2 Samuel Message 10 (2022)

**What makes you happy?**

**(True Blessing)**

*2 Samuel 9:1-13*

*Key Verse: 9:7*

*"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."*

Today’s passage is one of the most beautiful stories in the Old Testament. It shows wonderful friendship between David and Jonathan, and David’s unchanging love for Jonathan, which represents God’s unfailing love for us. From today’s passage, God may help us to be in delight with Him only.

**Part I. From Lo Debar.**

 Before diving into today’s passage, let’s have a quick lookback of David’s life. At the age of 15, David was anointed as king by the prophet Samuel. However, in his 20s, he had been on the run for 10 years to escape from king Saul’s hot and fierce pursuit. After Saul’s death in Gilboa, David was anointed again as king and started ruling over the Judah, and 7 years later, he became a king over the whole Israel. He brought in the ark of God to Jerusalem, and the Lord declared that the Lord would establish David’s kingdom forever. In chapter 8, as we learned, God gave him victory wherever he went, that is, David conquered enemies all around other than Ammonites. In short, to David, the time of peace, spiritually and physically, has come. Clearly, it is time for him to sit back and relax maybe for the first time in his life.

 Going back today’s passage, the bible does not specify when these events happened. But it is generally admitted that it was more than 15 years after the Gilboa battle where the king Saul and his three sons including Jonathan fell. For Mephibosheth who was 5 at that time, now has a young son, Mika, as in verse 12. In other words, this happened in the middle of David’s ruling when he had a peaceful time because all the enemies were gone. In verse 1, David is looking for any person left of the house of Saul because he wants to show God’s kindness for Jonathan’s sake. What does it mean ‘for Jonathan’s sake’? In 1 Samuel chapter 20, Jonathan and David made a covenant to keep unfailing kindness toward each house like God’s kindness even when all their enemies were cut off, and Jonathan saved David’s life from the king Saul. In this context, David is recalling Jonathan’s sincere love and the covenant with him. In verse 3a, **The king asked, “Is there no one still alive from the house of Saul to whom I can show God’s kindness?”** Here, David clarifies to Ziba, a former servant of Saul, that he is looking for Saul’s descendant to demonstrate God’s kindness. Even in such a successful time, David does not fail to remember God and maintains his focus on God. He obviously recognizes himself as a mere vessel, and an instrument to deliver God’s love.

 Ziba answered, “Jonathan’s son is still alive, but lame in both feet.” His answer sounds very weird. While the king is eager to show God’s kindness, Ziba is mentioning physical weakness. It was because Ziba believed that the king is seeking for an extermination of Saul’s lineage; killing all the descendants of Saul, which was very normal in that time. At that time when the new dynasty replaced the old one, all the family members of the former king were executed in order to prevent any potential threats to a new king. So, Ziba is now implicating to David that Jonathan’s son is useless, forget about him because Mephibosheth could not be any threat or harm to David’s ruling.

Let’s read together verse 4 and 5. **“Where is he?” the king asked. Ziba answered, “He is at the house of Makir son of Ammiel in Lo Debar.” So King David had him brought from Lo Debar, from the house of Makir son of Ammiel**. Jonathan’s son lived in Lo Debar. Lo Debar was presumably located in Gilead, east of the Jordan River, about ten miles south of the Sea of Galilee, very far away from Jerusalem. Lo Debar has the meaning of “Without pasture.” It was dusty desert land with poverty. And it has another meaning of “No word of God.” It was desolate, remote and isolated place. Here was a prince of Israel, of the royal house of king Saul, in shame and poverty, far from the palace where he should have been.

Jonathan’s son, Mephibosheth, got crippled in both feet at his age of 5 because he fell while fleeing in a hurry at the news of king Saul and Jonathan’s deaths (4:4). In a moment, Mephibosheth’s world overturned, upside down. He lost his father and royal family members, he became lame in both feet, and must have hidden himself in this desolate, and hopeless place where nobody could locate him. All these instances happened at his age of 5. His life was probably full of deep sorrow and bitterness. He turned from a prince to a refugee, and he was not even able to walk or move for himself.

**Part II. At King’s Table.**

 More than 15 years have passed since he became a fugitive. All of a sudden, Mephibosheth was discovered and summoned by king David. While being summoned to Jerusalem, he must have been shivering with fear of impending execution. At the arrival, he bowed down probably with dread, a great fear to the king. But, to his amazement, king David called his name with excitement, “Mephibosheth!” The name of Mephibosheth stands for “end of shame.” When the king David called his name, Mephibosheth’s life of shame and hopelessness ended.

Further, David announced amazingly unbelievable things. Let’s read verse 7. **“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.”** At first, the king said, “Don’t be afraid,” which means, “You shall not die.” Mephibosheth was to be sentenced to death because he was a fallen royal blood of former king, Saul. Saul’s blood was flowing thorough his veins. It was not his choice. Nonetheless, Mephibosheth was to meet his doom. But David’s viewpoint was totally different. David said he would show Mephibosheth kindness because of Jonathan, his father. Jonathan’s love saved David’s life from Saul’s plot to kill him, and David made a covenant of friendship to protect Jonathan’s house forever. This Jonathan’s blood and the covenant was a game-changer, which brought back Mephibosheth from death.

