

David at His Best

The Life of David

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Well, turning to 2 Samuel 9 this evening and the title of the sermon is "David at His Best." David at his best and you can imagine from that I have another title for another sermon not long after this which will be David at his worst. We're going to be entering, aren't we, there into less tasteful and commendable aspects of David's life, but that's to come. Here we are in happy territory surveying this incident and it's wedged, isn't it, amidst battles that are being fought in other places and we looked at those victories and what they have to teach us in our day, how we as Christians not with weapons and not with literal Ammonites to fight against but have our own spiritual foes and our own weaponry, our own fight against sin to wage.

But here is this incident and as I say before we then enter into a totally different phase of David's life and the whole kind of tone and the whole texture of David's life changes and it's hard work, and we are saddened and burdened at what comes but here this little incident, this episode regarding Mephibosheth and David and his treatment of him just radiates out to us something so wholesome, so touching and indeed more than an isolated act of kindness, more than simply an incident, and we'll draw upon this in a moment, that has much to teach us by way of what an act of mercy is, but we are right and truly although this, we've had probably quite a few sermons on this, to actually see something in this that we would say is typical, that is actually pointing us forward to a greater fulfillment, a more spiritual, a more rich fulfillment that awaits the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, that what David is doing on a smaller scale will be done on a very large scale by great David's greater son. But here David is acting in an early fashion like the Lord Jesus Christ and our Lord will then act but carry some of the same features as we see in David and how he treats and how Mephibosheth is in relationship to him, but our Lord will fulfill in a greater way. But here it is just embedded here in Scripture, something that shows us David is a type of Christ, what he's doing is an example of what the Lord Jesus Christ later on is going to fulfill in a greater, more wonderful way, and more beneficial way.

Well, let's remain then with this in and of itself as an act of mercy, and that's the first heading: act of mercy. For sure we cannot deny whatever else we're going to go on to say in a moment that this is an act of mercy and is not to be just sort of skated over or skimmed over into getting into what's typical in this but has, of course, in and of itself

something to teach us. Act of mercy whereby somebody who is in nobody's debt and indeed may actually be a person who's been wronged by somebody, but certainly is in nobody's debt and yet freely acts kindly, generously toward that other person, person who is a supplicant, a person who has nothing, nothing to give in return, no feature of them which shows that they can do something for you, but instead you freely do them good when they cannot do any good for themselves, perfectly freely chosen as an act by the one who is here showing mercy.

And the case is very clear and very beautiful, isn't it, that here is this man, he's now got his own son which is Mephibosheth and we learn, don't we, and it's repeated again right at the end of the chapter, it's like it sort of sums up this disability that he has, that he is lame in both his feet. This accident that happened to him aged five when in the midst of the battle and the Philistines, the death of his father Jonathan, and the maid that was looking after him dropped him and in those days there was little that can be done by way of surgery and corrective treatments that I'm sure would have had him running around again, but not then. Well, my son is a little bit grounded at the moment and they're making a bit of progress but we are hopeful that he'll be running around in a month or so but it wasn't so for Mephibosheth at age five and he's going to remain then with this condition all his life. And it kind of always defines him, doesn't it, so that when David, remembering his covenant with Jonathan, that most touching friendship that we looked at must be a few months ago now, wasn't it, but that he promised, in fact, Jonathan made him promise because Jonathan could see the future, couldn't he? He could see that David's star was rising, that Saul and therefore Jonathan's star was waning and perhaps already had anticipated his own death and wanted therefore David who he could see was going to be in that position to be king, that he would be generous to his father's house, that he'd be generous to Jonathan and his household, that David, other kings there usually what you would do as soon as you had established your own dynasty, you would kill off everybody, all the males in the house of the kingship that you'd conquered. And so that would have been it, Saul's family would have been decimated, that would have been just the normal way in terms of those kingdoms of that day, but David had promised that it would be his duty to Jonathan to look after any of Jonathan's family when he ever became king, that it was within his gift, within his power to be able to help.

