

Dave Sattler November 20, 2016 North Shore Alliance Church

Sermon Title: "The Impact of Leadership Community"

Series: "Out of Egypt" Text: Exodus 18:7-27

Sources: NIV Life Application Bible; Commentaries: Enns & Motyer; Books: Strengthening the Soul of Your Leadership by Ruth Haley Barton, A Visual Guide to Bible Events by John A Beck; Wikipedia - "Priesthood of All Believers", "Sacerdotalism", & "Shakespearean Fools" (assist, Ken Satake); NSAC Sermons: Mark Peters (Nov 13/16) & Mardi Dolfo-Smith (Nov 16/16). Testimonies: Michelle Jackson, Michael Lim, & Andrew Smith.

<Slide> Recap & Introduction:

- Good morning everyone, Dave Sattler here, one of the pastors, continuing our series "Out of Egypt" — the grand journey of the Exodus.
- So, where're we at in the story?
- God has miraculously liberated the Israelites from slavery in Egypt.
- For 2 months now, they've been in the desert regions north and east of the Red Sea. God was guiding them through their leader, Moses. And, with a pillar of fire at night and a cloud by day. God was providing. Water from a rock & a bitter lake. And daily food, manna and quail from heaven. God was protecting them. When the Amalekites attacked, the Lord was their defence.
- Here we see God is not just in the business of saving.
- God also longs to build dependence into His people. Through this time in the wilderness, God is saying to Israel, in effect, Q: 'You don't just need me for salvation — to get you out of Egypt, but you need me too for all of life. And I AM faithful, to guide and sustain you, to water and feed you, and protect you from your enemies, if you look to Me, trust in Me, depend on Me.'
- **<Slide>** The question Pastor Mark posed last Sunday captures this relationship well, Q: "What do we do when we don't know what to do? We pray." To God.
- Time after time, life brings Israel, and us, into circumstances beyond our control — to the end of our own resources. This is so hard. But so good.
- For, when we come to the end of ourselves, we "get what God can do" (MP, NSAC, Nov 13/16).
- And His resources are infinite.
- **<Slide>** We pick up the story in Exodus 18, p.58-59 in the blue Bibles in the seat rack in front of you. Or, you can turn there on your electronic device.
- If I were to choose a theme-song for this passage I'd have to look to ...
- ILL - U2's c.2004 classic, Sometimes You Can't Make it on Your Own. Here are some of the lyrics:
 - Q: "Tough, you think you've got the stuff, You're telling me and anyone, You're hard enough. You don't have to put up a fight, You don't have to always be right, Let me take some of the punches, For you tonight. Listen to me now, I need to let you know, You don't have to go it alone. Sometimes you can't make it on your own." Great song.
- **<Slide>** ILL - The sports world has been touched this week by ...
 - The scene in the BC Lions' locker room following last Sunday's comeback win.
 - Team leader, veteran receiver Manny Arceneaux had been literally knocked out of the game early — concussed from a late hit by a Winnipeg defensive back.
 - Sitting in the dressing room, mind unclear, head hurting, Manny could only follow the lead of the crowd. When they roared, it was good. When the crowd went quiet, he worried.
 - Until finally, his teammates came piling into the room post-game celebrating.
 - And he knew.
 - Later, a video circulated showing Arceneaux, in pain, standing with a crutch, emotional, addressing his teammates about how proud he was of them all, and then breaking down for not being able to finish the game.
 - And they gather round and cradle Manny as he falls apart in their collective arms.
 - The impact of team. Community. Shared leadership.

- **<Slide>** Geographically, Exodus 18 takes place near Moses' old stomping grounds.
- Where he'd spent his dark days, as a murderer on the run, fleeing from his problems in Egypt.
- Now, leading the Israelites to Mt Sinai, Moses comes near the place he was first introduced to Yahweh, the great "I AM", through the burning bush.
- In a few days, many others of the Israelites will also meet God, right here at Sinai.
- But, first, we're paid a visit by Moses' family, from nearby Midian — his wife Zipporah and two sons. And, his father-in-law, Jethro, who comes to meet his son-in-law.
- But both get much more out of this meeting. And so do we.
- **<Slide>** <READ Exodus 18:7-27> Prayer: "God, control me by Your Spirit. Move me out of the way. We're hungry to hear from you."

