

# The God Who Extends His Goodness

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[ 0 : 00 ] Has anyone here ever made this mistake? Have you ever built a structure, laid a walkway, and put it too close to a young tree?

Anyone ever done that? If you haven't done that, have you ever seen the effects of what happens when someone does that? I've seen many sidewalks where clearly it seemed like a great idea at the time to put it right next to a tree, but over the years what happens is the sidewalk buckles. Because there's a reason putting a structure or putting a walkway right next to a tree can be dangerous. The reason is that as the tree grows, not only do its branches grow, its branches extend upward and outward, but the roots of the tree also extend.

They extend downward, but also outward as well. And so the result is that as a tree grows, its roots slowly but very powerfully disrupt the foundation of any building next to it.

Its roots can cause asphalt or concrete to buckle, to break under the pressure. And as the tree absorbs the nutrients and the soil around it, what it does is it takes that soil and it makes it into new tree roots so that the tree extends into your basement until your home value drops in half because of all the flooding.

[ 1 : 23 ] So it's this slowly extending growth. It's this growth that extends outward. That's, I think, a good picture of how the Lord extends his goodness. How the Lord extends his goodness throughout the world and throughout his people.

Like a tree roots, it can be pretty disruptive, but it's disruptive in a good way. And we can see that happen in Exodus chapter 18. That's on page 59 if you're using one of the blue Bibles that a russer's handout.

Now Exodus chapter 18 continues the story of the people of Israel, the story of the people whom God has rescued from slavery in the land of Egypt, this people that God is bringing through the desert to Mount Sinai.

The Lord is going to bring them to Mount Sinai. We're almost there at the mountain. He's going to establish a new covenant relationship with them, a new, well-defined, committed relationship with them as he prepares them for their journey into the promised land that he has prepared for them, the land of Canaan.

So the Lord has appointed a man named Moses as his prophet, as his mediator to lead the people. And then in Exodus chapter 18, as they're traveling through the wilderness, Moses is going to reunite with a familiar figure in his life.

[ 2 : 41 ] So this is the name of an individual that, if you were here with us at the back in, I guess that would be back in January, February, this is a name that would have been familiar to you from back then.

Exodus chapter 18. I'll read the whole chapter here. Jethro, the priest of Midian, Moses' father-in-law, heard of all that God had done for Moses and for Israel his people, how the Lord had brought Israel out of Egypt.

Now Jethro, Moses' father-in-law, had taken Zipporah, Moses' wife, after he had sent her home, along with her two sons. The name of the one was Gershom, for he said, I have been a sojourner in a foreign land.

And the name of the other, Eleazar, for he said, The God of my father was my help, and delivered me from the sword of Pharaoh. Jethro, Moses' father-in-law, came with his sons and his wife to Moses in the wilderness, where he was encamped at the mountain of God.

And when he said word to Moses, I, your father-in-law Jethro, am coming to you with your wife and her two sons with her, Moses went out to meet his father-in-law and bowed down and kissed him.

[ 3 : 52 ] And they asked each other of their welfare and went into the tent. Then Moses told his father-in-law all that the Lord had done to Pharaoh 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.

And Jethro 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. Jethro said, Blessed be the Lord, who has delivered you out of the hand of the Egyptians and out of the hand of Pharaoh, and has delivered the people from under the hand of the Egyptians.

Now I know that the Lord is greater than all gods. Because in this affair, they dealt arrogantly with the people. And Jethro, Moses' father-in-law, brought a burnt offering and sacrifices to God. And Aaron came with all the elders of Israel to eat bread with Moses' father-in-law before God. The next day, Moses sat 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 are doing for the people? Why do you sit alone, and all the people stand around you from morning till evening?

[ 5 : 06 ] And Moses said to his father-in-law, Because the people come to me to inquire of God when they have a dispute. They come to me, and I decide between one person and another, and I make them know the statutes of God and his laws.

Moses' father-in-law said to him, What you are doing is not good. You and the people with you will certainly wear yourselves out, for the thing is too heavy for you.

You are not able to do it alone. 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 the laws and make them know the way in which they must walk and what they must do.

Moreover, look for able men from all the people, men who fear God, who are trustworthy and hate a bribe, and place such men over the people as chiefs of thousands, of hundreds, of fifties, and of tens, and let them judge the people at all times.

Every great matter they shall bring to you, but any small matter they shall decide themselves. So it will be easier for you, and they will bear the burden with you. If you do this, God will direct you, and you will be able to endure.

