

MONDAY, 6/10

Read 2 Samuel 9:1.

At this point in time, King David's reign is summed up in 2 Samuel 8:15 in that he was "doing what was just and right for all his people". Nothing has changed when we step into chapter 9. The primary story of chapter 9 confirms that.

During a time of relative ease, David asks if there is anyone left in Saul's line. Those who belonged to Saul had launched an assault on David following Saul's death. While David didn't take any of their lives, most of Saul's descendants died in the various conflicts. Now that the dust had settled, it was unclear who, if any, were still left.

Now, it's worth noting that when a king asked if any of his political opponents were still alive, he had one thing in mind--to eliminate them. A quick glance through the history books and you will see that kings don't like leaving loose strings. David, however, has a different motivation. He wants to show them kindness.

Why would David want to show kindness to a potential political enemy? David wants to show kindness "for Jonathan's sake". Jonathan was the son of King Saul and a great friend to David. In fact, Jonathan protected David from his father's attempts to take his life. In 1 Samuel, Jonathan had asked David to repay the kindness he had shown David by looking out after him and his descendants. He and David made a covenant together. David is now seeking to fulfill that promise.

So what does David mean by showing kindness? Kindness is giving of ourselves to others. That includes times when they may not be able to give back to us or even when they do not necessarily deserve it. Kindness is a way of seeing others that leads us to do good things for them.

Kindness in this way isn't natural. The Greek word in the New Testament for kindness means a "softening of something that was once harsh." This implies a change in our hearts that compels us to show kindness. We know that prompting to be the Lord's work in us. It is the work of Jesus to give us new hearts with an increased capacity to love. It is the work of the Spirit that enables and empowers us to show kindness to those we might otherwise deem less than worthy of our love. As those who are in Christ, we are called to live out this kindness to others.

I wonder how you might show God's kindness to someone today.

Praying Together:

"Lord, You have shown me great kindness. While I was unlovable, You have loved me with an unshakable love. Work in my heart that I might be kind to others. Let my actions be motivated by Your work within me. Amen."

TUESDAY, 6/11

Read 2 Samuel 9:2-3.

David continues to try to track down the remnants of King Saul's line. David summons a former servant of King Saul named Ziba. Ziba knows of only one person left. He was a son of Jonathan named Mephibosheth. Ziba adds that he was "lame in both feet".

We find the story about Mephibosheth's disability in 2 Samuel 4. Mephibosheth was just a child when King Saul and his father Jonathan were killed. After their deaths, his nurse picked him up to flee with him. He fell and was hurt, crippling both his legs. We will see why that is significant later in the story.

What I want to point out about this passage is what David asks Ziba. He asks if there is anyone left from Saul's house to whom he can show "God's kindness". This is different from the question he asks in verse 1. David wants to show another person's God's kindness.

What is God's kindness? I believe Titus 3:4-7 best captures God's kindness toward us. It reads, "But when the kindness and love of God our Savior appeared, He saved us, not because of righteous things we had done, but because of His mercy. He saved us through the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit, whom He poured out on us generously through Jesus Christ our Savior, so that, having been justified by His grace, we might become heirs having the hope of eternal life." *God's kindness is evidenced in His saving us through Jesus.*

*We encounter God's kindness in the gospel of Jesus. He gave His life for us so that we might live through Him and with Him. It is in the Father's lavishing His great love upon us and showing us mercy. We see it in the offer to share in the reward Jesus won and freely extends to us. We are recipients of God's kindness.*

*What is significant about this question is that David wants to share the same kindness he has received from God with others. He isn't peddling the shallow understanding of kindness we see in the world, which equates to being kind to those who are like you. This is a generous, self-giving kindness that reflects the Father's kindness toward us.*

*This is the kindness that we are called to extend to others as well. Our call to love and show kindness isn't based on whether we determine someone to be worthy of it. It is based on the fact that we have been shown love and kindness by God. We didn't deserve it, and yet God showed it to us anyway; therefore, as recipients of such love, we are to love others the same.*

Praying Together:

"Jesus, You have shown me the Father's kindness. You sought me and loved me when I was far from You. You pursued me and redeemed me when I was unworthy of such a gift. Inspire in me the desire to show kindness for the very reason that You showed kindness to me. I need no other reason than that. Amen."

WEDNESDAY, 6/12

Read 2 Samuel 9:4-7.

