mephibosheth, at your service, he replied. Don't be afraid, David said to him, for I will surely show you kindness for the sake of your father Jonathan. I will restore to you all the land that belonged to your grandfather Saul, and you will always eat at my table. Mephibosheth bowed down and said, what is your servant that you should notice a dead dog like me? Then the king summoned Zeba, Saul's steward, and said to him, I have given your master's grandson everything that belonged to Saul and his family. You and your sons and your servants are to farm the land for him and bring in the crops so that your master's grandson may be provided for. And Mephibosheth, grandson of your master, will always eat at my table. Now Zeba had 15 sons and 20 servants. Then Zeba said to the king, your servant will do whatever my lord the king commands his servant to do. So Mephibosheth ate at

David's table like one of the king's sons. Mephibosheth had a young son named Micah, and all the members of Zeba's household were servants of Mephibosheth. And Mephibosheth lived in Jerusalem because he always ate at the king's table. He was lame in both feet. This is the word of the Lord.

Okay, can I have my word of welcome? My name is Martin Ayers. I'm the senior minister here at St. Silas. And thanks, Aileen, for reading. You managed, I think, almost every Mephibosheth.

Quite a tongue twister there. And just to remind you, so we're in this series. We've reopened to Samuel, which we were looking at as a church earlier last year, and we started a new series in it last week.

[2 : 5 4] But on the first Sunday of each month, so next Sunday, it will be Tri-Church. Loads of flyers for that. So our shorter service. We're continuing in Luke's Gospel on the first Sunday evening of each month.

So that that's really accessible if you had a friend who you've had conversations with about faith, and you want to invite them to Tri-Church. They could come along next Sunday as we continue in that series in Luke's Gospel. There's flyers for that at the back. But we're going to be looking together at 2 Samuel and our evening series. So let's keep our Bibles open, if you could, at the passage we had read, 2 Samuel 9, page 312. And let's ask for God's help as we turn to his word. Let's pray together.

Father, almighty God and loving heavenly Father, we thank you that you have gathered us. We thank you for your words to us. Please give us heads that can understand your word, the Bible, and hearts that are willing to change and follow you. For Jesus' sake. Amen. Great. Well, we gave out that question over coffee time. And I had a little time at the beginning of the service there, that quote there about changing the world, one act of kindness, one random act of kindness at a time. Kindness is generally something we'd see positively, isn't it? If you think about the time someone has been kind to you. It's not always seen positively. There's this phrase, nice guys finish last. I don't know whether you've seen that phrase. It's the idea that you kind of miss out by being kind. And my favourite comedy series of all time, Chuck, I don't know how many of you watched Chuck. Unbelievably good comedy series.

Neil likes it at the back, raises his hand. But Chuck Bartowski is like the epitome of the nice guy. He's kind. And so you're thinking all the way through the six seasons, is he going to get the girl?

We want him to get the girl. But you know, nice guys finish last. Maybe he won't get the girl. There's this thing about maybe you can be too kind and you'll get trampled on. But I guess when we think to ourselves, how would we want to be treated? With kindness or with the opposite? With brutality or with someone bullying us or being demanding? Clearly we'd rather be treated kindly by others. So in that sense, it's a virtue. So what does God say about kindness? Well, that's the key theme here in 2 Samuel chapter 9. And the man who does the kindness is this king, King David. Here's a picture of King David. You can see what I've done there. King David, Michelangelo's sculpture there. And it's just worth remembering by the fact that that sculpture is kind of world famous, that whatever you think about God and Jesus and the Bible tonight, King David is undoubtedly one of the greatest men who has ever lived in history. He was a phenomenal man in world history who casts a shadow over so much. But what's going on in terms of the history of God's dealings with people in the

[5 : 56] Bible is we're after Abraham, we're after Noah, we're after Moses, we're after Joshua. And God's people, you know, you look at who are God's people today. They're people who trust Jesus, who live all over the world. But at that time, God's people were in one place. They were living in the land that had been the land of Canaan. And that group of people, Israel, Abraham's descendants, were living there.

