

Thanksgiving 2025 | David Baumgartner

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[0 : 00] Yeah, this morning we're taking a break from our study in the book of Acts and that's because! it's Thanksgiving week and it also kicks off the holiday season. I'm sure you're looking forward to that.

It's also a great reminder of the many blessings that we enjoy in this country. Amen? It is. I'm sure most of you, if not all, are looking forward to something like this.

A great feast. I don't really have much to do with it. I thank my wife for all the work that she does. I'll tell you what, if you're like me, Thanksgiving will begin with a prayer and end with a nap.

Just so you know, there's some 46 million turkeys that will make the ultimate sacrifice just to make that happen.

So, it's said that turkeys can teach us a valuable spiritual lesson. What is that lesson? It's when you feel the heat and you're in the oven, that's God's plan for you to be a blessing to others.

[1 : 06] And then comes Black Friday. Nothing says happy holidays like elbowing someone over a toaster. This morning, I'd like to focus on this topic of kindness.

Some of you may have missed the World Kindness Day. Did anybody miss that? Did you make it? No. World Kindness Day. That's every year on November 13th.

That was founded in 1998 by the World Kindness Movement. What happened is that several countries came together to promote global unity, goodwill, compassion, and gratitude.

You might want to ask this question, why would a group of people come together and do such a thing? Why is that needed? Well, things like, apparently, things like civility and kindness seem to be going by the wayside.

Have you noticed that? Yeah. Thanksgiving is actually a pretty depressing time for many people. The research shows that the period between Thanksgiving and New Year's is still the single most stressful time of the year.

[2 : 21] A little over a year ago, actually, I was in my car in my neighborhood in the morning, and this guy jumped in front of me with his car, and he stopped abruptly.

He got out of his car because he wanted to fight me. He did. And the reason he gave is because I was driving too slow.

You know what? Maybe that was true. I really came to feel sorry for the guy because, in general, people are frustrated. They really are. You know, there's uptight.

People seem to have a short fuse. And we might want to ask this question, why is kindness going by the wayside? Those who study human behavior have given these reasons.

They say that, first of all, kindness opens the door for exploitation. Isn't that amazing? You make yourself vulnerable by showing kindness to others.

[3 : 24] Another group said that it's just not practical to be kind because it hinders the advancement of oneself. Yeah. Well, I believe that the problem goes much deeper.

I think it's actually a spiritual problem. If you look with the... Oh, by the way, I'm sorry. There's some pages here. Tom, would you... Gary, thanks.

That's our text for today. Look at this verse with me. This is from Paul writing his second letter to Timothy, and he says, But realize this, in the last days difficult times will come.

For men will be lovers of self, lovers of money, boastful, arrogant, revilers, disobedient to parents, ungrateful, unholy, unloving, irreconcilable, malicious gossips without self-control, haters of good, treacherous, reckless, conceited lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God.

I could go on and on, but that's what Paul says about the last days. And frankly, friends, I believe we're in those days now. But there is good news.

[4 : 37] God... kindness does exist. And so this morning I'm going to focus on God's kindness. Not humanity's kindness, but God's kindness.

And that's because God is kind. He is. He does not give us what we deserve. We call that mercy. Instead, He gives us what we do not deserve.

And we call that grace. Now, the Bible is filled with stories about God's grace and mercy. And this morning I would like to look at an account in the Old Testament that demonstrates that very thing. It's the story involving King David and his treatment of a man named Mephibosheth. So if you would please turn with me to 2 Samuel 9, verses 1-13.

There's a sheet that's being handed out in case you didn't bring your phone or your Bible. 2 Samuel 9, verses 1-13. Before we read the text, I'd like to set the table here.

[5 : 45] In 1 Samuel, chapter 8, verse 6, we see that the nation of Israel wanted a king. And they were very impressed with this guy named Saul.

We're told that he was tall. I think that he had nice hair, personally. But the thing is that they made him king. But in God's eyes, Saul was not suitable to be the king of Israel.

