

Serm.Ser.: “Moses–God’s Poster Child of Meekness and Dedication”–Lord of Life Lutheran, Westfield, IN-8/1/10

Title: “Why Christians/Leaders Crack Up”

Text: Exodus 18

Intro.: *Illus.: Standing in the BMV lines – long lines/frustrations/ for both customer and employee*

Theme: Self-sufficiency attitudes sets up us up for sinful and destructive life events and must be relinquished and redeemed by our Savior God in order to bring balance and peace back into our lives.

How to recognize when we have slid into self-trust life-habits

Recognizing when we mistaken troubling symptoms for root causes of our life’s problems (**Exodus 18: 1-4**)

1. **Moses saw his family** (wife and sons) **as the problem** and rationalized his sending of them away
 - a. He didn’t want to endanger them felt that they would be safer elsewhere (but Eliezer’s name kept convicting)
 - b. He was busy with his “calling to ministry” and
2. Often, **we can take good or neutral activities and make them evil** when we substitute our plan/rationale for God’s
 - a. Career goals, academic and sports goals, marriage plans allowing vain ambition or self-centered goals to drive it and justifying it as God’s will when we never approached him or let him lead in it
 - b. *“They sow the wind and reap the whirlwind. Hosea 8: 7*
 - c. **Illus.: Misplaced Desires**

Using an objective, God-sent source to diagnose the spiritual sickness (**Exodus 18:5-10**)

1. **God sent Moses’ father-in-law, Jethro, a proven spiritual leader**, who would point him back to God’s plan
 - a. Not lecture Moses on neglecting family but brought them along to facilitate reunion around God’s plan (**5,6**)
 - b. He rejoiced with Moses over the victories and successes he and Israel experience (**9**)
 - c. Yet, pointed Moses to the fact that *“the Lord has rescued you”* (**10**)
2. **How do you know if someone is a godly advisor** to whom you should be listening?
 - a. Someone who **listens more than** he/she **gives advice** (*Everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to become angry, for man’s anger does not bring about the righteous life that God desires. James 1:19-20*)
 - b. Someone who can **rejoice in what is good**, but **steer you to what is godly**
 - i. **“Good is the enemy of great . . .it is a human problem”** (Jim Collins, *“Good to Great”* © 2001,Harper, p.16)
 - c. Someone who does not point you to **what’s right for you** but **what’s right by God**
 - d. *Have this attitude in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus Philip. 2:5*

Steps toward letting God restore His peace to the insanity of our over-busy lives

Remember and **Refocus** (**Exodus 18: 10-12**)

1. **Recite and retell the great things God has done in your life**
 - a. Jethro repeated Moses’ account but significantly changing God’s name from Elohim to Yahweh
 - b. Do you in your family gathering, recount the past tales of God, your Savior, and his work in your life
 - c. *We will not conceal them from their children, But tell to the generation to come the praises of the LORD, And His strength and His wondrous works that He has done. . . That they should put their confidence in God And not forget the works of God, But keep His commandments, And not be like their fathers, A stubborn and rebellious generation, A generation that did not prepare its heart And whose spirit was not faithful to God. Ps 78: 4, 7-8*
2. Intentionally, take time to **give God the credit in your successes**, steering you away from the tyranny of self-trust
 - a. Jethro just “happened” to bring along a sacrifice to get Moses to remember, refocus, and find peace in God (**12**)
 - b. When we are too busy to worship, we are too busy!
 - c. **Illus.: Hurry Destroys Souls & Christians, too busy for God**

Confront, **Correct** and **Connect** your values to Christ-centered, God-focused behavior (**Exodus 18: 13-27**)

1. **Compare and contrast your plan with God’s plan**
 - a. Work like a fool *“morning till evening”* (**vs. 13**) or *“wearing out”* yourself and other (**vs. 17**)
 - b. Too much *“you”* (**vs. 14**) and not enough *“God”* in your plan (**vs. 19**)
 - c. Trying to **be God** (*come to me to seek God’s will vs. 15*) or **be God’s representative** (**vs. 19**)
2. **Correcting sin-ridden, busyness** consumed behavior **requires a humble repentance before the Lord** so he can heal
 - a. Moses swallowed a lot of pride and anxiety to hear God’s advice and peace in Jethro’s word (*never good 17*)
 - b. *Restore to me the joy of Your salvation And sustain me with a willing spirit. Psalm 51: 12*
3. **Stepping out in God’s great saving love for you** requires the risk of faith that it will pay off in the end

- a. Moses still need to lead (equip others) but in a different way and trust that God would bless it (vs.20-23, 25-27)
- b. Will you step out in faith by first listening to this message, second heeding it, and finally finding rest in it
- c. **Illus.: Careless Busyness is Our Danger**

C.S. Lewis on Misplaced Desires

Our Lord finds our desires not too strong, but too weak. We are half-hearted creatures, fooling about with drink and sex and ambition when infinite joy is offered us, like an ignorant child who wants to go on making mud pies in a slum because he cannot imagine what is meant by the offer of a holiday at the sea. We are far too easily pleased. **C. S. Lewis, from the sermon "The Weight of Glory"**

