

I will show you kindness | 2 Samuel 9.1-13

INTRO

Grab your Bibles and open them up to 2 Samuel 9. We continue today in our series: GOD BUILDS HIS KINGDOM. Over the last 5 weeks we have been getting different glimpses of God's kingdom realized; different ways to think about what it means to be the people of God. The way that God makes this clear in 2 Samuel is by using the earthly kingdom of Israel to prepare us for the coming eternal kingdom. The character of David's kingdom on earth gives clues to what God is going to establish in the end. Each of these chapters provide us with a vignette, a story that reflects something about God and His plan for the world.

Chapter 5: the people submit to God's chosen king and experience the victory over the Philistines that had been promised to them when their first king was crowned. This chapter gives us a picture of how Jesus will come to establish His Lordship and drive out those who oppose Him.

Chapter 6: the ark comes to Jerusalem (we have the story of Uzzah who touches the ark and dies), in this we saw the holiness of God and the worship that this inspires. One of the pictures of heaven that we are given is of everyone surrounding the throne, crying out: Holy, Holy, Holy, is the Lord God Almighty; God instills this holiness and worship in His people through the ark coming into the center of the kingdom.

Chapter 7: we see God make a covenant with David to establish the throne forever through the offspring of David. The righteous and just king will maintain a perfect relationship with God and rule in a way that causes flourishing for all of His people. We know that this offspring is Jesus Christ, the true king, who rule's forever.

Chapter 8: last week, God began to bring together the pieces of David's kingdom, eliminating their enemies from the North, South, East and West. We saw God give them wealth, equity, justice, and rest, all through the leadership of the king who God has established and is working through.

This week we are going to focus in and see how this flourishing and kindness is shown to a single person. The idea here is that the experience of this person in Israel is a reflection of how all members of the kingdom have been blessed. In an eternal sense, the goodness that he experiences should be seen as a window into the overwhelming grace that every member of God's kingdom is given. While this is the main theme in today's text, we will also be looking at the kindness shown by David and think through how this reveals a characteristic of the kingdom that we should be living out now. Let's get into it, 2 Samuel 9, v.1:

AN OATH OF KINDNESS

[1] 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."

This seems like a strange question for David to ask, because it seems like most of 2 Samuel has been trying to put Saul and his kingdom in the rear view mirror. God is moving on from the self-serving king who tried to establish his own kingdom to David whom God is going to work through to establish God's kingdom. We would expect David to want to look to the future and to forget the previous king.

David doesn't. At least part of the reason is because David had made a promise to Saul. Back in 1 Samuel 24, we have the story of Saul's army hunting down David - Saul enters into the cave where David is hiding. The one time that the king is not surrounded by guards is when he is relieving himself, which happens to be what he enters the cave to do. David sneaks up, cuts off the corner of the king's robe. Then from some distance, he calls out to Saul, shows him the robe as proof that he means no harm to Saul. In verse 17, Saul responds, saying:

[17] He said to David, "You are more righteous than I, for you have repaid me good, whereas I have repaid you evil. [18] And you have declared this day how you have dealt well with me, in that you did not kill me when the LORD put me into your hands. [19] For if a man finds his enemy, will he let him go away safe? So may the LORD reward you with good for what you have done to me this day. (ESV) [20] And now, behold, I know that you shall surely be king, and that the kingdom of Israel shall be established in your hand. [21] Swear to me therefore by the LORD that you will not cut off my offspring after me, and that you will not destroy my name out of my father's house." [22] And David swore this to Saul. Then Saul went home, but David and his men went up to the stronghold. | 1 Samuel 24:17-22

Saul initiated this, knowing that God was with David and that eventually the kingdom would be given over. David agrees. He gives his word. This binds David and Saul together in covenant - solemn agreement.

The interesting part is, Saul doesn't keep his end of the bargain. Saul once again hunts David with the intent to kill him. You would think that this justifies David not fulfilling his end of the deal. David does not see his commitment as dependent on Saul. His promise was not contingent on Saul's action. He upholds his end IN SPITE of Saul.

