

A Place at the King's Table

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[0 : 00] If you have your Bibles with you, we're going to be working out of 2 Samuel 9 today. This is going to be a standalone sermon. Oftentimes, we will preach through books of a Bible. Sometimes, we'll push pause and we'll do a sermon series.

But today, it just seemed very appropriate for kind of where God has us positioned as a church at this particular time and what's going on to just have a moment to really dig into what I think is a very pivotal text.

Pivotal text? Let me try to say that right. And let me just say this. This chapter is something that I have been enjoying and just kind of marinating in for a couple of years now.

It's really been something to my faith for me personally. It's caused me to understand the depths and the riches and the goodness and the love of the Father in Jesus Christ, that after Jesus Christ, it also reminds me of how he's called me to follow him.

Anyway, so I'm hoping that for all of us today, this is something that gets into our DNA as a church, what we learn in this passage. So let's jump into 2 Samuel 9.

[1 : 07] It says this. Verse 1.

The king said to him, Where is he? And Ziba said to the king, He is in the house of Mephibosheth, the son of Amiel at Lodabar. Then King David sent and brought him from the house of Mephibosheth, the son of Amiel at Lodabar.

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.

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.

And he paid homage and said, What is your servant that you should show regard for a dead dog such as I? Then the king called Ziba, Saul's servant, and said to him, All that belong to Saul and to all his house I have given to your master's grandson.

[2 : 36] And you and your sons and your servants shall till the land for him and shall bring in the produce. But 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. Then Ziba said to the king, According to all that my lord the king commands his servants, so will your servant do. So Mephibosheth ate at David's table like one of the king's sons.

And Mephibosheth had a young son whose name was Micah. And all who lived in Ziba's house became Mephibosheth's servants. So Mephibosheth lived in Jerusalem, For he ate always at the king's table.

Now he was lame in both his feet. It's not hard when you read this not to be moved by this kind of rags to riches story, right?

We love seeing this type of thing. A powerful king reaching out to a cripple, Helping the weak, the rich, helping the poor. We look at this and we say, Man, Mephibosheth is so lucky.

[3 : 36] He has won the lottery. This is like a Disney movie. But this story is so much more than David helping a crippled man. See, in verse 1, when David calls his servants, he asks them, Is there still anyone left of the house of Saul?

And he's talking about his predecessor, King Saul. Now his servants and officers would have been surprised by this request. They would not have been surprised by this request, sorry.

What would have made them fall off their chairs was David's purpose for wanting to find them.

Showing Saul's family kindness was the exact opposite of what they would have been expecting.

See, in the ancient world of kings and kingdoms, when power transferred from one family to another, when thrones changed hands, it was common practice to kill all the previous king's family. It's kind of like, hey, take out the competition. Literally, that's what it was. Now let's add to that reality the history between Saul and David.

[4 : 40] Okay? During Saul's reign as king of Israel, David had to run for his life. Saul had made David public enemy number one. He made David out to be a traitor and a turncoat.

He deserved to die. And David lived on the lam. He was on the run, being hunted down, much like a terrorist. If you think of how Osama bin Laden lived the last few years of his life, running from cave to cave, trying to survive and evade capture, that is literally describing David's life, much of his life, during Saul's reign.

Nowhere was safe. No one could be trusted. That's it. Saul had allies everywhere who were more than happy to report David's whereabouts. Now, that's the context.

That's the backdrop of what's happening here. Let's go back to David in the story and David telling his servants he wants to show kindness to Saul's family. You know, more than likely, some of these guys had spent the last few years with David surviving like a hunted animal too.

Imagine being one of these guys. The last thing you and I would have expected, probably the last thing we would have wanted to hear from David was that he was going to extend kindness to a known enemy.

[5 : 54] But that's just what David does. He seeks out his enemy to show him kindness, to bless him and give him a place at his table. I've read this story so many times, kind of concluding this.

Well, Jesse, David gives you a really nice example to follow. You need to show kindness to your enemies. And that's true. That is a good thing we should do. We are called to be kind to our enemies, right?

But that isn't what changes our hearts. If that's all we get out of this passage, that doesn't transform us. That doesn't transform our hearts at all. It's not going to motivate us to do anything amazing and wonderful for the gospel and to fall in love with Jesus anymore.

