

Divine Kindness For a Lame Fugitive

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Preparatory Service

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Bible Text: 1 Samuel 20:11-17; 2 Samuel 9:1-8

Preached on: Sunday, June 7, 2015

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For our Scripture reading this afternoon we turn to 2 places in Scripture. We turn first to 1 Samuel 20 and then we turn to 2 Samuel 9. Let us turn first in God's holy word to 1 Samuel 20, starting at verse 11 and we will read through to verse 17. 1 Samuel 20, starting at verse 11,

11 And Jonathan said unto David, Come, and let us go out into the field. And they went out both of them into the field. 12 And Jonathan said unto David, O LORD God of Israel, when I have sounded my father about to morrow any time, or the third day, and, behold, if there be good toward David, and I then send not unto thee, and shew it thee; 13 The LORD do so and much more to Jonathan: but if it please my father to do thee evil, then I will shew it thee, and send thee away, that thou mayest go in peace: and the LORD be with thee, as he hath been with my father. 14 And thou shalt not only while yet I live shew me the kindness of the LORD, that I die not: 15 But also thou shalt not cut off thy kindness from my house for ever: no, not when the LORD hath cut off the enemies of David every one from the face of the earth. 16 So Jonathan made a covenant with the house of David, saying, Let the LORD even require it at the hand of David's enemies. 17 And Jonathan caused David to swear again, because he loved him: for he loved him as he loved his own soul.

We turn then also to 2 Samuel 9 and that is where we find our text for this afternoon. 2 Samuel 9, the text will be the first 5 verses which we will read through to verse 8.

1 And David said, Is there yet any that is left of the house of Saul, that I may shew him kindness for Jonathan's sake? 2 And there was of the house of Saul a servant whose name was Ziba. And when they had called him unto David, the king said unto him, Art thou Ziba? And he said, Thy servant is he. 3 And the king said, Is there not yet any of the house of Saul, that I may shew the kindness of God unto him? And Ziba said unto the king, Jonathan hath yet a son, which is lame on his feet. 4 And the king said unto him, Where is he? And Ziba said unto the king, Behold, he is in the house of Machir, the son of Ammiel, in Lodebar. 5 Then king David sent, and fetched him out of the house of Machir, the son of Ammiel, from

Lodebar. 6 Now when Mephibosheth, the son of Jonathan, the son of Saul, was come unto David, he fell on his face, and did reverence. And David said, Mephibosheth. And he answered, Behold thy servant! 7 And David said unto him, Fear not: for I will surely shew thee kindness for Jonathan thy father's sake, and will restore thee all the land of Saul thy father; and thou shalt eat bread at my table continually. 8 And he bowed himself, and said, What is thy servant, that thou shouldest look upon such a dead dog as I am?

Thus far God's word.

Dear congregation, to have dinner with a king is a special occasion. Some weeks ago there was a king of the kingdom of the Netherlands and his wife here in Canada and some had the privilege of going there to have dinner with him. It's not an ordinary dinner. What does it take to have dinner with a king? You would simply go to where a dinner was held with the king and came to the door, then certainly a question would be asked, "Are you one of the invited guests?" because if you're not invited, you're not allowed to have dinner. You need to be invited. It also goes the other way, doesn't it? If you received a personal invitation from the king to have dinner with him and instead you spent the evening weeding your garden, what an insult that would be to the king to decline the invitation.

Next week is the dinner of the King; the King of kings, who is so much greater. You go to dinner with the king of Holland or wherever and at the end you realize, as special as it is, he is a mere man. But this King is a King divine. He is a King who is so much greater than any earthly king because you can go to dinner with an earthly king without that king really knowing you. You're simply invited to the dinner and now he may have no idea who you are. But this King is so much greater because in the first place he doesn't call to a dinner with him, he calls to himself and that will be the focus in this afternoon not in the first place the call to the Lord's Supper but the call to himself because the riches of the supper is the knowledge of this King. It's to have a bond with this King. It's to know the favor of this King. It's about him.