Narrative Outline:

<Slide> 1. Reunion: Moses & His Family (18:7-8)

- For a time, Jethro has been caring for Moses' wife and 2 sons.
- What do we know about Jethro?
- He is twice called the "priest of Midian", he owns flocks, he's the father of 7 daughters.
- [That'd be enough to test your patience, and qualify you to give advice on 'divide & conquering.']
- Think about it. Just being Moses' father-in-law would have been quite a job. What would you do if a foreigner on "Egypt's Most Wanted List" showed up at your door asking to marry your daughter?!
- Surprisingly, we see a gracious and welcoming Jethro.
- Moses did make a good first impression, but Jethro went out of his way to invite him in.
- And it's clear, they have, over time, forged a close relationship.
- But, what's most striking about Jethro is that he's not Hebrew; he's a Midianite, from a people group considered, throughout the OT, to be arch-enemies of Israel.
- In the desert, Moses is reunited with his family.
- As is custom, a reunion features much storytelling. This one is no different. V8: "Moses told his father-in-law about everyone the Lord had done ... and how [God] had saved them."

<Slide> 2. Celebration: Moses, Jethro, & Elders of Israel (18:9-12)

- This spiritual conversation, Moses sharing his 'God-stories', has immediate impact.
- Jethro delights in hearing about "all the good things the Lord had done" (9) and praises the Lord, making this bold declaration in V11:
 [?] "Now I know that the Lord is greater than all other gods."
- Real irony here.
- The Egyptians, who'd seen firsthand power-display after power-display from Yahweh, failed to come to this conclusion. Even the Israelites, who'd had God rescue them with miracle after miracle, still weren't entirely convinced they wanted to worship Yahweh as their one true God.
- But Jethro, he's the 'Shakespearean fool' in the story, the 'clever peasant' who gets it when few others seem to. Perhaps it's the decades he's spent watching his son-in-law ... from murderer to shepherd to leader of Israel ... how the Lord genuinely transformed Moses & shone through him.
- Using their relationship as a catalyst, God reaches out to Jethro. And he responds in worship.
- Jethro even brings "a burnt offering and other sacrifices to God" (12) and gathers with "all the elders of Israel" to share a celebration meal together in the presence of God.

<Slide> 3. Observation: Jethro of Moses (18:13-23)

- "The next day" (13) Moses grabs his briefcase and heads off to work.
- What an exhausting workday. People standing "around him from morning till evening."
- ILL - In the ancient world, the role of "judge" served a dual purpose:

- o It meant settling disputes; and one can only imagine the issues 1.5 million people on a desert camping trip had with each other!
- o Additionally, to serve as judge involved teaching the ways of God to the community — a high calling and gargantuan task to tackle alone.
- This problem of Moses 'wearing himself out' foreshadows the need for the Lord's giving of the Ten Commandments (cf. Exodus 21-23).
- This coming revelation will take God's law 'off the bookshelves of Moses' office' and put it directly in front of the people in a form they can commit to memory.
- Soon, at Mt Sinai, Moses will declare:
 - o "The commandments I give you today, write them on your hearts" (cf. Deuteronomy 6:6).
 - o 'They don't have to just come from me anymore. Internalize them. Make them your own.'
- Not so subtle, Jethro addresses the sacrosanct: his son-in-law's job performance.
- Sniffing around Moses' workplace, he makes this observation,
 - ☐ [Son] "What you are doing is not good" (17).
- Just what we all love. Unsolicited advice. From an in-law, no less.
- And Jethro proceeds to tell Moses how to do his job better.
- Business 101: 'Choose a team of leaders.' ""Share" (22) the load.'