And here it comes to his attention assuming he didn't know of the existence of Mephibosheth, that the poor man for he was a man by now, nobody thought much of him, nobody took much notice of him, and it is the defining fact that when Ziba, the steward over Saul's estates and looking after these things, when he's asked is there anybody in Saul's household that I can show kindness to that I'm unaware of, and Ziba, or at least here at this time, he changes a bit later I'm afraid to report, that here he is very straightforward and says, yes, there is, there is still a son he says in verse 3 of Jonathan, and here was the defining feature of Mephibosheth, who is lame in his feet. That's him. That's the man. Not much going for him. Nothing really that we can report other than that he's lame, you could say a bit of a lame duck, you know, there's no great standout feature. He is not a significant figure, never will be, but honestly compels Ziba to say that there is this man.

And the place where he is, Lo Debar, it means no pasture. It's not a fertile area and we must credit this man who here is son of Ammiel who has sort of taken him in as being a generous man in himself even before David's greater generosity comes that Mephibosheth has enjoyed the favor of this man. This man, not living in an area that's blessed with great fertility, what little that maybe he has he is sharing with this very disadvantaged man, Mephibosheth, and his family.

So here we have the scene set. There is somebody who has basically nothing, living off the charity and good will of Machir in an area that's not particularly favored, lame in both feet, few prospects and that's him. So Ziba describes the situation there to David and, of course, David maybe Ziba thought he would be very disinterested in this man. Well, okay, somebody is looking after him. That's fine. But David says, doesn't he, in verse 4, "Where is he?" And that's how we know where he is and the description comes and David then sends for him in verse 5. Well, beautiful how it all unfolds from there, isn't it, and that suddenly Mephibosheth whatever day it was, whatever he was doing, perhaps might imagine that each day was pretty much like the last one and nothing much happens, and then Ziba comes and tells him that the king has called for him and he's to come, come now to Jerusalem to see the king. Mephibosheth might have wondered if this was actually good news or not in as much as perhaps still because of the way in which Saul had so persecuted David there might be a lingering resentment or desire for vengeance. It might have played a little bit on Mephibosheth's mind.

But he's brought to David and there he falls on his face, prostrates himself and he waits perhaps his fate, "What is to happen to me? I am utterly in your hands. I have nothing. If you decided that actually my grandfather had so badly treated you that you now wanted to take away what little I have, perhaps I could have no argument." And instead, of course, David shows such kindness to him and is honoring the covenant that he made with Jonathan and happy to do it, not as if, well, because you haven't got any great wealth there or great prospects, perhaps never going to be able to become a charioteer or be able to fight, be one of my mighty men, that didn't matter, in fact, it moved David greatly to see this powerless and weak man unable to look on the future with any great hope and instead to open to this man, well, so much that all Saul's possessions, his lands were now to be Mephibosheth's. And Ziba and his sons and servants were going to look after them, bring the harvest for Mephibosheth's family, but Mephibosheth himself, well, he's going to come and eat each day at the king's table. One day, Machir, well, won't exaggerate the story but perhaps he had fairly plain food to eat, and then suddenly every day you were going to be in the king's palace and you were going to be eating at the king's table. And whereas maybe one company there had been pretty ordinary people, people that really were from the fields maybe, but now suddenly he's elevated and he's going to be sitting with David and whoever David has, important people that might be there visiting David and also sitting at his table.

Well, it's a wonderful picture, it's a beautiful act of mercy, one that David so freely does. There's no reluctance, there's no hesitation, he just reaches out to this man and so tenderly calls him by his name and there he is in verse 6 prostrate on his face, fearful what this audience with the king means for him, and instead there is David speaking his name to

him and speaking to him and bidding him to respond to him. Mephibosheth, and the answer here is, "Your servant," those words that came must have just so reassured Mephibosheth, "Do not fear. Do not fear." David read perhaps what he might be thinking, sensing that, "I could be now about to face some vengeance that David might still but might now have found some hostility that he hadn't shown before but now has and it may be visited upon me. Who am I?" David says, "Do not fear for I will surely show you kindness." That's the words that must then have left Mephibosheth astonished and so his whole life changes around, his fortune is utterly reversed, and what again a marvelous marvelous picture that it is.

