

Before Our King
Andrew Kneeland, October 10, 2021
2 Samuel 9:1-13

I want to start this morning by telling you a story.

It's a story about a small country named Israel with a brand-new king named Saul. For years this small country had been attacked from every side by bigger nations with stronger armies with sharper swords, but Israel won battle after battle, war after war.

But the new king wasn't getting the praise for his country's miraculous defense. David, the celebrated general, was receiving the credit for the military success, and the king was jealous at David's rising popularity. So Saul tried many times to kill David, but his attempts always failed.

Things went on this way for many years, as the battles never seemed to end and as David's fame grew, so did Saul's jealousy. In one battle, though, King Saul was killed.

After Israel mourned his passing, some people wanted to make David the king. Others wanted Saul's oldest son to be king. Both David and Saul's son were crowned, and a civil war started: David and his allies fighting against Saul's family and their allies.

For years the civil war raged on. Years of friends and family dying, of young men leaving their families. But finally, at the end of 2 Samuel 8, it says: *"And the Lord gave victory to David wherever he went. So David reigned over all Israel."*

David had won. Imagine what that rest must have felt like to David, after years and years of endless warfare. For the first time in his life, David wasn't at war; he had victory over all his enemies.

Now imagine how you would have felt about Saul and his family, who caused

these years of civil war and death. What do you think was the first thing David did to Saul's family after ending this civil war?

We find out in our sermon text for this morning, in 2 Samuel chapter 9. Look again at verse 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."

The first thing David did after gaining victory was to seek out any remaining enemy. This wouldn't have been surprising to anyone; it was common for victorious kings to look for any living descendants of their defeated enemy and kill them. Anyone who might make a claim at the throne.

But, sitting on his throne, David wasn't looking for an enemy to kill, he was looking for a former enemy to make into a friend.

And so David hears about a grandson of Saul named Mephibosheth. He is brought before his king, and we can put ourselves in his shoes. Mephibosheth is a picture of us in this story, and we can imagine ourselves **being brought before our King**. Just like David, our God has also finished his battle; he has defeated his enemies. And as he sits on his throne, ruling far and wide, he's not looking to destroy us or punish us. He is looking for us so that he can make a former enemy into a friend.

Mephibosheth learned four things as he was before his king. Four truths that we can learn, too, as we come before our king this morning.

First we see that: Before our King, WE ARE ENEMIES. We are enemies.

As Mephibosheth was carted off to the king's palace, I'm sure he was anxious and afraid. Can you imagine? He was the grandson of Saul, the man who hated David and tried to kill David. On his way to see the king, I'm sure Mephibosheth was remembering all the grief his grandfather had caused David.

Mephibosheth belonged to a sinful family and was an enemy of David, and he expected the worst punishment from his king. But though he was an enemy, David showed kindness and mercy to Mephibosheth.

We were enemies of Christ when He called us. We belong to a sinful family, like Mephibosheth did. We have all been actively involved in opposing our King's authority and kingdom, and are legitimate enemies deserving of death. But praise God that our King doesn't want to give us the justice we deserve. He wants to show us kindness.

*Ephesians 2: But now in Christ Jesus **you** who **once were far off** have been **brought near** by the blood of Christ. For he himself is our peace, who has made us both one and has broken down in his flesh the dividing wall of hostility.*

It's important to understand that we weren't on the sidelines of God's war against sin. We weren't passive observers; we were enemies of God. We were far off, but Christ sought us and brought us near.

Mephibosheth knew he was an enemy. But he also knew that he was UNWORTHY.

Before our King, WE ARE UNWORTHY.

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.

Those last few words are usually the sort of words that we skip over when we're reading the Old Testament, but they're important to the story.

Mephibosheth was living in a place called Lo Debar, which means "No pasture, no promise." He was a crippled young man living in someone else's home in a barren land and being taken care of by somebody else.

Mephibosheth didn't look like much of a royal prince. His grandfather had been tall and handsome, he was crippled. He was undeserving of any respect or attention or special treatment. If there was anyone the king should show kindness to, it wasn't Mephibosheth.

But we are as unworthy of God's attention as Mephibosheth was of David's. We, too, have been crippled by a fall.

Ever since Adam's sin, and because of our continual failure to follow God's perfect standards, we are unable to save ourselves from the King's wrath that we deserve. We are crippled in our attempts to please God. We are unworthy of His kindness and mercy.

But even though Mephibosheth was an **enemy** of the king, and **unworthy** of the kindness of the king, he was still **FORGIVEN** by the king.

Before our King, WE ARE FORGIVEN.

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?"

Mephibosheth was expecting to receive the punishment he knew he deserved. But he was surprised by grace that day in David's court. He could find no reason why the king should show such kindness to him. He felt as worthless and unwanted as a dead dog!

But David wanted to show him kindness not because of anything Mephibosheth had done. But because of his father, Jonathan.

We haven't met Jonathan yet. Jonathan was a godly son of King Saul, and David's best friend. Jonathan was the father of Mephibosheth.

Jonathan died in the same battle that Saul had died in. But before he died, Jonathan asked David in 1 Samuel 20: *"If I am still alive, show me the steadfast love of the Lord, that I may not die; and do not cut off your steadfast love from my house forever."*

David promised to preserve and protect Jonathan's family. He fulfilled that promise in Mephibosheth. David kept his word.

David didn't care what Mephibosheth looked like. He didn't care that he had been his enemy, he didn't care how crippled he was, and he didn't care what his grandfather had done to him. Mephibosheth didn't please or impress the king on his own merits. Jonathan had already done that. And when David looked at Mephibosheth he didn't see a crippled man who belonged to a sinful family, he saw his dear friend.

And with Mephibosheth bowing before him in his royal palace, David remembered the promise he had made to Jonathan. David remembered that he had promised that he would not wipe out Jonathan's descendants, but defend and protect them.

David made a promise to Jonathan. And God made a promise to you.

We are all enemies of God; defeated enemies of a victorious God, deserving of nothing but death and punishment. But to those of you who believe, God has promised to forgive you. To protect you. He has promised to take you from the the Kingdom of Darkness into the Kingdom of Light and to remove your dirt and your sin and give to you Christ's righteousness.

The kindness that our King offers to us is free to us, but God paid for it dearly. God gathered up all of the guilt and all of the blame from all of our sins, and He punished someone else. God's innocent Son Jesus was blamed for our wrongs so that we can safely be brought before our King.

This morning, here at Gloria Dei, we are **before our King**. And as He looks at you, He remembers the promise He made to you when you were baptized. A promise to protect and to love you.

Just like David didn't see a crippled, young man but saw Jonathan, when God looks at you, He doesn't see your sin or your brokenness. He doesn't see your selfishness or your pride. When God looks at you, He remembers His promise to you, and He sees Christ. Even though we were enemies, and even though we are unworthy, God forgives us because of Jesus.

But that's not the end of the story: Before our King, WE ARE GIVEN BLESSINGS. We are given blessings.

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 was quite a day for Mephibosheth, wasn't it? He went from living in a barren wasteland to living in the king's palace. He went from being clothed in rags to wearing royal garments. He went from eating the poorest of foods to eating from the table of the king.

Though we are crippled and undeserving, Jesus offers to carry us to His table. Where he'll change us from guilty to forgiven. From broken to honored. From an enemy, to an heir.

Amen.