That is reflected in this king before us in 2 Samuel 7, who calls a man to himself and in that way to his table and what we see in this and that is our theme is: divine kindness for a lame fugitive. A fugitive is someone who runs away and hides away. Divine kindness for a lame fugitive. First, filling the king. Secondly, finding a fugitive. And third, fetching a fugitive back to the king. Divine kindness, filling the king, finding a fugitive and fetching a fugitive back to the king.

As I said already, this passage is in the first place not about the Lord Jesus but about King David, the forebear of the Lord Jesus in his royal palace. He was God's anointed king over Israel and the previous chapters of 2 Samuel record how he had become king not just of Judah but of the whole realm of Israel and how he had conquered Jerusalem and established his capital in Jerusalem where he dwelt and how he also brought the Ark of the Lord up to Jerusalem to show that God is the ultimate King over Israel and that he

said he would dwell in the midst of the people. It speaks of how the Philistines and the other nations had come to submit unto Israel and David as its king. It was a time of peace and prosperity. It was at this time that David began to think back, to think back over that time that had been so different. To think of Saul, how he had played the harp before Saul and how he had gone out as a captain of Saul and defeated the enemies of Saul. How he had killed Goliath. But also of how Saul had become jealous of him and plotted to kill him.

Remember how Saul had said that he had to go out and kill a hundred Philistines in order to have his daughter to wife and how he hoped that those Philistines would kill David? Do you remember, children, how Saul took that javelin and he threw it at David hoping to kill him? Do you remember how David delivered that town of Keida and then they told Saul that David was there and Saul came in order to capture David? Do you remember how Saul would chase David in the mountains like a hunter chases birds in order to catch them? Do you remember all the terrible things that Saul had done to David? And as David thought back he then asks, "Is there any left of the house of Saul?" And that very question shows how far the house of Saul had fallen that now it wasn't apparent whether there were any left of his house and if the servants would hear David say, "Is there any left of the house of Saul?" they would already know why David is asking that, if that's where he would stop his question because what does a king do towards the family of the former king? It was standard in those days that the king would kill and wipe out the entire family to avoid any threats of that former royal house rising up, any members of it rising up to try to regain the throne for that family and especially if that family had tried to kill the present king, then that king would get even and that king would execute revenge or that king would carry out justice in punishing those murderers.

That's what we would expect but instead David asks not, "Is there any left of the house of Saul that I may carry out vengeance or justice," he says, "that I may show him kindness." Kindness. Do you reward evil with good? Do you show kindness to those who have been cruel so many years? Do you show love to a house that has hated you? Do you show mercy to those who have tried to make your life so miserable? Do you spare those who try to kill you? "David, you want to show kindness to that house?" What does that show us about David's heart? It shows us that there is kindness filling David's heart, not bitterness, not envy and hatred and enmity which we read in the Lord's Supper, for we are to lay aside, but love. And it shows that David has a new heart.

What is in a new heart? One of the things is kindness. The Lord Jesus says, "Love your enemies. Bless those that curse you. Do good to them that hate you. And pray for them which despitefully use you and persecute you that you may be the children of your Father which is in heaven." You see that in David. He has a heart of kindness towards his enemies and the Lord Jesus says, "In that way you show yourself to be a child of the Father in heaven." But how much more was that kindness not embodied in that great son of David? Here the Lord is giving David as a picture of what his great Son would be like. It's a faint picture and yet already that faint picture is such a beautiful picture of what that great anointed one would be like, the great son of David. He would come into this world and he would come in the midst of enemies. He would come in the midst of those who

would plot to kill him. He would come into a rebellious house and he would have every reason to say, "Bring hither mine enemies that would not have me rule over them and slay them at my feet." And one day he will. One day this Christ will do so to those who refuse to bow the knee for him, to those who refuse to surrender to him, to those who continue in rebellion against him. He will have them slain at his feet and God forbid that any one of us in that day be found as an enemy of him still.

