

*I'd written my sermon going into last weekend. And guess who it was on? **Mephibosheth**. It's 4pm last weekend and we give Pastor Matt's slides a run through. And sure enough... his passage? **2 Samuel 9:1-13**. My first thought was I have to pivot. But then as service went on I felt the Holy Spirit impressing upon me that two separate pastors feeling prompted to preach on the same obscure passage isn't an accident, it's the Holy Spirit. God wants to emphasize something. Be obedient to highlighting it...*

First: Mephibosheth himself.

verse 13 of last weekend's passage ended the story with: **"...And Mephibosheth lived in Jerusalem, because he always ate at the king's table; he was lame in both feet."**

In the US, roughly **25%** of people are disabled.  
A recent survey found **67%** of people feel uncomfortable talking to a disabled person.  
That means a disabled person's mere existence makes most people uncomfortable.

Jesus cured people from time to time. We love those narratives.  
But curing a body and healing a LIFE are not the same.  
**Curing** is physical, on a surface level and happens in a moment.  
**Healing** is slow work done on the soul level. And we ALL need healing.

In the Church we aren't immune, we can find ourselves among the 67% of uncomfortable folks that honestly and truly mean well.. we just don't know what else to say or do.  
**So we insert God to make ableism seem holy.**

What actually needs to be destroyed?  
This perspective perspective in the Church that being disabled is some tragic defeat.

Disabled people are temples of the Holy Spirit.  
They walk in the same victory we ALL receive through the work of Jesus.  
They don't need healing to radiate God's glory.  
They are the beautiful Imago Dei.

What needs to be healed in the Church?  
The ableism that would think otherwise... that we slap *"faith"* on to make seem holy.

Listen - at times the Church needs to look in the mirror and realize what's ACTUALLY actively limiting disabled people isn't their bodies, but our spaces, our mindsets, and our practices ...and we need to repent.

Pastor Matt already preached the first half of my sermon: **"Identifying WITH Mephibosheth."**

The second step tonight? **Identify Your Mephibosheth**

In 2 Samuel 7 we see God proclaim a covenant promise to David.  
2 Samuel 7 ends with David's response, a prayer of thanks.

2 Samuel 8's heading is David Military Victories, as *he fights for those promises*.  
2 Samuel 8 is par for the course A king establishing his throne. Securing his reign.  
It all makes what comes next so surprising. Because what comes next is counter cultural.

WHY does the expectation exist that David would kill Mephibosheth rather than show him kindness? **Politics.**

We see in chapter 8 & 9 this juxtaposition of *going to battle* vs. *"Who can I show kindness to?"*

We must ask the question as a church in our own current political climate:  
*Which is more commonly your daily perspective with those in the other camp?  
Going to battle? Or showing kindness?*

How does David do it?  
**He gives him a seat at his table.**

A Bible scholar and author Scott Bartchy on the impact of a shared meal in that culture:  
*"It would be difficult to overestimate the importance of table fellowship... Mealtimes were far more than occasions for individuals to consume nourishment. Being welcomed at a table for the purpose of eating food with another person had become a ceremony richly symbolic of friendship, intimacy, and unity. Thus betrayal or unfaithfulness toward anyone with whom one had shared the table was viewed as particularly reprehensible. On the other hand, when persons were estranged, a meal invitation opened the way to reconciliation."*

Humans do meals around the table because we don't eat only for sustenance.  
We do it for communion.

And N. T. Wright said something on the Last Supper and first communion that I want to point to tonight- that *"When Jesus himself wanted to explain to his disciples what his forthcoming death was all about, he didn't give them a theory, he gave them a meal."*

**Three verses start with "The Son of Man Came..."**  
**Mark 10:45 – not to be served, but to serve and give his life as a ransom for many.**  
**Luke 19:10 – to seek and save the lost.**  
**Luke 7:34 – eating and drinking.**

Jesus shared dinners with those he wanted to reach and teach.  
So MUCH so that people accused him of being a glutton and a drunk!

**Luke 7:34** in it's entirety reads: **"The Son of Man came eating and drinking, and you say, 'Here is a glutton and a drunkard, a friend of tax collectors and sinners.'"**

See Jesus broke down WHY he came in Luke 19:10: to seek and save the lost.  
But HOW? One method he used repeatedly was the shared table. Eating and drinking together.  
WHY? "When people were estranged, a meal invitation opened the way to reconciliation."