True, some people create their own misfortunes, a lot of people if they're not lame in both feet have made themselves lame in some sense, that they've done damage to their consciences maybe and no longer enjoy freedom of movement and thought, have brought perhaps some health troubles upon themselves, addictions, drunkenness, drug taking, various kinds leave people not unscathed. It's a massive massive damage that is done to the body, to the mind, and really in many ways we're still tossing up the dangers, the damage of drug taking and having always to push back against those looking to legalize as if they're doing that, they're going to be doing us all a favor. No, we say, huge damage will follow to the mind. And though we are sympathetic to people who have come into difficulty, there is always, isn't there, that understanding that you brought it on yourself. And you look there not to rub people's noses in it but you're looking for some response, some acceptance of responsibility and that is always good, when you hear that you feel we can work with that, we can help that person on from there if they double down on it and somehow blame everybody else for their misfortunes, they're not so hopeful of recovery or that your efforts are going to really go very far. We have to be discerning. Then there are others who have misfortunes befall them and there are a lot of people for whom that is the case.

Here is Mephibosheth, age 5, and well, we could stop and sure think of lots and lots of people who, in one way or another, whether in mind, whether in body, are greatly disadvantaged, they came into the world with that disadvantage, it remains with them, and where we are very sympathetic. I hope we are and don't use excuses, as it were, that it must have been their fault somewhere why they've got that disability. You remember how our Lord went, there was that man born blind, they wondered is it his sin or his parents' sin why he's born blind like this and our Lord corrected them, that it's not that, it's so that God's glory is going to be revealed here. So we have to be very ready to open our hearts and be sympathetic and understanding to people and we've had experience, haven't we, just in the last few weeks in our own fellowship here and people we know and neighbors where such sympathy really is very much to be expressed and where we feel for people in their own mental illness perhaps. But there are all kinds of issues, all kinds of disabilities. I couldn't rehearse them all here nor perhaps would it be profitable, but we're ready to be very sympathetic and very very understanding.

And we hear the words of our Lord Jesus ringing in our ears. We read Luke 14, that passage there verses 1 to 14 and just draw your attention again to what we have from verse 12, "Then He also said to him who invited Him, 'When you give a dinner or a

supper, do not ask your friends, your brothers, your relatives, nor rich neighbors, lest they also invite you back, and you be repaid. But when you give a feast, invite the poor, the maimed, the lame, the blind. And you will be blessed, because they cannot repay you; for you shall be repaid at the resurrection of the just." That these are acts of mercy because the person can't repay. Mephibosheth could not repay, could not say, "Well, tell me what the bill is at the end of my month of eating the food here with you and I'll pay you for all my board and lodging." Didn't have anything to repay though he was going to be established his family with Saul's land but Mephibosheth in and of himself but for the fact of David's generosity, would not have been able to repay.

And our Lord is saying that we look out, if you will, for people who can't repay, people who are deserving of our care. We start with the household of God, don't we, Christians but we extend that to all fellow human beings wherever they are in their suffering, and we're not looking just to do good to people who can repay us. That's not an act of mercy. If we give because we think we're going to be repaid, then, no, that's not what's here. Our Lord read something in the heart of this man who invited the people, that he rather it was all just part of his social network. There you invited and then they invite you, and it's just part of this sort of social world. He said, "No, you look out for the poor, the maimed, the lame, the blind, for they can't repay you but you'll be blessed. There will be a blessing from God in that, that you have done something that is very much in God's heart to do, to be generous to those who've got nothing to repay with."

And so that is there taught us in Luke 14, and we might just also turn to Matthew 5:46-48, part of the Sermon on the Mount. Our Lord said, "For if you love those who love you, what reward have you? Do not even the tax collectors do the same? And if you greet your brethren only, what do you do more than others? Do not even the tax collectors do so? Therefore you shall be perfect, just as your Father in heaven is perfect." There is to be in looking beyond our own circle, if you like, and people who might be able to pay us back in some way, and we have to go beyond, go beyond the Gentiles and go beyond what the Pharisees of that day were also teaching that we may be perfect just as our Father in heaven is perfect, that this is in God's heart to show these acts of mercy. Generosity pure and simple. Of course it asks of us the questions I've already, in a sense, been asking. What are our motives? And we're ever mindful are we expecting something back? Are we placing somebody under an obligation by our giving where we're expecting that that obligation somewhere down the way can be repaid? Is there even a bit of emotional blackmail in it or we're wanting to appear good and righteous in some way?