That may not be because what filled David's heart, fills Christ's heart in perfection. Do you know what's in Christ's heart? It's kindness for enemies. That's what's in his heart for a rebellious people who resisted his kingship. He is filled with kindness for such to show mercy to those in trouble due to their own fault. To show love for those who have been hateful. David is only a faint reflection of the one who is filled with the kindness of God and desires to show it. Notice that it says there, verse 3, "Is there any that I may show the kindness of God unto him?" This is about the kindness of God that is in David. It's through David to those others as a faint reflection of that kindness of God in Jesus Christ and through him to others. He's the great son of David, so able, so willing and who does indeed today show divine lovingkindness. Oh, what a heart the Lord Jesus has. Such a heart right now filled with infinite divine compassion.

So much greater than David. How can we be sure? That's also faintly reflected in David. As David thought back of all that happened, he remembered Jonathan. Jonathan who became his closest friend after the death of Goliath. He recognized the grace of God in Jonathan and Jonathan recognized that grace in David and they were bound together with a spiritual bond. Greater yet, Jonathan realized that God had anointed David to be his king and Jonathan was willing to agree to that and yield to that and have David as king and they entered into a covenant and we read it just now how Jonathan had David promise that he would show that kindness not only to Jonathan but also to his house when Jonathan is dead and David makes that covenant. Now he remembers that vow that he had made long before. That's why he asks, "Is there any left of the house of Saul that I may show kindness for Jonathan's sake?" Saul had so often broken his word. He said, "David, I will not persecute you any longer," and a little later he was doing so. Saul was unfaithful to his word but David is faithful to his word, to his covenant, to his vow. He speaks and he fulfills and again God sets David in this page of Scripture as a type, as a foreshadowing of that great son of David, Jesus Christ, who is faithful to his word, his word of grace, of mercy. Why does he show kindness today? Why doesn't he change his mind in the midst of all the sin that there is? Why doesn't he say, "I said it so long ago but I will not after all"? It's because he's faithful to his words. Is that not a wonder that Christ is filled with lovingkindness and filled with faithfulness and that is why he desires to show it.

If you think that that is an ordinary thing, that Christ should be kind to you, then you have no idea how great he is in his glory and no idea how great your sin is before him. It makes you so unworthy of kindness and worthy only of the glory of this King to destroy. If you think it would be an ordinary thing for you to be at his table, the table of this King, you're blind to this King. You don't know who he is. His kindness is a wonder. It's a

wonder divine because it's a kindness of this glorious King for those who have rebelled against him.

You see it here. He asks for the house of Saul that had done all it could to destroy David and he wants to show kindness to that house. There is no kindness, there is no faithfulness like what fills not simply the heart of David but the heart of the son of David, Jesus Christ. Every earthly king pales in comparison to him and what fills his heart. Not only fills his heart but it also flows out of his heart to find fugitives. That's our second point, not only filling the king but also flowing from him and finding this man. He asks, "Is there anyone left?" And that news travels about, "Is there any left?" And no one comes forward and says, "Here I am." That's so sad and how much sadder when the Christ who is full of lovingkindness asks, "Is there any one of a rebellious house to whom I may show divine kindness?" and no one cries in response, "Jesus, thou son of David, have mercy on me!" By nature there is no one who comes to find kindness in him.

That's why he goes out to find them, to reach them. We see how it happens here, the servants discuss this question and they remember that old servant of Saul, Ziba, and they summon Ziba to come to the palace of the king because Ziba may know about the family of his former master Saul. And so he comes and David asks whether he really is Ziba because David doesn't know this man and he says, "Thy servant is he." He calls himself now the servant of David and the king asks, "Is there not yet any of the house of Saul that I may show the kindness of God unto him?" And Ziba says, "Jonathan hath yet a son lame on his feet." Later on we learn that there are also other descendents of Saul but they are not mentioned, maybe Ziba had his reasons for not mentioning the others but we can clearly see the hand of God directing David's attention to this Mephibosheth. He's only described as one lame on his feet and that's not such an honorable description of a man. The lame in those days were looked down on as ones who could not contribute much to society. Maybe their society is little different from us today who increasingly have no use and no place for those who are handicapped. They are seen as a burden rather than ones to love and care for.

