

Exodus 18:1-27

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[0 : 00] What a joy to be in presence of God with his people, to be able to worship, lift our voice and praise to him. We are a blessed people indeed.

Let me pray. Father, thanks again for this day. Thanks for the person and work of Jesus, our Lord, our Savior, our God.

Lord, we bless you and offer our praise individually as families and as a faith family to you this morning. Thank you, Lord, for the songs that we've sung and we would echo the words of the last song.

Speak, O Lord, through your word to us this day. In Christ's name, amen. What an interesting juncture we find ourselves in in the book of Exodus.

One phase is about to end and another chapter, beginning in chapter 19, which will take us to another phase, is about to begin.

[1 : 12] It's quite interesting on this morning who actually shows up in Camp Israel in our text today. A man named Jethro.

Jethro does not bear the pedigree of the children of Israel. He's a priest, as we can see there. He's a priest of Midian. He's a religious leader, if you will, who served at the altar of some god or gods in the land of Midian.

We don't know who or what particular deity this may have been. But in Midian, in the eastern part of the Sinai Peninsula.

That's not all that we see about him. We see his family connection with Moses. His father-in-law.

[2 : 14] How would you respond if your father-in-law showed up on your job? Interesting. Pops, what are you doing here?

There's a sense in which that's what we have in the text. Father-in-law shows up, in a sense, in the workplace. More, we'll see that a little bit later.

Humanly speaking, the chapter is very Jethro-centric. We begin with him. We end with him. So, comes at the beginning, comes at the end.

But in the process, this is what we see. In this chapter. Verses 1-12, Jethro's confession. In verses 13-27, Jethro's counsel.

His confession in verses 1-12. His counsel in verses 13-27. What about his confession?

[3 : 23] Essentially, what we have here is that Jethro acknowledges the supremacy of the Lord. The God of Israel.

We'll get to that specifically. But before we get to that, did you notice the report that we have in verse 1? Jethro, the priest of Midian. Moses' father-in-law.

Heard all that God had done. For Moses and for Israel, his people. How the Lord had brought Israel out of Egypt.

Huh? All that God had done for his people. The report comes. It makes its way across the land. And such events as this.

Monumental events. Where God really disassembled Egypt, if you will. These were things that would not have been unnoticed in that day.

[4 : 18] How could they have been? News of defeat on the one hand. Victory on the other. The magnitude of what was happening. It would be very, very difficult.

And hard to contain. The report. Verse 1. But notice there's a reunion. You see that in verses 2-7?

About Jethro, Moses' father-in-law, had taken Zipporah, Moses' wife, after he had sent her home.

And he goes on to speak about Jethro's grandson, Moses' sons. And we see their name there. We don't exactly know when it was that he sent the wife and the children back to his father-in-law.

There's some speculation as to when that might have been. Some point, we don't know. But Zipporah and the boys, if you will, probably they were men at this point, had gone ahead of Moses and it made their way back to Jethro.

Could it have been the fireworks that were going to happen in Egypt when he decided to send them home? We don't know. But could it have been he may not have wanted them to be exposed to certain things?

[5 : 35] We don't know. But we do know that there was a reunion, according to this particular text. And we see the names of the sons. And their names are memorialized, in a sense, both as far as Moses' experience, on the one hand, as an individual, as a husband and father.

But also, it was memorialized for Israel also, because these are the things. Israel, in a sense, was in a foreign land. And then also, God had helped his people, Israel, even as he had helped his servant.

Moses. Jethro. Here it is. We have him. He's making his way to see his son-in-law, Moses. Jethro announced his coming.

And eventually, he made his way to Moses, his father-in-law, or to his son-in-law. Greeted him respectfully and warmly. You see that there? Verse 6.

When he sent Moses' word to Moses, I, your father-in-law, Jethro, am coming to you with your wife and your two sons with her. Her two sons with her. Moses went down to meet his father-in-law, bowed down, and kissed him.

[6 : 43] And they asked each other of their welfare and went into the tent. Huh? And then Moses gives him firsthand account as far as what God had done for his people.

But then there's Jethro's response to what the Lord had done. And the first thing that we see there in verse 9. He rejoiced for all the good that the Lord had done to Israel.

