**Order of Service**

**Slide 1 from pack – Heart and cross**

**Welcome and call to worship**

**Song: (MG) I am new creation…**

**Song: (MG) I’m accepted, I’m forgiven…**

**Slide 1 from pack – Heart and cross**

**Prayer, brief introduction to today’s subject matter**

**Song: (MG) I have decided to follow Jesus…**

**Slide 1 from pack – Heart and cross**

**Lord’s prayer**

**Children’s talk**

* **Slide 2 from pack - “For God so Love the World – Valentine” acrostic**
* **Slide 3 from pack – Jonathan and Mephibosheth**
* **Slide 4 from pack - Chocolate hearts**

**Slide 1 from pack – Heart and cross**

**Pray, set context for the song.**

**Song: (MG) It’s all about you…**

**Notices**

**Offering**

**Children and young people leave**

**Slide 5 from pack – Heart and cross - Readings**

**Readings**

**Hymn: 472. And can it be**

**Slide 1 from pack – Heart and cross**

**Sermon**

**Slide 6 from the pack – St Valentine’s Day Massacre**

**Slide 7 from the pack – St Valentine’s Day Mascara**

**Slide 8 from the pack – St Valentine**

**Slide 9 from the pack – Round Tuit**

**Slide 10 from the pack - Tuit**

**Song (Organ): In Christ alone**

**Slide 12 from the pack – Matter of the heart**

**Intercession**

**Hymn: 432. Be Thou my vision**

**Slide 1 from pack – Heart and cross**

**Final prayer**

**Children Talk**:

**(Slide 2 from the pack)**

Good morning children. Do you know what special day it was yesterday? Here is a hint. (Hold up your valentine heart.) Saint Valentines day. Now Saint Valentine was a Christian bishop who lived a very long time ago. He was well known throughout his country for the great love that he had for people in need, he even cured a young girl of blindness and he just couldn’t stop telling people about Jesus and his love for us.

Today, we’ll be thinking about someone else who helped a friend’s son who was in need, because he loved his friend and he’d made him a promise.

We’ve been hearing about David for a few weeks. After he became King of Israel he remembered that he’d promised his friend Jonathan that he would always look after his family. Now David was King, so he could have thought that he was too busy to keep his promise now, but instead he asked around and found out that Jonathan’s son was still alive, so he sent for him. Now, his name was Mephibosheth and sadly he couldn’t walk because he’s injured his feet when he was only 5.

**(Slide 3 from the pack)**

When they met, David gave Mephibosheth all the lands that his Grandfather King Saul owned and that was a lot of land. So he gave him lots of servants to look after the land as well. Then he said that from then on, Mephibosheth would eat with David and his family.

Now, on Valentine’s Day, people tend to think about romance, and I’m only guessing here, but young lads don’t really rate that much do they, so remember this. The name Valentine comes from the word Valens, which is the same word we get Valour from. It means courage, power and strength.

It’s not always easy to do the right thing. Sometimes, you’ve got other things to do, or other friends to meet. Loving people and doing the right thing is often very hard, but the sort of Love that Jesus gives us is a strong love and helps us to be able to do that.

Now, around the church are hidden some hearts, just like these. Your challenge is to try and find them and if you do, then you’ll get one of these.

**(Slide 4 from the pack)**

A chocolate heart. Interested? Thought you might be. Off you go.

**Children’s Prayer**: Heavenly Father. We thank you that you love us so much. We thank you that people like St Valentine and David, showed love to people, even when it was difficult. Please be with us and give us the courage we need to help and love others. Amen!

**Sermon 15th February 2015: 2 Samuel 9**

Yesterday was St Valentine’s Day. Can anyone tell me the connection between February 14th and Chicago Gangsters? [[1]](#footnote-1)

How about a connection between February 14th and eye make-up? [[2]](#footnote-2)

Finally, February 14th and avoiding going to war?[[3]](#footnote-3)

War of course was something that David was very familiar with. Indeed, with campaigning and doing what Generals and Kings do, David’s promise to Jonathan, “to never cut off his kindness from Jonathan’s family”, got a lower priority than it might otherwise have got.