King David learns the location of Saul's only remaining descendant, Mephibosheth, and sends for him. When Mephibosheth arrives at the king's palace, he is nervous, and he should be. Typically, when kings start looking for the remnants of their political opponents, it was to eliminate them. Now an important point to note is that David didn't see Saul as a political opponent, but Saul certainly saw David that way, and treated him as such.

Mephibosheth does not know what to expect from David. When David calls him by name, he responds with humble admission of service to the king. Perhaps David can sense the fear in his voice because David's next words are, "Don't be afraid."

In the end, Mephibosheth isn't beheaded by the king but blessed by him. King David gives Mephibosheth the land and possessions that had belonged to Saul. Now, this doesn't include all that Saul owned as king, but that which he owned personally. It was still substantial and would elevate Mephibosheth from the living he had previously endured.

David also invites Mephibosheth to his table. In fact, David doesn't offer Mephibosheth a one-time ticket, but a permanent place at the king's table.

This is an unheard of gesture. It was a privilege to dine with the king. Few people enjoyed a place at the king's table. A lasting seat at the king's table was reserved only for family. In this sense, David is making Mephibosheth part of the family, like a son.

This is the kindness David had in mind to share with Saul's descendants. The Hebrew word for kindness here is *hesed*. It is a complex word and means something more like covenantal love. David is more than faithful to his promise to Jonathan and his commitment to Saul. David extends a grace that is undeserved and unexpected given the circumstances.

While we may not be king, we have opportunities to extend grace to people. Each day there are moments we can choose to dispense grace and mercy to others just as God has done to us. This is what Jesus has in mind for His Kingdom people. We are to not be merely recipients of His grace, but dispensers of it as well. This shows that we have truly been transformed by His love.

I wonder whom you can show God's grace to today.

Praying Together:

"Lord, You have shown us grace we do not deserve. You have shown us grace when You could have easily given up on us. As those who have experienced Your mercy, help us to show mercy. May we give grace, and, in turn, bring You the glory You deserve. Amen."

THURSDAY, 6/13

Read 2 Samuel 9:8-13.

As we continue in the story of David and Mephibosheth, we come into Mephibosheth's response to David's generosity. David has offered Mephibosheth, the grandson of the man who tried to kill David, his family's land and a place at David's table. This is more than Mephibosheth expected.

In verse 8, Mephibosheth replies to David, "What is your servant, that you should notice a dead dog like me?" Mephibosheth doesn't believe he deserves David's mercy. After all, he is kin to the man who made David's life miserable and wanted to do far worse. He is crippled, a state many would see as God's rejection of him. He has nothing to give or offer the king, and yet, David extends grace to Mephibosheth. He restores him and makes him like a son.

In many ways, we see how this mirrors the grace that Jesus extends to us. Like Mephibosheth, we are broken. Sin has ravaged our souls. We have and can do nothing to deserve grace, and yet that is precisely what Jesus has done for us. Even when we were still sinners, He gave His life for us, so that we might live through Him.

In chapter 9, Mephibosheth's place to eat at David's table is mentioned four times. That tells us how significant it is. Again, very few people were given an invitation to the king's table, let alone a lasting place there.

In the same way, Jesus offers us a permanent place at His table. One of the images for our life with God is at the table with Him. This is often called the Messianic Banquet. Jesus speaks of this often, several times in Luke 14 alone. The idea is that we will feast with the Lord at His table. Like a master throwing a party, we will enjoy life and fellowship together.

It is a wonderful image to ponder. What an amazing gift it is to receive such an invitation, and how grateful we are for God's grace that makes it possible.

Praying Together:

"Jesus, I have a place at Your table because You are gracious. When I deserved death, You offered me life. I'm not worthy of Your love, yet You love me with an infinite love. Thank You for making a place for me. Amen."

FRIDAY, 6/14

Read 2 Samuel 10:1-5.

As we enter 2 Samuel 10, we will see that not all kindness extended is returned.

The Ammonites were previous enemies of Israel whom Saul had defeated. It appears that David and their king had some kind of relationship, even if it was a friendly agreement to not fight against each other.

When the Ammonite king passes away, David decides to show the same kindness to his son in the hopes that the son, who is now the king, will continue to extend to David. David sends a delegation to extend his sympathy for the king's passing. It doesn't turn out as planned.