And it's also not going to help us understand who we are in Christ. If all we get from this story is principles and good morals to live by, then we kind of walk away knowing what we should be doing. But all the information is just hitting our heads and not our hearts. There's no conviction or transformation happening. And for a while, we could act like David. Man, should be kind. Be so nice to our enemies, to the people that irritate us or are mean to us or don't treat us how we deserve to be treated.

[7 : 07] We could be good little boys and Christians, but if no transformation happens, we're going to burn out. We're going to get tired of doing that. It's going to stop feeling like it's going to be worth it. And we're going to give up.

Why? Because it's not easy to love our enemies. That is not an easy thing to say. Not such an easy thing to do, right? But what hits us in our hearts, what's going to hit us in our hearts when we read this is when we realize that we are not David in this story.

We are Mephibosheth, and Jesus is David. And this is the first identity that we need to realize, first gospel identity we need to realize that we get from this story.

God made you a son and daughter and gave you a place at his table. That's an amazing truth. We can just go home based on that. This story is our gospel story, every one of us.

It's our gospel story. You are not the hero. I am not the hero. Jesus is the hero. You and I, we are the object of God's rescue.

[8 : 13] Think about it. We didn't want God's chosen king, Jesus, to ascend to the throne, to be in charge, to tell us what to do, to dictate how we should live our lives.

Instead, we didn't just try to kill him. We pulled it off. We killed him. We crucified him on a cross. But the problem was Jesus didn't stay dead.

He rose again and is now king. And he's not just a king with some power, but with total power. But Jesus doesn't seek us out to punish us, does he?

He seeks us out to show us kindness, unbelievable kindness. See how much you and I are like Mephibosheth. Mephibosheth. We didn't stand a chance.

We had no power. We were on the wrong side of this thing. And you know what? We, as God's enemies, it's not like we are running to God and say, you know what, forgive me, forgive me.

[9 : 13] No, we did what Mephibosheth did. Man, we ran. We run from God. We ran and we hide, right? He was hiding out in this place called Lodabar, this place far from Jerusalem, far from where David was living.

Here's the interesting thing. Lodabar is a word that means no pasture or no word. Basically, it's describing a place of desolation, right?

It's a place nobody wants to go. So I used to take vacations growing up. We used to go up to the Sierra Nevada as this cool little alpine lake called June Lake. And it was beautiful.

You just have these panoramic granite mountains just rising like 12,000 feet all around you and trout in the lake and trout in the streams and all kinds of great hikes everywhere. And going up to 395, it took about six hours to get there.

Going up to 395, we would always, you know, pass these turnoffs to Death Valley. You know, kind of look down the road for miles upon miles on end.

[10 : 18] Never saw any cars driving to Death Valley, right? Not a popular place. I think their board of tourism might want to think about changing their name. Just saying. That's Lodabar.

It's not just a place of material desolation. It's a place of soul desolation. That's where Mephibosheth was at. Imagine Mephibosheth hiding out in his home.

Suddenly, there's this knock on the door. He's a cripple. He can't move anywhere. He can't go anywhere. In walks a man announcing that he's a servant of David the King.

Big problems. You bet in that moment, he's thinking like, oh boy, I got found out. I tried to hide. I tried to run. I tried to escape. I got found out. There's Mephibosheth unable to move, unable to run anywhere, unable to escape. All he can do is listen. And the servant says, you're coming with me, Mephibosheth, and you're going to stand before the king.

[11 : 28] I wonder what he was thinking on his way to the palace. That must have been a long trip, right? You ever had those like, you ever had those moments where like you did something you shouldn't have done and your dad's like, okay, when we get home, driving, you know?

That was a long drive, right? I wonder what was going through Mephibosheth's mind. Racing with thoughts of doom, this is it.

I'm going to die. My whole life has just been one, just, man, let down after another. And then, in verse six, comes the moment that David longed for and Mephibosheth dreaded.

He comes before the king. And what does Mephibosheth do? Does he begin to make excuses and justify himself? Does he begin to parlay for terms of peace? No. He humbles himself.

He humbles himself and pays homage in the presence of the king. That's what he does. This is how Jesus saves us, right? We are humbled in his presence.

[12 : 36] We are humbled when we stand before him. There is no thought of defending ourselves. There is no thought of justifying ourselves. Only humility. Only honoring him.

Then we hear the king speak our name. verse six B. He says, man, Mephibosheth. He calls him by name.

