

Briarwood Presbyterian Church  
“Who’s Welcome at the King’s Table?”  
II Samuel 9  
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In this study we will be in one of my favorite Old Testament narratives which is in II Samuel 9. This text is about King David and Mephibosheth. It’s one of my favorites because I like how Mephibosheth just rolls off your tongue when you say it. I wanted my daughter Bailey’s middle name to be Mephibosheth but my wife Denise who is far smarter than me said those wouldn’t go together. So Bailey was saved by her mother. Seriously in the ancient Near East the question is what would happen to an enemy of the King? Would he be received with open arms? Would he be welcomed to the table? Our text from II Samuel 9 gives an interaction between David and Mephibosheth and the outcome is not what we expect.

One of the reasons I love this narrative so much is as Christians the story of Mephibosheth is our story, because as an enemy of the King he was welcomed to the table. Enemies aren’t welcomed to the table, but we are as Christians. If you’re still searching and you don’t have answers but are looking for answers then the story of Mephibosheth can be your story too. You will see why as we go through this study. Before we look at the text I want to give some background, context and information on this.

After the death of Saul and his son Jonathan in I Samuel 31 and II Samuel 1, David is anointed King in Judah in the South in II Samuel 2 and appointed King over Israel in the North in II Samuel 5. In II Samuel 7:8–16 God makes a covenant with David that his throne will be established forever. II Samuel 7:12–16 says *[12] When your days are fulfilled and you lie down with your fathers, I will raise up your offspring after you, who shall come from your body, and I will establish his kingdom. [13] He shall build a house for my name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever. [14] I will be to him a father, and he shall be to me a son. When he commits iniquity, I will discipline him with the rod of men, with the stripes of the sons of men, [15] but my steadfast love will not depart from him, as I took it from Saul, whom I put away from before you. [16] And your house and your kingdom shall be made sure forever before me. Your throne shall be established forever.*” This is the promise God made to David.

David is God’s covenant representative, yet he is pointing us into the future, forward to a far greater King whose line and Kingdom would have no end and that would be King Jesus. He would be the fulfillment of the covenant promises that God has made. David is at the peak of his reign in II Samuel. The Lord has given him rest from his enemies. The Lord has given him victory wherever he goes. The Lord has made his name great throughout the land and he reigns over all of Israel administering justice and equity for his people in II Samuel 8. Then we come to this passage in II Samuel 9. God is revealing something through His Word. Who is He and what is He saying to us? What is our need? I’d like to start this study by praying for us.

Prayer:

Not to us O Lord, but to You alone we give glory for the sake of Your steadfast love and faithfulness. Now I pray that You would open our hearts and eyes that we might behold wonderful riches from Your Word. I pray for the one who brings Your Word that You would keep me humble. Keep my heart and my eyes fixed on You. Jesus You are my Champion, the Author and Perfector of my faith and I pray all this in Jesus’ Name, Amen.

II Samuel 9:1–13 says [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.”* [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?”*

[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.* This is God's Word.

There are three points I want to make about this interaction – the King's pursuit, the King's message and the King's welcome. The first point is the King's pursuit. Mephibosheth, son of Jonathan and grandson of King Saul, was an enemy of King David. Saul had pursued David many times during his reign in an attempt to kill him because he viewed David as a threat and an enemy of the throne. Any enemies to a King in the ancient Near East would have resulted in that threat being wiped out. Saul's house was a rebel house and Mephibosheth by birth was a part of that rebel house.

Mephibosheth lived in this far northeast region of Gilead called Lo-debar, which was far away from David's throne in Jerusalem. Lo-debar actually means no pasture. So he lived in a barren land, had no crown, no kingdom, no inheritance, and he had even lost all his physical abilities for he was lame. When news of his grandfather Saul and father Jonathan's death came about, Mephibosheth's nurse who was in such a hurried rush to flee actually dropped Mephibosheth. We don't know exactly what happened but he became lame and crippled in his feet. He was about five years old when this happened and here in II Samuel 9 we fast forward about 20 to 25 years. Mephibosheth even has his own son Mica.

