

I Corinthians 1:18-31 - We Preach Christ Crucified

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Date: 28 August 2016

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[0 : 00] You are listening to a message from Southwood Presbyterian Church in Huntsville, Alabama. Our passion is to experience and express grace. Join us.

Amen. I love that song. It is one of the best summaries of why we do those things. That we would serve, that we would love others, that we would give ourselves away and sacrifice.

Why? Because of your great mercy. Because of your grace to us. Because you've poured in us to overflowing, you give us the privilege of sharing that with others.

What a great, great reminder that is. A great privilege for us to be a part of that work that God is doing in so many ways. Turn with me this morning to 1 Corinthians chapter 1.

Yes, 1 Corinthians 1. Take a week off from Luke. I'm so excited to have Ron Clegg here at Southwood to be a part of this installation service today.

[1 : 05] You know, as we were interviewing Ron, I discovered that he had recently preached all the way through the gospel of Luke at the congregation where he was serving as senior pastor at the time.

And that's pretty exciting, you know, when you're just getting ready and your next sermon series is on Luke to talk to a guy. And I mean, obviously, that's why we hired him.

And that got us pretty excited. I mean, there were other reasons. There was the, well, then there was the thing.

There were lots of other reasons that we called Ron here. I'm sure. It was Gail. Gail was the other reason. Yeah, that's right.

We loved Gail. Anyway, a few weeks ago before I started preaching through Luke, I asked him what advice he had, what he'd learned from preaching through the gospel of Luke.

[2 : 03] And he said, well, I mean, it's all about Jesus, of course, but not just about Jesus. It's about the cross all the way through. Not just the last couple of chapters when you get to the crucifixion, but the whole thing, just like all the Bible is pointing to the cross of Jesus.

That's what you need to remember. As you get to know Ron, you will learn quickly that he loves people. That he's got a dry sense of humor that's even funnier than mine, which is hard for you to imagine.

And that he's always going to point you to Jesus. I'm really, really thankful to have another pastor here who will preach Jesus and him crucified from this pulpit over lunch with you while counseling you in his office.

He'll do that in all of those places. And that's really, really important. It's very significant that that's where he's going to be pointing you. Because preaching Christ crucified is not just for full-time preachers.

Did you know that? You get to preach too. Ron's going to get a charge here in just a few minutes. But this, what we're looking at in 1 Corinthians, is for all of us.

[3 : 24] When Paul writes to the Corinthians in the passage we're about to read, he's not just interested in a preacher who preaches Christ crucified. He's interested in a church that preaches Christ crucified.

In my opinion, all of us preaching Christ crucified Monday through Saturday is harder and perhaps even more important than one of us doing it on Sunday.

You see, Paul's writing to a group of believers here that's struggling in a lot of ways. It's specifically at the beginning of the book with divisions and party spirit and this issue and many others, Paul's going to say, are a result of the fact that they're missing the message of the cross.

The message of Christ and him crucified. Let's look at what he says to them in 1 Corinthians 1, beginning the reading at verse 18.

This is the word of God.

[4 : 51] Jesus said, For consider your calling, brothers.

Not many of you were wise according to worldly standards. Not many were powerful. Not many were of noble birth. But God chose what is foolish in the world to shame the wise.

God chose what is weak in the world to shame the strong. God chose what is low and despised in the world, even things that are not, to bring to nothing things that are. So that no human being might boast in the presence of God.

He is the source of God. He is the source of your life in Christ Jesus, whom God made our wisdom and our righteousness and sanctification and redemption.

Therefore, as it is written, let the one who boasts, boast in the Lord. Lord, will you pray with me? Father, we give you thanks for your words.

[6 : 16] We thank you that your word speaks to our lives. We thank you that it meets us in our point of need. That it shows us the glories of our Savior.

And Father, would you show us that this morning? Holy Spirit, teach us. Show us a glorious Jesus that we can trust. Make us individuals and even more a community where Jesus' name is made great, where we preach Christ crucified.

Do that work. Work even in this time. We need to hear not from me, but from you. So would you speak? Would you change us forever? We ask in Jesus' name.

