

**Christ Presbyterian Church  
Edina, Minnesota  
November 17 &18, 2012  
Lee Hanssen  
The Gen 3 Project: Generations  
Matthew 1:1-6; 2 Samuel 9:1-13**

Good morning, everybody. My name is Lee Hanssen, and I serve here at CPC as Director of Student Ministries and Associate Pastor of The Table. I'm also recently a new member, and that's fun and exciting. You know what? I love mornings like this. I absolutely love mornings like this where there is a lot going on and there is a lot of movement in the service. We get to see videos like this and hear that we as a community packed 1.7 million meals together for Feed My Starving Children. I love that there are 300 kids that come here on Sunday mornings to hear about Christ. That we sent 800 students on trips throughout the summer so they might grow in their relationships with Christ and learn how to make a difference for His Kingdom.

I get excited about that because when I think about you, and when I think about this community, then I think about us. You know, about 2½ years ago I was new to this community. People would ask me, "What's it like there?" One of the things I always say first is that I believe CPC is a very generous community. I love this series we are in, that we are going to talk about for a couple of weeks, because I think it is two things. One, I think it's a commendation of you. I think it is a compliment because *this happens here*. It takes a lot of man power, a lot of hours, a lot of resources to do the things that I just talked about. But I also think it is an encouragement that we can ask ourselves what is next for us because I don't want us to be complacent. I don't want us to think that we've done well enough. I always want us to be stepping out in faith and so I get excited that we are going to take a couple of weeks and talk about this Gen 3 Project. How do we *Generate Generosity across the Generations* and make an impact for Christ in this place?

A few years ago I was in Fort Collins, Colorado where I was taking seminary classes for a summer. Colorado is an amazing place. I don't know if you've spent time there, but the mountains are unreal, and the air is so clean and so crisp and so fresh. But after a long week of studying systematic theology and Old Testament survey, it is nice to get out of the classroom and have some fun, and we would do all sorts of fun stuff. We climbed mountains. We went on hiking trips. We went whitewater rafting on a regular basis. Well, one Saturday some friends of mine and I did what all good, seminary-attending missionaries do on a Saturday. We toured a beer brewing company. Now, I had never been to a brewery before, but Fort Collins is the home of two major breweries. One is Budweiser and the other is the Fat Tire Brewery, and I went on a tour with some friends.

Actually, it is really an interesting process to learn how beer comes to be and see all sorts of crazy machinery. This one company, in particular, had a unique story. It started with some guys in a garage. They bought this home-brewing kit, and it really became a thing for them, and they started this great company. I'm walking on this tour, listening to this guy, and I can see how excited he is. I can see the passion that he really has for beer. I'll never forget at the end of the

tour. We are sitting around this bar, it's the time when everyone can sample the beer, and I'm listening to this guy talk. I'll never forget what he said. He looked at me and said, "I love that I get to spend my days doing what I'm passionate about, making beer." I had a response a little bit like, "Huh-huh, awwwwww." Like, "Really, this is what you're passionate about?" I walked away a little, actually, kind of sad. I thought how tragic that when you leave this world, when you leave this place, you will be remembered for making beer and getting it into the hands of other people. I'm not against beer. I don't mind a good beer. That's not what I'm saying. What I'm saying is that it was sad for me that this is what this man was most passionate about, that this was the legacy that this man would leave.

Now if you've been around CPC for any amount of time, you'll recognize the face on the screen. This woman's name is Lee Kerr. Lee has been an unpaid, volunteer receptionist for us here at CPC for 14 years. Lee is committed to making our reception area as welcoming and as warm as she possibly can for all who come. Lee ministers to kids who come in on Wednesdays. They look forward to seeing Grandma Lee and eating her treats. She sets aside special treats for our mailman. On Monday mornings Lee hand types, on a typewriter mind you, your prayer requests, and she faithfully prays over each and every single one of them. Lee writes a devotional that is sent out to hundreds of people. When Lee leaves this place, she will have passed on a legacy of faithfulness, service, grace, and steadfastness across a multitude of generations.

