

Returning to Jerusalem, Part III- Mephibosheth

Call to Worship: Psalm 92:1-4

1st Scripture: 2 Samuel 9:1-13, 16:1-4

2nd Scripture: 2 Samuel 19:24-30

Hymn (Supp)- *Joyful, Joyful, We Adore Thee*

Hymn #147- *O Come, O Come Emmanuel*

Hymn Insert- *His Robes for Mine*

Introduction:

Following the defeat of Absalom and his army, David has begun his journey back to Jerusalem. In the course of his journey into the Promised Land, the Scriptures record for us, some of the interactions, which David has with other men. Last time, we considered his interaction with Shimei, who, along with an entourage of one thousand Benjamites, had gone out to meet and welcome David back into the land.

This morning, we move on, to consider David's interaction with Mephibosheth, the son of Jonathan, the son of King Saul.

I. Who is Mephibosheth?

Before we look at our main text, it is important for us to go back, and consider some important things about Mephibosheth, which will give us a better understanding of the dialog that takes place here, between David and Mephibosheth.

Who is Mephibosheth? We first learn about Mephibosheth, immediately following the death of King Saul and three of his sons (including Jonathan). You will recall that the Philistines had defeated King Saul and Israel, at Mount Gilboa. Upon learning of this defeat, many Israelites fled to the other side of the Jordan River, as they knew that the Philistines were coming to take their land. Mephibosheth was but a very small child, and his caretaker/nurse, fled with him, accidentally falling, while fleeing, causing Mephibosheth to become lame in his feet.

Fast forward, to when David is the King over all Israel. At some point in David's reign, prior to his sin with Bathsheba, David had expressed a desire to show kindness to someone from Saul's house. He was told of a man named Ziba, who was a servant of King Saul, who might know of a living descendant of Saul, to whom David could show kindness and grace. When Ziba was brought before David, Ziba had informed David of a son of Jonathan, who lived on the

other side of the Jordan River, and who was lame in his feet. That son of Jonathan was Mephibosheth.

David was very excited to learn that Jonathan had a living son, and so, he sent for him. When Mephibosheth had arrived at Jerusalem, David restored all of Saul's inheritance to Mephibosheth, and furthermore, he kept Mephibosheth at Jerusalem, so that he could eat at the king's table, every day. This was a tremendous act of grace and compassion, shown, from David to Mephibosheth. Ziba then, along with his sons and servants, would care for Mephibosheth's land (his now large inheritance, given him by David), ensuring that yielded profits would return to Mephibosheth and his family (Mephibosheth had a son, Micha). Now, fast forward to when David was fleeing Jerusalem, because of Absalom's rebellion.

II. Ziba's Accusations

When David and his followers were fleeing over the Mount of Olives, Ziba, Saul's servant, who was caring for Mephibosheth's inheritance, met David on top of the mountain. And there, he had brought various supplies to help refresh David and his men. Naturally then, David had asked Ziba where Mephibosheth was, at this time, when David was forced to flee. Ziba then had told David that Mephibosheth had stayed back at Jerusalem, seeing David's plight, as an opportunity for Mephibosheth to try to take the throne for himself. In other words, he was accusing Mephibosheth of committing his own act of treason against David, since he was a descendant of Saul. And so, David, believing Ziba, gave Mephibosheth's entire inheritance over to Ziba.

Now, fast forward to our main text, where David will see Mephibosheth for the first time, since David and his followers had fled Jerusalem. Remember, David thinks that Mephibosheth had turned against him, trying to use Absalom's rebellion as a means of securing the throne for himself. And indeed, if Mephibosheth had done this, the insult and offense would be beyond enormous, especially considering the tender and gracious way, in which David had treated Mephibosheth, for Saul and Jonathan's sake.

III. David Meets Mephibosheth

And so, in our main text then, as David is returning to Jerusalem, Mephibosheth goes out to meet David. But first, we are given a description of Mephibosheth's appearance, which would immediately challenge Ziba's accusation, that Mephibosheth had stayed back at Jerusalem, so as to pursue the throne for himself. Notice, how Mephibosheth's outward appearance is described.

First, we are told that he had not cared for his feet. That is to say that, being a lame man, he would have had to wash and dress his feet regularly, since he had no use of them. Perhaps, this would help prevent some manner of infection at best, or keep them from smelling, at least. Whatever the case, he refused to properly care for them.

Second, we are told that he did not trim his mustache. That is, he left it, to grow over his lip, unkempt and ungroomed.

Finally, third, we are told that he did not wash his clothes. That is, he wore the same clothing, refusing to change or wash that which he wore.