And that's because Saul disobeyed him. When David slew Goliath and he became the national hero of Israel, it became obvious to everyone that David was supposed to be Israel's king, not Saul.

Well, when Saul found this out, he did not like that. And so for the next seven or so years, Saul and his supporters chased after David and trying to eliminate him.

Now, it's important to know that Saul had a son named Jonathan. And Jonathan never supported his dad's hatred of David. No, in fact, Jonathan and David became best friends.

[6 : 55] Also, just to know that Jonathan himself had a son named Meribah. Now, his name, though, was changed to Mephibosheth.

Now, why? What happened? Well, when Meribah was only five years old, his father, Jonathan, and his grandfather, Saul, were both killed in a battle with the Philistines.

Actually, Saul killed himself before the Philistines could torture him. In 2 Samuel 4, when the news of Jonathan and Saul's death became known, the attendant in charge of Meribah took the boy and they tried to escape.

Now, the reason for that is in those days, it was common to kill all the relatives of a rival king. But in the process of escaping, the boy fell and he became permanently crippled in both feet.

And ultimately, he was taken in by a family friend to live in this small town called Lodabar. Now, if you come across some property called Lodabar, don't buy it.

[8 : 08] And that's because that name means no pasture. Barren, unproductive land. And so eventually, Meribah became known as Mephibosheth, which means from the mouth of shame.

Well, our account this morning actually jumps ahead some ten years. It's in the middle of King David's reign as king. In 2 Samuel 8, 15, it says that David ruled over all of Israel and demonstrated justice and righteousness for all his people.

Let's go ahead and read that account together. In 2 Samuel 9, I'm going to read the whole chapter. Then David said, Is there yet anyone left in the house of Saul that I may show him kindness for Jonathan's sake?

Now, there was a servant in the house of Saul whose name was Ziba. And they called him to David, and the king said to him, Are you Ziba? And he said, I am your servant.

And the king said, Is there not yet anyone of the house of Saul to whom I may show the kindness of God? And Ziba said to the king, There is still a son of Jonathan who is crippled in both feet.

[9 : 28] So the king said to him, Where is he? And Ziba said to the king, Behold, he is in the house of Mekir, the son of Amiel in Lodabar.

Then king David sent and brought him from the house of Mekir, the son of Amiel, and from Lodabar. And Mephibosheth, the son of Jonathan, the son of Saul, came to David, and fell on his face and prostrated himself.

And David said, Mephibosheth. And he said, Here is your servant. David said to him, Do not fear, for I will surely show kindness to you for the sake of your father Jonathan.

I will restore to you all the land of your grandfather Saul, and you shall eat at my table regularly.

Again, he prostrated himself and he said, What is your servant that you should regard a dead dog like me?

Then the king called Saul's servant Ziba and said to him, All that belong to Saul and to all his house I have given to your master's grandson. And you and your sons and your servants shall cultivate the

land for him.

[10 : 44] And you shall bring in the produce so that your master's grandson may have food. Nevertheless, Mephibosheth, your master's grandson shall eat at my table regularly.

Now Ziba had 15 sons and 20 servants. Then Ziba said to the king, According to all that my lord the king commands his servant, so your servant will do.

So Mephibosheth ate at David's table as one of the king's sons. And Mephibosheth had a young son whose name was Mekah. And all who lived in the house of Ziba were servants of Mephibosheth.

So Mephibosheth lived in Jerusalem, for he ate at the king's table regularly. Now he was lame in both feet. Heavenly Father, we are so glad that we can come here today Lord.

And to look at your word and this very touching, moving story about this young man Lord. Who had lost virtually everything. And yet Lord, because of your kindness, we see your goodness to him.

[11 : 56] And Lord we just pray Father, we long for that goodness ourselves. And we are so grateful that we can come here and encourage one another with these truths Lord. We thank you Father.

We ask that these words come alive to us today. And that we can see what you are like Lord. That we can see your kindness in action. In Jesus name I pray and all God's people said, Amen.

Boy, Mephibosheth had a tough life didn't he? He was living in a barren land. His father and grandfather are now dead. So there's no more perks from living in royalty.