And he says, do not fear. Mephibosheth, listen, listen up. Do not fear. I will show you kindness. I will restore.

You shall eat at my table. This is the kindness of the king and the goodness of the king extending grace and love and mercy. You can be sure that this is the last thing that Mephibosheth expected. And this is why the gospel is such amazing news. It's the greatest drama. It's the last thing we expect to hear when we encounter Jesus and we realize all at once, like, man, I can't justify myself.

[13 : 43] I am a sinner. But then he calls us by name and he gives us these amazing promises and fear melts away. We don't hear words of judgment.

Man, oh, these are words of love. These are words of blessing. I wonder how often Mephibosheth remembered that moment. Can you and I remember that moment?

We would be well to. One of our biggest mistakes we can make as believers is not being in the practice of remembering God's grace and his goodness. Psalm 63, verse 5, it says, My soul will be satisfied as with fat and rich food.

My soul will be satisfied as with bacon. And my mouth will praise you with joyful lips when I remember you upon my bed.

Talking about, thinking about God and who he is and what he's done. About his steadfast love and his glory. For you have been my help and the shadow of your wings I will sing for joy.

[14:49] My soul, it clings to you. In your right hand, it upholds me. Remembering is so good for us. It is so good for us. We need to regularly be rehearsing the gospel to ourselves.

Right? And we do that by regularly meditating on the Bible and his word and through prayer. We get to do that as we get around each other. And we get to, in community groups where we talk about what is happening and what God's doing in our lives and what's going on and maybe things are a little bit difficult but then we get to rehearse that to one another.

Yeah, yeah, yeah, but God is so good. Remember all his benefits. Remember his steadfast love. Remember, gosh, all that he's done. And remembering is good because not only does it remind us how amazing God is and how dependent we are on him, it also makes us see ourselves rightly as well.

Check out what Mephibosheth's response to the king's kindness is. It says here in verse 8, and he paid homage and said, what is your servant that you should show regard for a dead dog such as I? Now, we're tempted to read that and think, man, Mephibosheth, he could use some self-esteem.

Like, what's going on, buddy? Is there no, like, Dr. Phil or Oprah and Lodabar?

[16:07] Like, what's, things have really gone downhill for you over there. Like, what's happening? But that's, that's the mystery of the gospel, guys. That's the mystery when we get the gospel that's at work in all of us.

The gospel doesn't tell us to get a bigger and better view of ourselves. It actually gives us a bigger and better view of God and it gives us a realistic view of ourselves.

It gives us a sober view of ourselves and we need a lot more of that. I know I need a lot more of that for myself. As Tim Keller puts it, the gospel is this, we are more sinful and flawed in ourselves than we ever dared believe, yet, at the very same time, we are more loved and accepted in Jesus Christ than we ever dared hope.

This, this seems like an oxymoron, this seems like two things that can't fit together, like how, how can I believe that God loves me and yet have some kind of like low view of myself and I don't think it's necessarily a low view, I think again, it's a right view.

If you look at Paul, the apostle that talked about grace, he talks about grace in like every single, I mean, his Galatians and Romans and Colossians, I mean, they're so saturated with grace and so rooted in grace and it's interesting to see in the different letters in his journey with Christ as he gets older, it starts with, I'm a sinner and then as he grows in more of his knowledge of Christ and he grows more in grace, he's then confessed, you know what, I'm not just a sinner, I think I'm the chief of sinners and then he writes his theological magnum opus Romans and he says in there, oh wretched man that I am, who will deliver me from this body of sin?

[17:59] I mean, this is a dude at the end of his life that is saying like he knows grace like inside and out, he's walked with God, he's got deep convictions, he gets it and yet he can say this about himself.

See, the more we see and recognize God's holiness and grow in that grace, the more we see that, hmm, we fall short.

We don't get a big head on our shoulders. We don't start to think too highly of ourselves. It doesn't work that way. I want to say this to you, my fellow Mephibosheths in the room, can you say with sincerity, who am I Lord that you should show regard for a dead dog such as I?

Yet you have shown me kindness. You've given me an inheritance and you've given me a place at your table. I am more sinful and flawed than I dared believe and yet, at the same time, I'm more loved and accepted in Jesus Christ than I ever dared hope.

That's the truth. And when our identity is established in this truth, man, it humbles us. There's no room for pride. There's no room for arrogance. There's no room for us trying to like earn God's love and earn our righteousness and earn our way into his good graces.