David's pursuit of his enemy is not one that we would expect. Instead of pursuit to eliminate the threat, David's pursuit is to show kindness to his enemy, an enemy of the crown. Three times in this passage (verses 1, 3 and 7) David says he wants to show kindness to the house of Saul. The Hebrew word for kindness here is *hesed* and its range of meaning is kindness, goodness, grace, favor, loyalty, faithfulness and steadfast love. So David's question is more like, is there anyone from the enemy camp of Saul that I can show the steadfast love of

God to? *Hesed* here is covenant language. It's keeping with the covenant. It's a contract, a commitment, a promise as God made with David himself in agreement.

David also made a covenant with Jonathan as well. In I Samuel 18 and 20 that covenant was to show Jonathan that he would promise not to cut off his steadfast love from his house, even though God was removing all of David's enemies. David was keeping that promise to Jonathan to show kindness to Mephibosheth, an enemy to the King and the throne. This is a picture of God's mercy, kindness and steadfast love to us, that God would pursue us as David pursued Mephibosheth. God extends His *hesed* to us, an enemy of the Throne because we are sinful and fallen people. Jesus Christ would ultimately be that fulfillment of God's covenant of grace that a throne and a kingdom would last forever from David's line.

Think of how God does this for us, His enemies. The saying is right from the old Pogo cartoon that says 'we have met the enemy and he is us.' Because of sin we are all enemies of the King, but don't miss God's pursuing grace here, His irresistible grace in the passage. It was David who pursued Mephibosheth, an enemy of the King to show him kindness and mercy. Say that we are running at break neck speed toward the edge of the cliffs to run off the Grand Canyon to our death, toward our own pursuits but because of His great love God reaches out, grabs us from behind, draws us in and saves us. That is the picture here of what David is doing with Mephibosheth.

As God restores and saves us He takes us from being enemies of the crown to being children of God. So as an enemy of the King, the question is have you received God's kindness and mercy that only comes through Jesus Christ Himself? If you haven't, my challenge to you is why not do so today? Isn't a King who extends kindness to His enemy as He welcome His enemy in, worthy of putting your faith and trust in? That is the kind of King we serve and who welcomes us in. He is worthy of putting our faith and trust in.

What about extending kindness to our enemies also? I think of how challenging that is for me to extend kindness, grace and mercy of God to my enemies around me. Maybe our approach to our enemies is like the reporter who interviewed an old man who had just turned 100 years old as he is celebrating his birthday. The reporter asked him 'What are you most proud of?' The man said 'I don't have an enemy in the world.' The reporter remarked 'What a beautiful thought, how inspirational!' "Yep" the old man said, 'I've outlived every last one of them.' Do you hope to outlive all your enemies, because honestly that's what I hope to do sometimes?

Instead I hope our approach would be something like this story in 1567. King Philip the 2<sup>nd</sup> of Spain appointed the Duke of Alba, his governor of the lower part of the nation and the Duke was a bitter enemy of the newly emerging protestant reformation. His rule was called the reign of terror with a bloody counsel, because it had ordered the slaughter of so many Protestants. It is reported that one man who was sentenced to die for his faith managed to escape in the dead of winter. As he was being pursued by a lone soldier the man came to a lake where the ice was thin and cracking. Somehow he managed to get safely across that lake but as soon as he reached the other side he heard his pursuer screaming. The soldier had fallen through the ice and was about to drown. At the risk of being captured, tortured and eventually being killed or being drowned himself the man goes back across the lake at risk of his own life to save his enemy. The great love of Christ that saved him was the same love that constrained him to save his enemy that day and he knew he had no other choice to be faithful to his Lord and God.

So who are your enemies? Maybe they are closer than you think. I think the question that this II Samuel 9 passage calls us to, is who can we extend the steadfast love, kindness, grace

and mercy of God to us as enemies of the King? For we once we all enemies as Paul says in Romans 5:8–11 [8] *but God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners (enemies), Christ died for us. [9] Since, therefore, we have now been justified by his blood, much more shall we be saved by him from the wrath of God. [10] For if while we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, now that we are reconciled, shall we be saved by his life. [11] More than that, we also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received reconciliation.* As God extends His love through Christ to us as enemies, how much more we are called to rejoice in the Good News of the Gospel and extend that out to those around us who need so desperately to hear it.