He's lame and yet David asks, "Where is he?" and he's told that he is in the house of a certain man, Machir, the son of Ammiel. As a lame man he cannot do so much and he needs to live in the house of another for another to care for him. Where is Machir? He's in Lodebar. Lodebar is actually a strange name, it means "no thing." Nothing. That's what Lodebar means. It's a nothing of a place. It's on the other side of the Jordan in a remote area on the eastern edge of the land of Israel, one of those forgotten places that no one knows about. There is this son of Jonathan. Why is he there so far away? Why is he not in his original lands, in Benjamin where Saul came from? Likely he fled and he wanted to be away from Jerusalem and away from the king because it would be safer there and there on the other side of Jordan, people had a little more respect still for Saul. Afraid of David. Afraid what David would do. Would he kill him? There he is as an exile, as a fugitive.

There was a time when everything was so different. He once lived in the royal palace. He had lots of things and attention and he could run and jump just like the little children. Are

you 4 years old? When Mephibosheth was 4, he could run and jump but when he was 5, 5 years old, suddenly the terrible news came into the palace, news that his grandfather and his father and his uncles had been killed in battle and that the Philistines had won the battle. And when they realized that, everyone in the house or many people, they fled and he had a nurse, someone who took care of him who said, "Come, we have to flee!" And they ran and the little boy of 5 years old, he gets tired, right? When you run and run you get tired and so she took him up in her arms and she continued to run and then she fell and when she fell, he started crying and his legs hurt so much but she had to keep running, and it turned out ever since that time he was lame on both his feet. He could not walk. Children, you can be so thankful that you can walk and run around. Imagine being lame. That was Mephibosheth, lame on both his feet.

I said Mephibosheth, actually in these first verses his name is not even mentioned and it is later in verse 6 that his name is mentioned as Mephibosheth. He used to be called Maribaal, the other account indicates that. That means "one who is against Baal," a beautiful name. But now he is called Mephibosheth. Mephibosheth most likely means "shameful thing." It summarizes what had become of this Mephibosheth, he was royalty but now he is there far away in a forgotten place hiding from the king, lame on his feet in his shame.

"David, do you want to show kindness to such a person? Why would you do so? Isn't there someone who can give you more honor than this person?" And yet David sends a word and tells them to fetch this one because that kindness is not for people who are so honorable but for shameful ones who run away. Is that you? Is that your name, Mephibosheth, shameful one? Shameful because of what you've been? You also were royalty, you are a son of Adam who was king, but it is a fallen royal house that you belong to. No longer is there any honor left in that fallen house, not of Saul but of Adam as king. We have destroyed ourselves and we have become exiles, banished from the King of kings, banished from God himself and in exile. Is that your condition? Maybe hiding from God, hoping that God will not notice you, hoping that God will not come and visit you for your sin, hoping that God will not see your sin and punish it? Hoping God doesn't see you? So far away from God and lame. You have run away but you can't get back to God. Helpless when it comes to returning to God. Unable to walk. Is that your picture? Or you say your picture is actually worse than Mephibosheth? "No reason for him to find me out with his mercy." That's exactly where God desires to magnify his mercy. His lovingkindness, exactly to those who only have shame about themselves, because that exactly shows how great his lovingkindness is and his bowels of compassion. His heart flows out to such fallen fugitives and exiles. His kindness is divine.

You see those pictured again, you see those wagons go or chariots or whatever they were, they go across the Jordan River and they go to that wee little place called Lodebar that nobody knows about and yet they find it and they come into the streets and the people must have wondered, "What's happening now? These people from the king coming to our little town?" They ask, "Where is Machir?" And they are shown the place and they come to that house and they ask, "Is Mephibosheth here?" "Yes, he is." "The king wants to see

Mephibosheth." "The king wants to see Mephibosheth? Me? Why would the king want to see me?"

