

In Jesus' name. **Amen.**

We read as follows in Jesus' name:

And Mephibosheth the son of Jonathan, son of Saul, came to David and fell on his face and paid homage. And David said, "Mephibosheth!" And he answered, "Behold, I am your servant." And David said to him, "Do not fear, for I will show you kindness for the sake of your father Jonathan, and I will restore to you all the land of Saul your father, and you shall eat at my table always." And he paid homage and said, "What is your servant, that you should show regard for a dead dog such as I?" ^(ESV)

This is Your Word, heavenly Father; sanctify us in the truth, Your Word is Truth. Amen ^(John 17:17)

Dearly Beloved,

To set the context for this Word of God, we need to go back a few years, perhaps around 25 or so. David had been anointed by God to be king after Saul.

Everyone knew this, Saul, Jonathan, the people of Israel, the people of Judah.

But while Saul had tried to kill David several times, David spared Saul's life at least twice.

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About 10 years prior to our text, maybe a little more, Saul and Jonathan both died in battle.

When David heard the news, he mourned and composed a lament that he made Israel to learn.

Though David had never expressed animosity or hatred against Saul or his family, people naturally thought that David would have been happy for the news.

In fact, the man who reported Saul's death to David, thinking he might get a reward, told him that he had killed King Saul himself.

Instead, David had him executed for murdering the Lord's anointed.

But when news of Saul's death spread throughout the land, a number of things happened:

1. Mephibosheth, Jonathan's son/King Saul's grandson, a lad of 5 years old, was crippled in both feet when his nurse fled for the boy's life and he fell. He lived in hiding in a place called Lo-Debar, meaning "no pasture," probably a wasteland.
2. David came out of hiding and was crowned king over the tribe of Judah at Hebron.
3. The northern tribes of Israel after a few years made Saul's sole-remaining son, Ish-bosheth, king.

For 2 years, Ish-bosheth and the northern tribes made war against David and Judah

Yet again, people thought that David sought the annihilation of Saul's family.

Two men treacherously murdered Ish-bosheth while he slept and announced it to David, again thinking that he would reward them.

Again, David had them executed for their cold-blooded murder.

But this was commonly the way of such succession workings.

You kill off the family of the previous dynasty to eliminate any possible contenders to the throne.

So you can see why Mephibosheth was hidden away, out of view of King David.

Imagine what was going on in Mephibosheth's mind as he was summoned by the king.

Fear, panic, anxiety. And for what? Being born into the wrong family.

Imagine his anger with Ziba who had "sold him out."

What harm would Mephibosheth be to David? He was a cripple.
No way could he lead an army into battle against King David.
He wasn't even connected to an army, being way out in Lo-debar.

But there he was, summoned before the king; completely exposed and nowhere to hide anymore.
He had nothing. Nothing to give the king for his life.
He didn't even make a living for himself, but relied on the family of Machir.
He had no hope of survival. He couldn't even run away if he wanted to.

But this is where we see what David meant by showing the "kindness of God to him."
That word translated "kindness" is more than just a polite nicety given or bestowed.
This kindness, this *chessed* in the Hebrew, is a kindness motivated by steadfast/unwavering love.

David would give and give and give.
To the landless exile, he restored all the land that had belonged to his royal family.
To a land-owning cripple, he gave a manager and a workforce of 35 men.
To an orphan from age 5, David gave him a place at his table, making him a part of his court.
Mephibosheth was not in danger under King David's reign.
So the accident that crippled him when he fled in fear had all been for naught.
What he might have initially thought was being born into the wrong family,
ended up being the "right" family, in the eyes of the king.

I am sure that you have seen the correlation by now between David and his greater Son, Jesus.
How Jesus' purpose is to show the *chessed* of God, the loving-kindness of God, upon you.

