

Title: Our Service to God
Scripture: 2 Samuel 19:8-43
Series: The Promise of the Messianic Kingdom

1. Introduction:

- a. Today, we study David's return and what it teaches the church.
 - i. We learn that a simple and sincere service to God is what is expected from each Christian.
 - 1. We are to serve God to the best of our abilities. Offering ourselves to God is always enough.
 - ii. We also learn that the unbeliever has a limited window in which to be reconciled to God through the Gospel of Jesus Christ.
- b. Let us turn our attention to the Scriptures.

2. Verses 8B-15: The Wisdom of Gentleness

- a. All of Absalom's army had fled. They had lost, and David now remained. Therefore, terror gripped the souls of these men. If David reassumes the throne, they most certainly will be condemned as traitors. Appropriately, the punishment for their treason was death.
 - i. However, David deals with his enemies gently and reassuringly, thus sending signals to all of Israel that forgiveness can be found in God's appointed king.
 - 1. We read in **Proverbs 15:1** A soft answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger.

- a. In this passage, David speaks softly.
- ii. This passage is a loose representation of the second advent of Christ. Consider the following:
 1. The once discarded David is now returning victorious. All his enemies must certainly die. But there is still time. The King is returning but has not fully returned. Before it is too late, his enemies must seek peace.
 2. Jesus warned us about His second coming. He warned that the reality of the coming king should move us to seek peace while there is still time.
 - a. **Luke 14:31-32** Or what king, going out to encounter another king in war, will not sit down first and deliberate whether he is able with ten thousand to meet him who comes against him with twenty thousand? (32) And if not, while the other is yet a great way off, he sends a delegation and asks for terms of peace.
 - i. This is what is happening in our opening passage. The enemies of King David have seen him prevail. He is on his way to assume the throne. They have little time to make amends and to surrender. By God's grace, we see Israel return to David.
 - ii. We find ourselves living in this exact time. King Jesus is coming.

The window of grace is gradually closing. While there is still time, those who have been his enemies should surrender and believe the Gospel.

- b. So we learn that before the wrath of God is poured on the unrepentant, they have an opportunity to experience the gentleness of the Lord by surrendering to his Lordship.
- b. Because of David's gentleness, the Northern tribes of Israel decided to bring back the king. The Northern tribes had learned that faith in Absalom was ill-placed. Only the true king was worthy! They further remembered the king's faithfulness in protecting them from their enemies in times past. They were repentant and ready to see David rule again.
 - i. The decision made by the Northern tribes caused a problem that marked the start of the division between the Northern tribes and Judah. The infighting is evident in the last verses of the chapter. By the end of the chapter, it appears that the kingdom is barely holding on.
- c. According to the text, David had to make a special appeal to Judah because they were lagging in their effort to bring back the king. David's own tribe was slow to act, possibly because the biggest betrayal had come from them. The whole clan had willingly and enthusiastically followed Absalom, who, like his father, was from Judea. Ahithopel and Amasa were also Judeans and their collective treason had made

Judah afraid of the consequences. However, David spoke softly to them, and his words of encouragement were heard:

- i. **Why should you be the last to bring the king back to his house, when the word of all Israel has come to the king?**
 1. It is shocking to have my own clan be the last to bring me back. Judah should not suffer such a dishonor.
- ii. **You are my brothers; you are my bone and my flesh. Why then should you be the last to bring back the king?**
 1. We are family. Family is quick to forgive even major offenses. Let us walk in the love of family. I have no ill will toward you. None will die. Do your duty and bring me back as the king!
- iii. **And say to Amasa, ‘Are you not my bone and my flesh? God do so to me and more also, if you are not commander of my army from now on in place of Joab.’”**
 1. Because Joab had killed his son and David wanted to reassure Judah that he was serious about forgiveness and reconciliation, David now offers Joab’s position to Amasa, the leader of Absalom’s army. This was a brilliant political move. It would prove to Judah that David’s forgiveness was total and that there should be no fear of death or reprisal.

- d. David's gentle words encouraged a group from Judea to join him on his journey home, while the Northern tribes were not consulted. This would spark anger among them, which is evident in our final verses.
 - i. But as for now, the king is returning home. As he travels, he meets with three individuals.