Brennan Manning, in *The Ragamuffin Gospel*, says: “*Jesus’ sinner guests were well aware that table fellowship entailed more than mere politeness or courtesy. It meant peace, acceptance, reconciliation, and brotherhood. Peace and reconciliation for all, without exception, even for the moral failures.*”

*Jesus’* ministry that included calling people of many backgrounds to share a table is ***an anti-polarization movement***. Opening the way to reconciliation over polarization.

Is the Church following in his footsteps? Or is the Church getting all of its cues from the culture?

Photo of George Bush and Michelle Obama

The polarized posture of politics:

We **categorize** people unlike us. Then we **demonize** them. So we **polarize** as a society.

**Revelation 12** the Bible calls the Devil ***the accuser of the brethren***.

The Greek word is “**categor**” – the word from which we get category.

When we forfeit love give into the pull of polarization like our culture does...

We do more than demonize them. We do the work of demons.

Jesus’ entire ministry was taking those categorized as “sinners” by the self righteous, and inviting them to the table, to open the door to reconciliation.

The Way of Jesus was an **anti-polarization** movement.

When Jesus walked the earth the Jews were under Roman oppressive rule.

And as they were well aware their situation was wretched and unideal, there were groups and tribes within the Jews that proposed solutions and ways out of it...

**The Pharisees**

**The Sadducees**

**The Essenes**

**The Zealots**

- Among them was a group called **the Sicarii**. They got their name from the small curved blades they carried. Sicarii literally means “dagger men.” They would use these to gut their political enemies in public places to incite fear.

You see the push of politics into polarization and escalating into violence... it’s not a new problem unique to our times. But it is a serious one Jesus pushed back against.

One of the reasons thousands followed Jesus was because each of these groups wanted to see where he would fall in line.

***What party would he join? What platform would he fall in line with?***

These groups all lived in politicized boxes much like we do today.

And what did Jesus do? Light the boxes on fire.

Jesus tells us in John 14:6 - ***“I AM THE WAY. The truth. And the Life.”***

Saying I won't be choosing a tribe, party, or platform. But you must choose me.

**He didn't make them choose a party or side.**

**He invited them to choose him - the way, the truth, and the life.**

Discipleship was an anti-polarization movement.

Think about this: Jesus chose a tax collector, **Matthew**, who the zealots and sicarii would have seen as an enemy more despicable than the Romans themselves.

...and Jesus puts him at a table again and again next to **Simon the Zealot**.

Placing them at tables together, opening the door to reconciliation not just to him...

But to each other!

Jesus wasn't just interested in vertical reconciliation between us and God.

He was and is interested in horizontal reconciliation between cultural foes, becoming family.

And he leaves that work to us.

**Psalm 23:5** – You prepare a table for me in the presence of my enemies.

Politics will have us wanting to stand **OVER** people from some false moral high ground.

The table reminds us God calls us to be **WITH** them. Friends and enemies.

Mephibosheth politically was King David's enemy.

But David had received God's gracious promise and he wanted to pay it forward.

People who receive God's grace should be the most gracious.

I was invited to the King's table like Mephibosheth.

Who can I invite to mine? The broader question – who can I show kindness to?

Henri Nouwen once wrote: ***“Hospitality is not to change people, but to offer them space where change can take place.”***

We are often so bad at being friends to non-believers because our end goal isn't friendship.

Our goal isn't hospitality. We want to change people.

But only God changes people. We are simply called to set the table.

The second reason we're bad at this – we want to change folks to look like us.

**Miles Law - *“Where you stand depends on where you sit.”***

The viewpoints you are most likely to take a stand on flow from the seat or position you occupy.

**Your context shapes your perspective, and that perspective informs your politics.**

What if I pulled up a seat and shared a table with you.

Would it change ME.

(my story with Chon Glover)

The power of a shared table lies in this:

**A shared table creates proximity.**

**Proximity creates awareness.**

**Awareness creates understanding.**

**Understanding creates empathy.**

**And empathy “opens the way for reconciliation” ...and unity.**

Who are you inviting to share a table? It may not be a literal table.

But our world desperately needs more kind hospitality and proximity, and less categorization and polarization. The Church gets to lead the way. NEEDS to lead the way.

To close - **Revelation 3:20** – *“Look! I stand at the door and knock. If you hear my voice and open the door, I will come in, and we will share a meal together as friends.”*

Jesus still hosts shared tables. And wants to sit at one with you.