Amen. Amen. Amen. This passage talks about what Paul calls the message of the cross or Jesus Christ and him crucified.

That's how Paul describes the gospel here in this passage. It's the message we're supposed to be preaching. It's the message the whole world needs to hear because it is the power of God for salvation, he says.

[7 : 29] And we could summarize or describe that message in a lot of different ways, but for this morning, let's do it with two brief statements. First, we are desperately needy.

And second, Jesus completely meets our need. It's not going to be real confusing this morning. I'm not going to be particularly profound.

It really is that simple. In some ways, it's that simple. But as we look at these two statements, I'll suggest it's actually harder for us to live, to preach day in and day out than you might think it is. So let's start with that first statement. We are desperately needy. Where do I get that from this passage? Well, first just think of the message of the cross itself.

You know that one way to tell the seriousness of an illness is the cure that's needed to heal it, right? Does it need just two Advil or two hours of surgery?

[8 : 32] That's how you know how serious the illness is. What does the cross tell us about our illness? It says we are so sinful that we don't just need a slight behavioral tweak, a little modification, but that the Son of God had to die to heal us.

Then look at verses 26 to 28. Consider your calling, brothers. Not many of you were wise according to worldly standards. Not many were powerful. Not many of noble birth.

But God chose what is foolish in the world to shame the wise. God chose what is weak in the world to shame the strong. God chose what is low and despised in the world.

Even things that are not to bring to nothing things that are. Who are the ones being described as foolish, weak, lowly, despised, and those sorts of things?

It's you and I, right? We're the ones described that way. Paul says, look, Corinthians, in God's economy, it's not at all the way the world operates.

[9 : 42] The message of the cross sounds like foolishness because it flips all our normal ways of thinking on their head. The foolish come out ahead of the wise. The weak overcome the strong.

So the gospel says those of us who trust in Christ are by definition needy people. And Paul actually goes to great lengths to show this is true in his own life.

Before and after the passage we just read, Paul says he preaches about Jesus without using eloquent words, lest the cross of Christ be emptied of its power.

Verse 17. Chapter 2, verse 2. Do you hear what Paul is saying?

Paul wants his own weakness to be evident. Why? So that God's power would shine clearly. That's why he says he could actually empty the cross of Jesus of its power.

[11 : 02] That if people were believing it just because Paul was so eloquent a speaker and he had so much wisdom in the way he communicated, that they would be missing the message of the

cross.

If his strength and his wisdom and his performance were actually obscuring the message of the cross which says we are desperately needy.

So Paul says I didn't come to show you how great I was. I came to tell you how great Jesus is. This is a big deal then, isn't it? The way we act, the way we speak, Paul says, can communicate something that is anti-cross.

Anti-gospel just by what we say or the way we live. We could be keeping the power of the cross from people. So how are we at being needy, Southwood?

If you're anything like me, it's really hard for you to admit that you're wrong, that you're weak, that you're needy, struggling, hurting. The needy are others out there somewhere.

[12:11] We care for the needy, that's what we do. More often than not, we're pretty much doing okay on our own, right? We at least can look like we have it all together.

Even if we know we don't, we can put on a good front. So let me ask you, would your friends and neighbors describe you as needy? Or as someone who seems to have it all together?

Do you let them see enough of your weakness, enough of your struggles and failings that they might actually believe you need the Son of God to die for you? Sometimes we feel so much better preaching ourselves and our own success, our own abilities than we do preaching Christ alone.

Because the first part of the message of Christ alone, the message of the cross, is that we are desperately needy and we just don't enjoy announcing that, do we?

But the Gospel says it's true. You're so needy that the Son of God had to die for you. That's how big my sin is. That's how big your sin is.

[13:24] If we don't preach ourselves as needy, then we don't preach Christ crucified. The first part of preaching Christ crucified in our lives is openly acknowledging our own neediness so that the grace and power of God is what is sufficient, not my abilities and what I have gathered around me.

So that's the first part, the message of the cross in this passage. We are desperately needy. But secondly, Jesus completely meets our need.

What's it going to take to meet our desperate need? If it's as bad as all that, what do we need? The Gospel says we preach Christ crucified. Jesus himself, Christ alone, is the cure for what ails us.