[ 6 : 23 ] And all this people also will go to their place in peace. So Moses listened to the voice of his father-in-law and did all that he had said. Moses chose able men out of all Israel and made them heads over the people, chiefs of thousands, of hundreds, of fifties, and of tens.

And they judged the people at all times. Any hard case they brought to Moses, but any small matter they decided themselves. Then Moses let his father-in-law depart, and he went away to his own country.

This is the word of the Lord. Now there are two ways here in chapter 18 in which God extends his goodness. And the first way in which God extends his goodness is in verses 1-12.

So in verses 1-12, here we see that the Lord extends his goodness by welcoming foreigners into his family. The Lord extends his goodness by welcoming foreigners into his family.

You notice the number of times, by the way, just to the point where it gets ridiculous. The number of times that Jethro is referred to as Moses' father-in-law, I was trying to keep count as I was reading that and I just lost count at around seven.

[ 7 : 34 ] There's a heavy emphasis on family relationships here. And what's going on here is that this relationship that Moses has with Jethro is being emphasized because Jethro is being welcomed into the Lord's family.

Basically, this is a conversion story. This is a story of Jethro coming to believe in the God of Israel. Jethro is a pagan priest. He's a priest of the Midianite people, of these nomads in the desert.

But Jethro is changing the God, changing his gods. He is exchanging his old gods that he's worshipped and instead worshipping one God, Yahweh, the Lord, the God of Israel.

And this happens over the course of verses one through eight. In verse one, Jethro, the priest of Midian, Moses' father-in-law, heard of all that God had done for Moses and for Israel, his people, how the Lord had brought Israel out of Egypt.

So before Jethro even sets out, before he's started on his journey to meet up with Moses, Jethro has already heard the news. Now we don't know how he heard the news.

[ 8 : 45 ] It might have been travelers or traders. It might have, maybe his daughter, we don't know quite when, Moses sent his daughter and his sons to be with his father-in-law.

So maybe that happened after the people of Israel brought out of Egypt and so she went across the desert and told Jethro. We don't really know how this happened but somehow, Jethro has learned that God is great.

Jethro has learned that God has overpowered Pharaoh, king of Egypt, and he's done it with ten great plagues and now God has drowned the Egyptian army in the Red Sea after bringing his own people through to safety.

And so this good news, this has been publicly proclaimed. It's not only been proclaimed in Egypt so that all of Egypt knows that the Lord alone is God.

But now this good news is being proclaimed throughout the region of Sinai, throughout the wilderness. And as we read last week, news has gotten around. Some people have responded to this news in the wrong way.

[ 9 : 50 ] The Amalekites responded to this news by locating and attacking the Israelite caravan. They did not respond with fear of the Lord God.

They did not respond in awe and wonder. Jethro is going to respond differently. Jethro is going to respond very differently to the good news. In verse 8, after Jethro meets up with Moses, Moses fills in the details.

But what Moses gives is his own personal account of what took place. Moses catches Jethro up on their experiences, not only in Egypt, but also their experiences traveling through the wilderness. Verse 8, Moses told his father-in-law all that the Lord had done to Pharaoh and to the Egyptians for Israel's sake, all the hardship that had come upon them in the way, their wilderness experiences, and how the Lord had delivered them.

How the Lord had delivered them, not only in Egypt, not only on the way out of Egypt, but as they traveled through the wilderness. The Lord has been continuing to rescue his people. And so Jethro has heard this public proclamation of God's greatness.

[ 11 : 00 ] He has already heard that. Now Jethro is hearing this private testimony of God's goodness. He's learned that not only is the Lord great, he is also good.

And in short, Jethro, in all of this, has heard the message of the gospel. He's heard the gospel in its early form. This good news that the Lord has delivered his people from slavery, that the Lord is bringing his people into a new relationship with himself, that the Lord is preparing them for a promised land he is waiting for them.

The Lord is inviting his people into a new relationship with the God who is great, the God who is good, the God who is with us.

And that is the good news. And this good news of the Exodus, it's meant to be just a taste, just a preview of the good news that is yet to come in its full and final form.

Because there is a new, a better Moses coming. It's a Moses that is written about in Hebrews chapter 3 where we read, Moses was faithful in all God's house as a servant to testify to the things that were to be spoken later.

[ 12 : 17 ] But Christ is faithful over God's house as a son and we are his house if indeed we hold fast our confidence and are boasting in our hope. So what we learned is that Moses is a mediator between God and man but he's a mediator with a lowercase m.