So we check our motives. Dear friends, we don't wait, do we, to find absolute perfection in our hearts before we do an act of mercy, we'll be waiting a long long time. We always regret when we find any thought rising up that's inappropriate and mortify it, but we are but sinners ourselves. So we show generosity even if we're not the perfect finished article in terms of being the people with the right motives to do it. Our hearts are moved, I trust, when we see real need and we put other things aside to do that.

Now, of course, David had made a covenant, he had promised to Jonathan that he would show favor to Mephibosheth so in a way, though it was an act of mercy, there was a

degree of obligation that David had placed himself under. Done it willingly. We might regard ourselves there as under obligation firstly, for mostly toward fellow believers and in that we think not just here in the United Kingdom but we extend our gaze elsewhere, and we were praying earlier, weren't we, for the Philippines and India and other places too and, well, we feel sad that we can't help more people, more often, with more things, but we give what we can and do what we can, search our consciences on this matter regularly to ensure that we are not just holding our resources but are being generous and being able there to give. So in a sense, we have made a covenant before God to his people that we will look to do good where we can to them, but also as members of the human race, we extend that further and we actually are ready to do good to whoever may need it as far as we have resources, the time, the necessary skills to help. We place ourselves there at their disposal.

So just a few thoughts. We should be proactive in searching out needs. David made inquiry and there is a time and a place sometimes for us to do that. We fulfill promises that I fear sometimes people start with somebody, find a Mephibosheth, help them, and then drop them and move on to somebody else, as if somehow they'll survive and they'll be okay while you now help somebody else. We know of some missionary organizations, we won't name any names, but where they like a big project, start a big project and then move on. But then how do you resource that project from day to day? Who's paying for the gas, the electricity to make it work? And that's not so interesting to some of these societies. They go on to another project, move on to another project but don't service it.

So the fulfilling of promises which can be very unexciting in a way, that you'll pledge to somebody and maybe they're having a hard time and maybe they're in a very unpromising, barren, sort of missionary situation but you stay with them and continue to support them if that's what we're doing, pray for them and we have made a covenant. So we fulfill the promises that we make, rather than drop people, move on to somebody else, drop them, move on to somebody else. Sure, again, we say we expect nothing in return. Felix when he had Paul in prison, he would speak to him, give him a measure of freedom, but was hoping for a bribe, wasn't he, he was hoping to be given some money. Of course, Paul wouldn't give that to him and so Paul remained in prison. We're expecting nothing in return. We are always touched when we get a little card or a letter there from Zoe in the Philippines and sends us a little thank you, but we're only too happy to help and we're always touched to hear something but we're not expecting anything there in return.

And we monitor, when we give we monitor to make sure that it is what we're doing, giving is achieving the good we hoped to achieve, and sometimes difficult decisions have to be made when we maybe have no longer any confidence in the situation, in the person. That's when giving is going to change and maybe some dishonesty, something that's upsetting us and maybe upsetting others and we confer and, well, we may then very sadly have to say we can't continue doing this, something has changed here. Sometimes people are giving money thinking they're the only people giving to this, and then they find out that loads of other people have been and that can be a bit disappointing and feels like a bit of a breach of trust.

But anyway, there is the principle established and it is certainly there in David's treatment of Mephibosheth, plenty for us to learn in a practical sense, but let me finish by, of course, taking what is typical in this, what is Christ-like in this, in the sense of what our Lord himself did in his life and ministry. So our second heading: the greatest act of mercy. And as ever in Scripture, details are very striking, very remarkable, there are transactions which just contain within them things that are teaching us a bigger lesson, a spiritual lesson, teaching us about Christ and his mercy and our proper response and God works in us to make us ready to make that response, and this episode and I'm going to belabor the point here because there are probably thousands more details which we could use and which could teach us something but just to take a few thoughts here.