[19:26] God doesn't prefer to run after the proud and the arrogant and the strong and the capable and the people that have it all together. No. Jesus the king, he invites the weak, you and me.

He invites the dead dogs to his table. Me and my boys, when we were living over in Newport, we used to kick the ball in the backyard and this eight-foot-high fence and one time we kicked it over so we had to go around and fetch it from one of the neighbor's yards and we're walking around and Asher and Riley were with me and we're walking and suddenly this dog bursts out one of the houses, right?

and this is the ugliest dog I've ever seen in my life. Okay. I mean, this...

It was so ugly that both of my boys just went to my side and looked at it and said, Dad, what is that? They didn't feel it even deserved to be diagnosed as a dog.

It was just a that, you know? It's like that thing. So we have this three-legged thing coming at us and all of a sudden, you know, out comes the owner and this old man is chasing after his dog and he picks it up and he says, Oh, this is my dog.

[20 : 59] This is who we are in Jesus, guys. We are his... We're his dog. Three-legged, ratty, unimpressive. But we're his dog.

Jesus sought us out when we were spiritually crippled, poor and powerless and he picked us up and brought us to his table to be in his presence. He doesn't call us dead dogs though and he doesn't treat us like one.

How does this story end? Verse 11. So Mephibosheth ate at David's table as a slave, as a servant, as some second-class citizen.

Did he have to beg for the scraps on the floor? No. He ate at David's table like one of his sons. That is the beauty of the gospel.

We go from enemy to son in Jesus Christ. We go from low to bar to the king's table. We go from no pasture to plenty.

[22 : 16] And we don't have that place out of the table because of God's pity. We belong there because he wanted us there. We belong there because he sought us out. We belong there because he came after us even though we tried to hide.

He said, I'm not going to let that happen. And he sets us at this table because we're his sons and we're his daughters. Every single one of us.

This is our gospel story. This is the depths of God's grace. We are given way more than we deserve. And I want to call on all of us, man.

Let's remember this often. Friends, let's remember this often. I'm Mephibosheth. I'm a dead dog. I received grace and mercy and was given a place at the king's table as a son.

Be rooted in that. But, I also want to say, God's grace even goes beyond that. It doesn't stop there. We are more than just Mephibosheth in this story.

[23 : 22] And this is important to realize. Often we get stuck in the identity of Mephibosheth and that's good. That should be an identity we never lose. We should be rooted in. Enemy turned son feasting at the king's table.

Man, that's awesome. But, there's another identity at play here. We're like a coin with two sides. On one side of the coin is the picture of Mephibosheth but there's another side of the coin and it's essential for understanding the fullness of our gospel identity.

Again, we're not David. Sorry, if you're hoping sweet now we get to be King David. Nope. Take that crown off. No, there's a role so ordinary and assumed it easily gets overlooked.

It's a role none of us like to play because it doesn't have names mentioned or accolades given to it. Think about this, guys. David opened his table to Mephibosheth. Every night he could eat at the king's table.

Let me ask the question. How did Mephibosheth get there? Who made the food? Who set the table? It doesn't say but we know, don't we?

[24 : 32] It was the king's servants, right? A nameless group of people that carried out what was in the king's heart. Not the heroes of the story but man, they made sure Mephibosheth had a place at the table.

They made sure Mephibosheth was there at the table and they made sure Mephibosheth had food at that table. They took care of him. That's the other side of this coin. We're not only Mephibosheth that have a place at the king's table and eat with him as sons and daughters.

You are Jesus' servants that are called to set the king's table. See, that's the thing when we get so rooted in this story of the gospel.

It's so amazing. We don't want to keep it all to ourselves. We want everyone to experience the king's table. We want everyone to experience the king's love and his goodness and his grace and his mercy, his faithfulness, his power.

We want them to experience all those things. As Spurgeon once quipped, I will not believe that you have tasted of the honey of the gospel if you can eat it all by yourself. As Christians, that's what we do, man.

[25 : 48] We want to share what we have gotten with as many people as we can. We want to do it. We're called to leverage our lives and everything we have to do this.

We get to create moments and opportunities and environments where the king's heart is put on display to be seen and experienced. Think about it.

Think about your home. Most of us, I trust, live in a home, right? Think about your dining room table. It's one of the most effective gospel assets you have as a Christian.