There's a bigger mediator coming, a greater mediator with a capital M. Mediator between God and man. Moses was a servant in God's household and God's family.

But Christ is the son over his household. There is a newer and better savior for the people of God. There is a savior who rescues and it rescues not only the Jewish people but Gentiles too.

from slavery. And this savior, this savior is Jesus Christ. He is our Lord. Jesus is the son of God. Jesus perfectly obeyed God's law on behalf of his people. Jesus never sinned against God. Not even once. Jesus met every right expectation that God had of him.

[ 13 : 29 ] Jesus is fully God and fully man. and so that means that Jesus is able to be this greater mediator between God and man. A greater mediator than Moses ever could be.

As we saw last week and as we see this week, Moses had limits. Moses had weaknesses. Jesus does not. Jesus spoke the gospel.

Jesus spoke the good news that there is a kingdom coming. God's kingdom. Jesus spoke as a greater prophet than Moses ever could be.

Jesus even obeyed his father, God his father, to the point of surrendering his own life. dying on a cross as a sacrifice on our behalf.

He did that to lead us out on an exodus from slavery. From our slavery to our own sin. Our own mindset and rebellion against God and against the Lord's way of life.

[ 14 : 37 ] Jesus did this so that our sins would be forgiven. So that Jesus' goodness would be credited to you and to me. because we're his people. We're his family now.

By faith. So that when Jesus rose again from the dead, three days after he died, Jesus ensured that we too would rise again to eternal life.

We would follow his lead. And this is true for everyone who repents, everyone who turns totally away from their sin, takes a 180 degree turn.

and believes in the gospel of Jesus Christ in this good news. It's good news because no matter how bad you have been, no matter how ashamed and dirty you feel inside, God is extending his goodness to you.

He is extending his goodness to you. And it is because of Jesus that we have this good news. We have this gospel. because of Jesus, the whole world has been given a public proclamation of God's greatness.

[ 15 : 53 ] And you and I are a part of that. You and I are able, now that we have experienced not only the greatness but the goodness of the Lord, we can now deliver our own private testimony of God's goodness.

here is how the Lord has been good to me. Here is how the Lord has saved me. Look, look in the scripture, look, don't you see how good Jesus is? Don't you see how all satisfying, how pleasing, how wonderful he is that there has never been a man like this and that he died so that I might have life and so that you might have life.

Believe in him. there is only one God and only one mediator between God and man, the man Jesus Christ. The Lord extends his goodness by welcoming foreigners into his family.

Now, how does God expect the world to respond to his gospel? We've talked about that a little bit. But Jethro shows us, he gives us a template, a blueprint for how to respond.

So maybe you're sitting here wondering, you're thinking, you know, I have heard about Jesus, I'm familiar with this story now, but I'm not really sure what to do with this.

[ 17 : 10 ] What does God expect? Well, Jethro shows us how every man, every woman, every child on earth is expected to respond to the good news of what Jesus has done for us.

In verse 9, we read, Jethro 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 realize this good news is not brought in so that you can be whipped into shape and turned towards some sort of miserable system of living that crushes all the joy out of your life far from it. This good news is for your joy. It's for your true deep-rooted happiness. Jethro first responds by enjoying, by rejoicing in the goodness of the Lord.

Jethro responds with emotion. Jethro responds with celebration and he speaks in verses 10 and 11. Blessed be the Lord who has delivered you out of the hand of the Egyptians and out of the hand of Pharaoh and has delivered the people from under the hand of the Egyptians.

[ 18 : 28 ] Now I know that the Lord is greater than all gods because in this affair they dealt arrogantly with the people. Jethro loves to see the victory of the Lord over those who would arrogantly try to destroy his people.

Jethro rejoices in the Lord's goodness and he not only rejoices in his goodness. Second, you see in these verses 10 and 11 that Jethro blesses, he speaks words of affirmation as someone in authority.

He blesses, he exalts the Lord for his greatness. He doesn't just keep this bottled up in his heart. He knows that, hey, this joy, this rejoicing, it has to come out of my mouth.

I have to say it. I have to express it. I have to tell the truth. The Lord is great. His name is to be blessed. He is a God that we should exalt, that we should say he is great, that he is good.

And Jethro's response is not only emotional, it's not only verbal, but it's a response that does take action. Verse 12, Jethro, Moses' father-in-law, brought a burnt offering and sacrifices to God.

[ 19 : 45 ] And Aaron came with all the elders of Israel to eat bread with Moses' father-in-law before God. And so that third thing that Jethro does is Jethro brings animal sacrifices to the Lord.