Secondly, we see the King's message in this passage. King David delivers a three-fold message of promise to Mephibosheth. II Samuel 9:7 says [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."* First, it's a passage of mercy and we've already spoken about that Hebrew word *hesed* and its range of meanings. David is already showing mercy, grace and kindness to Mephibosheth. In turn, we see it in the larger picture that God shows us mercy, grace and kindness through Christ. It's all through God's covenant promises to us that solely by His grace through faith alone in Christ that we are saved.

Secondly, it's a message of inheritance. All that Mephibosheth had lost which was everything, David now tells him it is all restored to him. The barren land that Mephibosheth once lived in would now be replaced with a fruitful land where he and his family would be cared for, for the rest of their lives and have nothing to worry about. If we're in Christ we get an inheritance too. Galatians 3:29 says [29] *And if you are Christ's, then you are Abraham's offspring, heirs according to promise.* Galatians 4:6–7 says [6] *And because you are sons, God has sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying, "Abba! Father!" [7] So you are no longer a slave, but a son, and if a son, then an heir through God.*

Titus 3:5–7 says [5] *he saved us, not because of works done by us in righteousness, but according to his own mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit, [6] whom he poured out on us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior, [7] so that being justified by his grace we might become heirs according to the hope of eternal life.* I Peter 1:3–5 says [3] *Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! According to his great mercy, he has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, [4] to an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you, [5] who by God's power are being guarded through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.* Amen!

Thirdly, it's a message of adoption. I think this is a beautiful picture not only of what God has done to Mephibosheth but what He has done with us. As a father calls his child's name, David calls Mephibosheth. We see this in II Samuel 9:6, *And David said, "Mephibosheth!" And he answered, "Behold, I am your servant."* As father would comfort his son or daughter, what does David do? Can you imagine being before the King where your father and grandfather had pursued to kill this King, shivering and shaking wondering if he is going to have you killed? David tells Mephibosheth, 'do not fear!' That is a father speaking to their son or daughter. David calls Mephibosheth his child, his son for he was accepted and received into David's family. He had a place at David's table always, like one of the King's sons for only a member of the King's family gets a place at the King's table. Mephibosheth has a place at the King's table. It's because he was adopted into David's family and he was now a son.

So Mephibosheth, an outcast and an orphan, rings a bell with us for we too were once outcasts and orphans. Yet in the Father's love He predestined us for adoption through Jesus Christ. Not only does the Lord save us but He adopts us into His family and I think we miss out on seeing that a lot. I think the question for us is, do we know the adoptive love of the Father? Through our union with Christ we're not only justified through grace alone in faith alone in Christ alone but we're also adopted as sons and daughters and brought into God's family.

Question 34 of the Shorter Catechism says this; What is adoption? Adoption is an act of God's free grace, whereby we are received into the number, and have a right to all the privileges of the sons of God. We are received into the family of God, thus we share all the privileges of those who are the sons and daughters of God. John 1:12-13 says *[12] But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God, [13] who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God.*

Think about this from the perspective of all the broken families that are around us today in this world. The question is, where can we bring the hope of the Gospel and the hope that adoption brings of the love of the Father to those that hurting in families? What a beautiful picture to see a family that was broken and was brought healing by the grace and mercy of Jesus Christ as they are brought into the family of God.

I want to give you three privileges that our adoptions provides for us. Our adoption expresses for us a new status. When we adopted our two girls they became our children and they took on the Wichlan name, likewise when God adopts us we take on His Name as sons and daughters of the King. To think about this from an adoption perspective I am Michael in Christ, in God's family and that is what the Gospel has done for me. It has given me a new name because of the faith and trust that I have placed in my Savior where I'm not only a child of God but I carry His Name. I think we lose sight of that sometimes as Christians.