Which brings us to this morning’s reading in 2 Samuel 9. As we go through this, I’d like to bring out 4 points under the following headings:

* Peculiar People
* Patient People
* Promised People
* Propagating People

The reading begins with a break in David’s campaigns. At the end of the previous chapter[[4]](#footnote-4) we are introduced to David’s advisors, so presumably the opening question of Chapter 9 was directed to them.

“Is there anyone left of the house of Saul to whom I can show kindness for Jonathan’s sake?” This is the first of three times that the phrase “hesed” is used in this chapter. “Hesed” means “loyalty”, it is David’s duty of promise towards Jonathan.

Now last week we considered God’s unconditional promise to David. This week we reflect upon the promise between David and Jonathon[[5]](#footnote-5), though this wasn’t as freely given, nor was unconditional. In fact, in each of the three times the promise is referred to, it is Jonathan saying to David “Promise me that you will…” Nevertheless, David took this promise upon himself as a covenant between them.

“Is there anyone left of the House of Saul?”

In preparing for this morning, I found commentary after commentary mentioning that it was the norm that when a new king arose, he would have been diligent in clearing out any members of the previous dynasty. So obviously, the commentaries suggested, it would have been normal for David to do that. But wait a minute. David’s predecessor was Saul, the first King of Israel. Where then was the precedent that David would have been tempted to follow? The answer is of course, from the countries around Israel, not Israel itself, but its neighbours. Of course, many of Saul’s descendants had been killed during the battles with David and at one point, David handed over seven of Saul’s male descendants to the Gibeonites, [[6]](#footnote-6) but this was in response to Saul having broken a covenant agreement with the Gibeonites.

But now David had time to stop and think about his promise and he therefore had to decide between whether to follow what was normal by society standards, or to stand by his hesed, his covenanted duty to Jonathan, setting a new standard for God’s chosen people. David dared to be different.

This brings us to my first point: “Peculiar People”. 1 Peter 2:9 in the King James Version refers to us as a “Peculiar people”. This doesn’t mean strange, but rather that we are “peculiar to God”, belonging to him. Through the New Testament in particular, we are shown a new way of thinking, God’s way, not the way that society offers. St Valentine and many other saints were martyred because they dared to be different. We can look back at our own histories and see reforms that came through Christians making a righteous stand against the pressures of society. In our daily routine we are often confronted with situations that need us to stand and be counted as Christian, to dare to be different, to offer an alternative life style to that offered by society. We claim to be God’s people. Is it any surprise that our beliefs and behaviours will challenge those of an increasingly irreligious and self-centred society?

Back to the reading.

David has asked his advisers “Is there anyone left of Saul’s House?” They bring to him someone who had previously been a servant in Saul’s household, Ziba. He tells David that there is still a son of Jonathan, crippled in both feet. The likely reason that this descendant is not generally known is that he was taken into hiding when Saul and Jonathan were killed.[[7]](#footnote-7) Remember that the normal behaviour during a takeover was for all descendants to be killed, so when the news of Saul’s and Jonathan’s death reached their household, the nurse for Jonathan’s son, Mephibosheth, panicked and took him into hiding. It was during this flight that he fell and injured both feet, leaving him crippled. That was when Mephibosheth was five years old. It’s now 15 to 20 years later. He’s even got a son, Mica.

15 to 20 years. This was a promise made with Jonathan, according to 1 Samuel 20:17, because “he loved him as he loved himself”. Without wishing to sound rude, that’s a long time to be distracted isn’t it?

Back in the seventies, a simple little diagram used to get passed on to people who were slow in meeting their commitments. It was a black circle. This was a “Tuit” and it was of course, round. They are more elaborate these days of course. Here’s one.

Slide 9. Round tuit.

They even come highly decorated.

Slide 10. Tuit.

The line that was taken was that the person was obviously distracted and would meet his commitments when he got a round to it, so he was given a “round tuit” and told that now he no excuse for not getting on with things.

Perhaps David needed a Round Tuit? Anyway, now 15 years on, he remembered and decided to meet his hesed to Jonathan.