So, yes, David is doing good to a member of a household where the head of that household had been a very very strong enemy, that Saul had made himself there by his actions and by the deliberation of it and the absolute enthusiasm by which he carried that persecution through, is certainly an enemy, there's no getting away from the fact. But David, his oath there to Jonathan, is able to overlook this, that he is under obligation, in a sense, to help here, and God in his love almost places himself under such a duty to care for sinners, enemies, "While we were still enemies, Christ died for us." Because of this covenant that God had made in eternity to benefit and help sinners, that covenant then could not be broken and however, what enmity in us before we were converted, how dreadful that we were in our behavior, how much we hated God maybe in a very clear, very overt way, we were out-and-out atheists maybe, but God's covenant stood and would do these needy sinners good. We thought a little bit about that this morning, didn't we?

So there they are as enemies but the Lord, as it were, no matter not deterred in his commitment in the covenant that he and his Son have made and the people that fit within that covenant, those named people, they will benefit, and however outrageous and terrible their attitudes and their behavior, however distasteful the things they do, wretched sinners that they are. But there is Paul when he was out breathing his murderous threats and God saved him and God saves such people, enemies, enemies of his. And yet here he has this covenant commitment as though there is this obligation now within the Godhead to come in spite of the fact that they are so filled with God-hatred and lawlessness and rebellion that they will have good done to them. David overlooks, if you will, the enmity of Saul's household, graces this man who is within that household.

He's actively looking for people. It's beautiful, isn't it? David there is like the shepherd looking for the sheep, "Is there anyone out there still I've not shown kindness to?" He's not infallible. He doesn't know and Ziba comes and tells him and he sends Ziba then on that errand to find Mephibosheth and bring him good news. The Lord, isn't it, there, we didn't have it this morning, could have done though, but the parable of the good shepherd looking for the lost sheep, searching them out high and low, not satisfied until found. Or the lost son, prodigal, waiting, not moving from the spot until they have been found and they have come. Well, there's something beautiful in that, isn't there? Our Lord's looking out for the lost and knowing them, yes, but still there's something so active and engaged in it. And we each of us, can't we, there, people talk there about the hound of heaven, that we're pursued, aren't we? That love is actively looking us out and God is bringing us to a

church, we didn't really want to go but we were there, and we find ourselves reading a Bible and suddenly things that we had least expected, we didn't look for this and now we're under conviction of sin and we're in the process of the Spirit of God working upon us, yes, because he's actively seeking us out.

David is actively there seeking out his lost sheep, those that he's going to look after for the sake of his friend Jonathan, the covenant name, and the Lord will actively seek us out. He gives rest to see to people that he's going to bring to himself. They just cannot get any peace in the world, they cannot be satisfied. Other people are. Amazing, they're satisfied with the things of this life but those that are in the process of becoming God's children don't find any comfort in those things. So David is actively looking to help and our good shepherd is actively looking out for the people, sends the Holy Spirit, as it were, the wind blows where it wills but as a definite plan he seeks out his own.

There is Ziba, a messenger sent to bring good news to Mephibosheth. That's how God works, isn't it, there? He sends messengers, sends preachers, sends those good friends who told us perhaps when we began work or at university about the Lord Jesus Christ who the Ziba's were to us at different times, maybe critical times in our lives, Sunday school teacher, parent, whoever it was. The Lord sends people to bring good news and wherever we are, it matters not. Mephibosheth out there and no pasture, a dead-end town, no kind of place, nothing interesting happens here. It doesn't matter if that's where we are, a messenger will find us there. If we're lying in the gutter in the street, somebody will find us if that's the plan of God. Some preacher will find you, some friend will advise you and through even your drunken stupor you may yet hear something that remains or puts a terror into your heart, but that's what God will do to that person in their sin. Seemingly forgotten people, seemingly invisible, they might be to the world but not to God and he will send his messengers one way or the other to find them.

David helped the helpless. Well, it has to be that way. We're helpless. God's mercy, it has to be mercy. There's nothing we can give, nothing we can offer him, nothing commendable, nothing that we can come and invite ourselves into his presence and show him our good works. We are absolutely helpless, of course, that is a most helpful kind of evangelistic application there, lame in both feet, no movement that we can make toward God, we are absolutely helpless, people of no account. Well, those are the people, because there's no other kind of people actually. People are proud, people think they're righteous, well, they just can't see what they truly are and that's what we truly are like Mephibosheth and he helps the helpless.