Some Ammonite commanders are skeptical of David's intentions. They figure he sent them to spy on the city, so they seize the men. They cut half of their beards off and trim their garments into miniskirts. This sounds like some kind of locker room boy prank. David is less than thrilled. He calls for the men to remain in Jericho until their beards grow back, likely to prevent them from embarrassment at home.

David wants to show kindness, but that kindness is not returned. What are we to do when our efforts to show kindness fail to produce a similar response, or are even thrown in our face?

Again, this goes back to what we looked at earlier in the week. We are to show kindness to others because God has shown kindness to us. I know it is human nature to determine whether we deem someone worthy of our love and service. We must remember that human nature is part of our problem and the first thing that Jesus seeks to redeem in us.

We cannot settle for our natural selves. We are a new creation in Christ. Jesus has made us new, and, at the same time, we are all growing into that newness. Growing into our new Christ-like nature is a process that is often slower than we would like, but this is who we are now, by God's grace.

Praying Together:

"Father, You know how we are. We are often willing to show kindness only when we think it will benefit us or be reciprocated. That isn't how You love us. You have extended Yourself to the world, knowing that many will not repay Your kindness. Help us to love selflessly as You do. Amen."

SATURDAY, 6/15

Read 2 Samuel 10:6-14.

Well, things go from bad to worse. That happens sometimes. It is certainly the case for Israel as we get further into the story of 2 Samuel 10. After the Ammonites disgrace and embarrass David's delegation, they prepare for retaliation. They know they've messed up and that they have lost before in a head-to-head with God's people. They call for backups, a lot of backups. They enlist the help of 33,000 soldiers. The Ammonites want to put a force on display that would intimidate David and dissuade him from further action.

This puts David in a precarious position. What is David to do? He goes from trying to shore up an alliance to defending his kingdom. With a force like that, the concern isn't extending Israel's territory but defending its borders.

Sometimes life comes at us like that too. We have great intentions in a given circumstance, but before long, dominoes begin to fall and things are on the brink of getting out of hand. We wonder what we are to do.

David finds himself in such a position, but the warrior-king doesn't bat an eye. He assembles his entire army to confront the Ammonite force at their own city.

The Ammonites divide their forces into two armies in the hopes of dividing Israel's army. Israel's army attacks before the Ammonites are ready and the Ammonites are immediately on the run. After success on the battlefield, Israel returns home.

I'm not sure this story is intended to be a real teaching opportunity for us. Its purpose is to inform us about the relationships surrounding Israel and David.

We might consider how we respond when things don't go according to our plan. What do we do when our desire to do right is met with a wrong like David here? I seriously doubt the answer for us is to go to war. We must consider our actions in prayer before the Father. As those in Christ, our desire must never be revenge for revenge's sake. We are to value righteousness in our actions over being right. If we draw unto the Father for wisdom and help, we will discover His gracious hand to guide us.

Praying Together:

"God, the world is such that even our best attempts at doing good aren't always met with good. We confess that sometimes we are the reasons for that and not just the victims of it. Guide us as we navigate the sometimes choppy waters of life in this world. Help us to be a reflection of You in all we do. We long to be righteous--not just right. Amen."

SUNDAY, 6/16

Read 2 Samuel 10:15-19.

After facing the armies of Israel, the Ammonites lose all taste for war. They retreat from their offensive, but their partners in crime, the Arameans, refuse to give up. The Arameans are quick to join the Ammonites against Israel because they had been defeated by Israel in 2 Samuel 8 and had come under Israel's authority. They are subject to David and pay him taxes.

The Arameans call for more help and find it, but it didn't matter much in the end. New fight, same result. The Arameans flee the battlefield, but not after taking on substantial losses.

The point of 2 Samuel 10 becomes clear in verse 19, which reads, "When all the kings who were vassals of Hadadezer saw that they had been routed by Israel, they made peace with the Israelites and became subject to them." This fight that began with the Ammonites would go a long way to solidify Israel's standing in the region as well as increase their power. Even more than territory, they gain power over nations that would go on to fill their pockets. This contributes to the rise of Israel's power and significance as a nation at this point in history.

As we prepare for 2 Samuel 11, things seem to be going well, even great, for King David. With the turn of the page, things will take a drastic turn. The peace he enjoys right now will not last. I invite you to continue studying the life of David as we move further into 2 Samuel.

Praying Together:

"Lord, You are so good and are always eager to give us wisdom. You are the Giver of all good things. You also have a way of working all things for our good and for those who love You. Continue to lead us into a deeper life with You. Amen."