For the weak and the foolish, Christ himself becomes what? The power and the wisdom of God. Verse 24. For the weak people, power. For the foolish, wisdom.

He's exactly what we need. Do you see that? Then in verses 29 through 31, Paul tells us the result of Jesus meeting our need is that we boast or glory only in him.

[14:40] Verse 29. That no human being might boast in the presence of God. Because of him you are in Christ Jesus, who became to us wisdom from God, righteousness and sanctification and redemption.

So that as it is written, let the one who boasts, boast in the Lord. Lord, Christ alone is our wisdom, our righteousness, our holiness, our sanctification, our redemption.

Everything that we need is found in Christ himself. It's not just something we're given, it's who he is, who he becomes for us. So there is nothing and no one to receive glory except Jesus.

He's all of it. We can't claim it for ourselves. We can't give credit somewhere else. It all comes through Jesus himself. Now some of you are probably thinking, boy, this is basic stuff.

Couldn't we get something really good for the installation service? You know, something profound and new and Christ alone? God's glory? I mean, I know those things.

[15:52] I'm sure that you do. But does your life preach it? You see, just as in Paul's day, we're wired so that we would prefer signs of power and words of wisdom.

We like that, don't we? We like success stories. We like to see people who figure it out and who look good and sound good. That's what people were looking for here.

And so a crucified Savior sounds like foolishness. For the Jews, verse 23 says, preaching Jesus as the one who meets your need is a stumbling block. Because anyone hung on a tree is cursed, right?

The Jews know that. He's a failure in the sight of men and God. What about everybody else? What about the Greeks? To look for anything out of someone crucified is just utter foolishness.

It's silly. If he was on a cross, that means he was a criminal slave. What are you going to get from him? And let's be clear. That is the message of the cross.

[16 : 54] That the one who hung there meets our need. That's the message of the cross. You think there were some Corinthians who had a difficult time at a dinner party with their friends, claiming the name of Jesus, the crucified Savior?

You think it was tempting, easier for them to talk about the eloquent pastor whose wonderful words they loved to hear? I think that was easier to talk about with their friends.

Or just to talk as though everything was fine. They were just kind of figuring life out. Yep, everything was fine. Career's fine. Family's fine. I'm fine. I know you are.

Isn't it easier to talk that way? I bet it was for them because I don't think a lot has changed in this regard in 2,000 years. If you're honest, do you sometimes feel sufficient spiritually to make it through a day, a week even, without a living Christ that you actually need something from?

Where would a friend or a neighbor say you draw your strength? Would they say you're content and feel that your needs are completely met? And would they say Jesus is the one you depend on to meet those needs?

[18 : 14] Or are you just content because you have enough stuff? Does your life truly bring glory to Jesus? Or are people more likely to praise and compliment you?

I don't like those questions. But that's what it's all about, isn't it? That's supposed to be the point. Not that people say good things about me.

Not that they think I've improved or I've got something to offer. But that Jesus has something to offer me and them. Paul said that's what it means to preach Christ crucified.

That we boast only in Him. That Jesus gets the glory for our lives and for everything else. That it's God's power rather than man's wisdom that's on display.

And He is great and He gets the glory because He completely meets the needs of desperately needy people. How great must He be? You see, Jesus says, I didn't die for you because you were so wise.

[19 : 15] So strong, so noble, so worthy of me. I came for foolish, weak nobodies so that I could display my incomparably great power through people who obviously weren't.

So when you act like you can do without me, you're emptying the cross of its power in the eyes of others. Tell them how desperately needy you are on your own. And how completely I have met your need and continue to meet your needs every day.

That's what they need to hear. I'm so thankful I can be part of a church where it's okay for the pastor not to be okay all the time.

Where I can lose my temper with my kids and tell you about it. And tell a leadership training class this week about my own defensiveness with other church leaders.

And the fear that I struggle with in that. It's so great to be a part of a place where I can be desperately needy. And you can too.

[20 : 19] We need that. We need a place where that's safe because our great hope and joy is not in ourselves but in Jesus who meets our needs so faithfully.

Isn't that what it's about? It's supposed to be. In Colossians 1, Paul says the glorious message of the gospel is Christ in you.

