

There are few more important sources of thanksgiving (and alas, few more neglected in our day) than giving thanks to God for the leaders Christ gives to His church. As we see God raise up under-shepherds, may our faith be strengthened to believe that He will provide us with the leaders we need to be built up into a holy people of God. During this Thanksgiving season, please take some time to concentrate on prayer for these leaders: Our church plans for an OPC intern next spring, and our regional church (presbytery) has several pulpit vacancies to fill, along with a long-term prayer need for a regional home missionary who could direct our church planting efforts in New England.

Monday: Read Exodus 18:1-5**Called to the Place of Worship**

We begin with a glance back into the Old Testament, to the place where God calls Moses' family, led by his father-in-law Jethro, to come to Him at the "Mountain of God" (Exodus 18:5). Though Jethro himself was a priest of Midian (Exodus 2:16), he must submit to the spiritual leadership of God's prophet, Moses, and offer worship at the place which God appoints. In other words, Jethro recognizes that it is to "the mountain of God" that he must go to offer worship. Just as the LORD commanded Moses to come to that mountain after the deliverance from Egypt (Exodus 3:12), so Jethro must obey the same command and come to Mt. Sinai.

Leadership Lesson # 1: Let us learn here that *evangelism and church leadership go hand-in-hand*. It is in the context of calling families like Moses' family back into renewed communion with the people of God and back to a more solid profession of faith in the God of Moses that Jethro's friendship and guidance of Moses must be understood. The reason Jethro can help Moses lead the people of God in Exodus 18:13-27 is because he first unites himself to the true worship of the Lord at the place God chooses to reveal Himself – at the mountain of God!

Meditate and Pray: Oh for the LORD to pour out in our day a hunger for true worship on the part of seekers like Jethro. Let us reaffirm our longing for that same work of God's Spirit to come true in our day that took place in Jethro's. May the prophecy of Zechariah be true in our day so that the nations flock to the church as the body of Christ, the true Israel of God:

And many peoples and powerful nations will come to Jerusalem to seek the LORD Almighty and to entreat him. This is what the LORD Almighty says: "In those days ten people from all languages and nations will take firm hold of one Jew by the hem of his robe and say, 'Let us go with you, because we have heard that God is with you.'" Zechariah 8:22-23

Tuesday: Read Exodus 2:15-22; 3:1 and 18:5-11**We Achieve by His Grace Alone**

Jethro, the priest of Midian, hungered for real fellowship with God and blessed Moses in reuniting him with his family (Exodus 18:5). Moses calls him "Reuel," meaning "friend of El" (Ex. 2:18). The name "Reuel" here means that he was a priest of the God, "El." Was this the ancient Semitic God "El"? Did Jethro at first serve a pagan deity? Did Moses' sister and brother later object to Moses' wife in part because of this questionable religious background? (See Numbers 12:1 -- If indeed Moses' wife Zipporah was the same person as the "Cushite" wife referred to in Numbers 12 -- perhaps called a "Cushite" because the nomadic Midianites may have moved back and forth to Cush in Africa. Scholars are not sure about this point.) What is clear is that we see

evidence of true faith as Jethro delights in all that the LORD did to save His people. He confesses in Exodus 18:11: “Now I know that the LORD is greater than all other gods, for He did this to those who had treated Israel arrogantly” (Exodus 18:11).

Leadership Lesson # 2: That’s the spirit, Jethro! It doesn’t matter where you start your life as the “Priest of El.” God brought you to Himself and restored the wasted years of darkness and ignorance. Forgetting what lies behind in our sinful pasts and living in the present blessing of saving grace – this is what we are to do by faith! May God grant us to live this way.

In the Kingdom of God and of Christ the standpoint is that of grace, and of grace alone; and it cuts across all other regulations. It is His grace that matters – ‘by the grace of God I am what I am’ (1 Corinthians 15:10). So stop looking at what you have not done and the years you have missed and realize that in His Kingdom it is His grace alone that matters.

Martyn Lloyd Jones, *Spiritual Depression*

Meditate and Pray: Lord, please raise up fresh converts like Jethro, who can step right into leadership in your Church, once they have matured and been prepared, as you prepared Jethro. Let us never be jealous or resentful of new members who see the truth more brightly than we do. We always need the fresh zeal and new gifts of the Spirit which new leadership can bring into your Church, and we ask for it in Jesus’ Name, Amen.

