



SERMON OF THE WEEK

First Presbyterian Church of Honolulu at Ko'olau

September 28, 2014

"Covenant Love" - 2 Samuel 9:1-13

David Chang

If you're new here to First Prez, I'm not Dan Chun. Pastor Dan is downstairs today preaching at all three children's ministry services. He'll be back upstairs next week and it will be Family Sunday.

If you're not new here to First Prez, you will know that we seem to have such a fascination with all things British.

Those of you who have gone through Alpha knows that our material comes from Holy Trinity Bromptom. And remember Jamie Haith back here a few weeks ago? We can't get enough of these Brits.

Well we're not the only ones, here's a picture of one of the most popular people in the world.
(Photo: Prince George with Prince William and Kate).

What a cutie! He's now about 14 months old. Imagine the life of this little guy. Darling of the world, well at least until...well, let me give you a hint. Our Middle School Coordinator, Nick Love and his wife Alex, are getting ready for their first child. Everyone is going to adore this child!

Back to Prince George. Picture the life of this little guy. Born into royalty, his great grandmother is the sovereign of a nation. He doesn't have a care in the world. He is protected by royal guards, served by royal servants and cared for by a royal nanny.

Imagine then one day, while great grandmother is off overseas somewhere, his grandparents are out in the countryside, and mom and dad are off dedicating a school somewhere, little Prince George is in the royal nursery playing with the royal building blocks, watched attentively by the royal nanny.

Suddenly, there's a flash of light, a deafening blast and the whole palace is shaken. Furniture is toppled over and debris is all around. The evacuation alarm goes off and the royal nanny scoops him up into her arms and starts running. She dashes out of the royal nursery and is sprinting toward the royal safety bunker, when her foot catches on a broken chair. Out of her arms flies the royal baby. He lands very hard amid the debris and begins to scream in pain, both of his ankles shattered. Not only are his bones broken, but so is his life. Is there no hope?

Did this really happen? No, but something like this did, way back in the days of King David.

So let me set the context for our scripture passage for today, especially because we're a bit out of sequence. It's just like what's happening now on television. The summer replacement shows are coming to an end and the main season shows are starting up. In order to help restore continuity,

they're showing last season's finales to get us back into the flow of the narrative.

So rewind, before Pastor Tim's sermon on Nathan dealing with David's sin. Rewind, before Pastor Dan's sermon on dealing with David's temptations with Bathsheba.

In our Scripture passage for today, King David is in a good place. He has defeated Goliath, defeated enemies of Israel, returned the Ark of the Covenant and reestablished worship.

What a gifted guy. Think about it. He is a great warrior taking on the giant Goliath, mano-a-mano; he is a great poet and a songwriter like Bob Dylan or Bono; he is a great military strategist like Sun Tzu or David Petraus; he is a great man of faith like Pope Dan or Francis. He had all the gifts needed to be a great king.

His victories have brought peace around the kingdom and now David turns his attention inward. This is where we come into today's scripture text. We enter into King David's throne room and we see the King ruling and doing what 2 Samuel 8:15 describes as "doing what is right and just for all the people."

2 Samuel 9: 1 One day David asked, "Is there anyone left of Saul's family?"

If so, I'd like to show him some kindness in honor of Jonathan."

2 It happened that a servant from Saul's household named Ziba was there. They called him into David's presence. The king asked him, "Are you Ziba?"

"Yes sir," he replied.

3 The king asked, "Is there anyone left from the family of Saul to whom I can show some godly kindness?"

Ziba told the king, "Yes, there is Jonathan's son, lame in both feet."

4 "Where is he?"

"He's living at the home of Makir son of Ammiel in Lo Debar."

5 King David didn't lose a minute. He sent and got him from the home of Makir son of Ammiel in Lo Debar.

6 When Mephibosheth son of Jonathan (who was the son of Saul), came before David, he bowed deeply, abasing himself, honoring David.

David spoke his name: "Mephibosheth."

"Yes sir?"

7 "Don't be frightened," said David. "I'd like to do something special for you in memory of your father Jonathan. To begin with, I'm returning to you all the properties of your grandfather Saul. Furthermore, from now on you'll take all your meals at my table."

8 Shuffling and stammering, not looking him in the eye, Mephibosheth said, "Who am I that you pay attention to a stray dog like me?"

9-10 David then called in Ziba, Saul's right-hand man, and told him, "Everything that belonged to Saul and his family, I've handed over to your master's grandson. You and your sons and your servants will work his land and bring in the produce, provisions for your master's grandson. Mephibosheth himself, your master's grandson, from now on will take all his meals at my table." Ziba had fifteen sons and twenty servants.

