

Dear Friends in Christ,

Once a year, at SotV, we have the Church Council step up in front of the altar. The pastor reads from a form that calls on them to carry out their duties as officers of the church. They are to assist the pastor in the carrying out of the ministry. They are to see to it that activities in the church are carried out decently and in order and that the church is in good repair. Then the pastor prays and blesses them. This ceremony only takes a few minutes. It doesn't seem like much, but it is very important. It is important because the work they carry out is important and even vital to God's kingdom. The word of God for today will help us to understand this.

In Numbers 27 Moses was old. The Lord had told him he wouldn't be around much longer. Moses was unique in that he held office of prophet, priest and king. He was both the spiritual leader and the lay leader of the church. Who would take over? In Numbers 27 we find out who replaced Moses as the lay leader or civil leader of God's people. We also hear how it happened and how the Lord blessed the process.

Today we are encouraged to **Pray for Leaders and Receive Those the Lord Provides.**

1. A Prayer for Leadership (by Moses)

In Numbers, we are told about the Israelites 39 year journey in the wilderness. They were now at the doorstep of the promised land. Moses asks the Lord if he can go in and see the land, but the Lord says, "No." He was not allowed to go in. Instead of moping and complaining, Moses accepts the Lord's word and turns his attention to praying for a replacement. Let's examine his prayer.

A. He asks the Lord for a new leader. **"Moses said to the LORD, "May the Lord, the God who gives breath to all living things, appoint someone over this community..." (15-16)**

1. Notice that his prayer is addressed to **"the LORD."** This is the same LORD who appeared to Abraham in Genesis 12 and 15 and promised a Savior. This is the same LORD God who had appeared years earlier in the burning bush. This is the God who had created heaven and earth. Moses acknowledges that by saying, **"who gives breath to all living things."**

2. Moses also knows that the LORD God condemns sin, because he his own sins prevented him from entering the Land of Canaan where Israel was headed. Moses believed he was still going to the promised land of Heaven, because the LORD had promised that a Savior would be born of the Israelites. He would take away the sins of the world. Moses believed that he had forgiveness in this Savior and it moved him to pray freely for the needs of God's people.

3. You and I have important things to pray about. It is important that we approach our Lord the way Moses did. We approach him because he is the Lord of life. He is the one who can help his church and help give and strengthen spiritual life among his people. We approach our God freely because Jesus suffered and died at the cross for our sins. The sins we commit may have earthly consequences and penalties, but Jesus paid the penalty for our sin. We are free to go to heaven with our prayers and we are free to live in Heaven some day.

B. Moses also teaches us what to pray for. **"...appoint someone over this community 17 to go out and come in before them, one who will lead them out and bring them in, so the Lord's people will not be like sheep without a shepherd."** He asks for specific gifts.

1. Moses asks the Lord to appoint a leader for community. This practice of appointing leaders was continued in the New Testament. During the first Missionary Journey of St. Paul we are told, **"Paul and Barnabas appointed elders for them in each church and, with prayer and fasting, committed them to the Lord, in whom they had put their trust."** The elders were to see to it that the ministry was carried out and it was done decently and in order. (1 Corinthians 14:40)

2. In praying this Moses is thinking of the people. He doesn't want them to be like sheep without a shepherd. Sheep are helpless and totally depend on their shepherd. Without a shepherd the sheep would get lost and die. In the wilderness the people had strayed countless times and sinned. Moses had to call them to repent of worshipping the Golden Calf. He prayed for their forgiveness. He assured them of God's grace and presence. Now that he was going, someone else would have to see that they were taken care of.

3. About twenty years ago, Gene Ahlswede, the mission counselor said, "I hope you can stay awhile at Surprise and see the church off to a good start." Over these years the Lord has blessed us with dedicated chairmen and other lay leaders. The leaders you have now won't be here forever. Pray like

Moses for continuing good leadership. Pray for a strong ministry that proclaims Jesus and forgiveness and life in him. We see that this is what Moses, the servant of the Lord did. We will now see that the Lord answers the prayers of his people.