And so far in 2 Samuel, there have been these two momentous events. The first was in chapter 5 of 2 Samuel, David became the king of Israel, the king of God's people. And that was so significant because the whole of 1 Samuel was recording this conflict as the people of God asked for a king and they got King Saul. So there's this King Saul and his house. And ultimately, Saul rejects God in his heart. He's not a man who loves God with his heart. He's a proud man. And so God rejects Saul as king of his people. And he anoints David to be king of his people. And in chapter 5 of 2 Samuel, finally, the people recognize David as their king. And the reason he's such a good king is because he's humble before the Lord. So now we're in this season in the life of Israel where for just a few short chapters, we see what it looks like when God's people are ruled over by God's faithful chosen king.

The second momentous thing that's happened so far in 2 Samuel was in chapter 7, an amazing chapter for the whole of human history, 2 Samuel 7. Because God promised there to King David in 2 Samuel 7, that there'll be a future king in David's line who's going to reign forever. He said of him, I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever. I will be his father and he shall be my son.

He says to David, your house and your kingdom shall endure forever before me. Your throne shall be established forever. So today as we look back at 2 Samuel, what we're seeing is that woven into history is a picture of what God's kingdom looks like when God's faithful chosen king is ruling over the people. And that shows us what the future is going to look like when David's greater son, King Jesus inherits the promises that were made to David in chapter 7 and reigns over us as his people on the new earth. So that's what makes 2 Samuel such an amazing book to look at as a church.

It's teaching us about what life looks like when Jesus is your king. When we pray, your kingdom come, as Jesus taught us to pray every day, your kingdom come in the Lord's prayer. We're looking for and longing for God's kingdom to be fully and finally established here on earth. And when we look at Israel under David in 2 Samuel, we're getting a foretaste of what that will be like. So last week we were in chapter 8, we saw that God's faithful king was reigning and it meant there was rest on every side from their enemies. They didn't need to fear their enemies anymore. Chapter 8 verse 6, the Lord gave victory to David wherever he went. We saw that the wealth of the nations being brought in to God's people and dedicated to the Lord by David. And God gave his king a great name. David was famous across the world, renowned. And for the people, in verse 15, we read this, chapter 8 verse 15, David reigned over all Israel doing what was just and right for all his people. The good times are rolling. It's the golden age.

[9 : 38] And what we see tonight is right at the heart of that is the kindness of the king. So first we're just going to think about the unexpected moment for the king's kindness. You can see the points where we're going on the white sheet inside the notice sheet. So the unexpected moment for the king's kindness. Just have a look with me again at verse 1. David asked, is there anyone still left of the house of Saul to whom I can show kindness for Jonathan's sake?

Now Saul was that king who'd made David public enemy number one. But Saul's son, Jonathan, he'd accepted that David was God's chosen king. And in 1 Samuel 20, he asked David to make a covenant, a promise with him that he wouldn't wipe out Saul's family line. He said this, I put it on the screen, but show me unfailing kindness like the Lord's kindness as long as I live so that I may not be killed. And do not ever cut off your kindness from my family, not even when the Lord has cut off every one of David's enemies from the face of the earth. And then, so Jonathan made a covenant with the house of David saying, may the Lord call David's enemies to account. And Jonathan had David reaffirm his oath out of love for him because he loved him as he loved himself. So David's made this promise to Jonathan about the family line of Saul. And that's the background to what's going on here in verse 1.

He summons Zeba. Zeba must have been this kind of senior servant, senior civil servant for Saul. In verse 10, we hear that he had 15 sons of his own and 20 servants of his own. So this guy is quite powerful and wealthy in himself, in his own right. But now he's serving King David. And in verse 3, David asks him the question, is there no one still alive from the house of Saul to whom I can show God's kindness? And Zeba tells him there is still a son of Jonathan. He is lame in both feet.

So David has Jonathan's son Mephibosheth brought to him. So why have I said this is unexpected timing? It's unexpected because David's finally got to the moment where he most doesn't have to do this.