To my second point: Patient People.

We are encouraged to pray for others, for healing, for help, for comfort. We are told that God wants us to pray to him, He wants us to bring petitions for others. Yet I would guess that I’m not alone in saying that there are times when answers do not come quickly. There’s a comforting verse in 2 Peter 3. Speaking about the end days, peter writes “With the Lord a day is like a thousand years and a thousand years are like a day. The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness.”

You know, I have two daughters, both brought up in the Church, both rejected it during their elder teen years and ae now in their thirties. Almost every night I pray for their salvation, for their partner’s salvation and for the salvation of my young grandson. I’m still having to pray. I know that it’s likely that I may die before I see this pray answered, but I keep praying, just like the parable of the persistent widow[[8]](#footnote-8), because God has promised to hear my prayer, but his timing is his business.

God calls us to pray for others. Maybe we have said to someone, “I’ll pray for you”. We need to be persistent and patient. Remember your promise, your hesed, and keep bringing that person before God. Do you need a Round Tuit as a reminder to keep praying? There’s a saying:

(Slide 11: People with good intentions make promises, people with good character keep them.)

So, Mephibosheth was in hiding. His location a closely guarded secret for fifteen years and now Ziba has let the cat out of the bag and told David and David has Mephibosheth brought to him. At this point, there’s no explanation to his advisors, to Ziba or anyone.

What must Mephibosheth have thought when the Royal Guard appear at the door of his hideaway and say, “David wants to see you”? Remember, the last he knew was that as a five year old he was quickly taken away into hiding. No doubt his nurse would have emphasised the importance of his staying hidden, off of David’s radar. Again, he would be thinking in terms of the society norm being to have him killed, doomed by his own bloodline to Saul. Now he’s found, summoned to the King and having to face his longstanding fears.

When he’s brought before David, he bows down “to pay him honour”. David’s response is “Don’t be afraid”. He goes on to tell him that he will show Mephibosheth kindness for the sake of his father Jonathan. He goes further and tells him that he’s going to restore to him the land that belonged to Saul, his Grandfather. He goes even further and says that he will now always eat at David’s own table!

This is so far away from what Mephibosheth expected, he can’t bring himself to believe it. There must be a trick, a condition. “Why would you do that for me, a Dead Dog?”

In answer, David calls Ziba and goes further again in meeting his hesed. He tells Ziba all that he’s doing for Mephibosheth and then tells Ziba that he, his 15 sons and 20 servants will now be servants to Mephibosheth and farm his land, to ensure that he is financially provided for.

David may have waited 15 years, the society may have expected him to deal harshly with this descendant of Saul, but David went far and beyond what would be expected of him, providing him lands, servants, a place at his table alongside his sons and of course, a release of the fear that had held Mephibosheth for fifteen years.

As for Mephibosheth’s descendants who might also be thankful for David’s loyalty. Jonathan was Mica’s Grandfather. There were 11 generations including Mephibosheth. That’s nine “Greats” and one Grandfather as far as was listed in Chronicles. They may have gone on from there, because that line had 6 sons at the end of it. [[9]](#footnote-9)

Mephibosheth was a recipient of blessing that came from the promise between David and Jonathan, albeit a bit on the late side. Of course, during that time, Mephibosheth had no idea that their promise was for him, he just lived in hiding, fearing this king who could wipe him out if he discovered him.

As we heard last week, God’s promise to David was that his house and his kingdom shall endure for ever, his throne shall be established for ever. Of course, that also took quite a time to get rolling. At times, like during their exile to Babylon, it must have felt to the nation of Israel that God had forgotten his promise to David, or maybe just that he was taking a long-time fulfilling it. But now, with the wisdom of hindsight we can see how the fulfilment of that promise began to work out.

And we have interest in that promise, because that Kingdom carries on through Jesus and sweeps us into it. The promises are there for us now. Jesus said that whosoever believes in him shall have everlasting life. He promised the Comforter, the Holy Spirit to be with us and dwell in us. We are promised that like Mephibosheth we will eat at his table, that we are children of God who can call him Father. We’re promised that he will come again. Some of those things we have experienced and know to be true. Some, like the second coming, we have no idea of when that will be, but the promise is there.

