

The Mission of Kingship

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[0 : 0 0] Well, this is the fifth installment of our series on the mission of God. And the mission of God, we've said, is the mission of God to redeem the world from sin. And in the first week, we saw that God pronounces himself the only true God, the God above all gods.

In the second week, we saw that God determines to redeem people through relationship with them. In the third week, we saw that God comes not only to redeem people, but to redeem everything, the whole cosmos.

In the fourth week, last week, we talked about the fact that God comes to redeem through a priest. And this week, we see that the king redeems through condescension.

The king redeems through condescension. Now, if you've been around Christianity for very long, especially the reform tradition that we're a part of, you'll have seen, you'll have, maybe you're catching on to the pattern that last week we looked at priesthood.

This week, we're looking at kingship. And you'll guess that next week, we're looking at the office of prophet. Right? Those are the three great offices of the Old Testament. And our tradition has always said that Jesus Christ fulfills all three of those offices.

[1 : 1 3] So from our Westminster Confession, the confession that our church adheres to in chapter eight, it says that God chose and ordained the Lord Jesus, his only begotten Son, to be the mediator between God and humanity, to be the prophet, the priest, and the king, the head and savior of his church, the heir of all things, the judge of the world.

Now last week, we saw that in Exodus 14 that we need a priest to cross over from death to life, that a priest, a mediator, a go-between is vital for our redemption.

And then this week, we see a picture of David at his best. David was not always at his best. And this week, David is at his best. And kingship at its best is a beautiful picture of redemption.

Kingship at its best is a beautiful picture of redemption. It's a picture that the king, the true king condescends. The true king condescends. Look, and we know this is a picture of redemption because the earliest presentations of who Jesus is in the gospels is as the son of David.

Matthew 1 verse 1 pronounces Jesus to be the son of David. And what is Matthew saying? Well if the Hebrew Bible, the Old Testament, originally in its form was composed of three sections, the Torah, the law, the writings and the prophets.

[2 : 4 2] And the very last book of the Hebrew Bible originally is not Malachi's and the English Bible, but Chronicles. And in the second half of Chronicles, what we call second Chronicles, eight times the author of Chronicles writes, talks about the son of David.

And then every time there's a little comma and it says the king of Israel. And you see what Matthew is doing in Matthew 1, he's picking up where Chronicles left off. The last book of the Old Testament, the first book of the new.

Matthew 1-1, now I'm here to tell you about the son of David. And Matthew doesn't say it, but he implies it, the king of Israel. Jesus Christ, Matthew pronounces the king.

And this is present in all the synoptic gospels, Matthew, Mark and Luke, all pronounce Jesus to be the king. So for instance, in Matthew 22, Jesus says to the Pharisees, what do you think about the Christ?

Whose son is he? And they say to him, he must be the son of David. Everybody knew. Everybody knew. The Messiah had to be the king.

[3 : 45] He had to be the son of David. Samuel 9 is David at his best, giving us a picture of how the king redeems.

This is the most beautiful story of the Da Vinic narrative, I think. And a lot of commentators will say that this is the climax of David's monarchy, this little story embedded in 2 Samuel.

And there's two lessons I want to draw out of it about the mission of kingship. And the first is this, the king offers deep commitment, deep commitment.

And the second is that the king loves his enemies recklessly, lavishly. Okay, so first, the king commits, at the very center of this passage is king David wanting to give something away.

What is it? What does he want to give away? And you see it in verse 1 and verse 3 and verse 7. It says it three times. Verse 1 is there's still anyone left that I may show him kindness.

[4 : 48] So what he wants to give away is kindness. That's the gift he wants to give. Now you'll notice that he also says, for Jonathan's sake. So there's a backstory here about this gift that he wants to give away.

Jonathan was David's best friend. And Jonathan was the son of the previous king, Saul. And the previous king, Saul, wanted to murder David. He made numerous attempts at it.

He was trying constantly. And not long before this, a battle with the Philistines, both Saul and Jonathan, and all the Saul's household, except for one, were all murdered by the Philistines.

Now in a moving scene in 1 Samuel 18, Jonathan comes to David finally realizing that David has been the one chosen to be the next king.

The next king will be David. He's awoken to it. And you see what the deal is. Who has the right to be the next king of Israel? Jonathan does.

[5 : 48] He's the bloodline. He is the son of Saul. It is Jonathan that is to be the next king, but he knows his best friend David is to be the next king. That that's what God has chosen. And so he makes a covenant with David.

He tells David that he will protect him from his father. In fact, he gives David his sword, his tunic, his robe, his bow, and his belt.

And what is he doing there? Everybody in the ancient area knew that the way you transfer kingship is by the handing over of a sword and a royal robe. You see what Jonathan's saying?

I recognize that even though I deserve to be king, that you are the chosen one. He's giving over his right. And he's doing it knowing that his father is going to kill him for it.