11-12 "All that my master the king has ordered his servant," answered Ziba, "your servant will surely do."

And Mephibosheth ate at David's table, just like one of the royal family. Mephibosheth also had a small son named Mica. All who were part of Ziba's household were now the servants of Mephibosheth.

13 Mephibosheth lived in Jerusalem, taking all his meals at the king's table. He was lame in both feet.

This is the Word of God.

Let's dive into this amazing passage. King David remembers a vow, a covenant that he and his best friend Jonathan made to each other. The Bible records this vow in 1 Samuel 20:13. Jonathan is speaking.

1 Samuel 20:13 And God be with you as he's been with my father! If I make it through this alive, continue to be my covenant friend. And if I die, keep the covenant friendship with my family—forever.

So David recalls Jonathan, a friend, someone he has fond memories of. I think David reminisces on the days that he was brought into the palace as a young man. I think he felt out of place, disoriented by all the royal trappings, not having friends and family around. I think amidst all the bureaucrats and military men and servants, he found a kindred soul in Jonathan. David finally found a friend. But Jonathan was more than just a friend—he was a covenant friend.

When David confided in Jonathan that the King, Jonathan's father, was out to kill him, Jonathan, at risk to his own life, asked his father why he wanted to

harm David. This enraged King Saul so much that he grabbed his spear and threw it at Jonathan. An ordinary friend would have taken this as a message to stay away from David or further risk the King's wrath. But no, Jonathan was not just a friend, he was a covenant friend. So Jonathan further risked his life to warn his covenant friend David that yes, his father King Saul was out to kill him.

What is a covenant friend? Tim Keller, senior pastor of Redeemer Presbyterian Church, says that we have two kinds of relationships, covenant relationships and retail relationships. Retail relationships are defined by how we will benefit from the other person in the relationship. This differs from a covenant relationship, where it doesn't matter what the other person does. It's not about benefits, it is all about doing the best for the other person.

There's nothing wrong with retail relationships. When I go to restaurant, I expect they will provide a clean place, get my order right, and serve me good food. The restaurant expects that I will pay them for their goods and services. If we don't get what we expect from the other, the relationship is broken.

Another way to put it? A retail relationship is all about what we can get from the other. A covenant relationship is all about what we can give to the other.

This is the kind of relationship that Jonathan and David have committed to, a covenant friendship to do the best for each other, no matter what it takes.

King David asks his staff if there's anyone in Jonathan's family who still might be alive. The answer comes from Ziba.

Now this Ziba is an interesting guy. He is described as King Saul's right hand man, King Saul's chief of staff, a very prominent and influential position. But I wonder what kind of relationship Ziba had with King Saul and his family, covenant or retail?

Ziba comes into the King's court and answers David's question, "Is there anyone left from Saul's family to whom I can show some godly kindness?" Ziba answers, "Yes, there is Jonathan's son, lame in both feet."

King David asks, "Where is he, where does he live?" To which Ziba replies, "He's living at the home of Makir son of Ammiel in Lo Debar."

Covenant or Retail? Let's see. When the King asks, "Is there anyone left in the house of Saul to whom I can show godly kindness to?" Ziba answers, "Yes there is Jonathan's son, lame in both feet." Ziba doesn't refer to Jonathan's son by name. Does he even know it? All Ziba shares is that Jonathan's son is lame in both feet. Covenant or Retail? Retail.

When asked where does he live, Ziba answers "He's living at the home of Makir, in Lo Debar." So we picture, Jonathan's son, a royal prince, living in a home that is not his, living in Lo Debar. Lo Debar literally means "place without pasture." Lo Debar is a wasteland, crops don't grow here, livestock is not raised here. This is a place of poverty. Ziba on the other hand, must have been living pretty close to the palace, since he had ready access to the throne room. He was doing pretty well. As scripture reports, he had 15 sons and 20 servants. So what kind of relationship is it when Prince Jonathan's son, a member of the royal household whom I'm sure Ziba was responsible for, is living

in a wasteland—in a room in someone's home, where you're living well with 20 servants? Covenant or Retail? Retail.

I think Ziba is feeling, "I don't like him, what good is he and what good can come out of this?" What good can come out of this retail relationship with him?

But not King David. He's not into retail relationships. He has vowed covenant friendship with Jonathan and it extends to his descendants as well. It didn't matter that this man was unable to walk. It didn't matter that he had never gotten himself out of poverty. All that mattered was he had a covenant relationship with this man's father and his family.