And that he had delivered them out of the hand of the Egyptians. You see that there? He is joyful in what God had done for his people Israel.

And that joy is expressed in the words that we see in verses 10 and 11. And notice, here it is, his confession.

And now I know that the Lord is greater than all gods. Because in this affair, they dealt arrogantly with the people. And so Moses' father-in-law, Jethro, brings a burnt offering of sacrifices to God.

[7 : 53] And Aaron came with all the elders of Israel to eat bread with Moses' father-in-law before God. What a confession of the greatness of God.

The one who was able to pull off what he had done in Israel, he was without peer. Unique. Absolutely in a class of one.

The Lord is the greater or the greatest of all gods. And so Jethro confesses the uniqueness of God, his superiority, and his supremacy.

What an event this was. Here was this man who had served at the altar of some deity. But then he comes in contact with the deeds of the almighty God.

And upon hearing beforehand and hearing firsthand from Moses, he begins to exalt the living God as far as what he had done.

[9 : 00] And often this sort of this whole kind of worship pattern. Rejoicing and praising and then a fellowship meal with those who likewise believed in what the living God had done and had been partakers of it.

The work of the Lord was acknowledged. Confession. Sacrifice. And offering with people of a like mind. Here, friends, was a fitting response to the salvation of God.

And are not such responses good and right and proper? When one considers the saving activity of God, whether it was through the Exodus work that we have looked at over the last 10 weeks or so or more.

Or in the saving work of the Lord Jesus Christ. Whose person and work, his death, his burial, and his resurrection deserves our recognition on the one hand.

But also our thoughtful, reflective praise on the other hand. Huh? Are not these elements of worship right for the God of salvation?

[10 : 08] Who knows that better than Christians who have been rescued by the very strong arm of God through the person and the work of Jesus? Huh? And even this morning we have found ourselves worshipping before God.

Who has manifested himself in and through the person and the work of the Lord Jesus Christ. Huh?! I'm going to describe some of you here this morning. You're not exactly sure about this person that Christians worship as their Lord and Savior. This man, Jesus. You've heard some things about him. But not quite sure yet. You're not sure that I would dot the I's and cross the T's like you folks here this morning. But you're in process. Yes. And we praise God for that on today. Huh? He was headed in the right direction. Huh? He acknowledged that like we have today on this side of the cross. Huh? There's no God like Jehovah. [11:39] Did you sing about it this morning? Huh? There's none like him. Huh? There's none as wise as he is. There's none as creative as he is.

There's none as dynamic as he is. There's none as gracious as he is. There's no God like him. Huh? Who is like thee, O God? Glorious in holiness. Fearful in praises. Doing wonders. As Moses would go on to say as he was there on the mountain. Exodus, I believe it was chapter 34. There is no God like him. And as you look at the pantheon of gods that people are worshiping now or that they have worshiped throughout time. The living God stands unique. He is in a class all by himself. There is none like him. Huh? And so the question goes out. Who has believed our report?

[12:37] And to whom has the arm of the Lord been revealed? Huh? Paul picks up on this. But they have not all believed the gospel. For Isaiah says, Lord who has believed what he has heard from us.

Are you in process? Keep on seeking. Keep on listening. Keep on exposing yourself to Christian people and Christian worship. Because this is what happened as Paul writes. Faith comes by hearing. And hearing through the word of Christ. Through the word about Christ. Here it is. Jethro's confession that acknowledges the supremacy of the God of Israel. That there is absolutely none like him. Who has rescued his people from years of bondage. Has demonstrated his might and his power with his hand. Has brought them out. Has delivered them. There's no God. Like Jehovah. Acknowledging God's supremacy.

[13:50] But then as we move on. And we'll spend more time here. In 13 through 27. We get to hear. Jethro's counsel. That advocates.

For a shepherding team. Huh? So on the one hand. Jethro's confession. Acknowledged the Lord's supremacy. Here we see.

Jethro's counsel. That advocates for. What I'm calling on this morning. A shepherding team. A cadre of people. That God would use.

In order to care. For his people. Huh? Oh. What a scene. We have before us. In 13 through 27. It's a scene. In which. Jethro finds himself. In the midst of God's people. While the great. Deliverance work.