You see? And so David later in chapter 20 makes a reverse promise. He says, Jonathan asked David, will you promise not to cut off your, and here's the word, kindness to my house forever?

[6 : 52] And David promised. He vowed. And David swore because he loved Jonathan as his own soul. First Samuel 20. So this idea of a promise of kindness to Jonathan is at the center of this passage.

Now it's, the word kindness isn't good enough. It's not weighty enough because if there's one Hebrew word, one word from Hebrew that you need to know, it's this word, just one.

And it's the word, hesed. H-E-S-E-D in English, hesed. And it's being translated here, kindness, but that's not, it's not weighty enough. What is this?

Verse one, verse three, verse seven, it's emphasized three times. What is this? Well, you'll see it normally, it's all over the Old Testament and you'll normally see it translated as steadfast loyalty, loving kindness, or just kindness.

What is it? What is it? Hesed is a word that describes a particular way of relating to someone. Now we live in the 21st century, we have all sorts of relationships, all different types of relationships.

[8 : 04] Employer, employee, husband, wife, parent, child. But one of the things that I think marks relationships more than anything in the 21st century is the consumer relationship.

So it's the retail relationship, right? It's the relationship you have with the person across the counter from you at Boots. It's the relationship you have when you go to buy anything.

What's the consumer relationship to March Buy? It's an exchange of goods at the point of need, right? You need something and so you're willing to give something to get that need.

And as soon as you either no longer need it anymore, need that thing you've bought anymore, or you can get it somewhere better, you're willing to drop that relationship, right? That's completely normal way, retail relationships, consumption relationships work.

Heasted is literally the total opposite of retail relationships. It's not needs-based.

[9 : 06] It's not looking for a transaction of goods. One commentator says it like this, Hesed love is a love that is willing to deeply commit itself to another by making a solemn or sacred promise.

It's a love of deep commitment, that's all. It's a love that doesn't leave when needs aren't being met, but is willing to lose one's needs, sacrifice one's needs for the sake of the relationship itself.

It's the total opposite of consumption. It's a complete giving over. Now, cultural, if you read any modern social sciences, cultural commentators, cultural ethnographers as they're called, you'll know that most cultural commentators think that the consumption relationship is not only what we do when we stand across from somebody at Boots buying our lunch.

It's something that is woven into the fabric of modern people, that it has penetrated all of our personal relationships in some way as well.

What are your relationships marked by? Has the consumption relationship of retail crept into the relationships that are supposed to be Hesed?

[10 : 31] Hesed love, deep commitments. Think about these. Think about these, the solemn vow commitments. If you're a church member today, you've made one of these to St. Columbus.

If you're not a church member, if you're a Christian, you're not a church member and you hop around perhaps or maybe you've been kind of sitting back and evaluating for some time, maybe one of the questions is, is the fact that I want to commit a mark that I'm treating the church more in a mode of consumption than I am of Hesed?

Consumer relationships is marked by this. You sit back, never willing to commit, just enough to play the judge to decide whether you like something enough to be around it.

That's consumer. Hesed is complete opposite. You commit in order to get into the mess, in order to be part of the solutions to the problems.

You see that they're at total off, even more. What about friendship? What about your friendships? It's easy. How do you tell the difference in a consumer friendship, in a friendship marked by deep covenant, Hesed type love?

[11 : 47] How do you tell? Well, the New Testament tells us all the time, a deep, committed friendship is one where someone is able to speak the truth to you, to tell you exactly who you are, even to the point of insult to your heart.

You swallow it in an act of love and take it in order to grow. Do you have friends like that? That's the mark of Hesed friendship.

Can you speak the truth and love to your friends? That's deep, deep, committed friendship. Look, it's not impossible to have these types of relationships, but it's never been more difficult in the 21st century to have them.

It's not impossible, but it's never been more difficult. Now, the question this passage is asking is how? How do you get relationships like this?

How do you become a person who loves with the kindness, the steadfast loyalty, the Hesed that this passage is talking about? How?

[12 : 53] David wants to give Hesed steadfast love to someone from the House of Jonathan for the sake of Jonathan, but how is he able to do it?

You see, when Jonathan made a covenant with David, he took off his royal robe. He took off his sword.

He took off his belt. And you see what he's saying in that moment. I have every right to be the king, and I will give up my kingship all the way to the point of death for the sake of you.

You see what's happening? See what's happening in that moment? The only way that David is able to love unconditionally in this passage is because a son who deserved to be the king gave up his right to be the king.

He made himself a servant all the way under the point of death. That's the only way David's able to do it is because he remembers. He remembers a king who made himself nothing, knowing that his father was going to kill him.

[14 : 02] You see, the kingship of God is unlike all the other kingships in this world. The kingship that God displays is the kingship that condescends.