He's disabled. And there's no laws protecting disabled people like we have. And because of his connection to Saul, he probably would have been treated like an outcast by the people of Israel. Mephibosheth would have agreed with the prophet Stephen King. Who said, life stinks and then you die.

[13 : 04] Yeah, maybe some of you have heard that before. But in Mephibosheth's case, something unexpected happened. Someone showed kindness to him. And in this passage, we actually see God's kindness through the actions of King David.

This story is actually a study of God's character. Now, why do I say that? In Christian theology, there are eight men in the Old Testament that are traditionally viewed as types of Christ.

Types of Christ. And that's because their lives and their actions in some way point to or foreshadow, if you will, Jesus Christ himself.

By the way, this is a great personal study if you ever want to look at this. Here are the types of Christ. Adam, Melchizedek, Isaac, Joseph, Moses, Joshua, David, and then Solomon.

Now, we're talking about King David this morning here. In 1 Samuel, we see that it says in chapter 13, verse 14, David is described as a man after God's own heart.

[14 : 19] Have you heard that before? What does that exactly mean? A man after God's own heart? It does not mean that David was perfect. No.

We all know that David sinned. He committed adultery with Bathsheba, and he also arranged for the death of her husband, Uriah. But here's the thing.

David cared about what God cares about. He honored God's name, and he sought to glorify God rather than himself.

Here's the key thing. David's life, and I'll say this imperfectly, but David's life pointed to Jesus, the one who is the true man after God's own heart.

I'm speaking of Jesus here. Jesus always did the Father's will. He always showed mercy, justice, and compassion. He always lived in perfect obedience, even what Scripture tells us by going to the cross.

[15 : 21] In this account, there's three truths then about God's character that I want us to see this morning here. And the first one is this. God's kindness overlooks our past.

If you look with me in the text here in verses 1 and also verse 3, David asks this question. Is there anyone yet still left in the house of Saul?

That word yet is very important. It's a conjunction. And what it does is it combines two different thoughts. First of all, it recognizes that something bad has happened.

Let me ask you, was there a revolt against King David? Yeah, there was. Did Saul and others try to kill David? Yes. But instead of destroying Saul's descendants, David sets aside his feelings of revenge, hostility, and he sought to bless the house of Saul.

Some of you here this morning, you may know someone who says, God would never accept me. There's too much that's happened in my life.

[16:33] Maybe there's a long history of where they've done their own thing. And now perhaps they're living with the consequences. Maybe they think that they're unlovable. Do you know anyone like that?

God's kindness is different from ours. God overlooks our past. God says here, even after all that's happened, I still love you.

The Apostle Paul actually confirms this. He says that in Romans chapter 5 verse 8, that God demonstrates his own love toward us.

That while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. God overlooks our past. Secondly, God's kindness seeks after us.

I want you to notice, Mephibosheth did not seek David out. No, David sought him out. David learns about this young man. And in verses 4 or 5, he says, where is he?

[17:38] Go fetch him for me. Go get him. And it's the same thing with you and I. God seeks us. He reaches out to us. I want to ask you, what could possibly be David's motivation for doing this?

Well, friends, it wasn't fear. King David had no reason to fear Saul's grandson. It wasn't out of pity. David intended to show kindness to the house of Saul before he even knew anything about Mephibosheth.

Thirdly, it wasn't out of obligation. There's no obligation on David's part. He didn't owe Mephibosheth anything. God's kindness isn't about obligation.

God's kindness comes from a true, genuine love that seeks us out. And that's because that's his nature. In Luke chapter 19, verse 10, we find Jesus being questioned as to why he went to the home of a sinner named Zacchaeus.

And this is what he said. He said, this is why I came. For the Son of Man came to seek and save the lost. Yeah.

[18:56] Boy, I'm sure glad that he came for me and sought after me. Friends, salvation is totally from the Lord. He initiates it. And here's why.

He has to. He has to. Why do I say that? It's because by nature, you and I will not seek after God. Paul the Apostle again confirms this.