This was an act of worship, taking something that was valuable to you, taking a life and giving it to the Lord and offering it to him. The fourth thing Jethro does is he shares a meal with God and his people.

He shares a family meal together with them. With the sacrifice and with this meal, what Jethro is doing is he isn't just celebrating the Lord's goodness and praising his greatness and then keeping God's people at arm's length and keeping God at arm's length.

He's not just standing off like a spectator watching a sporting event. Jethro's on the field now. He is cementing a new relationship.

The Lord is his God. The Lord's people are his people. So Jethro now counts himself as one of the people of God, as part of the family of God.

[ 20 : 49 ] The Lord is extending his goodness by welcoming foreigners into his family. And this response to the goodness that's extended by the Lord, that's significant for you and for me today because we also have been summoned, we also have been called, every man, woman and child in this room to respond to the gospel, to respond to the God who extends his goodness.

We are, we've been summoned to celebrate, to enjoy the good news, to affirm and praise the God who sent his only son for us, to offer our entire lives as a living sacrifice to him, to join his people, his church, as a new family, the real family.

This new community who are eager to extend the Lord's goodness to the rest of the world because the Lord extends his goodness by welcoming foreigners into his family.

That's good news. That's the first way that the Lord extends his goodness. And there's a second way in which the Lord's goodness extends outwards like roots from a tree. The Lord not only brings good news of salvation to the world, but the Lord also wants his own people to be transformed by their new relationship with him.

The Lord's not in the business of just gathering large numbers of people to show up at church on a Sunday. The Lord's in the business of making disciples. He wants to multiply disciples, people who are following after him with his own heart, who are coming to know him as their father and who are imitating him as his children.

[ 22 : 38 ] That's what the Lord is looking for. The Lord not only brings good news of salvation to the world, but the Lord wants his own people to be transformed by their new relationship with him.

We have to remember the challenge the people of Israel are facing right now. For the first time ever, they are, they're a nation and they're independent now.

Independent of Egypt. They've been underneath Pharaoh's laws and rules and mastery. Now they have to learn how to live as a nation apart from Egypt.

They used to live under the laws of Egypt. And so, the laws of Egypt in many ways would be, there would be a lot of good things in them. The people of Israel would have had a, some would have had a basic concept of right and wrong and some customs and ideas of how they live together.

But now they're not in Egypt anymore and they need new laws. Now, you and I, we often think of, in our culture, we somehow, we train one another to think of laws and rules as sort of a negative thing.

[ 23 : 48 ] They're a restrictive thing. They restrict us. They hold us back from living the good life.

But you know what? Laws and rules are essential to relationships.

If you don't have laws and you don't have rules, you can't have relationships at all. Any more than you can have a train without train tracks. It won't go anywhere. Laws and rules are essential to relationships because they mean that expectations have been clearly set and communicated.

That's really important. If you don't think that clear expectations are essential in relationships, try getting married. Those of you who are married know exactly what I mean.

Did you go into marriage with very different expectations? If you did, you found that you were butting heads pretty fast. You had to set new laws, new rules in your relationship with one another. New expectations. Once you got that in place, then try having children. Now you have to pass on a new family code, a new set of expectations, laws and rules to your children.

[ 24 : 59 ] And that's necessary. We can't relate to one another without that. We can't love one another without that. The train needs rails.

The thing is, now that the people of God, now the people of God, the people of Israel, now that they've been freed from their old master, Pharaoh, now that means their old master's laws and rules, the expectations that Pharaoh set, they no longer apply to them.

And so they need to learn, how are we going to live as a new nation? How are we going to live together? How are we going to get along? Do I just do whatever I feel like? What's right in my own eyes?

Do I just relate to people according to what feels right to me? And let me tell you what, there's a lot of things that'll feel right to you when you're put in the wrong situation.

Things that will feel so good and so right and so life-giving and other people will look at that and realize it, it is death that you are longing for. That sin is so deceiving.

[ 26 : 08 ] The things we long for sometimes are so terrible for us, for our relationship with God, for our relationship with other people and we don't even realize it. It feels so right and so good.

And as a result of pursuing those desires that we have, we come into conflict with other people. We destroy the people around us. We destroy our relationships with them and our relationships with God.

We need new expectations. We need a new way of life as the people of God. So how do the people of Israel live as a new nation? How does their new master, the Lord, how does he expect them to relate to him?

How does he expect them to relate to one another? In other words, how do they live according to the Lord's standard of righteousness?

