# Congregational-Presbyterian Church

 **“David and Mephibosheth”**

**2 Samuel 9:1-13**

 **August 1, 2021**

Our passage this morning is 2 Samuel 9. By this time in the story of David, he is well established as king of Israel. The descendants of Saul no longer oppose him and the Philistines have been defeated. This is the kind of ruler that God had intended Israel to have: a man after God’s own heart who rules with justice and righteousness. And, as we will see, he rules with the kindness of God. I invite you to turn with me to 2 Samuel 9

One day David asked, “Is anyone in Saul’s family still alive—anyone to whom I can show kindness for Jonathan’s sake?” He summoned a man named Ziba, who had been one of Saul’s servants. “Are you Ziba?” the king asked. “Yes sir, I am,” Ziba replied. The king then asked him, “Is anyone still alive from Saul’s family? If so, I want to show God’s kindness to them.” Ziba replied, “Yes, one of Jonathan’s sons is still alive. He is crippled in both feet.” “Where is he?” the king asked. “In Lo-debar,” Ziba told him, “at the home of Makir son of Ammiel.” So David sent for him and brought him from Makir’s home. His name was Mephibosheth; he was Jonathan’s son and Saul’s grandson. When he came to David, he bowed low to the ground in deep respect. David said, “Greetings, Mephibosheth.” Mephibosheth replied, “I am your servant.” “Don’t be afraid!” David said. “I intend to show kindness to you because of my promise to your father, Jonathan. I will give you all the property that once belonged to your grandfather Saul, and you will eat here with me at the king’s table!” Mephibosheth bowed respectfully and exclaimed, “Who is your servant, that you should show such kindness to a dead dog like me?” Then the king summoned Saul’s servant Ziba and said, “I have given your master’s grandson everything that belonged to Saul and his family. You and your sons and servants are to farm the land for him to produce food for your master’s household. But Mephibosheth, your master’s grandson, will eat here at my table.” (Ziba had fifteen sons and twenty servants.) Ziba replied, “Yes, my lord the king; I am your servant, and I will do all that you have commanded.” And from that time on, Mephibosheth ate regularly at David’s table, like one of the king’s own sons. Mephibosheth had a young son named Mica. From then on, all the members of Ziba’s household were Mephibosheth’s servants. And Mephibosheth, who was crippled in both feet, lived in Jerusalem and ate regularly at the king’s table.

King David is thinking about his love for his friend Jonathan, the son of King Saul, both of whom have died in battle. He had promised Jonathan that he would show kindness to Saul’s family, but he doesn’t know if anyone from the family is still alive. So he summons Ziba and learns that one of Jonathan’s sons still lives. He is crippled in both feet and he lives in a place called Lo-debar. In Hebrew, *lo* means “no,” and *debar* means “pasture.” This son of Jonathan is living in a place called “no pasture.” Doesn’t sound very appealing, does it? Why would Mephibosheth, the grandson of a king, live in such a desolate place?

In the ancient Near East, it was the custom for the family of a king replaced by someone from another family to be killed and their lands confiscated. The new king was expected to solidify his power and control, and this included being sure that no one from the previous king’s family could foster a rebellion against him. David’s desire to show kindness to members of Saul’s family was completely unexpected. In fact, it was grace.

So, when Mephibosheth is summoned by the king and appears before him, no wonder David tells him that he has nothing to fear. Expecting death, Mephibosheth hears unbelievable words of grace. Mephibosheth, the outcast, becomes Mephibosheth, the guest at the king’s table. Mephibosheth, the man who lived in an undesirable place, becomes the man who owns the desirable lands of his ancestors. All because the king decided to show him kindness. Mephibosheth paid nothing, he deserved nothing, and he had nothing that would attract David’s kindness. That’s grace.

The story of David and Mephibosheth is the story of God and us. Once we lived in a beautiful place called the Garden of Eden. But, sin caused us to be expelled from the Garden and we went to live in a no-good place – a place without God. Yet, because of his love for us, God sought us out and through his Son, Jesus Christ, he has extended grace to us. The relationship that was lost has been restored and, while we still live in this world, the promise of a return to “the desirable place” is ours. We will be raised from the dead into the eternal presence of God where we will be treated as sons and daughters of the king with a forever place at his table. Not because of anything we have done, or earned, or deserved, but solely because of God’s grace.

One thing that David could not do for Mephibosheth was give him healthy feet, but his disability would serve as a constant reminder of the king’s kindness. He still had his crutches, the result of his former life, and yet he was always welcome at the table. So it is with us. Our ongoing sin disability is a continuing reminder of God’s grace. Whenever we admit our sin, confessing it to God, God responds with the gracious promise of forgiveness. No matter our past problems, no matter our lack of deserving to be there, no matter our current struggles with sin, God looks at us with love and says, “Welcome. I’m glad you’re here.” That’s grace. It really is quite amazing!

This morning God invites us to this table, the table that commemorates the death of his Son on our behalf so that our sin may be forgiven. “Come to me all who are weary and heavy laden and I will give you rest.” You are invited. Come and receive the grace of God, offered freely to all who accept it.