The moment where he's really in power. And no one's pushing him to show kindness to the house of Saul. And so often, humanly, we just don't see people do this, do we, when they get power. We see politicians make promises in their manifestos about what they'll do if they get power. And then they get power and they say, oh, if the situation's changed now, I can't, I know I said that in the manifesto, but I can't do that. And if you're from England, this was an infamous moment for Nick Clegg and the Liberal Democrats. I mean, in Scotland, you don't care because you don't pay tuition fees. But in England, Nick Clegg, Liberal Democrats, they said, oh, he said, if I'm in, if I get in power, I will vote against any increase in tuition fees. And then he got in and then he just waved it all through. And people were very cross about that. Just last week, there were news stories about George Weir, who's been, he's been president of Liberia now for a year. And he's the only African ever to have won FIFA World Footballer of the Year. And then he, now he's, now he's president of his country. It was extraordinary. But he's now being evaluated a year in. Is he actually a good president? He was a good footballer. Is he a good president? And people are disillusioned in Liberia. And the story's about there was a hundred million dollars of Liberian currency that seems to have gone missing. It was last seen at an airport. And if you want money from a bank in Liberia, you have to queue for hours or days and they only give you a bit of what you ask for. So there are these allegations about the administration. And is he really keeping the promises that he would make? Or is he corrupt like so many other officials? Well, here with King David in 2 Samuel 9, it just would have been so easy for him to say, you know,

[13 : 41] I know I said that to Jonathan at that time, but the game's changed now. It's not practical for me to keep that promise anymore. It's going to be costly for David. Some would say it's foolhardy to bring back someone from Saul's house. Saul's grandson is a potential rival. And he's living out east across the Jordan River, kind of on the edges of the promised land. And David's saying, bring him in, bring him back to the heart of the power base to Jerusalem. But the thing is that David knows that when you make a promise, God wants you to keep it. He's true to his word.

So even as he gets most powerful, it's at that moment that he chooses to show this kindness. And in that, I guess we can see David's heart that he trusts God has made me king.

I trust God to keep his promises. And what God wants of me is that I will obey God. I don't have to grasp on to power. I just need to obey God to show that I trust him. And I wonder whether it's worth reflecting whether you've got a position of power in your world today, and whether it could be an example to you, what David does. If in your workplace, you've got people who work for you.

Or socially, if you're a popular person, that makes you powerful among a group of friends. If there are people in the group who are more trying to be accepted by a group of friends that you're already accepted by. Or financially, if you've got money, it makes you powerful in the world today. How could you look for ways to use the power that God's given you, not to be selfish, but to show kindness to other people?

And the kindness that David shows here is to keep his promises. And so it is for us that we are to be faithful people keeping our promises. Think about marriage promises for those of us who are married.

[15 : 45] We don't keep our marriage promises because it's always the best option for us. We don't keep our marriage promises because it's the most exciting thing to do. No, we keep them because we follow a God who always keeps his promises. So we keep our promises.

So that's the unlikely, the unexpected moment. The second point is the unrivaled generosity of the king's kindness. We move on. If you see the verses that I've highlighted in the outline there, we're going to come back to the middle because that's the sort of heart of things.

All David needs to do to keep his promise to Jonathan is not to kill Jonathan's family. But look at verse 9 as he meets with Zeba again. Then the king summoned Zeba, Saul's steward, and said to him, I have given your master's grandson everything that belonged to Saul and his family. You and your sons and your servants are to farm the land for him and bring in the crops so that our master's grandson may be provided for. And Mephibosheth, grandson of your master, will always eat at my table.

And then Zeba says, your servant, the king, will do whatever my lord, the king commands his servant to do. So Mephibosheth ate at David's table like one of the king's sons. That's extraordinary generosity from David to this man. Bringing this rival from a place of exile on the edge of the promised land right back to eat at his table. He's giving all the estates that Saul owned, all the farmland to Mephibosheth, handing it over. His family are going to be really wealthy.

And he gives this place at David's table. That's a way of saying he has a place of the highest honor. He's like a member of David's family now. So this is what kindness looks like in the kingdom of God.

[17 : 36] It's not just doing the bare minimum, discharging a duty. No, actively looking to honor somebody, to overflow with generosity towards people. And you see when this is David doing this, that kindness isn't timid. It's not a timid thing. It's not the same as niceness, being kind.