Also through adoption we have access to the Father's never ending care for us. Just as my two girls had all the privileges and pleasures of our family, we too have all the privileges and pleasures of the Father. Think of what He has given us. He has given us the blessings of the Word of God, the sacraments, the gift of prayer and the community of saints, the body of Christ. That is a benefit to being in the family of God for we have access to all of these privileges as sons and daughters of the King.

Thirdly, as children seek to imitate their parents, by being called into the family of God through our adoption, we have the benefit of imitating our heavenly Father. Sinclair Ferguson says this about adoption; 'understanding adoption should mean that our own sense and great goodness of the love of God is immeasurably enriched.' I John 3:1 says *[1] See what kind of love the Father has given to us, that we should be called children of God; and so we are.* As we have been shown this great love by the Father through our adoption, we have been called by the power of the Holy Spirit to imitate the Father's love in and through our own lives to the needy world around us.

The question this would bring us to is, are you growing in the deep sets of God's love through Christ in such a way that you are in turn showing the love that you received through Christ for the lost and hurting world around you? If not, how and where can you begin to imitate your heavenly Father, your Savior, Jesus Christ, where the Lord has placed you? He has placed us in a place of work, a neighborhood, a school, where there are people who need to see the love that God has for them and to call them as sons and daughters too. He has given us gifts and hobbies we enjoy that we can invite people into that don't know the Lord Jesus Christ.

Maybe you are reading this and like Mephibosheth's response to the King, your response is like his in II Samuel 9:8 which says [8] *And he paid homage and said, "What is your servant, that you should show regard for a dead dog such as I?"* Mephibosheth gives himself a title of a dead dog. It's a term of self-abasement. It's not very encouraging. It's a term of humiliation. Disgrace, guilt, shame is what ruled Mephibosheth's life and what he thought of himself. He had no self-worth, dignity or value as an image bearer of God, for even his name says it. Mephibosheth means from the mouth of shame.

We are all image bearers of God our Creator and yet the world is broken because of sin. Mephibosheth was broken physically, emotionally, spiritually and mentally. Every part of us is broken too. There is brokenness in our families, relationships, marriages and we're broken deep within ourselves as we try and cope with sin through means of isolation or we deal with it through guilt or shame ourselves, sheltering inward with our problems, instead of moving outward towards Christ seeking His forgiveness and grace which is sufficient for us. The Good News of the Gospel is that Jesus came to save broken people like us. We are all broken in some way today. What brokenness are you dealing with today?

The good news is that the Gospel enters into our brokenness and brings the healing balm of the Gospel. So the call for us today is to bring our brokenness to Jesus and receive His steadfast love and kindness that the King offers to us. As a shepherding pastor this is my job and I don't consider this a job but a calling that I love. I get to enter into people's lives and what a blessing it is to have this communion of saints here at Briarwood. We are called to live out the Gospel and our brokenness day to day before one another and before the face of God, because in the body of Christ there is no shame, no guilt and no condemnation for we are all welcome. Welcome to the King and welcome to His table. Let us as pastors enter into your brokenness and walk with you through your pain, through those challenges that you are going through in your life and to help you find the healing and peace that only Jesus can bring.

This is why our theme is to have a lifestyle of evangelism and discipleship. We can't evangelize and disciple one another or others if we're not doing that ourselves as the body of Christ and entering into each other's lives. I need you. We as pastors need your prayers in this church because we have huge targets on our backs and our families have huge targets on their backs. So come to Jesus who is the only true healing and balm for your wounds.

Finally we come to the King's welcome in this passage. Who is welcome to the King's table? Mephibosheth is welcome to the King's table. Notice the repetition in this passage and wherever you see repetition in God's Word we need to pay attention to it. Four different times in verses 7, 10, 11 and 13 David says 'Mephibosheth shall eat at my table', at the King's table always. Who is welcome at the King's table? We are welcome at the King's table. Just as Mephibosheth was in need of God's grace, mercy, steadfast love and kindness from the King, we too are in need of that for us as broken sinners.