3. Verses 16-40: Three Encounters with the King:

- a. Our passage reintroduces the reader to Shimei the Benjamite, Mephibosheth the son of Jonathan, and Barzillai the Gileadite.
- b. **Shimei the Benjamite (The Hypocrite)**: As a reminder, Shimei had previously spoken out against David and his men, hurling insults, curses, rocks, and dust at them. He accused David of being a murderer and took pleasure in his misfortune. Shimei was a close relative of Saul, the previous king, and harbored a deep hatred towards David. He even invoked the name of the Lord in his curses.
 - i. Initially, David showed restraint. He didn't kill Shimei but chose instead to commit himself to the Lord. David knew God's sovereignty had brought his affliction. Because of his sin, he deserved not only the cursings of Shimei but death. So David submitted to God's hands and allowed Shimei to curse.
 - ii. The situation here is different, though. David has been vindicated as the true king of Israel. Shimei's actions were treasonous, and he deserved to die for daring to put his hands on the Lord's anointed.

- iii. Shimei was a snake. Yet even snakes want to live. He came with a thousand men of Benjamin and was the first of the northern tribes to arrive. He realizes his trouble, so he comes to David early and falls before the king. He proceeds to apologize. He admits his wrong, but only because he wants to live and not because he is sorrowful. He is a hypocrite.
1. Abishai enters the scene. He is right in his argument. **“Shall not Shimei be put to death for this because he cursed the LORD's anointed?”** Yet Abiashai is not looking at the big picture. If David were to kill Shimei, the rest of the northern tribes might believe they were next for their treason.
 2. So David, for the sake of the kingdom, forgives Shimei. **“You shall not die.”**
- iv. Therefore, what we have here is not justice. Shimei should die, and David instructs Solomon in this regard many years later. We read in **1 Kings 2:8-9** And there is also with you Shimei the son of Gera, the Benjaminite from Bahurim, who cursed me with a grievous curse on the day when I went to Mahanaim. But when he came down to meet me at the Jordan, I swore to him by the LORD, saying, ‘I will not put you to death with the sword.’ (9) Now therefore do not hold him guiltless, for you are a wise man. You will know what you ought to do to him, and you shall bring his gray head down with blood to Sheol.”

1. This passage teaches us that God's justice would eventually find Shimei. No one, not one person, can escape the justice of God. God might defer his judgment, but He always acts at the appropriate time.
 - a. We read in **Romans 12:19** Beloved, never avenge yourselves, but leave it to the wrath of God, for it is written, "Vengeance is mine, I will repay, says the Lord."
- v. So why did David defer judgment for a later time? David postponed judgment because he was finally living up to his responsibilities as king. For the love of the kingdom, for its unity, David waited. He knew that Shimei's sins were grave in God's sight. He knew that God's judgment would eventually find Shimei. At the moment, it mattered more to pastor God's people and unite them under God's king.
 1. Beloved, the church will inevitably have its fair share of people like Shimei, hypocrites who align themselves with Christ's people out of self-interest and not out of love. They can often do much harm, but here in lies the good news. God and God's King know these individuals. They see them, and God's judgment will fall on them at the appropriate time.
 - a. **1 Thessalonians 5:2-3** For you yourselves are fully aware that the day of the Lord will come like a thief in the

night. (3) While people are saying, “There is peace and security,” then sudden destruction will come upon them as labor pains come upon a pregnant woman, and they will not escape.

b. So, beloved, we will see Shimei again, and the next time we do, he will suffer for his iniquity.

c. **Mephibosheth (The Sincere Devotee):** We have not heard of Mephibosheth since Chapter 16, and what we heard was not good. Ziba alleged that Mephibosheth had stayed in Jerusalem because he somehow thought Absalom’s revolt would bring the throne to him. Ziba alleged that Mephibosheth was a treacherous conniver. However, Mephibosheth gets to speak for himself. **He came down to meet the king.**

- i. Suspicious of Mephibosheth, David asked him why he had not shared in the exile. If you remember, David had been kind to Mephibosheth and had expected his loyalty in return.
- ii. Mephibosheth’s appearance demonstrated the truth of the matter. **He had neither taken care of his feet nor trimmed his beard nor washed his clothes, from the day the king departed until the day he came back in safety.** In other words, he had left himself go. So desperate at the news of David's flight and so full of love for David as the true king, Mephibosheth would not take care of himself. His disheveled appearance showed he had forced himself to share David’s

exile, but only in spirit. This type of mourning for the true king could have been very costly. Absalom would have certainly destroyed Mephibosheth for mourning for David.