King David immediately sends for Jonathan's son. When he arrives, I picture that since the King immediately sent for him, they brought him straightaway into the throne room. I imagine this man looked like and smelled like someone who was living in a place of desolation, or poverty; a man who could not walk.

The King calls him by name. Where others know him as lame, and even call him that, the King of Israel calls him by name—the name given to him by the King's dearest friend. King David calls out "Mephibosheth".

The King then proceeds to restore Mephibosheth. He returns the inheritance, which is substantial, being all the property and land of his grandfather King Saul. He gives orders to Ziba that he and his family will work the land to provide every thing that Mephibosheth's family needs.

Doesn't this sound like the prodigal's father welcoming his son home? The father had a

covenant love for his son and restored him completely, putting a robe on him, a ring on his finger and invited him back into the house, not as a servant but as a son.

The prodigal father, King David, and our Lord Jesus want to restore us completely. It goes beyond just the material needs. Yes, food, clothing and housing are important. But we see here King David restoring respect by giving back his inheritance, his place in community. But most of all I think the greatest thing that King David gave Mephibosheth was himself. The king instructed that Mephibosheth would take all his meals at the king's table just as one of the king's own son. I believe King David felt that it wasn't enough just to give things to Mephibosheth. The king wanted to spend time with Mephibosheth to get to know him, to enjoy his presence.

This wasn't easy. Even for a king this was a challenge. There may have been some around King David who thought he was nuts to do this. They were of a culture that when a new king took power, everything would be done to protect against rebellion. The new king would normally destroy the entire family, relatives, and officials of the old regime. When the U.S. invaded Iraq to topple Saddam Hussein, we did not just take him out, we took out all of his sons as well.

But we see the King David challenged the traditions of the day. He didn't do what was just and right for himself, he did what was just and right for all people. I think he must have driven some of his royal advisors crazy. First, he left King Saul's chief of staff alive and even let him prosper.

Then he brought King Saul's grandson back from virtual exile. Then to add further risk, he restored his property and finances. Then one more thing...he brought him into the palace.

I think the royal advisors must have been pulling their hair out. This is a major risk to the King. The King brings Mephibosheth out of obscurity, provides him resources and access to the throne, all ingredients to help Mephibosheth take back the throne into his own family.

King David, what if we just send Jonathan's son back to that Lo Debar place? He was doing okay there. I mean, he even had a kid. We can send him money, check up on him every once in a while to make sure he's okay. That way we could minimize the threat to your reign. Wouldn't that fulfill your covenant relationship with Jonathan?

But that wasn't King David's way. King David took the challenge of fulfilling his vow head on. He trusted that God would take care of his kingdom. After all, God put him there...God would keep him there. David was a man after God's own heart and he wanted to show God-sized compassion. God had blessed David abundantly, and now he would bless others abundantly.

Just as King David recalls the covenant that he made with Jonathan, I think we need to recall Jesus telling the disciples of John the Baptist about himself

Luke 7:22 Jesus (to John's disciples): Go and tell John what you've witnessed with your own eyes and ears: the blind are seeing again, the lame are walking again, the lepers are clean again, the deaf hear again, the dead live again, and

good news is preached to the poor.

Just as Jesus called the disciples to carry out His covenant love, He calls us to do the same. We are challenged to bring these folks back, not because of what they can do for us, but because of what we can do for them. I believe that God calls us to do as King David did, to provide for them, to restore their respect, to share our lives with them. We must do this out of covenant, but we also must do this out of compassion.

Can you imagine the life of Mephibosheth? He was born into a royal household the son of the Prince of Israel, grandson of the King of Israel.

Remember that picture of Prince George and my little allegory using him?

For five years, Jonathan's son lived the life of royalty, he was protected by the King's guards, all of his needs were met by the King's servants. He would one day inherit the throne all the properties and land of the king.

But then one day, it all came crashing down around him. His grandfather and father were defeated in battle. The household was in a panic, knowing that the enemy was coming for them now, to wipe out the family. So the royal nanny scoops him up.

In the rush to leave, Mephibosheth's nanny dropped him, injuring both his feet to the extent that he could not stand on either one. There was no medical care in those days like we have today, no orthopedic surgeons, no physical therapists. And look where Mephibosheth wound up. In Lo Debar.

What a way to live—once knowing that he would inherit the kingdom and now living in a home in a slum that is not even his. Living in fear that a powerful king is coming to take revenge on what his paranoid grandfather had done. Losing all respect of others, being known only as a cripple because he could no longer do anything to help himself or his family. Mephibosheth feels helpless and hopeless. He becomes crippled in his spirit, not just in his feet.

