

Sermon Numbers 11 4 29

Sermon: 19th Sunday after Pentecost

Text: Numbers 11:4-6, 10-16, 24-29 (vv.16, 17).

Theme: Sharing leadership.

Goal: God gives us His Holy Spirit to serve each other as a team, according to the skills we receive.

Dear Friends,

Introduction: Stewardship is in connection with leadership. A good steward is a good leader, and a good leader is a good steward.

Remember from previous thoughts about Stewardship that a steward is a servant in God's eyes, not a boss! Jesus said: "Whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, and whoever wants to be first must be your slave— just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many" (Matthew 20:26-28).

God served us first when He sent His Son Jesus to redeem us for Himself so that we shall serve others with love and care. – The 7<sup>th</sup> of the *Biblical Stewardship Principles* we are following states: *God's stewards are served and serving.*

I – Moses – the servant leader

To understand the background of our text, we have to revise a part of Moses' story: God had taken the people of Israel out of slavery in Egypt by the hand of Moses. They had received the Ten Commandments on Mount Sinai and they were on their way now to the Promised Land. Can you imagine a multitude of 600 thousand men wandering through the desert, plus the women and children? God had provided food/manna to them every morning at their doors. But they were bored of that food and complained to Moses, missing the cucumbers, melons, leek and garlic from

Egypt. But...but they had forgotten that they had been slaves in Egypt, suffering a lot under the pressure of their lords.

Moses, who had led the people under marvellous signs given by God, became upset. *He was tired of having responsibility for the whole community; so, he vigorously expressed his feeling to God* (ABC, p. 183). And he complained to God that his task was too hard: “Why have you brought this trouble to your servant? I cannot carry all these people by myself; the burden is too heavy for me.”

*Moses’ complain falls into the category of prayers for help. God recognises that Moses was genuinely weary and exhausted by the hardships of leading a complaining people. Moreover, Moses did not merely lament and complain. He asked for help that he desperately needed to lead the people* (ABC, p. 183).

Have you ever felt like Moses? Is your leadership as Elder, as Sunday School teacher, as Ladies Guild Chair not always well accepted? If you are a manager or have a position in your job, is it easy to work with your people? As fathers and mothers you are leaders in your homes; how is it when your children complain about this and that? What about me as pastor and leader? What about our Bishop Dieter and his leadership and responsibilities? Sometimes we are very tired and worn out. In times of crises, the best solution is to pray, to appeal to God’s help.

*Moses’ prayer offers encouragement to all leaders who are overwhelmed by the burdens of leadership. It brings out the point that leadership is a joint effort by the leader who is entrusted with responsibility and by God himself, who can relieve the burden of leadership* (ABC p. 183).

## II – Shared leadership

*A leader is never a leader alone. He needs people to lead; and he needs co-leaders to help him.* This was the beginning of the speech

I delivered when I was once honoured as President of the Lutheran Church in Brazil. This statement was based on God's solution to Moses' complaint and on the attitude of Jesus when He chose His Twelve helpers, the apostles.

Moses needed help. "The Lord said to Moses: Bring me seventy of Israel's elders who are known to you as leaders and official among the people. I will take of the Spirit that is on you and put the Spirit on them. They will help you carry the burden of the people so that you will not have to carry it alone." And so it happened. God's solution came fast to Moses.

Maybe some of them were leaders of the crowd who was complaining to Moses. They had to be not only part of the problem, but part of the solution as well. It is easy to complain and to criticize. Help to do it! Help to find a solution! The seventy elders should work together with Moses and help them, and they are not supposed to cause more problems to Moses. They had to work as a team – as I like to work with you. I don't like to do everything alone and I cannot do it. I need your help – as we have good teams besides the Elders to carry St. Thomas duties and responsibilities. Don't wait for others to do what you can do. Do it!

### III – We as leaders

God shared the Spirit that was upon Moses with the seventy leaders, giving them capacity to be good leaders. God gives us His Holy Spirit as well when we are baptized. No one can say: *I can do nothing*. Every one of us has some skills and by the sum of our gifts the body of Christ works well. Not all of you can preach; not all of you can manage money; not all of you can bake a good cake. But when everyone performs well his/her duties with gladness, everything works well.

*We cannot sit in the pew and say that the good things of God are someone else's job... What good things has God got for me to do? Scripture is pretty clear that this has something to do with saving the world. To die in sin and out of a relationship with God is a terrible thing. Hell is really hot. My words, my deeds, my life have all become an instrument for God to give eternal life to another. God has a lot of stuff for us to do, of course; simply living life is part of that. Loving my spouse, earning my pay, carting my son to another cross country track meet, and fixing my house can all be occasions in which God uses me for his kingdom purposes. Or they can be lived selfishly and for my own purposes. This is where we need God to govern and direct our life.* (Phil Brandt, pp. 7, 8).

Conclusion: This means *Servanthood Leadership*. We should take leadership not as a strong and harsh boss, but as God's humble servants, being served by God first as He gives us His Son and with Him forgiveness and life; and serving our neighbour with the same love that God loves us. Our *Biblical Stewardship Principles* states: *As children of God through faith in Jesus Christ, and with the Holy Spirit's help, a) we will recognize that service done for the benefit of the community and world is also part of the Christian stewardship; b) we will emphasize that the same way as Jesus came to serve, stewards are privileged to serve others through their abilities and resources; and c) we will adopt the attitude of a servant in all our relationship with others.*

The Holy Spirit that was given to us at our Baptism comes to us through the Bible and the Holy Communion. As much as we listen to God's Word and as much as we receive the Body and Blood of Jesus, the Holy Spirit will strengthen us to be good servants and stewards of God. Amen.