All of these, he refused to do, from the time that David had first fled from Jerusalem, up to the present, when David had safely returned. The overall idea, is that, he did not properly care for himself. And all of this, was a sign of deep grief and mourning. In other words, by his neglect of caring for his own hygiene, in any sense, Mephibosheth was expressing his grief and sorrow for all that was happening in the conspiracy against David.

That said, when Mephibosheth arrives to greet David, David, still having been influenced by Ziba's accusations against Mephibosheth, asks him, "Why did you not go with me, Mephibosheth?" "Where were you when I was forced to flee, Jerusalem?"

And then, Mephibosheth responds by telling him the other side of the story. In verses 26-27a, we are told, "And he answered, 'My lord, O king, my servant deceived me. For your servant said, 'I will saddle a donkey for myself, that I may ride on it and go to the king,' because your servant is lame. And he has slandered your servant to my lord the king.'"

And so, Mephibosheth explains, that he had saddled a donkey for himself (since he could not walk), so that he could go out with David, but before he could get on the donkey, Ziba took off with it, and left Mephibosheth there in Jerusalem. Ziba took advantage of the opportunity, so as to gain David's favor, by slandering Mephibosheth (accusing him of treason), hoping to make

himself, look like a true and loyal servant to the king. And it worked, because David gave Ziba, the entire inheritance of Saul, which had belonged to Mephibosheth.

After giving David this important information, Mephibosheth further moves on to affirm his great respect for, and gratefulness toward, the king, so much so, that he refuses to complain, no matter how David handles this matter. "But my lord the king is like the angel of God. Therefore do what is good in your eyes. For all my father's house were but dead men before my lord the king. Yet you set your servant among those who eat at your own table. Therefore what right have I still to cry out anymore to the king?" (vs. 27b-28).

And so, what does Mephibosheth say here? In essence, he is acknowledging, why he could never betray the king. David has been as an angel of God to Mephibosheth. When the family of Saul had become like dead men; when they virtually lost their relevance in the land of Israel, because of the sins of King Saul, David had brought them back on the map, by exalting Mephibosheth, to the place, of eating with the king, daily. Mephibosheth was not ignorant of the magnitude of the grace, that David had shown him. How could he then, ever turn on David, in accordance with Ziba's accusation?

And furthermore, Mephibosheth was so grateful for the undeserved favor and grace he was shown by David, that even now, he does not wish to imposition the king, in any way, concerning the wrong, which Ziba has committed. And so, he says, "How could I complain about anything, whatsoever? Do whatever seems best to you, my lord."

And so, David then, wrongfully (I believe), fails to search these things out further. Rather, instead, he tells Mephibosheth that he and Ziba can divide the land between them.

Finally, Mephibosheth responds to David's decision, not with a complaint, and not with an appeal to the king, to search things out further, but rather with the words of verse 23, "Then Mephibosheth said to the king, 'Rather, let him (Ziba) take it all, inasmuch as my lord the king has come back in peace to his own house.'" "My lord, let Ziba have the whole inheritance. I am just happy that you have safely returned back to Jerusalem."

And brethren, in all that we witness here, it becomes very clear that Ziba's accusations are false and slanderous, and Mephibosheth's loyalty to the king is confirmed. We have seen this evidenced in the following ways:

1) Mephibosheth has completely neglected his hygiene, the whole time David was away. This is not at all becoming of someone, who was attempting to maneuver himself into the position of king. In fact, after Absalom was killed, it could have been the ideal time for Mephibosheth to act, if he had such a desire. But instead, his mourning is confirmed by his appearance.

2) Mephibosheth's side of the story pans out, well. Ziba had the extra saddled donkeys, when he had first met David on the Mount of Olives.

3) Mephibosheth's attitude of not wanting to imposition the king in anyway, and his willingness to suffer wrong from Ziba, rather than imposition the king, speak highly of his lack of concern for his own inheritance, let alone for gaining the kingdom.

4) Even after David tells Mephibosheth to divide the inheritance, Mephibosheth tells David to let Ziba keep it all, as his great joy is bound up, not in his material/tangible assets, but in the return of the king. When David had told Ziba that he was giving Mephibosheth's inheritance to him, Ziba's response was nothing like this. He just accepted the grab.

Clearly, Mephibosheth's loyalty was proven, and he is the innocent party. Unfortunately, David, still occupied with so many other things (in seeking to reestablish his kingdom), neglected to exercise proper justice, concerning this matter. But Mephibosheth did not complain, and was happy to prevent any such burden, from being placed on the king. He absorbed the wrong, especially in light of all the grace that he had been shown by David, from the outset.