2. A Prayer is answered. (by the Lord)

It seems that it did not take very long and the Lord answered Moses prayer. Even if the Lord does not answer right away, we can be confident that he still answers our prayers for leaders.

A. “So the Lord said to Moses, “Take Joshua son of Nun, a man in whom is the spirit of leadership, and lay your hand on him.” (18)

A. Joshua, son of Nun, was chosen by the Lord.

1. Sometimes as we look in the church, there will be obvious choices. This was the case in Numbers. Joshua had been Moses’ aid. It seems that the Lord had been preparing Joshua for this work for a while. The Lord does not always choose the most obvious person. Many years ago a pastor commented that a certain man joining Shepherd was very nice, but not real active. To my joy, he became very active and served faithfully until he moved on. Perhaps it was the atmosphere of a smaller church, perhaps it was just the right time. Obvious or not so obvious the Lord provides leaders and servants for his church.

Note that the original language does not say “**spirit of leadership**”, but simply says “**spirit.**” This is a reference to the Holy Spirit. Joshua had faith and he was led by God, the Holy Spirit, to use his gifts for the Lord. There is an encouragement here that when we put people in positions of responsibility in the church, we need to choose people who are regular in worship and have spiritual gifts for the work that they carry out. The Lord will help us in this.

2. The Lord commands the people to work with Joshua.

a) Eleazer, the High Priest is to recognize Joshua’s authority. This was done a public commissioning. At this special ceremony all the leaders would see Eleazer’s promise of support.

b) At the commissioning some of Moses authority was given to Joshua. Joshua would not be a prophet, priest and king like Moses. Joshua was receiving authority over civil matters. He would be their version of a king.

c) If Joshua needed to have the Lord’s word in a matter of government, Eleazer would provide that answer through the Urim. That is how God would declare his will.

d) The leaders of people were to give their approval, so that Joshua would know that the people would obey him and serve as he governed.

B. There is more to this event. The Lord not only spoke, but Moses and the people responded.

1. We are told, “**Moses did as the Lord commanded him.**” (22a) It sounds basic, but it is important. There are leaders in the church when it is time to go, don't want to go. They drag their feet. Moses did not do this. This would be one of his final acts as a leader, but he doesn't hesitate. Veteran leaders need to respond to the Lord's will.

2. Also Moses called for an assembly and the people showed up. Through their actions they showed that they had accepted his leadership and they would do what he said. Initially that was marching out of camp and across the Jordan River into the promised land. They did do that.

Conclusion: Twenty-five years ago, Les Proeber and his wife, Shirley, came to Surprise and wanted to start a church. Several people including church officials told that it couldn't be done. They prayed and worked and as did the people with them and we have a congregation on Bell Road. Along the way others have expressed doubts about the church, but the people have prayed and worked and the Lord has answered our prayers. He provides.

Today, we need to keep praying and working to proclaim life and forgiveness in Jesus. For as long as the Lord wants a church here, he will answer our prayers and provide leaders and workers filled with the Holy Spirit. For what he has done and what he will do, we give thanks to the Lord God. Amen.

Context: Moses and the Israelites had left Mt. Sian 39 year earlier. They are at the door step of the land promised to Abraham and his descendants. Moses is about to die, he sees the need for a successor. Joshua is chosen and commissioned to succeed Moses in leading God's people.

Malady: The Lord does not want his people to be without leadership.

Propositional Statement: We should pray for lay leaders and be confident that the Lord will provide people that we can recognize as church leaders.

Exodus 19:2-8a (NIV 1984)

After they set out from Rephidim, they entered the Desert of Sinai, and Israel camped there in the desert in front of the mountain. Then Moses went up to God, and the LORD called to him from the mountain and said, "This is what you are to say to the house of Jacob and what you are to tell the people of Israel: 'You yourselves have seen what I did to Egypt, and how I carried you on eagles' wings and brought you to myself. Now if you obey me fully and keep my covenant, then out of all nations you will be my treasured possession. Although the whole earth is mine, you will be for me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.' These are the words you are to speak to the Israelites." So Moses went back and summoned the elders of the people and set before them all the words the LORD had commanded him to speak. The people all responded together, "We will do everything the LORD has said."