- iii. Mephibosheth's appearance proved his loyalty, but so did his words. **He answered, "My lord, O king, my servant deceived me, for your servant said to him, 'I will saddle a donkey for myself, that I may ride on it and go with the king.' For your servant is lame. (27) He has slandered your servant to my lord the king. But my lord the king is like the angel of God; do therefore what seems good to you. (28) For all my father's house were but men doomed to death before my lord the king, but you set your servant among those who eat at your table. What further right have I, then, to cry to the king?"**

1. Mephibosheth's words:

- a. **My lord, O king, my servant deceived me, for your servant said to him, 'I will saddle a donkey for myself, that I may ride on it and go with the king.' For your servant is lame. He has slandered your servant to my lord the king.** Ziba had lied to Mephibosheth and then slandered him.
- b. Ziba had abandoned Mephibosheth.
- c. **But my lord the king is like the angel of God; do therefore what seems good to you.** However, Mephibosheth

trusted God's wisdom apportioned to David to see the truth.

d. **For all my father's house were but men doomed to death before my lord the king, but you set your servant among those who eat at your table. What further right have I, then, to cry to the king?"** Ultimately, David had already been far too gracious to Mephibosheth by making him a part of his family. Whatever happened, Mephibosheth had already experienced God's grace, and that was enough.

iv. David realized that he had made a mistake and that Ziba had lied to him. Now, he had to find a way to resolve the issue. However, the decision he made was unjust. He decided to divide the estate between Mephibosheth and Ziba. Although Ziba was a greedy liar, he had helped David in the past, and David was afraid to alienate him and Israel. It is worth noting that Ziba had 15 sons and 20 servants, and David needed to win everyone's support.

1. **Pragmatism**: An action dictated by consideration of the immediate consequences rather than by what is right or absolute.
2. David economically harmed Mephibosheth but tried to make up for it by giving him half of what Ziba took. In doing so, David rewarded Ziba's deceitful behavior.

v. How did Mephibosheth react to David's pragmatism? He said, **"Oh, let him take it all, since my lord the king has come safely home."**

1. Mephibosheth truly understood the concept of grace. When King David returned, Mephibosheth was overjoyed, knowing that the King would always be enough for him. Even when Mephibosheth was at his lowest, David had sought him out and spared his life. Not only that, but David had also enriched him and elevated him to the king's table. Mephibosheth knew he had received more than enough from the King and was genuinely grateful for it. He believed that even half of what he had received was more than he deserved. Mephibosheth understood that the King could give and take away, and no matter what happened, he would always bless the name of the King.

2. Beloved, there is much for us to learn regarding grace. Mephibosheth's story teaches us that grace is not something we are entitled to, but rather, it is a free gift from God. We have been saved, set free, indwelt by the Holy Spirit, transformed, blessed, guided, loved, and taught by God. Regardless of what we have or don't have, we have been greatly enriched by God's amazing grace. We need not be concerned with the things of this world because we have the King, which is more than enough.

vi. Let's look at another incredible biblical principle found in the story of Mephibosheth. Despite being lame and having been cheated by his servant, Mephibosheth remained loyal to the true king. Unlike Shimei, who was loyal only to survive, or Ziba, who was driven by greed, Mephibosheth did what he could to show his loyalty. He may not have been able to offer abundant provisions like the wealthy farmer Barzillai, but **he did not trim his toenails or beard, nor did he wash or change his clothes** and in these acts, his loyalty shone through, and it was enough.

1. Jesus's words about Mary, the sister of Lazurus, are instructive here. She anointed his feet amid the disciples' complaining and harassment:

a. **Mark 14:8** She has done what she could; she has anointed my body beforehand for burial.

vii. **Barzillai the Gileadite (the content servant):** Barzillai was a wealthy Gileadite farmer who had come to David with lavish provisions. In doing so, he exposed himself to danger had Absalom won.

1. David thanks Barzillai for his support by inviting him to live at court, but Barzillai declines the offer.

a. At age 80, Barzillai declined the king's offer as he could no longer taste the

food or enjoy the entertainment. He offers his son instead.

b. We learned that Barzillai was content to live the rest of his days in his hometown.

2. This passage highlights a crucial lesson for both you and me. The central truth about Barzillai is his unwavering loyalty to God's chosen king. He had utilized his wealth wisely and rendered his most significant service to the Kingdom of God at eighty. Barzillai had remained steadfast in his commitment to God's covenant king. Ultimately, what else could matter beyond that?

3. Beloved, let us take in this wisdom. The most important testimony for any Christian is to be faithful to the Lord. In the long run, it won't matter how many churches we led, how many ministries we were a part of, or even how many sermons we preached. What will matter is how dedicated we are to serving the Lord. We should be content with our position and serve the true King. What God has given us is sufficient.

a. **1 Timothy 6:6-8** But godliness with contentment is great gain, (7) for we brought nothing into the world, and we cannot take anything out of the world. (8) But if we have food and clothing, with these we will be content.

4. Benediction -

- a. **Colossians 3:17** And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.

Public Reading of Scripture
Luke 2:22-38 (Christmas)