The hope of glory. Because Christ in you is the message. Paul says him we proclaim. Christ we proclaim.

That we might present everyone mature in Christ. Everyone perfect in Christ. We preach Christ because we need Christ.

Amen? We don't preach morality that we may present everyone perfect in behavior. There's a lot of things you can preach.

[21 : 17] We don't preach self-help so we can present everyone perfect in themselves as wonderful models of humanity. We preach Christ so that we can present everyone perfect in Christ.

The only way that any of us will ever be perfect, mature is in Christ. Being connected to him, united to him. The cross of Christ is why we do everything here at Southwood.

Not just the preaching on Sunday morning. It's why we support missionaries and send teams around the world. Because the message of the cross of Christ is the power of God to the salvation of all who believe.

It's why we partner with Jobs for Life here in Huntsville. Because it's through the cross of Christ, Colossians 1, that God's reconciling to himself all things in earth and in heaven.

Thus healing the brokenness in our communities and everything that's impacted by the fall. It's why we meet in small groups. Because the cross of Christ breaks down barriers that would otherwise divide us.

[22 : 22] And creates a new community where we can be needy and broken. And we can love and forgive each other. Because we offer each other the hope of the cross of Christ. And the forgiveness that he's shown to us there.

It's why we study God's word in Sunday school and other contexts. Because there we learn more of the heart of God who would give himself for us. So we could live in relationship with him where we know him more and more.

It's why we baptize our children. Because our hope for them too is the blood of Christ washing and cleansing them. It's why we confess our sins in the worship service.

Because we don't boast in ourselves. And so every week we come and we're free. Not having to pretend that this is the church where people have gotten it together. But it can be a community where people still struggle.

And we can be honest about our failures. And cast our hope week after week upon a crucified and risen Savior. Right? It's why we do everything. Everything we do.

[23 : 25] Not just as a church. But in all of life. Must be about preaching Christ crucified. About acknowledging our great need. And our great Savior.

Savior. The story is told of a small country church. That had a beautiful black wrought iron gate. Out in front of the church.

And built into the gate were the words. We preach Christ crucified. And around this beautiful gate some ivy grew.

And over the years the ivy grew up the gate. And it began to cover up the words that were there in the gate. And the ivy completely covered up the word crucified. So it just read we preach Christ. So the leadership got together for a meeting. And they talked. And they said well you know there's a lot more uplifting stuff to say about Jesus. Than to talk about his death.

[24 : 25] Let's just leave it. So they let it go. And over time the ivy grew up. And it covered the word Christ. So that what was left was just we preach.

And the leadership got together. And they talked and said well you know I mean honestly there's a lot of things to preach about. We've talked a lot about Jesus around here.

I think we've got that down. Why don't we move on to some more advanced spiritual things we ought to be teaching about. So they left it. And the ivy grew of course.

And it covered up the word preach. So that all that was left was we. And the leadership got together and said well you know honestly we do a lot of things around here. And not all of it has a real message behind it.

Sometimes people just enjoy when we do nice things and we make people happy. But let's just let it go. So over time of course the ivy grew up. Covered the we. The church doors closed.

[25 : 23] And everyone went away. The message of the cross is that we preach Christ crucified. It is the gospel.

It is the only message that Christ has entrusted to us to meet us in our need. And to offer to a world full of need. That's Paul's heart for the Corinthian church.

That's my heart for this church too. Now imagine if you walked out the back doors every Sunday. And there was a wrought iron gate with we preach Christ crucified.

That would actually be kind of cool wouldn't it? Yeah put one of those back there. But for now just imagine that it was back there as you go. And imagine that you were all responsible for keeping the ivy trimmed back.

So that it would continue to be true that this church as an entire community. Not just the preachers. Preached Christ. And him crucified.

[26 : 24] I know Ron is passionate about trimming that metaphorical ivy back. I pray that we would be a church full of ivy trimmers.

Trimming the ivy back daily on our knees in repentance and humility before God. Trimming the ivy back regularly with each other in honest and genuine fellowship.

Trimming the ivy back constantly before a watching world who sees needy people. And their glorious all sufficient savior. May God make us that kind of community.