David is strong when he needs to be. At times, as you read to Samuel, he's brutal. You'd think he was too strong. But God's king isn't a bully. He's not merciless. And we shouldn't mistake kindness as a sign of weakness, especially not in our leaders. Sometimes it's as though we look for qualities in a leader that are not kind. But actually, a sign of real strength in a leader is that they're able to be kind. And as we move into the center point, the heart of the story, we get to our third point. So we've thought about the unexpected moment for the kindness, the unrivaled generosity of the kindness. Thirdly, the unlikely beneficiary of the king's kindness.

So Mephibosheth turns up, and you can understand he's pretty suspicious about David. What's David up to here? And you can sense his fear in verse 6. When Mephibosheth, son of Jonathan, the son of Saul, came to David, he bowed down to pay him honor. And you wonder, as he got down, you know, which was probably difficult, couldn't use his legs. He might be half expecting he's never going to make it back up again as he bows his head. Is he going to lob my head off here? But David calls him by name, Mephibosheth. And he says, at your service. And then the culmination, verse 7.

Have a look, verse 7. Don't be afraid, David said to him. Don't be afraid, for I will surely show you kindness for the sake of your father, Jonathan. I will restore to you all the land that belonged to your grandfather Saul, and you will always eat at my table. And then at the end of the chapter, verse 13, Mephibosheth lived in Jerusalem because he always ate at the king's table. He was lame in both feet. And I wonder if Mephibosheth is perhaps the most unlikely man in the whole kingdom of Israel at that time to get kindness from David. Why? Because he's powerless and because he's an enemy.

He's powerless because he's lame. And that's a time in history and a place in history when that meant you were pitied. We know the background from chapter 4. When he was five years old, the news reached his household that his dad, Jonathan, and his grandpa Saul had died on the battlefield. And the maid looking after him fled with him. But he was five years old and too small to keep up. And he fell. And he got crippled in both legs. It's an awful story. The point, though, is that David is giving to a man who can give nothing back. He's a powerless man. He's a pitied man.

[20 : 39] That's the kindness of the king. And he's also such an unlikely beneficiary because he's an enemy, potentially at least. His grandpa Saul tried to murder David. Even after Saul died, the tribes loyal to Saul's household sent the nation into civil war for years. They installed someone else from the house of Saul as a rival king to David. David's just fought those wars. And here is David seeking out a man who could be used by his enemies as a rival king. And he pursues him so that he can overwhelm him with generosity. And as he does that, he's giving us a picture of God's kindness. Did you notice that connection back in verse 3? That the king doesn't just say he wants to show kindness. He says, to whom I can show God's kindness. David is an agent here of God's kindness. And if you're a Christian here this evening, we're called to reflect that same kind of godly character in our lives, to show

God's kindness to other people. It's a fruit of the Spirit. In Galatians chapter 5, one of the fruits of the Spirit is kindness. And David models it for us here. So what does it look like? Well, it's good to say that kindness isn't the same as niceness. Christian kindness has to flow from love. I read a really good article this week, actually, about how you could easily spot a church where no one's kind to each other and no one's nice to each other. You could easily think there are some unhealthy signs in this church. But actually, it's deeply unhealthy in a church if everyone's nice to each other all the time. And no one actually cares enough to say anything hard. Actually, no one goes deep in relationship. We're just nice. We're just polite. And then we just go about our own business.

But Christian kindness, it stems out of a heart of love for the other person. It's loving kindness. So it's not just about not offending people or being polite. It's about wanting what's best for other people. And there are so many ways we can show kindness. Obviously, in today's world, we can show kindness with our time, by making time for other people, by who you take the time to send a message to, a text message or an email or write to, just to see how they are, to tell them you are praying for them, by who you choose to phone when you've got a free evening. Perhaps there's a relative in your life who you know thinks about you, but you never really see. They never hear from you.

We can show kindness by who we invite along, you know, for going out with friends. And we think of somebody who perhaps would love to come, and we haven't, they probably haven't been asked. We can show kindness by remembering people. So when people tell us things that are important to them, remembering. And next time we see them, asking them, what happened or how was that that you told me about? We can show kindness with our body language. And you know, you can see that you think about the opposite, can't you, when you're talking to somebody and they're looking over your shoulder for who they'd rather speak to. There's ways that we can be kind just by showing somebody with our body language that we want to pay attention to them and that we want to hear from them. They're important. We treat them as more important than ourselves. We can show kindness in our prayer lives. There was an older couple I can think of who I went to see for the first time.