Sometimes it’s hard to remember that isn’t it? When times are hard, when the pressure is on, it’s difficult to think of ourselves as a “Promised People”, but we are. Mephibosheth was in hiding for 15 years. When the guards finally knocked at his door, his circumstances may not have felt like he was a child of promise, but as things unfolded, so he realised he was. Just because in those dark moments when we don’t feel like a child of promise, it doesn’t mean we aren’t. In fact, many will tell you that it is often in the darkest hour, when you search for God, it is then that His presence feels strongest. But I will agree, that it’s hard to feel like a child of promise at those times, when hope dims.

Those who know me well will tell you that I have a bit of a thing about the word “Hope”. Paul writes a lot about our “hope” being on Christ and on his promises. Yet when those words will originally written down and subsequently translated into English, the word “hope” was much stronger that it is now.

Today, “Hope” is a bit wishy washy, more like “Wish”. I’m a supporter of Bristol Rugby. I HOPE that they will be promoted this season. I don’t “expect” that though. Yet when Paul writes of hope, it’s more like “I fully expect”, a solid, grounded belief and expectancy. I’m a child of God. I EXPECT to go to Heaven, because Jesus promised. I don’t just hope that, I believe it to be true.

When we have a promise from God, we don’t hope it will be fulfilled, it’s a cast iron certainty. We are a Promised People.

The same people who know me will also tell you that I often look at other languages to get a better feel for a word. For “Hope” for example, in French it’s Espérer, in Italian it’s Sperare, where we get our word “Aspire” from. For “Expect”, in French and Italian, it’s Attendre and Aspetare, both words also meaning “Wait”. Interesting, we can “expect” God’s promises to be fulfilled, but we therefore have to “wait”.

Finally, a “Propagating People”.

Mephibosheth was a Child of Promise, but he didn’t know that. 15 years of fearful hiding, expecting that he would be killed if that awful King David ever discovered where he was. If David had not got a Round Tuit and followed up on his promise to Jonathan, Mephibosheth would never have been blessed.

Can I ask you, do you know any Mephibosheth’s? Any friends or family who are Promised People, but not living within the blessings of those promises? People yet to start a relationship with the Prince of Peace? Or maybe they are just someone who you said you would show kindness to? You know, the people you say “If there’s anything you need or anything, just ask”, but they never do, do they, because, well they just don’t.

Let’s think about David as a model for our behaviour. Let’s pray fervently for our friends and family who need to know Jesus as their saviour. Let’s be ready “season or out of season” to tell them what the Lord can do. Pray for the right words and the right opportunities. Pray for the Holy Spirit to ready the ground, then “Expect and wait”.

You could even tell them about our Christianity Explored Course. It is a great opportunity to invite people to come for an honest discussion about faith - which isn't threatening or patronising , preachy or simplistic - all the common criticisms and hang-ups people have about coming to such events or plucking up the courage to invite their friends.

And for those others who we sort-of offered help to and they haven’t asked, let’s be brave and do something positive for them.

We are a peculiar people who belong to God’s Kingdom and his Kingdom has different standards, so we must dare to different. We are a Promised People, even in those hours of darkness, when we need to be a patient people, waiting, but with expectation, for God to fulfil his promises to us. And we should be a Propagating People who look to the needs of our own Mephibosheths, bringing them to share with us in God’s Kingdom.

Let us bring our Mephibosheth’s before the King… and who knows, maybe even inviting them along to Christianity Explored?

1. Valentine’s Day Massacre, 1929, involving the infamous Al Capone [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Valentine’s Day Mascara (Sorry!) [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. It is said that St Valentine was arrested and subsequently martyred because he married Christians, including where the husband to be was a Roman soldier and being married meant that the soldier didn’t have to go to war. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. 2 Samuel 8:15-18 [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. 1 Samuel 20:15, 17, 42 [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. 2 Samuel 21 [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. 2 Samuel 4:4 [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. Luke 18 [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. 1 Chronicles 8:34-38 [↑](#footnote-ref-9)