

“Christmas Time-A Reason to Come out of Hiding from Jesus”

Our reading for this morning takes us to 2 Samuel 9 where David invites Mephibosheth to have a place at the king’s table. It’s one of my favorite places in the OT because it illustrates in so many ways the mercy of God. This passage parallels so much of why Christmas is important to us. It is a picture of grace and it also has something important to say about those of us who regularly hide behind the words “I’m fine” when we may not be.

Starting with verse 3. <sup>3</sup>The king asked, “Is there no one still alive from the house of Saul to whom I can show God’s kindness?”

Ziba answered the king, “There is still a son of Jonathan; he is lame in both feet.”

<sup>4</sup>“Where is he?” the king asked.

Ziba answered, “He is at the house of Makir son of Ammiel in Lo Debar.”

<sup>5</sup>So King David had him brought from Lo Debar, from the house of Makir son of Ammiel.

<sup>6</sup>When Mephibosheth son of Jonathan, the son of Saul, came to David, he bowed down to pay him honor.

David said, “Mephibosheth!”

“At your service,” he replied.

<sup>7</sup>“Don’t be afraid,” David said to him, “for I will surely show you kindness for the sake of your father Jonathan. I will restore to you all the land that belonged to your grandfather Saul, and you will always eat at my table.”

<sup>8</sup>Mephibosheth bowed down and said, “What is your servant, that you should notice a dead dog like me?”

<sup>9</sup>Then the king summoned Ziba, Saul’s steward, and said to him, “I have given your master’s grandson everything that belonged to Saul and his family. <sup>10</sup>You and your sons and your servants are to farm the land for him and bring in the crops, so that your master’s grandson may be provided for. And Mephibosheth, grandson of your master, will always eat at my table.” (Now Ziba had fifteen sons and twenty servants.)

<sup>11</sup>Then Ziba said to the king, “Your servant will do whatever my lord the king commands his servant to do.” So, Mephibosheth ate at David’s table like one of the king’s sons.

<sup>12</sup>Mephibosheth had a young son named Mika, and all the members of Ziba’s household were servants of Mephibosheth. <sup>13</sup>And Mephibosheth lived in Jerusalem, because he always ate at the king’s table; he was lame in both feet.

Mephibosheth was the last living son of Jonathon, David’s best friend who also happened to be the grandson of King Saul, David’s predecessor. Usually during this era when a new King from a new family took the throne all remaining family members from the previous dynasty were killed off to avoid any possibility of a challenge to the new king. So, in 2 Samuel 4:4 we are told that Mephibosheth was five years old when Saul died. When news of Saul’s death got back to the family little Mephibosheth was swept up by his nanny to go into hiding. But she picked him up in a panic. As she ran, she tripped and fell with the little kindergartener breaking something in his legs—leaving Mephibosheth crippled from the rest of his life.

Many years later Mephibosheth was still hiding in the sticks, in a nowhere town far from David. Once royalty Mephibosheth was homeless, living in a fear that one day the king will try to execute him, and orphaned. Except for one son, he had no one except his loyal friends.

And then the day that he dreaded came. He stood in his ragged clothes, dragging himself in with some help in a magnificent king's hall, a misfit and completely out of place even though he once played in the very throne room he now stood in. But instead of an execution David invites Mephibosheth to his table. Jesus does the same for us. He seeks us out not to drop the hammer on we who are hobbled by sin and death. Jesus comes in the flesh to give us a place at the king's table. Turns out Mephibosheth didn't need to hide. Nor do we. Jesus seeks us out to raise our status; homeless to a place in the father's house; sinner to saved; tatters sinners rags to robes of righteousness. Jesus Himself illustrates this in the Parable of the Prodigal Son who runs out to His son, hugs and kisses him, and then celebrates him being home safe and sound.