And, CPC, here is the deal. We will all be remembered for something. Every single person in this room will, in fact, leave some sort of a legacy, so the question for you and for me is, what will that legacy be? You've maybe heard me talk about my nephews. I've got four of them, and they are four years old. If you've been around kids, you know we get excited about their first words, and they are normally words like *mama* and *dada*, right? My first word was *vacuum*. I used to love to ride around on the front of that thing. But shortly after our first word, when we start interacting with other people and people come into our space and start rubbing elbows with our toys or our clothes, we learn another word. Can anyone guess what that is? It's *mine*! My toys, my clothes, my stuff. It's mine. We laugh about it, but at age four I don't think that word was laughed at and I see that many people are marked by this word throughout their lives. I see this word written on people's wallets. I see this word written on people's to-do lists. I see this word written on people's daily planners. I would argue that if we want to be a generous people, if we want to invest in the next generations, then a shift has to happen. We have to shift our mentality from "What can I get from the world and what can the world give me?" to "What can I possibly give away to the world?"

In this series we had talked about staying in the Gospels because we wanted to look at Jesus' life. I kind of stayed in the Gospels, but I cheated a little bit. I want to start in Matthew, chapter 1. It might be a little surprising that I am going to start with a long list of names, but as I was reading this long, mundane list of names wondering, why does this list of people find its place in the very beginning of the New Testament, why is it important that we see this long list of names, some that I can pronounce and some that I can't, what is the significance? A few things strike me about Jesus' lineage. First, I see the Gospel of grace in Jesus' heritage. I see the long list of these people. Some you know their stories. They were, indeed, great men and women of faith, and they were also all men and women who had had great failures at one point in their lives. I can relate to these people. They are normal people to me.

The second thing I'm reminded of as I look at this list is that we don't really get to choose our heritage, do we? We don't get to choose our families. We are stuck with our brothers and

sisters, for better or worse, and stuck with our parents and our relatives. We don't get to make a choice about what family we are born into, but what we *do* get to choose is what legacy we are going to leave behind. In the midst of this long line of great successes and great failures, we stumble across the name of King David. I want to talk about the story of this man, not necessarily as a role model for how we should make all of our decisions or how we should live our lives on a day-to-day basis, but instead I want to look at the story of this man that resonates with me because of a time in his life when he got it right.

The story is in 2<sup>nd</sup> Samuel, chapter 9. If you want to open up your Bibles and follow with me that's fine, if not, it's on the screen. Before I start the story, there are a few names in here that you may not know. The key names in this story are David, Jonathan, and Saul. David is the new King of Israel. Saul is the past King, and Saul had a son named Jonathan. David served Saul and Jonathan faithfully for years and became best friends with Jonathan. They shared lots of memories and loved each other. The story starts in 2<sup>nd</sup> Samuel 9:1-3.

9 One day David asked, "Is anyone in Saul's family still alive—anyone to whom I can show kindness for Jonathan's sake?" <sup>2</sup> He summoned a man named Ziba, who had been one of Saul's servants. "Are you Ziba?" the king asked.

"Yes sir, I am," Ziba replied.

<sup>3</sup> The king then asked him, "Is anyone still alive from Saul's family? If so, I want to show God's kindness to them."

Ziba replied, "Yes, one of Jonathan's sons is still alive. He is crippled in both feet."

So the story of David and Mephibosheth begins with David remembering the covenant that he had made with his deceased friend, Jonathan. Because of the love that Jonathan had demonstrated to him, he promised both Jonathan and the Lord that he would look after any of Jonathan's descendants if something were to happen to Jonathan. That is why he inquired if anyone was left. The story picks up in verse 5.

<sup>5</sup> So David sent for him and brought him from Makir's home. <sup>6</sup> His name was Mephibosheth; he was Jonathan's son and Saul's grandson. When he came to David, he bowed low to the ground in deep respect. David said, "Greetings, Mephibosheth."

Mephibosheth replied, "I am your servant."

<sup>7</sup> "Don't be afraid!" David said. "I intend to show kindness to you because of my promise to your father, Jonathan. I will give you all the property that once belonged to your grandfather Saul, and you will eat here with me at the king's table!"