There are two different kinds of covenants in the Bible: conditional and unconditional. God uses conditional covenants (like the one with Adam and Moses) to show His people that there are consequences for sin and disobedience. The conditional covenants are there to show us what we deserve. God then follows that up with unconditional covenants (Abraham and David) to reveal how he shows grace to people who do not deserve it. While there is a place for conditional promises, the heart of God is unconditional.

He intends for His people to make commitments in a similar way. Since we have been promised everything in the Kingdom, we can live out kingdom principles in a world that doesn't uphold them. We

can be consistent and follow through on our promises independent of whether or not those we love, care for and serve, respond accordingly. This, I believe, is what Jesus is getting at in the Sermon on the Mount when he tells the people that in the kingdom there are no oaths:

[34] But I say to you, Do not take an oath at all, either by heaven, for it is the throne of God, [35] or by the earth, for it is his footstool, or by Jerusalem, for it is the city of the great King. [36] And do not take an oath by your head, for you cannot make one hair white or black. [37] Let what you say be simply 'Yes' or 'No'; anything more than this comes from evil. | Matthew 5:34–37

The sermon on the Mount is Jesus laying down kingdom ideals. When he says that we should not take any oath, he isn't saying that we shouldn't sign contracts or make promises...what He is saying is that the oath that we make should not be dependent on someone else's performance. We should not be basing the value of our commitment on anything on earth or heaven. We should do what we say because we are people of integrity. When I preached on this text (which is available online if you want to think through this more), I summarized it this way:

Jesus defines the oath of a Christian as one of simplicity. It should not be bound by paper or additional authority, but it is a reflection of a person whose heart is committed to stewarding the earthly relationships created by God. Your character should be so trustworthy that yes or no is enough to hold you to your word. The life of an honest man is his promise.

This is important for us because we tend to think of all commitments as conditional. There are times in life, because of sin, where we do have to set boundaries and have some conditions. These should be the exception, not the norm. The Bible, over and over, calls us to live out our relationships with the unconditional love that we have been shown by God rather than this hesitant faith that is only willing to give as much as we feel that we are receiving. In marriage, you vow to love and care for your spouse, not based on how well they fulfill their vows, but as an unconditional promise. 95% of marriage counseling is people pointing out how their spouse isn't living up to their commitment rather than simply asking: how can I be a better husband or wife?

Similarly, you commit to love and serve others in the church, not because they will always be lovable (they won't), but because the love that we show is being given to us. 1 John 4 is ALL about this, it famously states:

[19] We love because he first loved us.

That whole section in 1 John 4 is about how the love and commitment that we are called to live out is not something that we have within us or that makes sense in a conditional world. We have been gifted divine grace and that allows us to live unconditionally without being promised anything in return, knowing that the inheritance we talked about last week is ours - whether the people of this world take advantage of our kindness or not.

We see that God blesses His world with kindness through those who know His kindness. Which makes all of us both recipients, but also those tasked with bringing His unconditional, divine kindness into this broken world. David gives us an example here by keeping his word in spite of Saul's failure to keep his.

We see another motivation here as David says: *that I may show him kindness for Jonathan's sake.* Jonathan was Saul's son and a close friend of David. David and Jonathan model for us what Christian relationship should look like. True friendship, according to the Bible, involves loyalty, sacrifice, compromise, and emotional attachment.