But like with Mephibosheth, it is completely natural for you to not know or believe this.
When your conscience strikes you, when you feel the burden of guilt,
like Mephibosheth's nurse you want to flee in fear, lest you be caught by the judge.
But God is not just some upstart king; for a king is only able to kill the body,
rather we **fear Him who can destroy both soul and body in hell's eternal flames.** ^{Matthew 10:28}
And your conscience isn't helped at all when tragedy happens,
when a fall cripples you, you get a diagnosis, a death occurs, a layoff, the world falls apart...
these simply compound the guilt as you wonder, 'what did I do?';
... or maybe you don't wonder. Maybe you think you know what it was.
Taking into consideration our corrupted heritage from Adam,
it may seem that God would hate you just because you were born into the wrong family.
And so you want to hide yourself. You don't want to be noticed anymore by God.

But there is more to God than simply His just and almighty nature,
but this is something that you don't naturally know,
like Mephibosheth didn't naturally know that David would be so kind.
If you thought David was generous, he was only reflecting the loving-kindness of God.
Remember, David told Ziba that he desired to show "the *chessed* of God" to Saul's survivor?

As David was never out to destroy Saul or his family, the Lord has never been out to destroy you.
Instead we hear in the Gospel, "**Be merciful, AS YOUR FATHER IS MERCIFUL.**"
From the very beginning, when Adam first sinned, when he first tried to usurp the divine rule,

the Lord never desired to wipe out the entire human family.
Instead, He vowed to Adam and to all his children, that He would become one with our family,
and take the just wrath of God upon Himself, in the person and work of Jesus Christ.
It was this one Man, Jesus, that would receive the complete justice of God for your sins.
He would become the one who would be judged and condemned,
so that the Father would **forgive you and give to you good measure, pressed down,
shaken together, running over and put into your lap.**

For we who are so crippled in our righteousness, **dead dogs**, really, unable to earn His kindness,
what a relief this brings us, what burdens this lifts.

From complete dread of judgment to complete freedom and blessing.

You go from one whose inheritance is eternal damnation, to one receiving a mansion in paradise.

From one who is unable to do any good work, to one who receives Jesus' complete life
of perfect righteousness.

From one whose family line is full of orphans, to having a seat at God's table,
brought in to share in the privileges, blessings and joys of His family.

You were not born into the wrong family, for no other creation can claim God as its Brother.

No other creation sits at the Lord's Supper to receive forgiveness, life, and salvation,
in the very body and blood of God.

No other creation will rise from the dead in glory on the last day in eternal unity and peace.

...

Then should we wonder that this present and future reality effects us here in this life?

We hear in this account of King David,

who, against the world's wisdom, did not show animosity, but loving-kindness
to his "should-be" enemy.

Who, in the midst of God's great promises and life-&-death trials,

did not presume to work out his own justice, but waited on the Lord to fulfill His promises.

In a time when there is great division within our country,

when open rebellion is flaunted before the rule of law,

when unjust acts are legitimized under the pretense of seeking justice,

when fear of viral, political or even physical harm is palpable among gatherings of people,
when isolation and loneliness raise our vulnerabilities and sensitivities,

and we are more easily offended or more quick to offend with lovelessness,

perhaps we can appreciate our text a little better and pray to God for such a heart in ourselves
and in our land.

It is important to remember that **we do not wrestle against flesh and blood,**

but ... against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places that seek to divide us,
both from God and from each other.

There is certainly evil in this world, perpetrated by humanity, just as David also suffered.

In our prayers, we remember our enemies and pray for them as the Lord directs us.

It is also to be in our lives that we care for those who persecute us, just as St. Paul also did
to those who flogged and beat, and jailed him.

Just as David also did to him whose grandfather sought him out to kill him.

Remember that it was not with the threatenings of the Law that the Lord won you over,

but with His *chessed*, with God's loving-kindness so greatly displayed and given for you and all people in the death of His only Son, Jesus Christ.

And so we just sang & prayed, for the Lord's help *to overcome my foe With words and actions kind.*

As the Lord's *chessed* is given to you packed down, shaken together, and running over, ^{ELH#470:4} in the remembrance of your baptism, the absolution pronounced and believed, and the cup of the Lord's Supper overflowing with forgiveness and salvation, others, for whom Christ also has died, will also be brought into His loving-kindness, having seen and heard from you about the loving-kindness of this great David's greater Son.

**Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Ghost,
as it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, forevermore. Amen.**

Soli Deo Gloria