It's a kingship that's willing to give itself up all the way to the point of sacrifice because of a deep commitment, a deep commitment to love somebody that didn't deserve it.

Let's put it plainly. The word, as it is, the love of the gospel. That's what's being put on display here. The New Testament word for steadfast loyalty, hesed, is the little Greek word, eleon.

Typically, the New Testament translates it to mercy. Whenever you see the word mercy in the New Testament, a lot of times this is that same exact idea transferred over, but God being rich in mercy, hesed, to you.

Because of the great love with which he loved us, even when we were dead in our trespasses, he made us alive together with Christ. By grace you have been saved.

[15 : 19] Hesed is a commitment to win people by losing. You can only become a person who loves all the way to the point of winning people by losing if you know something of a king who did it first.

Have you been changed by that kind of love? One of the ways you can know that is, are any of your relationships slowly becoming marked by it?

That's the first thing. The king, the king, God the king deeply commits. The second thing and final thing is this, the king loves his enemies recklessly or lavishly.

Now, King David wants to give something. We've said that. It's hesed. It's covenant love. But who? But to who? Who does he want to give it to?

And the answer in this passage is he wants to give it to Mephibosheth. Mephibosheth. So, you can try to pronounce that word five times in a row when you leave today. See how it goes.

[16 : 22] Mephibosheth is who he wants to give hessid to. And who is this? Who is Mephibosheth? I've said a few times in sermons the past year that in the ancient Near East, the time of the Old Testament, your resume, your CV is everything.

It's everything. Your name, your bloodline, who your father is. It's everything. And it's never more been the case than for Mephibosheth.

Mephibosheth, his name, methibosheth, ibbosheth is the word shame.

And we're not sure what meth exactly means, but most scholars think it means from the mouth of. So, literally, his name translates to from out of the mouth of shame.

His bloodline is that he, it says in this passage, is the grandson of Saul, the son of Jonathan. He's the last line of the disgraced king, Saul.

[17 : 27] And in verse four, it tells us the place he comes from. So, we know his name, we know his bloodline, but where does he come from? Verse four, where is he? He's in the house of Mykir, the son of Amiel at Lodobar.

Now, Lodobar, and you can't see this, they should have translated it, Lodobar literally means no or nothing. It literally means the place of nowhere.

So, so far we have the man who is called out of the mouth of shame of the disgraced lineage of the last king that lives in the nowhere place.

You see the picture that's being painted. Not only that, but it says he's in the household of Mykir. Mykir was a loyal supporter of David.

What it's saying there is that he's a slave. He's being tended to as a slave. He's a slave in the place of nowhere. And then the thing that's emphasized most other than anything else in this passage, at the very beginning, and then you'll see in the very last verse, in verse 13, the writer reminds us that he was disabled in both of his feet.

[18 : 35] It says at the front of the passage and at the back of the passage. And once you remember that, he was disabled. And why is that so significant? To be disabled in the ancient Near East in any form is the direct path to abject poverty.

There is no hope for the disabled in the ancient Near East. They were not, oftentimes they would not be allowed to come into the city. This is probably why he means lives in the place of Lodobar, the place of nowhere.

They would basically be beggars. If they were immobile, that could not move. Just sit in their filth for years and years begging and they would die young.

And he's a young man. He's probably about 20 at this point. The text is emphasizing this. Now, how did he become this way?

Well, in 2 Samuel 4, it tells us that when Saul and Jonathan, sorry, yeah, Saul and Jonathan were murdered by the Philistines, his nurse, he was only five years old, and his keeper, a young woman of some sort, ran with him away.

[19 : 40] She ran because she knew what would happen, which we'll get to in just a moment, to him after the death of Saul. It says that she fell on his feet and crushed them.

So he was five and he was not disabled until she fell on his feet running away and crushed both of his feet. And it's probably the case that they healed poorly and he'll never walk.

He's disabled in no way. This is his resume. This is his CV. It doesn't get worse than this in ancient years. It doesn't get worse, you see, but even more.

But even more than this. The worst is yet to come. Because in verse 6, when he comes before David, Mothubeshet, the son of Jonathan, came to David, it says that he falls on his face.

He lays prostrate in homage. And David shouts his name and says, do not fear. Now the reason this probably takes place is because Mothubeshet is physically shaken.

[20 : 45] He would have been visibly afraid because everybody knew, as one commentator puts it, that when a new regime or dynasty comes to power, as David's just had, the name of the game was purge.

You needn't go wandering into the ancient Near East to confirm this. You can stay within the pages of the Bible and watch Baasha and First Kings, Zimri and First Kings, or Jehu and Second Kings, to find out what happens to the remnants of a previous regime.

The new king always needed to solidify his position. It was conventional political policy, solidification by liquefaction. Liquidation, I should have said.