<sup>8</sup> Mephibosheth bowed respectfully and exclaimed, "Who is your servant, that you should show such kindness to a dead dog like me?"

I noticed a couple of interesting things as I read this story over and over and over this week. First, I noticed that the story makes it clear that David is the King. It says that some nine times in

chapter 9 in these short 13 verses. This reminds us that David has the power and the authority, the right to do as he pleases, because he is, in fact, the King over all of Israel.

The second thing the story goes out of its way to show us is that Mephibosheth is crippled in both of his feet. Three times it says this. At the end of the story, it reminds us that, by the way, “he was crippled in both feet.” It really doesn’t want us to forget that fact. It wasn’t very acceptable to be crippled. You certainly would not traditionally find a crippled man at a king’s table with all of the other esteemed guests who would be there.

The last thing we need to know about this passage is historical context. The reality of that time period is that when a new king would take the throne, it was customary to expect that anyone who had served the previous king would have been wiped out. It would have been normal for David to have wiped out any descendants of Saul who might have posed any sort of threat to his kingdom. When I think about these things, I think about how different this story could have been, how different this story could have actually read, but David chose in this moment to give to the next generation in a way that I really believe has a word for us.

The first thing that I see in this story of David is this idea of **intentionality**. If we want to be about the next generations and live our lives in a way that is going to leave a ripple effect, I believe we have to stop and be intentional. Right before chapter 9, it talks about this conquest that David was on. The author of 2<sup>nd</sup> Samuel lets us know that God’s favor had been with David everywhere he went. If you’ve ever read the psalms, you know that David wrote many of the psalms, and by deductive reasoning, we have to believe that after this great successful voyage that David was on, that he stopped and took some time to get away with God. Then he processed, and I can see him praising God and asking, “God, you’ve given me this position. You’ve given me this authority. You’ve given me so many resources, how can I honor You with all that I have and all that You have given me?” David stopped and took the time to ask those questions, and he made a plan. I can see him sitting there thinking, “Okay, I remember this covenant I made, God. I remember the promise I made to You. I’m going to see if there is anyone left, and I’m going to bring them in, and I’m going to give them back everything, everything that is theirs. I’m going to give it right back to them.” David stopped, and he was intentional. He reflected and processed and invited God into that process and came up with a plan.

Going back to verse 3 in the story, David says he wants “to show God’s kindness,” and so, yes, it was a promise that he made to Jonathan, but really, it was a promise he made to God. When we put ourselves in an intentional place to stop and remember the promises of God, God does something inside of us. And when we want to share and give those promises of God away, that is when we see change, that is when we see lives affected, and that is when we see movement for the Kingdom. So it is really God’s promise and God’s promises that change people. As followers of Jesus, at some level and in some way, we have all made promises to God, that we would be the type of people that He wants us to be, that we would go where He wants us to go and live how He wants us to live. Generous hearts are given to us by this good God when we stop to take time to let God in and look for opportunities to give. That starts with being intentional.

The second thing I want us to notice is that after David stopped to process and took the time to be intentional, David actually took **action**. That is where I so often fall short. I can’t tell you how many meetings I have been in where we had this great strategic plan. We knew our current

reality. We planned out great vision, mission, and values. We had action steps, but then went out and spent the next five to six hours or days with little thought of what we had put together in that meeting. Often we start out with these grand ideas, but we rarely spend our days consistent with what we want our legacy to be. It's like we skip that middle part without even realizing it.

You know, when I look out at this congregation, and there are so many of you that I don't know, I love the stories that I've heard, and I've seen how you are all gifted and all wired so uniquely. God has blessed you with amazing talents and convictions and resources, but it's all kind of wasted unless we learn how to spend those things that God has given us lavishly on others. It's all wasted if we keep it to ourselves. It's less about the big picture and more about how can I spend myself lavishly *today*? I see that in this story because it would have been enough for David to simply look after Mephibosheth because that was what he had promised. But he didn't want to simply do the minimum requirement. He gave Mephibosheth back all of his land, his livestock, he gave him servants, he invited his family. He invited this man into his home. David went above and beyond, and lavishly bestowed what he had been given from God. I believe this is a message for us, because David's gifts of protection and provision and position that he gave were far more than he was ever expected to fulfill.

