**BUMC Weekly Bible and Sermon Study**

**Sermon: “The Art of Delegation” (from the “Deliverance” sermon series)**

**Scripture: Exodus 18:13-27 (Jethro visits Moses)**

**Key take-aways from the Scripture**

* In this section of chapter 18, we find Moses listening to the people’s disputes with one another and there are long lines of people waiting to issue their grievances. Jethro takes notice of this “system” and asks Moses what he really thinks he is accomplishing by keeping this process as it is.
  + Moses is spending so much time hearing these disputes that he has no time for other important work that needs to be done (let alone wearing himself out and frustrating the people waiting long periods of time to seek his advice).
* In verses 15-16, Moses responds to Jethro that the people come to him to get a ruling from God regarding their dispute. He is acting as an intermediary between God and God’s people. Moses explains, “I inform the people of God’s decrees and give them his instructions.” As such, Moses is hearing these cases ad hoc, since the laws which will govern the Israelites (i.e. the Sinai Revelation) will come in chapters 20-23.
* In verses 17-23, Jethro urges Moses to delegate his responsibilities and establish a system of administrative officials. With the current arrangement, nobody, including Moses, is being served well. It is too great a task and cannot be done alone.
  + He instructs Moses to “…look for able men among all the people…[and] set such men over them as officers…” in order to “…sit as judges for the people at all times; let them bring every important case to you but decide every minor case themselves.”
* In verses 24-27, Moses heeds Jethro’s advice and puts it into practice. Some scholars point to Moses implementing this judicial process after the Law was given at Mount Sinai (see Exodus chapters 20-23; also, Deuteronomy 1:9-18).
  + To account for this discrepancy, the Old Testament writers may have included this narrative here in Exodus 18 to capture the entire account of Jethro. It is not uncommon to see narratives in the Old Testament treated topically, rather than in chronological order.

**Key take-aways from the Sermon**

* As we have discussed in the past few sermons, being in the liminal space has been a challenge for the Hebrew people. When the cultural landscape changes, it demands that we adapt in ways that may be different from the past. Such seasons require that we learn, re-learn and in some cases un-learn.
  + One of our core values as disciples of Christ is to be “teachable” and a life-long learner.
* During this time in the story of Exodus, Moses is leading his people without the assurance of where he is going and how long it will take to get there (remember the cries from long road trips: “are we there yet???”).
* In a post-COVID world, things are not as they once were, and we sometimes find ourselves longing for what once was. In such seasons, we can develop a “chronic nostalgia” that prevents is from living in the present.
* God cannot bless you where you were…only where you are. We can’t live in “yesterday” or in “someday” but where you are today. THIS is the day that the Lord has made! Let us rejoice! Today is all we are assured of.
* The Israelites were expecting a land of milk and honey…but what they got was a wilderness, that made Egypt look better than it actually was!
* The big shift was in the heart of the leader…Moses shifts from the “deliverer” to the “delegator.”
* The tendency of a leader is to take on too much for themselves to handle. “If you want something done right, you better do it yourself.” This limits the capacity of others. Remember, the body has many parts, and we all have a role to play.
* We also tend to fall back on what we know to be true and do what has always been done. Such was the case for Moses. Here, Moses’ father-in-law Jethro comes and helps Moses with the long lines of people coming to him with their disputes.
* Jethro does not jump in and tell Moses what to do, rather, he poses it as a question (Exodus 18:14). Moses responds that the people need me! He is set in the same way he has always done things and Jethro tells him it is too much for him and the people.
* If the leadership of the church is not spiritually healthy, the people are in jeopardy. If someone wants to do everything, they will ultimately accomplish nothing.
* Steve Jobs would frequently ask those he was leading: “what are you *not* going to do this week?” This was a way to re-focusing them.
* Jethro instructs Moses to *delegate* his responsibilities to a team and share the load.
* When we try to do everything, we neglect the primary thing! See Acts chapter 6:1-7 where the apostles were trying to do everything but neglecting their primary tasks. They ultimately delegated!
* There are some things that spiritual leadership cannot delegate…namely their spiritual and prayer life.
* When you are living in between something (the liminal space/wilderness), we must slow down before we speed up. Your heart will grow, and your ministry will increase, and it won’t be how it was. Needs will be met, heart’s will be changed, people will grow, and God will be praised.
* We must remember that we must involve the whole body in the greater mission, if it is to be accomplished. Every part of the body has a role to play.
* Consider Paul’s message in Philippians 3:12-14:
  + Forgetting yesterday, and straining forward to what lies ahead, I have my eye on the goal where God is beckoning us onward to Jesus. I am off and running, no longer crawling and I am not turning back, and you are not running alone. Therein lies *our deliverance*!

**Questions for Personal Reflection or Group Discussion**

* What were your key take-aways from the sermon? How can you apply this to your everyday life?
* If we are in a position of authority (regardless of context), it can be difficult to let others do things that we think should be done by us alone. How can you apply Jethro’s counsel to your life and delegate (i.e. increase your effectiveness while giving others around you a chance to grow and reach their potential)?
* How did delegating these tasks benefit Moses and the Hebrew people?
* Read Deuteronomy 1:9-18. How does this compare with Exodus 18:13-27?
* Early in the sermon, Rev. Dr. Chappell explains that we must always adapt to a changing landscape. Where do you see opportunity for this today?
  + What can we do to adapt the Gospel without compromising the essence of the “Message”?
* How can we avoid falling into “chronic nostalgia,” and focus on living in the present?

**NOTES**