[14:47] Had already. Been done. Huh? God's ministry. Through his servant. Continued. But it was in a different arena. It was no longer.

In the arena. On Egyptian soil. He had brought them out. But the ministry. Of God's servant. Did not stop. But there was. A shift.

In the focus. Of what he had done. Huh? Again. We're removed. From the ancient scene. Of is. Of Egypt. But there were certain things. God's servant.

Was engaged. With God's people. People. And he was shepherding them. From. His heart. I like what. Dr. Phil Reichen.

President of Wheaton College. Writes in his. Commentary. On. Exodus. As relates. To. Serving. God's people.

[15:43] And serving God's people. As a pastor. Listen to what he says. By day. And this is when he was at. Tenth prayers. He said. I serve as a pastor. By night. I sometimes. I also coach. Local youth sports teams.

One night. Before soccer practice. As I was leasing up my cleats. One of the parents. Asked me. About my work. I heard that you're. Some kind of minister. Or something.

She said. Yes. That's right. I replied. And we began to talk about. What kind of church. I serve. Where was located. And so forth. Then she asked.

Now. Is that a full-time job? And Dr. Reichen writes. To the truth. To tell the truth. I burst out laughing. As any faithful minister.

Will tell you. The pastorate. Is always a full-time job. And then some. Pastoral ministry. Takes as much time. As it is allowed to take. Especially.

[16:40] In. A large church. There's some things. That have not changed. As far as the ministry. To God's people. Whether it is. In an ancient. Desert setting.

Or smite. Smack dab. In the midst. Of the asphalt. Jungle. In the city. There's some things. That. Do not change.

Notice. Jethro's. Observation. In verses. 13. And following. Just let me read. A little bit. The next day. Moses set to judge the people.

And the people stood around Moses. From morning till evening. When Moses father-in-law saw all that he was doing for the people. He said. What is this that you're doing for the people? Why do you sit alone?

And all the people stand around you. From morning till evening. Huh? Jethro. Jethro. Made his way. Through the camp of Israel.

[17:39] And he saw something really that troubled his spirit. Something was wrong with the picture of what he beheld. There was a huge.

Massive crowd. That was standing. The line was as long as you could see. Huh? There were young people and old people. There were men. There were women in line.

And this line went on from morning until evening. The situation did not change. And thus we see the questions. Of Jethro's questions in verse 14.

What is this that you're doing for the people? And why do you sit emphasis on alone. And all the people stand around you from morning till evening. In Jethro's mind it was something that was wrong headed about what he was saying.

Huh? What? Before looking, however, at what was wrong with the picture. I want to help us to see what was actually right with what was going on.

[18:41] Huh? Here, friends, was a picture of a shepherd who was concerned about the sheep that had been entrusted to his care. Huh? That was the way that Moses was wired.

Huh? Have we not seen that from the early years of Egypt and of Midian? As a matter of fact, turn back in your Bibles to Exodus chapter 2.

And we will see this particular instinct that Moses really had from the beginning. As far as his shepherding care for the people of God.

Exodus 2 verse 16. Now the priest of Midian had seven daughters. And they came and drew water and filled the troughs to water the father's flock.

The shepherds came and drove them away. But Moses stood and noticed this next word and saved them. And notice what he did.

[19:43] Not only say he cared for them, he watered the flock. When they came home to their father, he said, how is this that you have come home so soon today?

And his daughters, that is, they said, an Egyptian delivered us or saved us out of the hand of shepherds and even drew water for us. He cared for us. He watered the flock.

Here he is. He rescued us on the one hand. But he cared for us on the other. Moses, the one who had been used of God back in chapter 18 to rescue God's people.

Here he is. He's a shepherd who's caring for the flock that had been delivered from the hand of Egyptian slavery. There was a sense in which he was laying down his life for the people that God had called him to shepherd.

Here was Moses, the same one who on the backside of the mountain for 40 years had cared for God's people. Here he was in this scene.

[20:54] He is shepherding now a human flock. Hundreds of thousands of people. People who needed compassionate shepherding care. And he was willing to give himself for.

What's right with the picture? There's a shepherd. There's a man of God with a heart for the people of God. And he's giving himself for them. Perhaps he's seeing what perhaps someone else had done.