Then he calls them, doesn't he, to himself, brings them into his presence, and that's amazing. It's when the Lord is at work and we find ourselves being addressed by him wherever we were, whatever we started out with, and then we realize that we're coming into contact with superior power, that we are now coming into contact with the God of the Bible and that begins to really shake you, doesn't it, and you realize there's something more here. Our eyes are beginning to open, our ears are beginning to open, we're being moved and indeed may be moved to some degree there of fear. But he's bringing us to

himself actually, bringing us into his presence ultimately because he is going to speak such kindness and do such good things for us.

He will say to us and Mephibosheth doesn't come and protest, "Well, I'm of the household of Saul. I demand all the land back. I've got royal blood, you know." Just falls on his face. That's repentance, that's in there, isn't it, something in us. But David's words, "Do not fear." And often the Lord Jesus said that, didn't he? Do not fear. Different people in their need, do not fear. To his disciples when in terror, do not fear. And the word is a word of comfort, isn't it? Do not fear. God in his holiness wondering how can I stand before him, do not fear. I have done all that's necessary that you may be able to meet with, stand in the presence of God, be accepted, be able to hear words of comfort from him. I have done all that is needed. Do not fear for God's word in the gospel to us is, "I will surely show you kindness. I will surely show you kindness." If we have a doubt, we look at the cross and we say, "Well, that's kindness in such large letters." And all therefore proceeds from that. Well, if the Father has not spared his own Son, given him up for us, how would he not along with him freely give us all things? That's the kindness. That is it. That convinces us that he means good for us.

We do not fear because, look, he's done this, we shelter under that and we are now in a relationship with him which will continue to proceed on the basis of grace and kindness being given to undeserving people, still as Christians undeserving people, but that is what he will continue to do. And we are amazed, aren't we? That's what Mephibosheth is, he is amazed. He is reeling, I'm sure, from this, that he has been brought from where he was and is now in the presence of the king here in words of kindness. Next up, of course, is that he is given elevated place at the king's table. No longer there with a meager portion down at Lo Debar, depending on Machir for charity but he's now elevated, brought from the ash heap, seated among princes. That is the station of the believer, isn't it? Raised in Christ in heavenly places. We are united now with him. We sit at table with him and today he says, doesn't he, the marriage supper of the Lamb, that this is where we will be and we'll sit at table with him there. But we already are. He shares with us and has us to enjoy good food, Scripture brought to us in the power of the Holy Spirit, comforts and joys, our togetherness as believers and all that we contribute to one another and helps that we give, encouragements to each other.

And it's permanent, never to be lost. Oh, sometimes there you feel as a Christian you're an absolute fraud, don't you? You have had maybe a bad day and all kinds of wrong thoughts and mean thoughts and ungenerous thoughts, and you wonder at yourself am I going to get thrown out of here, am I going to be exposed as the hypocrite that I am? And we all of us can say, yes, we're guilty of the worst hypocrisies at times but we're not ejected and isn't that wonderful, that the Lord accounts us brethren still. For good we render ill, here counts us brethren still. We're not excluded and banished and the doors barred and we never again can sit at the king's table. He may have to discipline us and change the rations a little bit to make us long for his fellowship more. He may withdraw himself a bit and distance himself and we begin to think something's gone wrong here and search our hearts and begin to deal with that hypocrisy or whatever it is, greed, covetousness, all the usual things that befall all the saints, but the place is never lost.

It's permanent and it's an elevating one. We are kings and priest unto our God. What mercy that that is. What a reversal this man Mephibosheth experiences and it's showing us in a more kind of earthly temporal sense what is happening in a bigger spiritual sense, what Christ does for the sinner, that he does for each of us if we're believers tonight, what he has done and is doing and we're still there at the table with him enjoying the rich fare that he gives and, of course, we could say so much about that. Even though we still are failing and flawed and broken in various aspects of our character, but we're able to still eat, we may have something very curative and just the thing on the table for that, something suited to your need and to your particular need, and there we just marvel at the generosity and the wisdom, kindness of this great King who has brought even people like us from no pasture, from nowhere places, forgotten, invisible people, and in the world's eyes perhaps deserted and really that's all we did deserve, but here we are instead and we have ears to hear the word of God and we have a heart to worship him, and this is all of it, every last bit of it, an act of mercy proceeding from our Lord Jesus Christ.