Wednesday: Read Exodus 4:18, 24-26 and 18:5-11

For the Sake of the Little Ones

In order to fully appreciate the joy of salvation which Jethro shares with Moses (Exodus 18:9-11), we must appreciate the darkness from which God delivered Jethro and his whole family. The possibilities for impure religion in Jethro’s family are sobering. Calvin describes the kind of worship which may have occurred: “After duly weighing all these points, nothing occurs to me as more probable, than that under the priesthood of Jethro the true God was worshipped, according as tradition had revealed Him, but not purely; because religion was at that time everywhere contaminated by diverse superstitions.”

What do you think? It must also be said that we don’t have to go far to see evidence of such impurity. In Exodus 4:24-26, Moses’ wife takes action to save Moses’ life by quickly circumcising her son. Hundreds of years earlier, God had told Abraham that the uncircumcised covenant child “must be cut off” from the people of God. So, praise God for Zipporah’s quick response to Moses’ deadly encounter with God – saving both father and son: especially Moses, who was under the wrath of God for failing to observe this fundamental outward sign of the faith of Abraham.

Meditate and Pray: How sore our sins are! How we can hurt others by our anger, selfishness and prejudice! Lord, deliver our families from long standing conflicts and resentments. We all deserve to die at your hands. But what of the little ones? For the sake of the next generation of covenant children, please bless our homes and marriages with more peace and grace than we deserve or imagine to be possible! In the Name of our Elder Brother Jesus, Amen.

Thursday: Read Exodus 18:5-12**The Joy of Restoration**

Given the dark trouble in Moses' own home, let us thank God for the reunion between Moses and his family. No wonder Moses is moved to such an outpouring of joy and gratitude to the LORD. The LORD had delivered him and his family from many snares and trials and reunited them! Moreover, Jethro's joy is proof that God has transformed Moses' family as well. Surely father Jethro and daughter Zipporah, Moses' wife, would join in confessing their faith in Moses' God! What a restoration. Use this poem as your prayer for God's restoring grace in your life – even until the very end when you go to meet the LORD:

*Will you forgive that sin by which I have won others to sin, and made my sin their door?
Will you forgive that sin which I did shun a year or two, but wallow'd in, a score?
When you have done, you have not done, **For I have more.***

*I have a sin of fear, that when I have spun my last thread, I shall perish on the shore;
But swear by yourself, that at my death your Son shall shine as he shines now, and heretofore;
And, having done that, you have done; **I fear no more.***

John Donne, *A Hymn to God the Father*, 1631

Fri/Sat/Sun: Read Exodus 18:13-27**Sound Advice and a New Pattern**

Well, Pastor Carl, that's very nice to study this ancient fellowship in the family of Moses, since God had to straighten out many problems in Moses' family *before* Moses' leadership could be effective over the Hebrews. But what does that have to do with the promised subject of these Bible notes, (namely), the importance of church leadership?

First, we keep in mind one rule with spiritual leadership: if a man cannot manage the leadership of his own family, then he ought not to seek to care for the church of God. Leadership over the family of God means proper management of one's own family (1 Timothy 3:4-5).

Second, Jethro's advice is inspired by God. He suggests to Moses the system of godly judgment and the appeal process which lies at the heart of all true biblical church leadership. Let me show you what I mean.

Note that, in Exodus 18, there was set in place a system of judicial review and control, from lower courts to higher. In Jethro's words, if the elders at the lowest level of the clan, who are to "judge God's people at all times" (Exodus 18:22), have a case that is of too great a moment for them to judge themselves, they are to bring it to Moses. And so, Moses set this plan into action; he organized the people under the leadership of elders over "tens, fifties and hundreds."

To be sure, today we have no Moses as our unique prophet on the top of our leadership chain of authority in our church. But we have the Lord Jesus as our "greater than Moses," and it is Christ Himself who has appointed all offices in the church.

And he gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds and teachers, to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ, so that we may no longer be children, tossed to and fro by the waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by human cunning, by craftiness in deceitful schemes.

Rather, speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ, from whom the whole body, joined and held together by every joint with which it is equipped, when each part is working properly, makes the body grow so that it builds itself up in love.

Ephesians 4:11-16

Meditate and Pray: Lord Jesus, look down on each of our homes and the domestic situations in our church family. As the One who walks in the midst of your church on earth, use your discernment to attend to the most critical crises which threaten our little ones. Judge us in your grace, but oh, still judge us. Do not allow the sins of the fathers and mothers to cause your little to “starve on every corner.” We lift up our hands, asking you to spare us from the sins which would consume us “to the third and fourth generation.” Amen! Send us godly leaders to be your hands and feet among us!

Arise, cry out in the night, as the watches of the night begin; pour out your heart like water in the presence of the Lord. Lift up your hands to him for the lives of your children, who faint from hunger at every street corner.

Lamentations 2:19