To be righteous is to live up to the expectations that the Lord has of our relationships with him and with one another. That's what it means simply to be righteous. Well, we're almost at the point in the book of Exodus where God's righteous law is going to be revealed to the people of Israel.

[ 27 : 23 ] But he does something before he does that. Before giving them his righteous law, he gives them a structure and he gives them relationships and leadership that will help in establishing and spreading and communicating and working out his law.

Before God even reveals his law, the Lord is going to provide for his people a structure, a legal structure so that they can work out how to put that law into practice. Because it's easy to hear the Ten Commandments and to agree, yeah, yeah, yeah, I agree with all that, that all sounds good. Let me tell you what, when you face certain specific situations, certain conflicts in your life, things become a lot more murky, don't they? They become a lot more shades of gray. It's easy to say, oh yeah, people shouldn't steal.

But there's issues in our culture, and we'll definitely get to that on the do not steal commandment. There's certain circumstances in our culture where stealing is often considered socially acceptable. There's situations in our culture where adultery is considered socially acceptable. There's situations in our culture which murder, hatred, is considered socially acceptable. Things are not so black and white. Real life is difficult.

[ 28 : 40 ] And so we need relationships and we need leadership in our life to sort through these difficult issues. And the Lord is providing that for his people here. The way that, the way that things have been working out for the people of Israel up until now is in verses 13 through 16.

And if you look at those verses, what we are, what's neat is that we get to see things through the eyes of Jethro. Jethro's this newcomer to God's people. And Jethro is a man with a lot of experience in organizing and structuring a people.

And he watches. He watches Moses sitting down each morning as people are coming to Moses with their conflicts, with their problems, with their questions, this huge long line forming.

And Moses is responding to the people on a case-by-case basis as God's spokesman, as the mediator between God and man. Moses is giving them instructions on how to resolve each dispute they have or each question they have.

Because there isn't, they have some sort of understanding of a law, but there isn't a really well-defined code of laws to resolve their disputes. There isn't a code of values that tells them how they are to live.

[ 29 : 52 ] All they have is sort of this general sense of right and wrong, whatever laws they brought from Egypt, and then this haphazard case-by-case instruction from Moses. So the wait list for an audience with Moses is getting longer and longer.

If you think the BC court system is bad, this is really bad. What if you only had one judge? What if there was only one judge among a whole people group to handle all the cases?

They're standing in line from morning till evening and they're still not getting an answer. People need God's will for their lives. People need to know what God expects of them in their specific

circumstances.

Don't you need that? Don't you go through the day wondering, what does God expect of me in this situation? How am I supposed to respond? What's the right thing to do? I'm presented with so many different choices and I'm not sure which to take.

they're seeking God's will for their lives. They're coming to Moses but they're not getting God's will for their lives because Moses is too busy. So what happens next?

[ 31 : 02 ] I like to think of this as a bit of a kitchen nightmares moment and so before I begin with this, I'm not recommending the TV show Kitchen Nightmares. There's a lot of crass language. It's better left out of our vocabulary but if you have ever seen the show, the formula here is that Chef Gordon Ramsay, he comes into this local restaurant into a local restaurant that's invited him and the showrunners in and this restaurant is deep in debt.

This restaurant is struggling to survive and usually what happens is that we the viewers see very clearly, very fast why the restaurant is struggling to survive. Usually the restaurant's owners are just completely clueless.

They don't realize how dirty the conditions they're in. They don't realize how dysfunctional their business is. They don't realize how terrible their food is and so what happens is Chef Ramsay spends half the episode insulting their food, yelling at the owners and staff and just beating them up until they realize how terrible their restaurant is.

He has to break them down first. It often takes a lot of work and then Ramsay shows them how to make good food instead. How to replace their bad food with good food. How to replace their dysfunctional relationships with good relationships in a restaurant.

How to set clear expectations for what is and isn't good. how to run their restaurant properly. And magically he all does that within the space of an hour long episode. All their problems are fixed, right?

[ 32 : 23 ] Perfect reality TV. Well, Jethro is like this ancient Midianite version of Chef Ramsay except that he's not a jerk. Here's what Jethro tells Moses in verses 17 through 18.

What you are doing is not good. That's about as mean as he gets. What you are doing is not good. You and the people with you will certainly wear yourselves out. For the thing is too heavy for you. You are not able to do it alone. So Moses has had a solution up until now. And Moses' solution is this. I'll do it myself. I'll take it all on. Moses hasn't exactly figured out this whole delegation thing. He's taking it all on himself. And that has not been good. It's not been good for anybody. Moses' solution has failed to extend the goodness of God to his people.