So David at his best is actually pointing towards what is the best and that is the ministry of our gracious loving Savior Jesus Christ. We finish there for tonight.

DAVID AT HIS BEST

(Sermon Summary)

Reading: 2 Samuel 9.

This is more than simply an incident in David's life or an isolated act of kindness. We are right to see something typical in this. In other words, we are able to trace in it aspects of the ministry of the Lord Jesus Christ. David, in a smaller way, is acting like the Lord Jesus Christ will act in a bigger way. So, in David's act of mercy, we will see something that we are to copy as an example. But we are also to see something in it that will teach us about the work of our Lord Jesus Christ.

1. Acts of mercy.

An act of mercy is an act of kindness, freely chosen, towards someone who is not able to repay us. Mephibosheth was such a person. He lived in a place which had very little. Lo Debar means 'no pasture.' He had been lame since the age of five. He was being looked after by a kind man called Machir.

Some people, though they are loath to admit it, create their own misfortune. This can result in sickness and depression, as a result. Others have misfortunes befall them and are worthy of all our sympathy. We should not close up our hearts against such people.

Our Lord teaches us to do good to people who are not in a position to repay us (Luke 14:12-14). So we are to invite people, in this teaching, who are not able to invite us back in return. Our Lord teaches in Matthew 5:46-48 that it is no credit to us if we just love our own people. So we are to love people who are from cultures and places totally different to our own and to show mercy to them.

We are to be generous, pure and simple. We should check our motives to give for the right reason, but we should not wait until we are satisfied we are absolutely perfect before we give at all. David had made a covenant with Jonathan promising to look after members of Jonathan's family in the event of him dying. This had happened when Jonathan died in battle on Mount Gilboa fighting the Philistines. David honoured that covenant commitment. In a way we should regard ourselves as in covenant especially with the Lord's people, where we are prepared to be generous to them, whoever they are. So we should not hide away from the needs of different believers, or indeed any one else. Then, we should stay loyal to those that we might have begun to help.

We should be proactive in looking to help people, seeking out needs. If we make promises, we should fulfill those promises. In our giving, we should not be expecting anything back in return or be giving in a way of blackmailing people so that they feel indebted to us. We should monitor our acts of mercy so that they are fulfilling the ends for which we are doing them. That does mean that we should stop further of acts of mercy if we have no confidence in those we are doing them for, or can see they are not achieving the results we hoped they would.

2. The greatest act of mercy.

The detail involved in David's act of kindness to Mephibosheth is very striking.

Although David was under covenant to Jonathan, it was still generous of him to do good to a family line that had been at war with him. It is just as when we were enemies that the Lord died for us. In regards to the covenant, the Lord had an ancient covenant established to do us good by saving us from our sins. David actively looked out for people to do good to. That is how our Lord Jesus Christ, the Good Shepherd, actively looks out His people to do good to them.

David sent messengers to Lo Debar to bring good news to Mephibosheth. The Lord sends preachers to bring the good news of the gospel to different people. These people find us wherever we are, even if we are in a place where we might easily be forgotten.

Mephibosheth was lame and of no account in the world's eyes. The Lord looks for the helpless to save them from their sins. He was amazed to find that King David himself was looking out to help him. That is how it is with sinners when the Lord Jesus brings salvation to them. David called Mephibosheth into his presence. The Lord Jesus brings us into His very presence. Once we are there the Lord speaks very kindly to us as He did to people that He met during His earthly ministry. Like Mephibosheth, we are astonished that we should be receiving help and mercy from one so high and dignified.

Finally, like Mephibosheth, we are raised up to enjoy a place of privilege alongside the Lord. We are raised up from the ash heap to sit with princes. Believers are made to be kings and priest unto their Lord. The position they are given, to be with the King and enjoy the benefits of His favour, is permanent and never to be taken away.