Some feel that he may have been following a top-down kind of leadership that he may have learned in Egypt. But nonetheless, here he was on the job caring for God's people. On the one hand, his motives were right.

His methods lacked something. The shepherd was at work. On the other hand, we cannot ignore the fact that Moses was not the only shepherd in the picture.

Who else was a shepherd? Jethro. Jethro was a shepherd. He was an experienced shepherd that had a flock of his own. Did he not own a flock?

[22 : 09] Chapter 3, verse 1. Were not his daughters shepherds? Chapter 2, verse 16. Here, the narrator lets us in on a shepherd-to-shepherd kind of conversation.

And eventually, we see how Moses' compassionate response would then be balanced by practical wisdom. And the people of God would get what they needed.

Moses, I'm a shepherd too. Let me tell you, there's another way to do this. Let me tell you how another way where that might be done. Or you can lead and shepherd the flock of God.

So enter the practical side. You see that in verse 17. Moses' father-in-law said to him, Hey, son. What you're doing is not good. Huh? You, verse 18, and the people with you will certainly wear yourselves out. For the thing is too heavy for you.

[23 : 19] You're not able to do it alone. What you're doing is not good. You're going to wear yourself out. Moses, the way that you're operating really is unhealthy for you.

And it's unhealthy for the people. What you have here, son, is a no-win situation. It's unbearable. And it's unsustainable.

Moses, can I reacquaint you with what your role is? Look at verse 19. Now obey my voice. I will give you advice. And God be with you.

You shall represent the people before God and bring their cases before or to God. And you shall warn them about the statutes and the laws and make them know the way in which they must walk and what they must do.

Huh? Your role, Moses, verse 19, intercession before God. Huh? Your role, verse 20, instruction for God. Huh?

[24 : 22] Huh? That's your role, huh? Are not these the ongoing assignments for those who are charged for the shepherding care of the flock? Did not similar counsel come from the apostles in Acts chapter 6 when there was a need for care in the midst of the New Testament church?

And they brought this need before the apostle and he said, look out among yourselves. Get the people who have the right character. They're people of faith.

They're people who are filled with the Spirit. And set them over this business. And we will give ourselves to the ministry of the Word of God in prayer. Huh? That's your role? Huh?

Your role, shepherd? Your role, under-shepherd? Your role, leader? Word. Huh? And prayer.

Peter gives similar kind of instructions as far as the ministry description for elders and leaders. I exhort the elders among you as a fellow elder and the witness of the sufferings of Christ as well as the partaker in the glory that is going to be revealed.

[25 : 30] Shepherd or feed the flock of God. Huh? Huh? Exercising oversight, not under compulsion, but willingly, as God would have you, not for, listen to this, we hear echoes in Exodus, not for shameful gain, but eagerly, not domineering over those in your charge, but as being examples to the flock.

Oh, for those of us who are elders and pastors, and this is good for all of God's people. Huh? What about them?

Okay, okay, Jethro, I got it. See what I'm supposed to do? What about them? Huh? As for them, with the verse 21, look for able men from all the people, men who fear God, who are trustworthy, hate a bribe, and place such men over the people as chiefs of thousands, and of hundreds, and of fifties, and of tens, and let them judge the people at all times.

Huh? Every great matter they should bring to you, but any small matter they should decide themselves so it will be easier for you. They will bear the burden with you.

Huh? Get the right people. Not just anybody can be over or have a leadership kind of role amongst God's people.

[26 : 54] Here we get an Old Testament list for men and women of honor. And trust those kinds of responsibilities to them. Huh? Look for men of character who are honorable and trustworthy, God-fearing, not greedy.

Huh? Men of known character among you. Huh? Similar traits of standards for God's people throughout this particular era. Huh?

Leading God's people in an honorable kind of way. Release them to serve in the right people. Let them judge the people at all times. Lead the judgment of the people to capable men who can oversee clusters of people.

People who can make good, sound, biblical judgments. Huh? Is that not to be the norm amongst God's people? 1 Corinthians 6, verse 3 lets us know that we're going to be judging as far as supernatural beings.

The church, can't you make simple judgments among yourselves? Huh? Put them in charge. Place them as chiefs among God's people. And then bring the greater matters to me.