Same thing really. Everybody knew it. Everybody believed it. Everybody practiced it. You see why he's so afraid.

He knows who he is. He's the son of Saul. It's not just that he was called out of the mouth of shame, that he was the man from nowhere, that he was disabled, that he was a slave, that he lived in abject poverty in the ancient Near East.

[22 : 02] He was an enemy of the state. That's the most significant thing. He was an enemy of the state. David had even killed some of Saul's people right after he took the throne.

David was not exempt. He had done this already. He had murdered some of the loyal supporters of Saul. The Fiebisheth knows what's about to happen.

He's come to die. He's come to die. What's a king? What's a king?

The Westminster Confessions defines a king. We know what a king is because they've told us it's a ruler and a judge. It says the two things. He rules, a king governs or rules and he judges.

The moment Mephibisheth walks in the door of the king's house and he sees David, he knows himself judged by the judge.

[23 : 01] His status is enemy. He knows what he is. He's judged by the judge. That's who he is. He knows it. As soon as David places his hand on Mephibisheth's shoulder and says, fear not.

In that very moment, he's transferred. He's transferred from condemned enemy to son.

You see, David says, you will eat at my table always like one of my sons. He steps into the door of the palace, enemy of the state and in a single moment becomes adopted son.

Oh boy. Is this the Gospel? What's the CV of a Christian?

What's the resume of a Christian? Paul and Romans. While we were enemies, enemies of the state, enemies of the king. We were reconciled to God by the death of his son.

[24 : 07] Many of us who were not wise in the eyes of this world. We were helpless. Romans 5 despised Romans 6 enemies of God.

Romans 5 and sinners. Romans 4. And when the man from nowhere with the name, with the name, the mouth of shame enters the room, the king lays down the scepter of judgment to pick up the crook of the shepherd.

You see, you see what he gives him? It says in the middle of our passage, he gives him protection. He gives him an inheritance as a son and he invites him to eat at the table.

Does that sound familiar? Does that sound familiar? The Lord's Supper being invited to eat at the table.

It's coming to the king's table, knowing yourself a former enemy of God. It's knowing yourself a Mothibosheth.

[25 : 11] It's coming to the table and saying, why me? Why me? It's knowing yourself once called shame, now called son or daughter, knowing yourself adopted.

It's knowing yourself not to be invited to a funeral but to a party. That's what the king's table is. It's a party. You don't come to the table to just remember Jesus' death.

You come to the table to partake of resurrection life, to eat of new life. You could have never eaten of it, lest the king lay down his scepter of judgment and extend to you the crook of the shepherd.

He didn't just take off his royal robe like Jonathan did, he was stripped of it. He was stripped naked.

Last thing we'll close with this, many commentators have noted and other preachers, I've heard a good friend of mine who preached from this passage years ago in Jackson, Mississippi, make this point, who was sitting at the table of David every day?

[26 : 27] Mothibosheth has been invited to come eat at the king's table as a son for his whole life. Who would have been at the table?

We can find out from other passages. First it's Amnon, who was David's eldest son and he was a strong man. Secondly it was Tamar.

If you remember Tamar, she was known to be the most beautiful woman in the whole of Israel. The third was Absalom.

The text in Samuel says that there was not a blemish on Absalom from the crown of his head all the way to his toes.

Fourth was Joab. Joab was the captain of David's army and one of the mighty men. You've heard of the mighty men. He's a Herculean figure. He was an Achilles of David's army.

[27 : 27] And lastly Solomon, the wisest man who has ever lived. Solomon, the most beautiful in the world, male and female, the two strongest of any man, the men's men and the wisest man who would ever live, the next king.

And every single day, just picture it, Mephibosheth would pull himself to the table.

Every day for the rest of his life, he's been invited to the table. Every day he would pull himself up and he would sit down to the best. It was like sitting at a table with angels.

And every day you can imagine what he would say. Why me? Why would I not deserve to eat at this table?

And how would he know? How would he be reassured? How would he be reminded of who he was, a son, because David would break the bread and he would pass the cup and he would say, eat and drink.

[28 : 41] You are my son. Today I've bought you. With this table I'm buying you back once more.

What do you do at the Lord's table? You say, why am I a guest? You celebrate. Feast and know. Christian, feast and know.

Feast and know the hessed love of the Lord. As often as you eat and drink, remember that you have been loved well by a king who condescended, who was stripped, who gave up his sword.

Are you marked by the hessed love of this gospel? And does it mark the way you love other people? Let's pray together.

Father, we ask that you would break our hearts with the picture of Mephibosheth today that we would know ourselves loved at our lowest.

[29 : 42] We come to the table this morning pronouncing nothing other than a king who invited us and celebrating in resurrection life and the life of the bread and the wine.

So we ask that you would fill us up. And we ask this in Jesus name.