<Slide> 4. Delegation: Moses & Leaders of Israel (18:24-27)

- To his credit, Moses listens (24).
- Wow! Most Christian leaders don't heed advice or share ministry well. Believe me, I'm closely-acquainted with one! We(e) pastors don't easily share the glory. Or, the load.
- ILL - Interestingly, this is a truth Protestant Reformers fought against.
 - o Sacerdotalism, the belief that "a special, segregated order of men, called to the priesthood, were the only ones who could commune with God directly" was widely accepted in the 16th Century church. With dire consequences: spiritual abuse. Power in the hands of an elite few. Limited accessibility to God for common folk.
 - o **<Slide>** So guys like Calvin, Luther, & Zwingli called the church back to "the priesthood of all believers" — the truth that all Christ-followers are "priests in the sight of God", have the Holy Spirit in them, and can converse directly with God (cf. 1 Peter 2:9).
- Following (25-26) Jethro's instruction, Moses implements a new, shared leadership structure.
- Delegation. He identifies quality help. Widens the leadership hierarchy. Divides up the work.
- Engages more people using their gifts. Gives others opportunity to grow.
- Getting the job done quicker. Ultimately, this is better for him and for God's work.

Applications:

- Let's 'land the plane' on today's sermon with a few application points.

<Slide> 1. God Designed us for Shared Leadership.

- Our culture venerates the "rugged individualist."
- And sadly, out of need to feel 'indispensable', trust issues, or the drive of workaholism, pastors, parents, leaders ... often find it necessary to do everything.
- Many times I've had to come to the stunning realization: I am not the Energizer Bunny. I cannot keep going and going and going. There is a limit to me I must embrace.
- I've heard people suggest, "Isn't Christian ministry or church work just the job of the clergy?"
- But this is not the Lord's design.
- APP - Whether you're capable of ministering to 1000's, 100's, 50's, 10's, or 1, truth is: we all have a gift or talent to contribute to the Lord's work. So I challenge you to get involved. Bring it.
- ILL - I don't know that I've experienced everything God has for me here on earth yet.

- o But, I've been part of some awesome leadership teams. And, there's nothing like it!
- o This week I asked a few teammates for testimony about the impact of sharing in the ministry. Over the years. In the trenches. Together. Here's a sampling of their stories:
- o Teammate 1, Q: "I am thankful for how you have invited me into ministry areas that I now love. You have called people to get involved — to serve and be part of something bigger. After all the preparation and prayer, to stand back and see how God is so loving, so faithful, and is constantly moving and working things out in our midst. THAT has impacted my life!" - Michelle Jackson
- o Teammate 2, Q: "Many years ago, when I started out serving with NSA Youth, I was still young in my faith. During those years, God shaped in me a servant's heart. Later, I got involved in several other ministries; it's how I eventually met my wife. If my faith hadn't grown through accepting God's call to serve early on, I can't say I'd be where I'm at spiritually today." - Michael Lim
- o Teammate 3, Q: "Being involved in ministry at NSAC has had a big impact on my faith. By serving with others I have discovered my spiritual gifts and been able to use them to build up the church and glorify God. It's also brought me close to people whom God has used to give me the confidence that I'm not alone, but part of something bigger. Serving with others takes the focus off me & my limitations and rightly puts it onto God." - Andrew Smith
- There's something incredible about sharing with others in the Lord's work.
- ILL - I've had the privilege of being part of many 'Stanley Cup' winning teams ...
 - o With North Shore Alliance Church Staff, fellow pastors, interns, missionaries, volunteers ...
 - o Sharing in the ministry of Jesus'. Reaching lost people. Together.
 - o The profound impact and precious gift of shared leadership.
 - o A joy I'll treasure with you, my family and friends for eternity.

<Slide> 2. God Loves the Outsider.