I think the most unfortunate words sometimes are, "I'm fine." It's like Adam and Eve hiding themselves after the fall to sin. The only two people in the wide world—are you kidding me. "I'm fine" may be covering a storm of emotions, worries, concerns, and stuff swirling in our hearts in minds. Sometimes I can sense it in some of our members I've known for twenty years. I've been at this long enough to realize that many people are not always fine and Christians are not immune to this. "I'm fine" acts like a deer blind, camouflage.

As Christmas fast approaches so does an amplification of feelings that percolate within so many Christians. Mourning feels harder. Guilt stings more. Unsaid apologies plague our minds. Worrying about Covid turns into a deep fear. Feelings of being loveable at all creep in. Loneliness feels all the lonelier. There are so many different feelings that make someone want burst. It would be so good to unload them but we don't dare because of this fear of feeling exposed, or more vulnerable than we already do. We may tell ourselves, "What if they see my sin, my deepest problems, my personal worst....? I can't handle what may come on top of what I am feeling right now."

If this describes you, or someone you care about I would invite you to hear from the King of Kings, Jesus. Those wonderful words, "Do not be afraid..." are shared when God is doing something good for His people. We've heard them before at the coming of Jesus when he was announced to the shepherds, themselves outcasts, men who worked outside with the dirty sheep; ragged, rugged, and dirty. In Luke 2 we hear, "Do not be afraid. I bring you good news of great joy which will be for all people. Today in the city of David a Savior has been born to you and He is Christ the Lord." In Matthew 28 the angel at the tomb tells the women the same thing. "Do not be afraid, He is risen." When fear seems to intensify God is inviting us not to fear.

Christmas is still good news even when it is clouded by deep internal emotions. "Do not be afraid..." The King has brought you a place at His table. You are no longer a stranger to Him. You are welcomed as a child of God. No longer will you hunger or thirst or be in want. You do not have to live in hiding but in safety. Your sin will no longer hold a bounty on your life but you have been set free from sin and death.

There is an old illustration that fits our idea today. In 1981, California police staged an intensive search for a stolen car and its driver. They even placed announcements on radio stations in their attempt to contact the thief. On the front seat of the car sat a box of crackers that, unknown to the thief, were laced with poison. The car owner had intended to use them as rat killer. But now the police and car owner were more interested in apprehending the thief to save his life than to recover the car.

Psalm 23 tells us that “Goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life and I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever.” Like the thief that stole the car God is after you so that He can show you His grace and kindness. Like the thief on the cross Jesus came to bring a rescue; to pursue the sinner to save his life, to save the one lost sheep, and to welcome home the prodigals, not perfect people who have no problems. No one I know lives without problems. No one can truly say, “I’m fine.” But Jesus’ goodness and mercy are following us. There is no place that the Lord will not be with you.

Look, I’m not suggesting that you should suddenly come out of hiding; that you are going to be suddenly all right if you just talk to your pastors. Not at all. It’s not about fixing you. It’s about identifying your assets when it is hardest to look for them. Your greatest asset is your greatest advocate and friend, Jesus. Jesus is always inviting you to come to Him in prayer. I am also here reminding you in this Advent season that you are invited to have a seat at His table. You have people that care about you and how you are doing. I would suggest that hang around with them so that your only company isn’t just your thoughts and emotions.

When David welcomed Mephibosheth, he invited him to his table without condemnation and without judgement. Mephibosheth only had to show up. In Jesus we have mercy and welcome just like this. “Come unto me all you who are weary and heavy laden, and I will give you rest” (Matthew 11:28). You may not necessarily come out of hiding from whatever may be secretly wrestling with your soul but my goal today isn’t to cure you of that. I can’t do that anyway. My hope today is that you are reminded that you are still Jesus’ favorite part of Creation, no matter how messy you think your life is. The King is still inviting you to sit at His table.

And now the Lord bless you and keep you. The Lord make His face to shine on you and be gracious to you. The Lord look on you with His favor and give you His peace in Jesus. Amen.

Pastor Matthew Woods  
John 3:30