He says in Romans chapter eight, he says, the mind, he's talking about the natural mind here. The mind set on the flesh is hostile toward God. For it does not subject itself to the law of God.

For it is not even able to do so. For those who are in the flesh cannot please the Lord. And then he goes on talking about the natural man again. The natural man does not accept the things of the spirit of God.

For they are foolishness to him. And he cannot understand them because they're spiritually appraised. You and I by nature will not seek after God.

[20:01] Many people, therefore, they think that God doesn't care. Or that he's not interested in them. Or that a relationship with him has to be earned.

And they'll try to earn it through performing what we would call religious rituals. That never work. And as a result, like Mephibosheth, they live a life characterized by isolation and hopelessness. And there's no room for kindness. But God comes after us. His kindness is motivated out of mercy and grace.

And in the midst of the darkness of God, when it appeared, when a love and kindness of God, our Savior appeared.

He saved us. Not because of righteous things we have done. But because of his mercy. God seeks after you and me. But there's actually much, there's more in this study of God's character.

[21:04] It goes much deeper. King David did not just arbitrarily pull kindness out of thin air. No, he didn't. That leads to the third thing here.

God's kindness is promised to us. When we study this whole account, we see that David's actions toward Mephibosheth were actually based on a covenant that was made between David and Jonathan.

If you have your Bibles, please turn with me to 1 Samuel, chapter 20. And we'll pick it up in just these two verses here. 1 Samuel 20, verses 14 and 15.

While Saul was trying to kill David, Jonathan made an oath to him that he would protect David from his father's schemes to kill him.

So in verse 14, he said, verse 14, Jonathan says to David, show me unfailing kindness like the Lord's loving kindness.

[22 : 12] For as long as I live, so that I may not be killed. Do not ever cut off your kindness for my family. And so, in verse 14, we see that David pledged that he would do that.

He would not forget the covenant he made with Jonathan. Notice verse 14 in your text. Jonathan compares it to the Lord's loving kindness. God made a promise that we're not saved because of our own merit.

No, we're saved because of Jesus' sake. Jesus was being questioned one day by a group of people after feeding them loaves and fishes.

And they're asking about that and about his ministry. And he says to them, all the father gives me shall come to me. And the one who comes to me, I will certainly not cast out.

What does that mean? All that the father gives me shall come to me. And the one who comes to me, I will certainly not cast out. There's this verse actually carries two ideas.

[23 : 26] The first one is divine intervention, where it emphasizes God's role in drawing people to Jesus. Second thing is human response. That whoever comes to Jesus will never be rejected.

So, upon faith, you and I are accepted into God's family. And out of grace and mercy, God overlooks our past. He seeks us out and he shows kindness to us.

How does God show kindness to us? If you turn back to 2 Samuel chapter 9, I want to see three ways here that God shows us kindness.

The first one is this. Because of God's kindness, we experience peace. Notice David's first words to Mephibosheth. He called his name out.

And then he says in verse 7, Do not fear. Can you imagine a guy living like he was? How fearful he must have been to come before the king?

[24 : 32] I mean, as far as we know, he didn't know why he had been summoned to the king. He probably thought something like, boy, I'm a dead turkey now. My goose is cooked. Maybe you know somebody who lives in fear.

Well, if you know someone that lives in fear, Jesus says, do not fear. And that's because of what he has done, we find forgiveness. Paul says in Romans chapter 8 verse 1, there is now therefore no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.

I want to ask you, how can that be true? It just seems too good. It's because of this truth that you will hear every Sunday at this church.

That Jesus paid the price for our sins. Amen. He did. There's a common misunderstanding. And I tell you, I hear it all the time.

I hear people will say, at the end of my life, God's going to overlook my sins. That's because he's love, right? God is love.

[25 : 41] God is love. But he also loves justice. He is not like a crooked judge that can be bought.

What am I talking about? Let me give you an example. Suppose your family is murdered by some guy. And this guy is caught and he's put on trial.