Let's pray. Jesus you are indeed glorious. You are all sufficient whether we believe it or not.

You do completely meet our needs. So would you make us into a people who know you more deeply.

[27 : 22] Who are willing because of that to be weak and needy. To trust you more.

To give glory to you. To boast in none other than you. Would you do that in each of our hearts. And would you make Southwood a place where Jesus Christ and him crucified goes forward.

With great joy. Not just on Sunday mornings. But every day and in every life. That the people in this room go and touch this week. Father change Huntsville.

Change the world through the power of the cross. That is the hope of salvation to all who believe. We ask it in Jesus name.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. We are going to move into the installation portion of the service now. This is a real treat in being Presbyterian.

[28 : 24] You knew there were some exciting things about that right? Been waiting to find those. One of the real joys in being a Presbyterian is that we are connected to other churches in this local area.

Who love us. Who help us. Who come alongside us. And this is one of the things they do for us. They examine pastors like Ron.

They've examined Ron to see if it's safe for them to let Ron be a pastor at Southwood. Honestly. They've examined him. And he's been an ordained minister for many years.

But they wanted to know was God calling him here? They wanted to hear about his views on theology and many other things. They've examined him. And now the Presbytery has sent a commission here.

The names of that commission are in your bulletin. You'll see I'm on that commission. Teaching Elder John Gordy from Decatur. Teaching Elder David Hammond from Westminster Christian Academy.

[29 : 18] Ruling Elder Greg Carter is standing in for David Clark. Ruling Elder Alan Judge. And Ruling Elder Ray Shepherd. That's the commission the Presbytery has sent here to install Ron as a pastor.

It's a great opportunity for us to be thankful together as a congregation. Not only for Ron, although we rejoice in God bringing him here. But also for our connection to these other churches who have consistently loved, helped, and encouraged Southwood over the years.

So we're delighted that they are here again for the purpose of installing our new assistant pastor. Ruling Elder Ray Shepherd as a representative of that commission is going to come and begin the installation by asking Ron his vows.

Ron, could you stand up for us? I have a few questions for you. Ron, are you willing to serve this congregation as their assistant pastor, agreeable to your declaration in accepting its call?

I am. Good. And Ron, do you conscientiously believe and declare, as far as you know your own heart, that in taking upon you this charge, you are influenced by a sincere desire to promote the glory of God and the good of the church?

[30 : 41] I do. Okay. And Ron, do you solemnly promise that by the assistance of the grace of God, that you will endeavor faithfully to discharge all of the duties of a pastor to this congregation, and will be careful to maintain a deportment in all respects becoming a minister of the gospel of Christ, agreeable to your ordination engagements?

I do. Very good. Thank you. And John? John will ask some questions of the session. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you.

Thank you.

And at this time, we'll invite any ruling and teaching elders in the PCA to come forward as we lay hands and pray for Ron at this time. Amen. Amen. Amen. God, our Father, we rejoice greatly to celebrate the installation of Ron Clegg as our assistant pastor this morning.

Lord, we praise you and thank you for the way you have sovereignly orchestrated the circumstances of his arrival at this point before us to become our assistant pastor. Lord, in your word, you have likened your people to sheep.

[32 : 56] And Lord, both in the natural world and the spiritual world, it is evident that sheep desperately need shepherds. And so, God, we praise you and thank you for bringing Ron here to shepherd among us.

Lord, we as sheep need shepherds to lead us and guide us spiritually and to help us to deal with the circumstances of life that you place before us, imparting great wisdom and counsel and comfort and help.

Lord, we need your shepherds that you call and provide to lead us beside still waters, to make us lie down in green pastures and assisting you to restore our souls.

And so, God, we thank you for the call you've placed upon Ron to serve as an under-shepherd and particularly to shepherd us here at Southwood. We praise you and thank you for the call in his life and his commitment to do so.

One of the great ironies of your kingdom, Lord, is that the men you call to be your shepherds are sheep themselves.

[34 : 09] And so, God, we pray that you would continue to shepherd Ron's heart, that you would lead and guide him in his service here, that you would continue to mature him spiritually.