IV. Closing Thoughts and Applications

Having worked through the text then, brethren, let us now close, by considering a few relevant closing thoughts and applications:

1) Let me just highlight again, brethren, the picture of the Christian's gratefulness to Christ, displayed here by Mephibosheth. Had Mephibosheth betrayed David, after all David had graciously done for Mephibosheth, the insult would have been doubly grave and enormous. Is

ungratefulness, in any sense, not one of the ugliest offenses to view with the naked eye? But indeed, we find that Mephibosheth was not ungrateful, as his outward appearance and actions confirm, when he here meets David.

And brethren, what level of insult do we cast upon our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, when we would treat sin, in some careless and casual fashion? What insult is it, for any, who name the name of Christ, to presume that they can willfully continue on sinning, with no concern for the Christ, who was crucified, to pay for those very sins? When the Apostle Paul states the rhetorical question in Romans, "Should we, therefore, continue on in sin, and let grace abound, since we are wholly justified by faith in Christ alone," what is his answer? "May it never be!" Or, "God forbid!" And, of course, he goes on to show that by our faith in Christ, we have also been united to Christ, in His death and resurrection, leading us to die to sin with Christ. But consider, as well, brethren, the gross display of ungodliness, bound to the whole notion of continuing comfortably forward, in a state, out of which, Christ suffered so terribly, to redeem us. Our sin is a gross offense against our eternal God. So offensive is our sin, that God required His only begotten and righteous Son, the Son of His love, to bear that sin in His body, so that He might be the object of His expressed wrath; so that He might internalize hell, as it were, so as to expiate it. The wrath of God was satisfied; God's wrath was propitiated in Christ.

And so, although, sadly, we will always struggle with sin, till the day we die, this realization alone ought to grieve us, and to compel us to fight sin, tooth and nail; indeed, to violently attack sin, with the fiercest of vengeance, because we know, that as a consequence of it, our Savior suffered such a deep and humiliating death, on our behalf.

And like Mephibosheth, the grace shown us, leads us, in fact, in the very opposite direction from rebelling against the king and pursuing our own kingdom. It drives us to sacrifice, and to be willing to give up, and to be willing to absorb and suffer wrongs, as long as His Kingdom prevails! Mephibosheth saw David as an angel of God. But, we see Christ as He truly is, the glorious Son of God! Mephibosheth remembered; he never forgot how David reached out and pulled Mephibosheth out of a dead heritage in Saul, only to exalt him at his table, in the presence of all. We remember; we never forget how our Lord reached out and pulled us out of a dead heritage in Adam, only to exalt us to His table, in the presence of all.

Mephibosheth was more than compelled to forget his earthly inheritance, because of all that the king had done for him. We ought to be more than willing to forget and to suffer loss with respect to our earthly heritage, because of all that the king has done for us! Mephibosheth was just grateful for the return of an earthly David. We gratefully, look forward to the return of our heavenly David! Do you see the connective analogy, given here, brethren?

You see, if Mephibosheth were consumed with the earthly inheritance, given him, by David, he very well could have rebelled and sinned against his king. But he never allowed the things of this world to loosen his grasp of the reality of the grace, shown him, by David. And brethren, we must regularly, daily, ponder and lay hold of, the incomprehensible grace, shown us in Christ, so that, when our time of temptation comes, we will remain faithful, clinging to Christ, to the point that we would let everything else go, rather than lose Christ! Brethren, we must fight to keep the big picture in mind. We must "grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ." We must strive to increasingly comprehend the great dimensions of Christ's love toward us; the height, the width, the depth, to know the love of Christ, which passes understanding. The Spirit's power, exerted through such meditation, will empower us to remain faithful, so that all that is visible, will be seen in proper perspective, under and secondary to, that which is invisible.

2) Have you been an object of the incomprehensible grace and kindness of God, in Christ? Have you had your sins forgiven? Are you now, presently reconciled to, and in relationship with God? Does the smile of God shine down upon you? Is heaven your certain and eternal destination, and are hell and the second death, forever behind you? Are you in union with Christ?

Oh friends, if you are outside of Jesus Christ today, will you not call upon the Lord, and plead with Him, for the free salvation that He offers in Christ? What does your sin have to offer you in the long run? What lasting benefit does your sin and lusts provide? What does the world offer you, which is more precious, lasting and valuable, than your never dying soul? You are in a dying world, where you are dying, and the judgment and wrath of God, presently hang over your head, at this very moment. You are presently condemned, if you are outside of Christ! Don't you want peace with God? From heaven's standpoint, your tombstone is already etched, with your

name, and the precise date that you will be called to die! Be ready, friends! Be ready! And the only way that you can be ready, is if you are in Christ! Repent and believe in Him, before it is too late! Seek Him, while He may be found. Call upon Him, while He is near! He is the Way, the Truth, and the Life. There is absolutely no other way to the Father; there is no other means of removing the barrier of your sin, which presently separates you from God, except through Him!

AMEN!!!

The Lord's Supper!