And you're now at the trial because you want what? You want justice. He's found guilty. He's awarded the death sentence. But at the very end of the day, the judge turns to the criminal and he says, I know you're guilty.

But if you wash my car a few times, I'm going to let you go. I want to ask you, how do you feel? Do you feel like justice has been served?

No. God is loving. But he's also just. And he does not ignore our sin. Love comes in because he sent his son into this world to take upon himself the guilt and the punishment that you and I deserve.

[26 : 56] And you and I are offered a legitimate pardon. And if you want that pardon, friends, it's received by faith. God did that for me.

He did that for you. We can't earn it. It can't be bought. God cannot be bribed. Peter, in his first epistle, says that he reminds us that we were not redeemed with perishable things like silver and gold from your feudal way of life inherited from your forefathers.

But we were redeemed with a precious blood as a lamb unblemished and spotless, the blood of Christ.

The second thing that we see is because of God's kindness, he provides for our needs. Notice, God gave Mephibosheth the inheritance that he had lost.

In verse 7, he says, I'm restoring to you the land of your grandfather, Saul. Boy, just think of the dignity that was given back to Mephibosheth.

[28 : 05] I mean, one moment he's a dead dog. And the next moment, he's a landowner with a private estate in Gibeah. That, by the way, that's Saul's hometown.

Not only that, Saul's former servant, Zeba, and his sons were commissioned as servants for Mephibosheth. Friends, that's a substantial household that included 15 sons and 20 servants. And when we read this, what was their job? Well, their job was to work and manage the land. I think it's really interesting that as a landowner now, Mephibosheth would have to, he would provide his fair share of food to the royal court.

Here's the key thing. David gave Mephibosheth a responsibility, but he also gave him the means to fulfill it. Mephibosheth went from being a recipient to a contributor.

God's design for us is to bring us human dignity. And he gives us meaning. He gives us purpose in life.

[29 : 16] In John's first epistle, he says, See how great a love the Father has bestowed upon us, that we would be called children of God. And such we are.

For this reason the world does not know us, because it did not know him. God wants us to experience his kindness. His kindness is vastly different from ours.

Even on a good day. Basically, man's kindness is what? It's earned. God's kindness is free.

Grace means unearned favor. Man's kindness is conditional. God's kindness is unconditional.

Man's kindness leads to feelings of entitlement.

God's kindness leads to gratitude. And the third thing we see is that God's grace and mercy grants me acceptance forever.

[30 : 19] David accepted Mephibosheth as his own son. If you notice with me in verse 7, he continues here, You shall eat at my table regularly. Mephibosheth no longer lived in a land called no pasture.

From now on, he gets to eat at the king's table regularly. David made Mephibosheth a constant participant at the royal table.

Friends, this is not a government entitlement. This is not a Thanksgiving handout. No, it's a high honor. Four times it's mentioned in this passage that Mephibosheth ate at the king's table for the rest of his days.

I think David himself knew what it meant to be restored, didn't he? He says in Psalm 23 that the Lord restores my soul. If I could invite the musicians to come up.

I'd like to leave with one closing thought. And that's that if you notice, it ends with, Now or by the way, Mephibosheth was lame in both feet.

[31 : 38] Do you notice that? Isn't that kind of an odd way to end an account? To remind us that Mephibosheth was lame in both feet? Why is that there?

I believe that as a reminder that God is looking for humble hearts. Those who see their need for a savior. That's the first step to acknowledge that we need a savior.

And we can focus on all the various social problems that plague us today. We can focus on all the social programs that are good and worthwhile for our culture.

But the fact is, friends, without God's kindness, you and I are facing a pretty dark future. Our Lord and Savior not only provides the best example of kindness that we see.

He provides the power of a changed life. Just to remind you that kindness is a fruit of the Holy Spirit at work in our lives.

[32 : 44] And so as we enter this holiday season, may we not forget of God's kindness. We may experience human kindness.

We may experience, or we may not experience acts of kindness. But because of God's kindness, we can be truly thankful. Amen. If we could stand together and sing this Thanksgiving song. Let's sing this Thanksgiving song.