I think the same happens today. There are sons daughters of Jonathan out there. There are sons and daughters of Jonathan even in this room this morning. I know because I'm one of them.

There are times that I feel like I don't have what it takes. I'm stumbling along, I'm letting others down. I blame God. I blame others for dropping me. Why couldn't I be in a better place? We become so wrapped up in our failures, our shortcomings, our guilt and shame, that we lose our identity, we lose our name.

We get stuck in our own Lo Debars. We feel that resignation—that we don't have what it takes to get out our wastelands. Or we feel fear, frightened that we might be found out and brought out, so we hide out.

But things change. King David sends for Mephibosheth and when he arrives, the King calls him by name. It doesn't matter that he cannot walk. It doesn't matter that he wasted all those years in Lo Debar. The King calls him by name and restores him. The King wipes his slate clean and gives Mephibosheth a fresh start.

Our King Jesus wants to do the same for us today.

You're here today, somehow, somehow, you're hearing this because God has sent for you.

You see the twist of the story is that...we are Mephibosheth. Yes, us! God calls us in all our imperfections, with all our limps, and sin and failures and mistakes in life. And he asks us to dine with Him forever, not only in this life but in the next. He invites us to His forever banquet.

He makes the covenant, "Lo, I am with you always, even to the ends of the earth."

We're like Zaccheus who climbed up a tree, just to catch a glimpse of Jesus to find out more about him.

Luke 19:5 *When Jesus came by, he looked up at Zacchaeus and called him by name. "Zacchaeus!" he said. "Quick, come down! I must be a guest in your home today."*

He wanted to dine with him, to fellowship with him.

What did Zacchaeus do? How did he respond? **6** *Zacchaeus quickly climbed down and took Jesus to his house in great excitement and joy.*

Zacchaeus didn't say, "Wait, I need a day to straighten out the place, the refrigerator is empty, I have to go Costco, I have some 'ummm' people over the house, I don't think they're your kind of people. Let me show them out first."

Maybe he did, but I think Jesus said, "Relax Zacchaues. Chill. I know what your house looks like. I know what you have there and I know who you have there. It doesn't matter how messy it is, whatever you have is enough for

Me and I want to meet everyone who's at your house now."

And after Jesus got there, He declared, "Salvation has come to this house today, I have come to find and restore the lost."

In Revelations 3:20, Jesus says, *"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 has always wanted to be that friend with us who hangs out and eats with us, even though we many not think we deserve to be there. He's the one he wants to meet with every Saturday at Like Like Drive Inn or Zippy's.

Jesus is standing at the door of our lives. He knows we're in there. He's calling us by our names. He knows all about our doubts, our fears, our hurts and He still wants in. When no one else wants to, He wants to. He calls our name and wants to come in and eat with us and restore us. This is the character of God.

Won't you join me in inviting Jesus to come into your life? If you've done this before great, I think He would be pleased to hear you renewing your invitation to Him to becoming an even larger part of your life.

If this is your first time...yes!!! I'm going to be saying a prayer that basically says, "Yes, I have these doubts and hurts in my life and I want to give them to Jesus. Yes, I've messed up in the past, have made mistakes that I am now sorry for. Then we want to acknowledge and thank Jesus who took all the consequences of our mistakes, our sins, all of our hurts and put them upon Himself upon

the cross, sacrificing His life for ours. Finally, we want to respond to Jesus and say, "Please come into my life. I want You as Lord of my life, I want to sit with You and know You better."

Let's pray. Dear Jesus, thank You for sending for us to be here, for calling us. And You've done so even though you know exactly who and what we are. So we lay down all of our baggage, all our hurts. We are sorry for the mistakes we've committed. We turn away from our wrongs. Thank You for taking the consequences of our wrongs upon Yourself on the cross. Please come into our lives now and bring Your forgiveness and restoration.

While heads are stilled bowed and eyes closed, to help us to seal our invitation, I want to ask you to do one more thing. In the privacy of this moment, if today is the first time you asked Jesus into your life, would you just slip up your hand so that I can see it?

Now for those that took the opportunity to renew your invitation to the Lord, would you just slip up your hand?

Praise God! Hallelujah! Thank You for all those who responded. Heavenly Father, thank You again for calling us. Come now and fill us with your Holy Spirit!

In Jesus' name we ask, Amen.

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Sunday sermon texts are also available at fpchawaii.org. The audio version can be downloaded from iTunes. It can also be sent to you by e-mail. You may also request the free audio version by visiting: fpchkoolau@gmail.com