Hurry Destroys Souls

Pastor and author John Ortberg writes: Not long after moving to Chicago, I called a wise friend to ask for some spiritual direction. I described the pace of life in my current ministry. The church where I serve tends to move at a fast clip. I also told him about our rhythms of family life: we are in the van-driving, soccer-league, piano-lesson, school-orientation-night years. I told him about the present condition of my heart, as best I could discern it. What did I need to do, I asked him, to be spiritually healthy? Long pause. "You must ruthlessly eliminate hurry from your life," he said at last. Another long pause. "Okay, I've written that one down," I told him, a little impatiently. "That's a good one. Now, what else is there?" I had many things to do, and this was a long-distance call, so I was anxious to cram as many units of spiritual wisdom into the least amount of time possible. Another long pause. "There is nothing else," he said. "You must ruthlessly eliminate hurry from your life." I've concluded that my life and the well-being of the people I serve depends on following his prescription, for hurry is the great enemy of spiritual life in our day. Hurry destroys souls. **John Ortberg, "Ruthlessly Eliminate Hurry," LeadershipJournal.net (7-4-02)**

Christians too busy for God

In data collected from over 20,000 Christians in 139 countries (though mostly in America) and between the ages of 15 and 88, The Obstacles to Growth Survey found that, on average, more than 4 in 10 Christians around the world say they "often" or "always" rush from task to task. About 6 in 10 Christians say that it's "often" or "always" true that "the busyness of life gets in the way of developing my relationship with God." Christians most likely to agree were from North America, Africa, and Europe. While busyness afflicts both men and women, the distraction from God was more likely to affect men than women in every surveyed continent except North America, where 62 percent of women and 61 percent of men reported busyness as interfering with their relationship with God. By profession, pastors were most likely to say they rush from task to task (54 percent), which adversely affects their relationship with God (65 percent). "It's tragic and ironic: the very people who could best help us escape the bondage of busyness are themselves in chains," said Dr. Michael Zigarelli, who conducted the study at the Charleston Southern University School of Business. **"Survey: Christians Worldwide Too Busy For God," www.christianpost.com**

Careless Busyness is our Danger

Steve Green, a Christian artist, tells about getting to know some of the work crews in the large auditoriums where their concerts were held. Sometimes singing concerts-in-the-round meant extra work for the "riggers," who walk the four-inch rafter beams--often a hundred feet above the concrete floor--to hang sound speakers and spotlights. For such work, understandably, they are very well paid. "The fellows I talked to weren't bothered by the sight of looking down a hundred feet," says Green. "What they *didn't* like, they said, were jobs in buildings that had false ceilings--acoustical tile slung just a couple of feet below the rafters. They were still high in the air, and if they slipped, their weight would smash right through the flimsy tile. But their minds seemed to play tricks on them, lulling them into carelessness." Satan's busyness in our lives is not so much in scaring us to death as persuading us that the danger of a spiritual fall is minimal. No wonder Peter advised us to "resist him, standing firm in the faith" (1 Peter 5:9). **Leadership, Vol. 6, no.**

1.Exodus 18:1-27

¹Now Jethro, the priest of Midian and father-in-law of Moses, heard of everything God had done for Moses and for his people Israel, and how the LORD had brought Israel out of Egypt. ²After Moses had sent away his wife Zipporah, his father-in-law Jethro received her ³and her two sons. One son was named Gershom, for Moses said, "I have become an alien in a foreign land"; ⁴and the other was named Eliezer, for he said, "My father's God was my helper; he saved me from the sword of Pharaoh."

⁵Jethro, Moses' father-in-law, together with Moses' sons and wife, came to him in the desert, where he was camped near the mountain of God. ⁶Jethro had sent word to him, "I, your father-in-law Jethro, am coming to you with your wife and her two sons." ⁷So Moses went out to meet his father-in-law and bowed down and kissed him. They greeted each other and then went into the tent. ⁸Moses told his father-in-law about everything the LORD had done to Pharaoh and the Egyptians for Israel's sake and about all the hardships they had met along the way and how the LORD had saved them. ⁹Jethro was delighted to hear about all the good things the LORD had done for Israel in rescuing them from the hand of the Egyptians. ¹⁰He said, "Praise be to the LORD, who rescued you from the hand of the Egyptians and of Pharaoh, and who rescued the people from the hand of the Egyptians."

¹¹Now I know that the LORD is greater than all other gods, for he did this to those who had treated Israel arrogantly."

¹²Then Jethro, Moses' father-in-law, brought a burnt offering and other sacrifices to God, and Aaron came with all the elders of Israel to eat bread with Moses' father-in-law in the presence of God.

¹³The next day Moses took his seat to serve as judge for the people, and they stood around him from morning till evening.

¹⁴When his father-in-law saw all that Moses was doing for the people, he said, "What is this you are doing for the people? Why do you alone sit as judge, while all these people stand around you from morning till evening?"

¹⁵Moses answered him, "Because the people come to me to seek God's will. ¹⁶Whenever they have a dispute, it is brought to me, and I decide between the parties and inform them of God's decrees and laws."

¹⁷Moses' father-in-law replied, "What you are doing is not good. ¹⁸You and these people who come to you will only wear yourselves out. The work is too heavy for you; you cannot handle it alone. ¹⁹Listen now to me and I will give you some advice, and may God be with you. You must be the people's representative before God and bring their disputes to him.

²⁰Teach them the decrees and laws, and show them the way to live and the duties they are to perform. ²¹But select capable men from all the people--men who fear God, trustworthy men who hate dishonest gain--and appoint them as officials over thousands, hundreds, fifties and tens. ²²Have them serve as judges for the people at all times, but have them bring every

difficult case to you; the simple cases they can decide themselves. That will make your load lighter, because they will share it with you. ²³If you do this and God so commands, you will be able to stand the strain, and all these people will go home satisfied."

²⁴Moses listened to his father-in-law and did everything he said. ²⁵He chose capable men from all Israel and made them leaders of the people, officials over thousands, hundreds, fifties and tens. ²⁶They served as judges for the people at all times. The difficult cases they brought to Moses, but the simple ones they decided themselves.

²⁷Then Moses sent his father-in-law on his way, and Jethro returned to his own country.