Three different times in this narrative David says that Mephibosheth will always eat at his table and that means for as long as Mephibosheth lives and David is alive. That means for eternity. When God pursues us and calls us by His grace He not only pursues us but preserves us by His grace. We not only have the irresistible grace of God but we have the preserving grace of God which brings me great hope to know that I'm secure in my King, safe in His arms and there is nothing in all of creation that can ever separate me from that promise.

Jesus said in John 10:27-29 says [27] *My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me. [28] I give them eternal life, and they will never perish, and no one will snatch them out of my hand. [29] My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all, and no one*

*is able to snatch them out of the Father's hand.* This should give us confidence and free us to do the work of the Gospel that we're called to do as brothers and sisters in Christ. As those called by Christ we are to bear witness of this to the world around us.

Do you remember Mark Twain's book The Prince and the Pauper? It was a story about two boys born on the same day and they actually had striking resemblances to each other. One boy was named Tom Canty and he was born into a life of poverty, servitude and humble living. The other boy was named Edward Tudor and he was born into a life of royalty and exalted living as a prince. He was the royal heir to King Henry the 8<sup>th</sup>'s throne. The prince spares Tom in an altercation with one of the palace guards and both realizing later each other's striking resemblances they decide to switch clothes. Tom now exemplifies a life of riches and royalty and sees what it is like to live as a prince, in a king's palace. Edward experiences a life of poverty and servitude and what it's like to have a life of humble living.

The boys are restored later, Edward to his kingship and a life with Henry the 8<sup>th</sup> but Tom is not returned to his life of poverty. Instead he is given the title of what is known as the King's ward, meaning that he is adopted by the King into the King's family and he has all the rights that Edward had and he has a place at the King's table. Is that your story today? If not I challenge you to give your life to Christ and to call on Him as your King and Lord.

I would be remiss if I didn't talk about how this passage ends. It kind of seems like it ends on this 'hanging chad' so to speak. II Samuel 9 ends with this last sentence in verse 13, *Now he was lame in both his feet.* I don't know why this Hebrew narrative ends there but I believe it's there to remind us that we live between these times of the already and the not yet. While Mephibosheth had a place at the King's table he still carried the scars and wounds of his former life. There was healing to some degree in his life but complete healing didn't come to him in his lifetime, neither will complete healing come to us in our lifetime.

The promise is that in the already Jesus is King today and He does bring healing and hope to us in our lives of brokenness. The wounds and scars of Mephibosheth are there as a reminder that while there can't be complete healing now, one day there will be and that's the hope that we cling to of the not yet. He will bring complete healing one day and at the great feast, the Marriage Supper of the Lamb all those in Christ will be welcomed, seated and will feast with the King. And there will be no more sickness, sadness, suffering, sorrow, death, enemies or pain. At that time we will always be at the King's Table for all eternity, worshipping Him in a new heavens and a new earth.

There is a song by Sideways Prophets called *Come to the Table*. Here is a portion of the lyrics:

*We all start on the outside  
The outside looking in  
This is where grace begins  
We were hungry we were thirsty  
With nothing left to give  
Oh the shape that we were in  
Just when all hope seemed lost  
Love opened the door for us*

*Come meet this motley crew of misfits  
These liars and these thieves  
There's no one unwelcome here*

*So that sin and shame that you brought with you  
you can leave it at the door  
Let mercy draw you near*

*Come to the table  
Come join the sinners who have been redeemed  
Take your place beside the Savior  
Sit down and be set free  
Come to the table  
Come to the table*

So the call for you today is to come to the Table. Come to Christ in your brokenness as an enemy even of the throne and receive Him. Know that you can bring your brokenness to Him and that there will always be room at His Table. Let's pray.

Prayer:

Heavenly Father, we thank You that Your Word is true. We thank You for these amazing promises we see in II Samuel 9 that You not only fulfilled through Your servant David but we see them all the way through his line, through Christ to us as your sons and daughters. I pray for those reading this that are dealing with brokenness that are walking even as enemies of You today that this message would give them the hope and promise of the Gospel they need to hear and that they would turn their lives to Christ. For those of us dealing with brokenness may we bring that to Your Table to know that at Your Table there is room for us, You love us and You will never leave us or forsake us for we pray all this in Christ's Name, Amen.