[28 : 01] Well, what's the principle here for us? It's interesting on this morning as we drove up, I saw one of our faithful people putting out signs to help people get here.

The health of the whole needs the participation of the many. Huh? The health of the whole needs the participation of the many.

Interesting thing about this particular person. If I were to look at the roster of who's serving where in the church, I would find that one individual serving in a lot of different places, in a lot of different areas.

That person will be unnamed on this morning. But I would ask you this morning, is your name on a ministry roster list? Because the health of the whole needs the participation of the many.

And this is the time to sort of sign up. There perhaps will be people who are tapping you on the shoulder to get you engaged.

[29 : 29] What about you? Are you willing to participate in whatever way? May not be a teaching role or various kinds of roles, but there's a place for you in the family of God where you can serve in among us.

Is not Jethro's counsel good today? May those of us who minister in paid and unpaid positions continue to learn the lessons that we see here.

And are we not even here reminded of our Lord in the gospels? People flocked to Jesus in droves. They were seeking him by day, waiting on him in the morning.

And Matthew describes the situation in Galilee. The people there were like sheep without a shepherd. Listen to what Matthew writes.

And Jesus went through all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues, proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom, healing every disease and every affliction. When he saw the crowds, here it is right here.

[30 : 33] He had compassion for them because they were harassed and helpless like sheep without a shepherd. And he says to his disciples, The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few.

Pray earnestly to the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest. And guess what? Then he calls 12 disciples. Those who would share the responsibility, those to whom he would pass off the baton when his time was up.

Oh, the shepherding heart of our God. Care for his people. We see the execution in verses 24 through 27.

System in place that would help to relieve Moses of the things that others, with things that others could do was put in place. Hearing God, speaking for God, that would be his role.

Well, Jethro goes back home. Goes back home. We're about to break from this series in Exodus, where next week we'll begin Philippians.

[31 : 47] But let me say a few things that will help us to see in a big picture kind of way what we have here in these scenes. We're about to leave Moses and the people of God at the foot of the mountain.

But our text really helps us to summarize what we've been through already, does it not? Through Moses, the Lord had saved his people.

We've seen this, and Jethro's confession makes this clear. God is the Savior of his people. The makings of the man Moses were in play, even on the backside of the mountain.

And even in Moses, we see glimpses of our Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, through whom God saves all who come to him by faith.

And we see also the spiritual instincts of Jesus early on, do we not? We see a 12-year-old Jesus, Luke chapter 2.

[32 : 58] I must be about my father's business. God saves. But not only have we seen God as Savior in Exodus, we've also seen him as shepherd, have we not?

The one who sustains and cares for his people. Is that not what we see here? Oh, if there is ever the Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want scenes, and there are various ones in Scripture. As for the children of old, did not God provide water again and again? Did he not provide bread and protection and preservation? And so Jesus, the great shepherd of the sheep, through whom we have all that we need.

So my question today as I close, have you trusted him as Savior? Maybe that's the way that you need him most. As the one who has given himself, the cross itself was a judgment scene, where the wrath of God fell on his son for sins, not for sins that he had done, but for your sins and mine. Do you believe that? Do you receive that? All who do can find him as Savior, and then confess him as such?

[34 : 27] Jesus, indeed is the Lord. Ah, but then I know that there's some of you here this morning. You need to experience him, perhaps in practical and tangible ways even today.

The Lord is shepherd. As one who cares for you, those of you who are burdened, encumbered with care. Life has dealt you what you consider an unfair blow, and you're feeling the weight of that on this morning.

May you know our Lord as the one who cares for you, and even through his people, the church, entire church in a sense, is a shepherding team of sorts, and God uses various people in various ways, through various gifts, in order to care for his people.

May you experience him in both ways, both as Savior and as Shepherd, the one in whom we find our help today.

Father, we love you, and we bless you this morning, and give thanks to you that you are Savior. We've seen that. We've seen that in Exodus, but we've seen that in our greater Exodus, through the person and the work of Jesus at the cross.

[35 : 52] But then we see you as our Savior, as a shepherd, lead us. You've led us, and you bring us comfort. May the people of God here today experience you in ways that they know that you, in fact, do care for them.

That's my prayer this morning. In Christ's name, amen. Amen.