And, Lord, that you would gather godly men around him to assist in the shepherding of his heart, making him, therefore, a better shepherd to us.

Lord, we praise you and thank you for the way you have brought this about. And we look forward to what you're going to do in the future. And we pray that your good, acceptable, and perfect will, and your eternal purposes will be accomplished and fulfilled through Ron's ministry here and through the lives and ministry and example of his wife, Gail, as well.

It's in Jesus' name we pray. Amen. While they're doing all of that, it is now my great privilege to pronounce and declare that Ron Clegg has been regularly elected, ordained, and installed as assistant pastor of this congregation, agreeable to the word of God and according to the constitution of the Presbyterian Church in America, and that as such, he is entitled to all support, encouragement, honor, and obedience in the Lord, in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost. Amen.

We have a couple of charges to be given, Ron. Don't go far. If you'll stand right there, ruling elder Alan Judge is going to charge Ron, and then teaching elder David Hammond will charge the session of Southwood.

[36 : 10] As an assistant pastor, at this point in time, Ron has been called by the session. So that's why the session receives a charge on behalf of the congregation and why the session took those vows earlier.

So, Alan, if you will charge Ron. Not only am I representing the Presbytery, but I had the privilege of serving on the search committee that God used in getting Ron here, so I bring that in my charge as well.

So, I was asked to charge the newly installed pastor that would be Ron, and I've never done this before, and Will very kindly gave me some guidance.

He said, it should be three or four minutes long and should reference the Bible. With that very helpful direction, I could not possibly go wrong.

My wife gave me some more direction. She said, I know Will said three or four minutes, but the congregation is definitely hoping on three max. So, I'm going to jump right in.

[37 : 23] The person I think of in the Bible when I think of pastor is Paul. Paul tells the young Timothy and us in 1 Timothy 1.15, it is a trustworthy statement deserving full acceptance that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, among whom I, Paul, am foremost of all.

Think about that. Paul, who wrote a letter, several of them in his letters are Scripture. needs Christ, foremost of all, as much as all of us.

So, in thinking about that, Paul knew he had to remind us that we all need Christ. That no man, no matter how great, how gifted, how knowledgeable, can give us what we need.

The best way that any man can help us is to point us to Christ. That is what Paul did. Now, God has given this congregation a very special, godly, gifted, young pastor.

I have said on many occasions that when you look up pastor, when you Google pastor, Will's face should come up, right? He's that much of a pastor's heart.

[38 : 59] But he just started shaving about three months ago. And even though he's young, God gave him wisdom beyond his years.

And he came up with a wish list for who he wanted to fill this position. One of the things he said, well, some of the things he said on his wish list is, he would love to have someone who is older, has been a senior pastor, and who really wants to help teach and equip a young pastor to pass on,

effectively, what God has given to him over the years.

Interestingly enough, when we talked to Ron, the search committee, one of the first things that became clear was that he really thinks God is calling him to take a supportive role and to come alongside a young pastor and pass on what God had given him over these years.

So, Ron, my first charge to you is keep your focus on Christ and come alongside Will to lovingly remind him to do the same.

The best gift that you can give this congregation and Will is the gift of living in such a way that you point us all to Christ. Other things on Will's wish list for Ron's position was that he wanted someone who loved people, had a shepherd's heart, and who had humility that had been forged by suffering.

[40 : 45] Someone who really knows what it is like to cling to God when life simply does not make sense. Again, in our very first conversation with Ron, it was clear.

He was either bugging the search committee meetings or God was clearly at work. Ron has a heart to shepherd God's people and to teach them how to shepherd each other.

He served for years on the foreign mission field doing just that. He was excited to talk about what God was doing at his church in areas like Sunday school and others.

Finally, he was unbelievably honest about the times of suffering that God had allowed him and Gail to walk through. So, Ron, here's my second charge to you.

Please keep living out the gospel right here at Southwood. Honestly, share your life with us and help us to live in gospel community with each other.

[41 : 50] The kind of gospel community where we can be honest with each other and point each other to Christ in our moments of great success and in our dark times where we doubt whether God is even there.