We can understand that later when he comes before the king, Mephibosheth is afraid but he is brought to the king, he is called to the king. What will happen? We'll see that in a moment but now, again, you think of that greater than David, that great son of David, as the one who sends out his word, who sends out his message, that message that finds us where we are, wherever we've been and wherever we are spiritually this afternoon. And that message comes to us as a message of the King, "Is there any to whom I may show my kindness? Come, for I desire to show my lovingkindness to shameful ones far from me." Isn't that what we confess in the canons, how it begins, how all have sinned and come short of the glory of God and God would have been just if he had punished, left all in their sin to perish but this is the love of God that he sent his own Son that whosoever believes on him should not perish and that now the messengers of these most joyful tidings go forth into this world and they come to us and they declare there is lovingkindness in the heart of Christ for those who have fallen so far from him and who belong to a rebellious family. And through those messengers he says, "Come." You may question, "Is the Lord's Supper for me? Am I called to come to the Lord's Supper?" But there is no question and, "Does this glorious Christ call me to come to him?"

David did not say, "Go and see what Mephibosheth is like and interview and see whether he's a kind person and a nice person and whether he's this or whether he's that and whether he's willing to do this for me and that for me." No, he hears this description of Mephibosheth and he sends forth his messengers to bring Mephibosheth to him. That shows, again, the picture of the Lord Jesus Christ who calls sinners just as they are. All that you lack is no reason to stay away but to go to the fullness that is in him. All your shame is all the more reason to heed his call because he is a covering for your shame. And all of your rebellion is no reason to stay away because that's only to continue in rebellion but to bow before the king. And all your depravity as a fallen son or daughter of Adam is no reason to stay away. Neither the fact that you are so far away from him. Mephibosheth could have had 1,000 reasons why he should not come and why David should never show kindness to him but through these messengers, the king is showing his kindness to him and finding him where he is.

This king, his heart is so full of lovingkindness and he shows it in the messengers that call to those who lack all to come to him and it's a message that will not return empty-handed because through that message he also fetches and brings fugitives back to him. Our final point: fetching a fugitive. His divine kindness fetching a fugitive back to the king. In the Gospel, this Christ with a divine heart of lovingkindness reveals himself in the midst of a world of fallen royalty, children of Adam, exiles from God, and he calls. Have you heard his voice? He has every reason to say, "Depart," and instead he says, "Come." Does someone here think that that can't be me he means? You say that lovingkindness is not for me, that lovingkindness is for other people, people that are different than me, people that are better than made, people who are God-fearing and people who are godly and people who are sincere and people who are this and that but that lovingkindness is not for me like Mephibosheth hiding away from David, thinking

that that king would not be kind to him? Or are you one who does not want to come before him because it means that you no longer would be able to live your own life? No longer able to be your own king? You don't want to surrender all and fall before this King? Or do you have a secret resistance to this King?

You think of Mephibosheth there, he was lame because God had turned against that household of Saul and given the kingdom to David and that's why he fled and that's why he was lame and that was not an easy way for Mephibosheth. Is that also how it is in your life? It's not an easy way that the Lord has led you? There are these problems in your life and troubles in your life and it has made you bitter and it has made you suspect the heart of this God and made you think that there is no kindness in him for you? Or do you feel your own unworthiness and your own unfitness to be in his presence and you think that if he calls you to come to him that it must be for him to judge you because if you should stand in his presence, you cannot stand because of your sin and because of your unworthiness? Are all these things things that make you suspect the heart of this King who calls?

My friend, tell the Lord all your objections and all your problems. Confess them before the Lord in this week. Tell him why you cannot believe there would be lovingkindness in his heart toward a sinner like you. Tell him why you cannot believe that. Confess it before him. All those problems on your side, will he not address them? Does he not show his lovingkindness to those who bow before him also in this week, in the midst of all their shame and unworthiness and problems? You say, "I don't understand how that can be." That's because Isaiah 55 says, "His ways are higher than our ways and his thoughts than our thoughts." Our thoughts are wrong and suspicious and unbelieving thoughts of him, but his thoughts are thoughts of peace and mercy for the sake of Christ.