I remember I was 16. I was going to work. It was about 7 in the morning. It was kind of a cool, I think, autumn-y, Southern California morning, kind of overcast.

I was getting into my car and one of the neighborhood kids, a kid I grew up with, he was a couple years older than me, he had just gotten out of juvenile hall a few months ago.

[26 : 53] He came walking up the path and was like, hey, Danny, what's up? He's like, we got to chatting. We talked about some things but he said, you know what, Jess? My family, my home life was a wreck.

You have no idea what I saw, what I faced. I want to preface what I'm about to say by saying this. I had a decent home I grew up in.

It wasn't the perfect home. My parents got divorced, it wasn't the perfect home. But they still loved Jesus, both of them. and they opened up their home. And sometimes Danny would come and he would just sit down and have dinner with us.

That's all we did. It wasn't anything more special than that. And talking to him, he's like, man, Jess, I remember those moments. There was something different about your guys' house that I couldn't figure out.

It was, I felt safe there. There was peace there. I'm thinking in my head, I was like, are we talking about the same home that I grew up in? We always tend to be harsher critics on ourselves than we need to be.

[28 : 02] But man, our homes, our dining room tables, man, these things are amazing assets. If we choose to open them up to people and let them in, they could experience something.

They could see something of the king. Take advantage of that gift God has given you. Use it to his glory. Another place that we get to leverage is right here on a Sunday.

This is God's house. This is the king's table. I'm not the only Mephibosheth coming to eat at the king's table this Sunday. Right? We all are.

But, we also come as the king's servants who makes the king's house a welcome and inviting place. We set that table. We want to set it well.

Are we leveraging what God has given us to reach the Mephibosheth all around us? You don't have to go far to look for them.

[28 : 59] They're everywhere. They're in this room. They're at your office. They're in your workplace. They're at your school. They're everywhere. Everyone around you just might be a Mephibosheth God is calling you to bring to his table.

And we get to open up our homes, our hearts, our lives to receive them. It can be lunches or dinners or coffees or hosting community groups or serving on Sundays, whatever it may be. Now, if you're anything like me, you realize that, okay, that's nice, but there's a cost to this.

That's true. There is a cost to this. Loving others is always going to cost something. It's always going to cost you and I something to love someone. Think of the good Samaritan.

What do you have to do? Cost him time, cost him money. He had to go out of his way. He had to have his plans interrupted. That's what happens. Setting the king's table is going to cost us something. It's going to mess our schedule and our time up.

It's, man, I have to wake up 45 minutes to get to the church early to do some setup. It's going to make us have to prioritize what is most important, which might mean we have to come cut some things out of our life because we're committed to setting the king's table.

[30 : 17] Now imagine being the king's servants. Let's just step into their role right now. Imagine we're in that story. Mephibosheth just made our job harder, not easier.

People had to carry him to and from the table. They had to make extra food. They had to do extra dishes. Somebody had to make an extra chair, I'm supposing, or lengthen the table or make a whole new table so that he could fit it.

I have no idea, but it's just more work. And that's the thing. There is a real cost to living this out. And I do have to say, man, I've seen this happen.

You guys do it so well. I've seen it in the way that people have used their cars to pick up people that don't have cars so they could get to church. I remember when we first started Havelock about 18 months ago now and David Winslow said, hey, I'd like to come on Saturday night to set up chairs. Something I could do. Just was interested in doing something to set the king's table for this place. I've seen a guy, man, back in Moorhead, one of my brothers from another mother, Otis, he's like this big dude with just arms, just boom.

[31 : 34] And there'd be these single moms walking with baby carriers and he would run out there and grab them. He'd have like, I don't know how he did it, but he had like six baby carriers at one time just walking back in, you know?

But just looking and seeing and thinking, okay, how can I be a blessing? How can I minister grace? How can I give grace? How can I do this? How can I set the king's table?

It's hard not to look at people and see problems. But Jesus never sees us as problems. He never sees us as projects. He sees us as people to love.

That's our king's heart, right? Jesus' heart was seen in his ministry here on earth. He moved into the neighborhood. He came from heaven, moved into our neighborhood.

He walked among us. He moved toward people, lepers, the lame, the sick. He moved toward you and me, didn't he? And Jesus' heart hasn't changed. His heart of love toward people is still made known through his servants.

[32 : 38] And he has plenty of space at his table and he's always making room for more. Thank you.