

Text: Exodus 18:13-27

Message: "I will give you counsel"

INTRODUCTION

1. Challenges that the children of Israel faced in the wilderness thus far
 - a. No water (Exodus 15:22-27, Exodus 17:1-7)
 - b. No food (Exodus 16)
 - c. Attack from enemies (Exodus 17:8-16)
2. A new challenge encountered
 - a. The children of Israel were still new to being governed on their own
 - b. There was no proper system in place to manage the affairs of the people
 - c. God needed to help them develop as a people!

THE PROBLEM WITH MOSES' APPROACH

¹³ And so it was, on the next day, that Moses sat to judge the people; and the people stood before Moses from morning until evening. ¹⁴ So when Moses' father-in-law saw all that he did for the people, he said, "What *is* this thing that you are doing for the people? Why do you alone sit, and all the people stand before you from morning until evening?"

¹⁵ And Moses said to his father-in-law, "Because the people come to me to inquire of God. ¹⁶ When they have a difficulty, they come to me, and I judge between one and another; and I make known the statutes of God and His laws."

Exodus 18:13-16

1. One of Moses' roles as leader – judge
 - a. The people came to him to inquire of God when they have a difficulty
 - b. He would judge between one and another
 - c. He would make known the statutes of God and His laws
2. The problem with his approach
 - a. He was doing the work of judging all by himself

- b. The work was very demanding (from morning to night)
- c. It was very taxing on the people queuing to meet him

JETHRO'S PROPOSAL TO MOSES

¹⁷ So Moses' father-in-law said to him, "The thing that you do *is* not good. ¹⁸ Both you and these people who *are* with you will surely wear yourselves out. For this thing *is* too much for you; you are not able to perform it by yourself. ¹⁹ Listen now to my voice; I will give you counsel, and God will be with you: Stand before God for the people, so that you may bring the difficulties to God. ²⁰ And you shall teach them the statutes and the laws, and show them the way in which they must walk and the work they must do. ²¹ Moreover you shall select from all the people able men, such as fear God, men of truth, hating covetousness; and place *such* over them *to be* rulers of thousands, rulers of hundreds, rulers of fifties, and rulers of tens. ²² And let them judge the people at all times. Then it will be *that* every great matter they shall bring to you, but every small matter they themselves shall judge. So it will be easier for you, for they will bear *the burden* with you. ²³ If you do this thing, and God so commands you, then you will be able to endure, and all this people will also go to their place in peace."

Exodus 18:17-23

1. Jethro expressed his concerns
 - a. Moses' current approach was not good
 - b. It would wear both Moses and the people out
 - c. It was too much for Moses to perform by himself too
2. Jethro's advice to Moses
 - a. Focus on his tasks as the leader
 - i. Be the main person standing between God and the people
 - ii. Teach the people the statutes and the laws of God
 - iii. Show them the way in which they must walk and the work they must do
 - b. Select able men to support his work of judging the people
 - i. They must fear God
 - ii. They must be men of truth

- iii. They must hate covetousness (men of integrity)
- c. How they are to support Moses
 - i. Every great matter they shall bring to Moses
 - ii. But every small matter they are to judge themselves
- 3. The desired outcome of Jethro's advice
 - a. Moses would be able to endure as their leader
 - b. The people would have their difficulties resolved and go away in peace

MOSES' POSITIVE RESPONSE

²⁴So Moses heeded the voice of his father-in-law and did all that he had said. ²⁵And Moses chose able men out of all Israel, and made them heads over the people: rulers of thousands, rulers of hundreds, rulers of fifties, and rulers of tens. ²⁶So they judged the people at all times; the hard cases they brought to Moses, but they judged every small case themselves.

²⁷Then Moses let his father-in-law depart, and he went his way to his own land.

Exodus 18:24-27

- 1. Moses' heeded the advice of Jethro
 - a. In humility
 - b. In recognition of Jethro's wisdom
- 2. He chose able men out of Israel
 - a. Made them heads over the people
 - b. They judged the small cases themselves
 - c. They brought the big cases to Moses
 - d. These were done as Jethro advised!

LESSONS TO LEARN FROM THIS EVENT

- 1. The value of wise counsel
 - a. Moses recognised the value of Jethro's advice

- b. He did not adopt a “I know better” attitude
 - c. In humility, he accepted Jethro’s advice and made changes
 - d. This resulted in a more efficient and effective judicial system for the people
- 2. The role of the community
 - a. Moses could not have done the work of judging the people all by himself
 - b. He needed others to support his work
 - c. Bringing others to lead alongside him turned out well
- 3. The importance of character
 - a. Jethro’s criteria for choosing able men was not based on ability
 - b. Instead, his focus was on a person’s character
 - i. Fear God
 - ii. Men of truth
 - iii. Men of integrity
 - c. This was key to ensuring that these men would serve faithfully as leaders

CONCLUSION

- 1. Appreciate the counsel of older ones
 - a. To discern the wisdom behind the advice given
 - b. To have the humility to accept good advice
- 2. Seek to be that community in Bethany
 - a. We don’t need to go through life alone
 - b. We have a community here to help when we cannot cope
 - c. We can also be there to support the leaders and others

3. Cultivate our character

- a. To become people who fear God
- b. To be people of truth
- c. To be people of integrity