- God said to Abram in cf. Genesis 12:3, Q: "all peoples on earth will be blessed through you." In cf. Matthew 12:21, of Jesus, it says this, Q: "In His name nations will put their hope."
- Yet, Christian people, and the Christian church from its inception, always struggle with exclusivity.
- But God doesn't. That He chooses to invite Jethro right into His story, should come as no shock to us. For the Lord is not exclusive; His plan includes all people.
- Early in Exodus and later in Numbers, we read that Jethro, like many others in the Bible, had a second name: Reuel. And, do you know what it means? 'Friend of God.'
- Even an arch-enemy, God doesn't reject.
- He has a spot in His story for anyone who confesses the God of Israel as the one true God.
- APP - Maybe today you feel like an 'outsider' in church.
 - o You've got a 'rap-sheet' a mile long. If God or the church only knew ...
 - o The idea that God is far off and impersonal is stuck in your head. Or, God is angry and out to get you. Or, entirely apathetic — disinterested, too busy to care about your life.
 - o But, I have to tell you, these are all lies: we are never too far from God's love.
 - o 2000 years ago this was most beautifully demonstrated when Jesus came to earth to become human, one of us, to be with us: to declare His love, to die on a cross for us ... to win our forgiveness, and to extend loving relationship to all humanity.
 - o The greatest life-truth? The God of the Universe is entirely accessible. Even to outsiders!
 - o No matter where we go, or how deep a dark place we find ourselves in, we cannot flee from God's love. And, no matter who we are, if we open our hearts to Him, God has room in His heart, for us. Even calls us 'friend.'
- One commentator I read this week says, Q: "The 'nations' are still being called into God's kingdom, and we take part in this today." - Enns, p 380.

- I love how God plants Moses in Jethro's world. And, for 40+ years Moses simply lives his life, one of sheer brokenness and beauty, and from time to time, stops to tell his father-in-law: look what God has done! Granted, he has a pretty wild story. But we mustn't miss the point here.
- APP - Often it's those closest to us that are the hardest to reach. And seem so far from God.
 - Plus, close family and friends tend to see our faults most intimately.
 - And we are tempted to throw in the towel. Keep our mouths shut. Lose hope.
 - But we mustn't give up. Let us keep telling our stories: look what God has done!
 - And, over time, God will use our stories to reach others.

<Slide> 3. Finally, building on this idea, we see **God Speaks through Other People.**

- God reveals His will in many ways: through His Word, in creation, through music & the arts, via the Holy Spirit, through dreams & visions. Sometimes even audibly.
- Throughout Exodus, God Himself had spoken to Moses numerous times. So, when it came to instruction on better work strategies, why didn't God just tell Moses directly?
- Reality is: God often loves to use people to speak on His behalf.
- Though difficult, it is helpful to have others who see us and our work from a different vantage point. Identify our blind-spots. Friends, or family members, who see what we cannot.
- APP - For sometimes, life's circumstances blind us to our own inadequacies ...
 - Maybe today you find yourself in a difficult situation in your workplace; or you're in an unhealthy or co-dependent relationship, or there's a closet addiction you're using to cope.
 - And you're wearing down. Burning out.
 - What you're doing is not good. Or, perhaps you're simply 'maxing out' on the treadmill day after day after day. And you can't see or feel a thing.
 - Sometimes God speaks to us about our limits through the natural aches and pains of our bodies. Other times through failure and burn out. But often He uses other people.
 - However, many of us bail on relationships when we start to get close.
 - Feeling exposed, instead of seeking community, we isolate.
 - Carry it alone. Which only compounds our problems.
 - When it's the stability of relationships like Moses had with Jethro that we need to sustain us. In deep community, God uses other people's voices to help us see our blind-spots before they destroy us. Do you allow God to speak to you through others?
- What prompted Moses to listen? Perhaps he was feeling tired, or Jethro's strategies just made sense, or he simply trusted his father-in-law. But, I'll throw another reason into the mix.
- In V19 & 23, Jethro suggests Moses "listen" to him, but also weigh his wisdom with what God "commands". I believe the primary factor in Moses actually listening to his father-in-law's sage advice was this: **Moses sensed God was in it.**
- APP - For every Christ-follower, this is a vital ability. Requires a certain humility, discernment in the Spirit, & servant heart. It's not in our nature to receive instruction well.
- ILL - Recently, God has been convicting me about how I respond to advice.
 - Typically, not well! Pastors tend to be narcissistic know-it-all's.
 - BQ: What was keeping me from having a teachable spirit?
 - I love to be the man, the expert, and not take advice from anyone.
 - And when it did come, there was this inner rage that welled up inside me. Hurt feelings bubbled to the surface. I got angry. Defensive. Still do sometimes.
 - But God has been changing my mindset. And my heart. People's advice is not just about them telling me what to do. But about how God might be using their words to shape me, transform me, **help me into His will for my life.** And this is a beautiful thing. Amen.