I believe that how we spend our days is how we spend our lives. You might have heard it said, "Show me your checkbook and your daily planner, and I'll show you what is important to you." I'm with you in that I have these great dreams and these big plans, but so often they fall short because of my day-to-day life. I know that it's hard. A friend of mine and I were out at dinner the other night talking about just how hard this is, because sometimes living to make a difference for the generations isn't easy. There seem to be so many road blocks, and sometimes it feels like there are a lot more hard days than good days, and way more days that feel ordinary than days that feel extraordinary.

Will Walker wrote a book called *The Kingdom of Couches*, and he says this. He says, "We are unpredictable people, aren't we?" He says, "My best energy often runs out long before my intentions are realized. My purest moments are undermined by bad habits and self interest." I think we often get caught up in having big, fancy dreams and, hear me, I want you to have big dreams. I want you to dream big and dream about what you can do and what God can do. I want you to have those dreams, but David had a dream that he wanted to give to one, and I believe that is where we can start.

Many of you know that on Wednesday nights around this community, the high school ministries meet in people's homes, some are your homes, in fact. There are hundreds of students who come to hear about Jesus and with that we have tons and tons of college students and young adults who want to come to give their time to these younger students. I was at one of these groups the other night, talking with the leader, Taylor Eide. Taylor just graduated last May and decided that he wanted to sign up to give every Wednesday for the next four years, hours upon hours, to lead a group of boys. It just so happens that of the group of boys we gave Taylor, only one of them has been showing up for the past two months. It also just so happens that the boy who comes to this small group has special needs. I can't imagine what that's like, to grow up maybe not feeling normal or being treated normal or having the same relationships as others. But as I'm listening to Taylor tell me this story about how he has continued to faithfully show up and have conversations with this boy, and laugh and share stories with this boy, and tell him about Jesus, Taylor is making a difference in one person's life. Taylor, like David, is lavishly giving of his time, his talents, and his resources so that this boy might know and experience the

kindness and love of Jesus Christ. This boy's life will be different and this boy will know Jesus more because of Taylor's investment.

The story of David and Mephibosheth ends by letting us know that Mephibosheth had a son. I have to wonder how the life of this son of Mephibosheth was different because of the actions of God's kindness shown through King David. I have to wonder how Mephibosheth's sons and daughters and their sons and daughters lives were different because David chose to lavish God's love and God's kindness on one. That's why I love this story, because in this story we see God's heart and His desire for us to give lavishly, the same way He delights in giving to us.

Mephibosheth experienced the grace of God and that always changes people. King David was faithful with the small things and it made a big difference. If we want to leave the generations with a legacy of grace, faithfulness, steadfastness, and a legacy of Jesus, I want to offer a few simple starting points and reminders.

- I think it starts with being faithful. It doesn't need to be a big, grand, kingly gesture. I believe that consistency over time takes change, consistency over time equals change. And so where do we start? I think we have to start with being intentional so that we can stop to reflect and process and invite God into that. Ask Him, say, "God, what have you burdened my heart with? What am I good at? What do I love to give away? What do I have to give away and how can I do that?"
- Then I think the second thing is that we could start by being intentional with one person or one place. If you are already involved and you are already giving yourself, that's amazing. Then I encourage you to find ways you can give even more and partner with God to take your leadership to the next level. But if you haven't started, find someone to mentor. Find a small group to lead. Find a non-profit or a ministry area where you can be a consistent, faithful presence. It's okay to start with one because one causes a ripple effect that can have the potential to echo into eternity. Let's shift from this mine-mine-mine mentality and stop asking what the world can do for me and start asking what we can do for the world. Pray with me.

God, thank You that You are the giver of so many good gifts, that You have bestowed upon us a multitude of treasures. Thank You that we can partner with You to give those away, to bring them all back and lay them down at Your feet that the world would know who You are, Jesus, and that the following generations would hear Your Name, and the generations after that, and the generations after that. Amen.

*The nature of oral presentations makes them less precise than written materials; any lack of attribution is unintentional, and we wish to credit all those who have contributed to this sermon. Soli Deo Gloria.*