One of the stories that best describes this is when Jonathan protects David from the wrath of his father in 1 Samuel 20. Jonathan is worried his dad will do something foolish and so they test Saul's anger by having David hide and not show up to Saul's table. After a few days, Saul asks where David has been, Jonathan covers for him, and Saul gets mad and throws a spear at Jonathan, blaming him for helping David. Jonathan goes and warns David by their pre-decided signaling system. At the end of all of this, these two close friends meet for just a moment, knowing that they will not see one another for the rest of their lives. As they do, Jonathan reminds David that though they are apart, they are united and this will pass along to all who come after them:

[42] Then Jonathan said to David, "Go in peace, because we have sworn both of us in the name of the LORD, saying, 'The LORD shall be between me and you, and between my offspring and your offspring, forever.'" | 1 Samuel 20:42

Again we have a promise David made, but this one is a reflection of the love that these two men have for one another. Wanting to show kindness to Jonathan's offspring would be much easier for David, because it is not just something that he agreed to do, but something that is a natural outworking of their relationship. This is one of the results of living in faithfulness towards others: it makes it easy for them to do their part and love you back. This isn't rocket science, if you show love and integrity to people, they are more likely to reciprocate and love you back.

In marriage and church (examples I used earlier) the idea is not that you have to fight to love others all of the time. It is that in taking on the interest of others (as Philippians 2 describes it), or sacrificing and submitting yourself for their good, you remove all of the reasons that human beings have to withhold their love. The Bible explains the beauty of marriage as mutual submission:

[21] submitting to one another out of reverence for Christ. | Ephesians 5:21

The beauty of the church is described to us as a body, with all of the parts functioning for the good of the whole and the other individual members:

[25] that there may be no division in the body, but that the members may have the same care for one another. [26] If one member suffers, all suffer together; if one member is honored, all rejoice together. | 1 Corinthians 12:25–26

All of this is a picture of the Kingdom. We said last week that the Kingdom of God is ordered, with every part doing what it is supposed to. What we add this week is the joy that accompanies this. All are serving one another out of reverence for Christ, but this is not a harsh task, where we push through and do what is right even though we don't want to. In the heavenly kingdom, we serve and are served in a way that develops deep loving relationships as we are filled with gratitude and awe. We experience the peace of God and it frees us to love as we were meant to.

The final thing I want us to see in this opening section is that David is able to act on this because God has provided peace in his life. We mentioned this last week: all of the things that God is doing in David's kingdom is to provide rest for God's people. It is when David enters into this rest that he is able to see others who need kindness. The same is true for us. Without Jesus, we have a broken relationship with God, a fractured identity, and a misunderstanding of what it means to be human. We are regenerated, our relationship with God is made new, we are unified with Jesus as co-heirs, and our lives now have purpose: to glorify God and enjoy Him forever. What this does is allows us to take our eyes off of ourselves and actually see others. We can't do that as long as we are insecure about ourselves. God frees us, he gives us peace, so that we can begin to see the needs of others. The rest that he has given us is not so that we can fill our lives with more self-centered activity - it is so that we see beyond ourselves. This is what David does.

In his search for someone from the house of Saul and Jonathan, a former servant of Saul alerts David to the plight of Mephibosheth, the son of Jonathan. We were introduced to him in chapter 4, when we learned of how he became lame, when his nurse, fleeing after the death of Saul and Jonathan, dropped him. Now David has someone to show kindness to. Here is what that looks like, v.4:

THE HUMBLE STATE OF MEPHIBOSHETH

[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." [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." [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?"

David finds out where Mephibosheth is staying and brings him in. There is really no reason for David to be calling him in, so I am guessing that there is a bit of fear and trepidation in Mephibosheth as he is ushered into the king's court. His first act is to fall on his face and pay homage. He understands the immense difference between the king, who has pushed out all of the enemies and unified the nation, and a crippled son of a former prince. He takes on a position of humility.

David tells him not to be afraid; Mephibosheth responds in confusion. It does not make sense for David to treat him well. He is being offered unmerited favor - which is the definition of the word GRACE.

David and Mephibosheth are acting out the last chapter, with Mephibosheth playing the role of David and David in the place of God. This is a model for us of what it looks like to recognize the grace that you have been given and to pass it along to others. David's kindness is an outworking of what he has been given.