Did Mephibosheth realize that? The king had thoughts of mercy for him? When the soldiers came and placed him in that chariot or in that wagon and took him off to the king, he still had many fears but it's so beautiful that the king was fetching him with all his fears to bring him before himself. What a blessing in this week, to see the great son of David send forth his word and Spirit to fetch those among us who try to hide and who cannot believe that there is kindness in his heart for someone like them, that he takes hold and brings them to himself, to find just how great his kindness is.

As I said already this text is not in the first place about coming to the Lord's Supper but it is about coming to him. Being fetched by this Christ and brought to him to find what is in his heart in the midst of all your fears. Sometimes we can be so caught up in whether we are to come to the table or not to come or we think, of course we come to the table or we think, of course we do not come to the table and all the while we forget it's about the King. And what is essentially in you and me is that we know this King and we know his heart because if we don't know that, coming to the table will do us no good. Without knowing his heart, we only eat and drink judgment to ourselves when we come to the table. And without knowing his heart of kindness, we live on under his wrath whether we come to the table or not. That call is to him, to this Christ and it's in the way of seeing

what kindness is in him and you cannot stay away from where he reveals it at his table. How blessed to come in that way.

What does this Christ desire in this week? Mephibosheths before himself. In this week he calls out, "Is there yet one to whom I may show kindness? Is there yet room in the midst of the congregation for me to magnify my lovingkindness to sinners?" If that's what he desires to do, magnify his own kindness, then what do you need to bring along as you come before him? As you bow before him in prayer? It's nothing but your sin and but your shame. Whether you say you are unconverted or whether you say you are converted, even if you say you are converted, still what is the way to come before him? It's with your sin so that he may show his heart of kindness.

And if you still feel so powerless to really come before him, to really see what is in his heart, you see here how great his kindness is that it is reflected here in David that he not only sits in his palace with his heart of kindness and he not only sends messengers out that he is willing to receive them but he also sends out those ones who take that Mephibosheth and bring him to himself and that shows the power of his lovingkindness. It's not just a desire. It's not just a wish and that after he has expressed his wish, that's all he can do and that wish breaks against the unwillingness of ones that it meets. No, if it depended on Mephibosheth's willingness to come, then Mephibosheth would not have been at the feet of David because Mephibosheth did not believe that David was so full of kindness and Mephibosheth did not want to come. He was afraid. And if it had depended on Mephibosheth's ability to come, then he also never would have come because Mephibosheth was lame on both his feet. But it did not depend upon his willingness and it did not depend upon his ability but it was about the kindness of this king which reached Mephibosheth and overcame all those problems and obstacles and brought Mephibosheth before the king.

Again, we have a faint picture of this glorious King who will have his supper next week, the one who in the first place calls us to himself. He is also the one who fetches by his own Gospel to himself and he finds sinners wherever they have hidden themselves and he finds his children wherever they have wandered to and he brings them back by his words and Spirit. His power serves his kindness. No obstacle is too great for him. He says, "My Father will draw them unto me." Blessed Gospel of an Almighty God of salvation who makes the unwilling willing and the unable able and they come before him to see what is in his heart. He still does so.

Can you look back, look back to where you were as a fugitive? You doubted him, you suspected his heart, you remained away from him hiding. He found you and he didn't let you go. He found you in your shame and he didn't turn you away. You couldn't bear to remain in exile far from him in Lodebar, you desired to be with him and you weren't able to stay away any longer but were constrained by his grace to return to him, to fall at his feet confessing who you were and discovering who he was in his lovingkindness. You feared and he said, "Fear not. I am your King. I am your priest. You should be at my table."

Is that your desire as the Lord's Supper approaches to come not just to a table, to receive not just bread and wine but to have fellowship with this King and to see in that bread and wine that as windows into the heart of this King which is filled with lovingkindness, such lovingkindness that he lay down his life for his people who deserve to die so that they may live with him. The call of today is, "Is there any poor, lame, shameful one in whom I may glorify my lovingkindness? Do I hear one say, here I am as I am?" Christ says, "Here I am as I am in all my kindness to find you, to fetch you, to bless you and to feed you." Amen.