Numbers 27:15-23 *Moses prays for God's people that they might have a leader who is a shepherd to guide them.*

(NIV 2011)

15 Moses said to the Lord, 16 "May the Lord, the God who gives breath to all living things, appoint someone over this community 17 to go out and come in before them, one who will lead them out and bring them in, so the Lord's people will not be like sheep without a shepherd."

18 So the Lord said to Moses, "Take Joshua son of Nun, a man in whom is the spirit of leadership,[a] and lay your hand on him. 19 Have him stand before Eleazar the priest and the entire assembly and commission him in their presence. 20 Give him some of your authority so the whole Israelite community will obey him. 21 He is to stand before Eleazar the priest, who will obtain decisions for him by inquiring of the Urim before the Lord. At his command he and the entire community of the Israelites will go out, and at his command they will come in."

22 Moses did as the Lord commanded him. He took Joshua and had him stand before Eleazar the priest and the whole assembly. 23 Then he laid his hands on him and commissioned him, as the Lord instructed through Moses.

Footnotes:

Numbers 27:18 Or the Spirit

(NIV 1984)

15 Moses said to the LORD, 16 “May the LORD, the God of the spirits of all mankind, appoint a man over this community 17 to go out and come in before them, one who will lead them out and bring them in, so the LORD’s people will not be like sheep without a shepherd.”

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SECOND LESSON - Romans 5:6-11 (NIV 1984)

You see, at just the right time, when we were still powerless, Christ died for the ungodly. Very rarely will anyone die for a righteous man, though for a good man someone might possibly dare to die. But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us. Since we have now been justified by his blood, how much more shall we be saved from God's wrath through him! For if, when we were God's enemies, we were reconciled to him through the death of his Son, how much more, having been reconciled, shall we be saved through his life! Not only is this so, but we also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received reconciliation.

2 Thessalonians 2:16—3:5

(NIV 2011)

2:16 May our Lord Jesus Christ himself and God our Father, who loved us and by his grace gave us eternal encouragement and good hope, 17 encourage your hearts and strengthen you in every good deed and word.

3:1 As for other matters, brothers and sisters, pray for us that the message of the Lord may spread rapidly and be honored, just as it was with you. 2 And pray that we may be delivered from wicked and evil people, for not everyone has faith. 3 But the Lord is faithful, and he will strengthen you and protect you from the evil one. 4 We have confidence in the Lord that you are doing and will continue to do the things we command. 5 May the Lord direct your hearts into God's love and Christ's perseverance.

(NIV 1984)

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THE VERSE OF THE DAY

Alleluia. May your priests be clothed with righteousness; may your saints sing for joy. Alleluia. (Psalm 132:9 NIV).

GOSPEL READING - Matthew 9:35-10:8

(NIV 2011)

9:35 Jesus went through all the towns and villages, teaching in their synagogues, proclaiming the good news of the kingdom and healing every disease and sickness. 36 When he saw the crowds, he had compassion on them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd. 37 Then he said to his disciples, "The harvest is plentiful but the workers are few. 38 Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field."

10:1 Jesus called his twelve disciples to him and gave them authority to drive out impure spirits and to heal every disease and sickness.

2 These are the names of the twelve apostles: first, Simon (who is called Peter) and his brother Andrew; James son of Zebedee, and his brother John; 3 Philip and Bartholomew; Thomas and Matthew the tax collector; James son of Alphaeus, and Thaddaeus; 4 Simon the Zealot and Judas Iscariot, who betrayed him.

5 These twelve Jesus sent out with the following instructions: "Do not go among the Gentiles or enter any town of the Samaritans. 6 Go rather to the lost sheep of Israel. 7 As you go, proclaim this message: 'The kingdom of heaven has come near.' 8 Heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse those who have leprosy,[a] drive out demons. Freely you have received; freely give.

Footnotes: Matthew 10:8 The Greek word traditionally translated leprosy was used for various diseases affecting the skin.

(NIV 1984)

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