We also get, in Mephibosheth, an accurate response to grace: HUMILITY. Mephibosheth is unable to improve his place in life: he can't undo what his grandfather did and he can't heal himself. The only hope that he has is for the king to lift him up. The same is true for us. We are dead in our sin and have no ability to mend what has been broken. Jesus gives His life to do the work we could not. Our king not only shows kindness, but dies to give us life.

At no point should we become comfortable with the fact that Jesus brings sinners to life, invites them into the Kingdom, and promises them undefinable wealth and peace. We should be confident in it, but not because it is deserved. The fact that God sanctifies us and clothes us in white and presents us in glory does not make it any less gracious. We don't deserve anything that He gives.

We don't have to verbalize this, but our response to God should echo Mephibosheth here: *What is your servant, that you should show regard for a dead dog such as I?*" This posture is not to put us in our place, because it is in relation to the fact that God does not allow us to stay here. Humility is the means for us to see how amazing God's grace is. It puts us in a place to experience His goodness in its fullness. This is where Mephibosheth is in this story as David reveals how he will be blessed, v.9:

GRACE UPON GRACE

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

In this we see what the grace offered to Mephibosheth looks like. In this moment, David takes him from a lack and provides everything that he needs. This gracious provision is described as: wealth, care and status.

WEALTH | *All that belonged to Saul and to all his house I have given to your master's grandson.*

David tells Saul's servant that all that belonged to Saul has been transferred to Mephibosheth. He went from poverty to wealth in a moment. No longer would he have any concerns as it came to money because of David's kindness. For someone who had little to no ability to produce wealth, this is security.

CARE | *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.*

David now tells Ziba and his household that they will work and provide for Mephibosheth. He needs more than just wealth, he needs help. As a disabled person in a farming culture, the work of the land would be difficult to impossible. David makes sure that he is not only given the means, but the care that he needs.

STATUS | *Mephibosheth your master's grandson shall always eat at my table.*

To eat at the king's table is about much more than food; it means that you are a person of value in the community. Of all of the people in the Kingdom, a select few get to share a meal with the king. Yet here, Mephibosheth is given a permanent seat at the table.

As we continue to see, these are a foreshadowing of the wealth, care and status that we receive as members of God's kingdom. We talked about the wealth God provides in the great inheritance last week. We also see that the heavenly kingdom will be a place where all of our needs are met, not only by the overwhelming presence of God's glory, but also by all of the saints together caring for one another. And God uses a similar image in Revelation to describe status, showing us that all of His people will be elevated and invited to His table. Revelation 19:6–9 describes it this way:

[6] Then I heard what seemed to be the voice of a great multitude, like the roar of many waters and like the sound of mighty peals of thunder, crying out,

"Hallelujah!

For the Lord our God

the Almighty reigns.

[7] Let us rejoice and exult

and give him the glory,

for the marriage of the Lamb has come,

and his Bride has made herself ready;

[8] it was granted her to clothe herself

with fine linen, bright and pure"—

for the fine linen is the righteous deeds of the saints.

[9] And the angel said to me, "Write this: Blessed are those who are invited to the marriage supper of the Lamb." And he said to me, "These are the true words of God."

We will sit at the table and share a meal with the king, not because we achieve or deserve it, but because he chooses to bestow His grace on us. In the same way that David goes out of His way to lift up and provide for Mephibosheth, our king will keep His promise to us: inviting us into the glory and joy of His kingdom, and providing for us grace upon grace.

One of the symbols of God's provision that he has given to us comes in the form of a meal. While this has been condensed down to a small piece of bread and little cup, it nonetheless is the assurance that the provision that we will experience in the future, is also the provision that gets us there. Jesus is not simply waiting for us to make it to heaven; He is doing the work to get us there. When we come to the table for Communion, we approach it with humility, in need of Jesus to endure. Come today with an accurate view of your state, and with the assurance that God will provide everything that you need and more. Not because you deserve it, but because he is good.

Ephesians 2:1-7