And finally, I know that you're probably tired of hearing how we wanted Gail so we hired you, so I'm not going to mention that. But I charge you to keep your personal relationship with God and your wife ahead in first priority and second priority and that you don't let the ministry God has given you here to ever overtake those priorities.

I go back to Paul recognizing that he needed Christ as much or more than anyone. Well, brother, so do you and so does Will.

And the best thing you can do for this congregation, for Will and for yourself, is to put all of us after God and Gail. That is just one more way of reminding us that we are in the same boat.

We all need Christ and there is no substitute. Those are my charges. Thank you. It is customary when one rises to speak on the floor of Presbytery to begin with fathers and brothers.

[43 : 37] Having attained my 70th birthday last month, it's probably more appropriate that I begin brothers and sons. I speak to the under-shepherds, the session of Southwood.

When Moses brought the children of Israel safely out of Egypt and was back at Mount Sinai once again, his father-in-law, Jethro, Ruel, brought Moses' wife and boys back to be reunited, they had stayed with him while Moses and Aaron had gone to Egypt.

In the 18th chapter of Exodus, it says that Moses told his father-in-law all that the Lord had done to Pharaoh and to the Egyptians and to the Egyptians for Israel's sake, all the hardship that had come upon them in the way and how the Lord had delivered them.

I suspect that took an entire afternoon at the very least. As Moses probably began at the burning bush and then recounted to his father-in-law the trip back to Egypt and the many face-to-face confrontations with Pharaoh, I suspect that he described each of the ten plagues in great detail.

And as the afternoon wore on, God's spirit stirred in Jethro's heart and he marveled and he confesses, now I know that the Lord is greater than all gods because in this affair they dealt arrogantly with the people and Jethro professes his allegiance to the God of Scripture.

[45 : 45] After that meeting, it says that Aaron and all the elders came and they had a great covered dish dinner. A great time of fellowship, a great time of rejoicing in the very tangible redemption.

Elders, I would charge you and encourage you that many times you take Ron and Gail for times of fellowship.

You'll be tempted to concentrate on the challenge, the difficulties, the hard things. Please give ample time of reflection upon the good things that God is doing in this place.

God's mercies are new every morning. great is his faithfulness. And so I would encourage you elders when you don't have an agenda to take Ron to lunch and to reflect and to rejoice and to give

thanks for the work that God is doing in this place.

I just have two points. If Ron was an associate, I would have come up with three, but being an assistant, we'll go with two. Later in this 18th chapter, I suppose an economist would say division of labor and a military man would say the strategy of divide and conquer or as your mamas would have said on Saturday morning as they were, as she was passing out the chore list of the day, many hands make light work.

[47 : 38] The next morning when Jethro got up, he found that his son-in-law Moses was already up and at work. And Jethro observed him all that day from morning until sundown, hearing the complaints, hearing the questions, hearing the murmurings of the children of Israel and settling each one.

Jethro gave some wise advice and he told his son-in-law, 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 to God and you shall warn them about the statutes and laws and make them know the way in which they are to walk. Moreover, look for able men from all the people, men who fear God, who are trustworthy, who hate a bribe, and place such men over the people as chiefs of thousands of hundreds of fifties and tens and let them shepherd the people.

Your young pastor mentioned at the beginning of this installation part of the service is a positive thing about Presbyterianism, the division of labor, the many hands making light work.

And so elders, not only do I encourage you to take Ron and Gail out for times of fellowship and refreshment and encouragement and rejoicing, but you pray that God would give you a sense of where you can come along and help carry the load, where you can assist the assistant pastor.

[49 : 39] Shall we pray? Our Father, we are grateful again this morning in your marvelous providence how you bring things to pass that could not possibly have been orchestrated by man.

And Father, what an evidence of your great love for the sheep of Southwood Presbyterian Church that you have granted them and granted Pastor Will's desire to have a seasoned veteran, an experienced shepherd.

who can take those gifts and be a blessing to this congregation. And so, Father, I pray for these elders that you would grant them much grace to be found faithful to their callings, that they would come alongside, that they would help bear the burden.

We pray in Jesus' name. Amen. For more information, visit us online at southwood.org.

For more information, visit us online at southwood.org. Thank you. Thank you.