And they were a housebound older couple. And I'd never met them before. And they asked me questions that showed they knew loads about me. And it was because they'd been praying for me. It was very moving. Seeing their kindness. I think of a couple of older men who were really busy points in their lives have made time for me because they knew I needed some time. And it's meant a lot. I was at a conference where a guy who was really busy and lots of people wanted to see him came to find me and said, let's have a meal together. What meal can we meet up and sit together? And it was just kindness. He knew that I needed some wisdom, some encouragement, and just wanted to give that time.

[25 : 01] And I guess we find it easy with people we like to be kind and people who we really want to like us. But God calls us to show kindness to everybody. So I put it on the sheets there.

That verse from 1 Thessalonians 5. Make sure that nobody pays back wrong for wrong. But always try to be kind to each other and to everyone else. So a couple of examples of that I think are being kind to powerful people and being kind to powerless people. So kindness to the powerful because in our culture I think people think it's okay, it's perfectly fine to speak unkindly about powerful people. So if you think about how we talk about politicians, about celebrities, people in the public eye, maybe next time you're in a conversation about Brexit or a celebrity in the news, maybe think how could I speak words of kindness when this person's being torn apart. And it includes kindness to the powerless, the people like Mephibosheth today, people who may be overlooked by the world, people we think of as needy when in truth we're all needy. Even in a Christian setting like in your small group, it's all too easy to kind of raise an eyebrow or sort of roll your eyes or say something that just makes it clear that you feel superior to someone else. And instead we're called to be kind in our words, in our thoughts, our actions, our prayers, our time. And let's be kind out there in the world so that we as Christians are known for our kindness where it's most needed today. As a fruit of the gospel we believe about a kind

God. And as we do that, let's pray it opens doors to share the gospel because people see that we're different because we're kind. We look after the vulnerable. We look for ways to serve our city and those most in need. Well look, to do those things, to live in that kind of kindness is an act of radical self-denial. Where do we find the power, the strength to be kind like that? Well in Titus chapter 3, we're commanded to be kind to all people, even to the malicious and the foolish in Titus 3. And Paul tells us that and then he says to remember that we were so undeserving of kindness ourselves. Titus 3 verse 4, and yet when the kindness and love of God our Savior appeared, he saved us, not because of righteous things we had done, but because of his mercy.

Jesus coming was God's kindness to us. In other words, when we see David's kindness to Mephibosheth, it's just a picture of the kindness that King Jesus has shown to you and me.

You think about Mephibosheth as the potential enemy who was powerless. And in Romans 5, we read that Jesus came to save us while we were still powerless, while we were still sinners.

[28 : 11] And in verse 10, when we were God's enemies, we were reconciled to him through the death of his son. So we turned away from God, but God has pursued us. And when we turn back to him, he lifts up our bowed heads and says, just as David said to Mephibosheth in verse 7, Jesus says to us, don't be afraid. You're welcome. And David said, think about that unrivaled generosity of David that he said to Mephibosheth, you'll always be welcome at my table.

And Jesus promises in Luke 13, people will come from east and west and from north and south and recline at the table in the kingdom of God. So the more we realize how shocking it is that David is this kind to Mephibosheth, the more we can start to see how shocking it was that Jesus has been this kind to us.

And we find the strength to be kind to others by reflecting on the kindness of our King to us. Amen. We're going to sing together in response to God's word.

And then we've got a prayer, just section B there on the sheets. We'll come back to after we've sung. Bathroom. We'll see you next time.

We'll see you next time. He's just feeling. I'm going to sing. We'll see you next time.

[29 : 50] We'll see you next time. Bye-bye. Amen. Bye-bye. Bye-bye. Bye-bye. Bye-bye. Bye-bye. Bye-bye. Bye-bye. Bye-bye. Bye-bye. Bye-bye. Bye-bye. Bye-bye.