Also, David declared to restore Saul’s all belongings to Mephibosheth, and ordered Ziba to farm the land and serve him with his 15 sons and 20 servants. This restoration culminated at king’s table; Mephibosheth was allowed to eat always at David’s table like one of the king’s sons. Eating at David’s table means not only literally eating together but also having an intimate relationship with the king, washing away all the shame and bitterness in his life. What a wonderful grace!

Probably David felt an empathy for Mephibosheth because David was also a helpless fugitive. He also plunged from a king’s promising son-in-law to a runaway. But David’s blessing was based on mainly Jonathan’s love for him and their covenant. Therefore, Jonathan’s blood shifted his son from death to life, and from curses to blessings. The covenant between Jonathan and David moved Mephibosheth from Lo Debar, the place of shame and despair, to the king’s table, the place of victory and king’s family membership.

We all were like Mephibosheth before God. We were hiding in our own Lo Debar, with shame, weakness and hopelessness. Even though it was not our choice, we inherited the disobedience of the first man, Adam. We lost our royal blood, were separated from God, condemned to death, and hid ourselves from God. Yet, life comes to all of us through the obedient blood of the second and last Adam, Jesus Christ, who made a new covenant and restored us to the privilege of God’s children. Let’s read Mathew 26:28. **“This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins.”**

Does anybody knows how different a covenant is from a contract? Whereas both of them are a promise between the parties, they have a crucial difference. In a contract, if a party fails to perform its obligation, the other party may terminate the contract, and can be released from all his remaining duties. For example, if a tenant does not pay the rent, the landlord is entitled to termination of the lease contract and to eviction, expelling the tenant. On the other hand, a covenant is not grounded on the other party’s performance or sincerity. A covenant is a perpetual pledge to fulfill what is promised, regardless of the other party’s breach or wrongdoing. Jesus’ blood of covenant to forgive our sins lasts to the end without termination no matter how we transgress or betray his affectionate love. By virtue of Jesus blood, we were moved from Lo Debar to the God’s table as His Children.

**Part III. True Blessing.**

 What was Mephibosheth’s response? In verse 8, he bowed down and said, **“What is your servant, that you should notice a dead dog like me?”** Israelites despised a dog because they regarded that a dog eats the meat of dead animal. Even more, Mephibosheth compared himself to a dead dog. This was not a humility. He was touched and overwhelmed by David’s love, and he was confessing that he did not deserve this love. Mephibosheth confession reminds us of David’s Psalm 8:4, **“What is mankind that you are mindful of them, human beings that you care for them?”** David’s blessing on Mephibosheth came from his love for God, as he said in verse 3. He loved because he had been found by God’s unfailing love.

 Let’s look into a little more Mephibosheth. In chapter 16, when David was fleeing from his son, Absalom’s rebellion, the steward of Mephibosheth, Ziba, met David with hundreds of cakes and a skin of wine, lying that Mephibosheth remained in Jerusalem planning to re-establish Saul’s kingdom. Immediately, David ordered to give away Mephibosheth’s all property to Ziba. But as a matter of fact, when Mephibosheth was preparing to go with David, Ziba betrayed and left him alone in Jerusalem. But since David’s escape from Absalom, Mephibosheth had neither taken care of feet nor trimmed his beard nor washed his clothing awaiting David’s safe return. In chapter 19, after returning to Jerusalem, David found out that Ziba manipulated all situations. So, David ordered to divide the land between them, which seemed very unfair. What was Mephibosheth’s response? Let’s read 19:30. **Mephibosheth said to the king, "Let him take everything, now that my lord the king has returned home safely."** Mephibosheth did not care about any property. All his concern was David’s return in safety, and being together with him.

 What do you think the best blessing that Mephibosheth received was? Although he restored Saul’s all properties, dozens of servants, and privilege to eat at king’s table, all he wanted was to be with David, and to listen to David. Since he was found by David’s love, David was all he wanted. This should be the authentic, born-again Christian’s attitude to God’s grace who crucified his innocent Son for our sins who was like a dead dog. That is why David sang in Psalm 1:2, **“But whose delight is in the law of the LORD, and who meditates on his law day and night.”**

 Two days ago, in the morning, while I was nervous with the message preparation, my wife, Grace, asked me to join the family worship service with our kids as they decided to have it every morning during their vacation. I refused, saying “it would be pretty superficial.” When reflecting this incident, I realized that the main reason was that I felt awkward with God, and was quite unwilling to spend time with Jesus. I have been always busy struggling to survive. Someone says love is to give your time to her/him. I repent my going astray in midst of world, and will make efforts to give my time to my Lord, Jesus.