God's goodness is not being extended to his people. It has not been good for Moses because it exhausts Moses. It isolates Moses.

[ 33 : 32 ] He's doing this alone. Leadership isolates you. You're on your own especially when you're trying to run everything by yourself. It's not been good for the people because they're not learning what God expects of them.

They're not learning God's will for their lives. They're not learning how to live in relationship to God and relationship with one another. Moses needs help. Moses needs help in communicating God's will.

In counseling his people. In judging between people. And so here Jethro becomes the means that God uses. Jethro becomes a channel of God's goodness.

The way by which God extends his goodness to his own people. The Lord extends his goodness by directing his people through qualified leaders. The Lord extends his goodness by directing his people through qualified leaders.

The reason Jethro is proposing a system of judges to Moses is that these qualified leaders can help him communicate God's will. Now in order to direct God's people in the laws and the values that God expects them to adopt Jethro lays out the qualifications for leaders.

[ 34 : 47 ] You can't just have anybody doing this. Among God's people you need certain qualifications for who can and can't serve in these roles as leaders and judges and counselors. First of all what Jethro doesn't say what he doesn't say is just as important as what he does say.

Because you can think about who we might naturally elect or choose for a position of leadership in the church. Jethro doesn't list charisma that magnetic personality that big smile that person who just lights up a room when you walk into it.

That's not a qualification. Jethro doesn't list popularity. Jethro doesn't list seniority that just because you've been around for a long time that therefore you should be a leader.

Jethro doesn't list lineage that you come from the right family the right stock. These are not what is needed among God's leaders. Those are not things that God is looking for in his leaders.

Instead in verse 21 Jethro lists four attributes of qualified leaders. first of all Jethro calls these leaders in verse 21 able men. So qualified leaders are capable.

[ 36 : 08 ] They are capable. They have knowledge of who God is. They know him. And they've learned about him. They know what God requires of his people.

Not only do they have a knowledge of God but they have a knowledge of the people that they're judging and leading. They know their people. And they have experience in overseeing and directing people. Maybe at a lesser level.

But now they're ready for the next step. Qualified leaders are capable. Second Jethro calls them men who fear God in verse 21.

Men who fear God. Qualified leaders second fear God. Now we spent three weeks recently learning about the fear of the Lord. If you were there for that series you know exactly why this is so valuable. You know exactly why qualified leaders fear God. The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom. The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom because it places the Lord as the controlling and governing center of our lives.

[ 37 : 15 ] And the fear of the Lord frees us from the fear of man. It frees us from being overwhelmed by a desire to please other people. People pleasing leaders are the worst. the fear of the Lord gives a leader both wisdom and boldness.

Wisdom in how to care for people. Wisdom in how to handle delicate situations. Wisdom in how to speak gently but firmly and boldness and not backing down when other people are coming at you. When other people are angry with you and upset at you. The fear of the Lord frees you from that. Qualified leaders are capable and qualified leaders fear God. And then third, Jethro calls them, verse 21, trustworthy.

So qualified leaders are trustworthy. They're trustworthy in their words and in their actions. So whenever a trustworthy person speaks, you know their words are solid gold.

Their words are going to be true. You don't doubt for a moment that they're telling you the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth. Whenever a trustworthy person makes a commitment, you know that their commitment is true as well.

[ 38 : 29 ] They're going to keep their word. If they say they'll be here at such and such a time, you know they'll be there. You don't have to follow up repeatedly with them and make sure they aren't just going to disappear or flake out.

They'll be there. Whenever they make a commitment, they'll keep their word. So qualified leaders are trustworthy. They're capable, they fear God, they're trustworthy. And then fourth and finally, Jethro says these men hate a bribe.

Good quality for a church leader. You can't pay them off. Qualified leaders have integrity. They have integrity. They are not going to be swayed in their judgment by bribes or by promises of reward.

Things will go better for you if you do this. If you do this, I'll make your life really easy. I'll give more money to the church. I'll do this, I'll do this if you do that.

Qualified leaders will not back down when faced with anger and threats either. They're not swayed by a carrot, they're not swayed by a stick. They'll stand in there. Qualified leaders are capable, qualified leaders fear God, qualified leaders are trustworthy, qualified leaders have integrity.

[ 39 : 46 ] In verse 23, Jethro explains how qualified leaders are a way that God extends his goodness to his people. Verse 23, if you do this, God will direct you, you will be able to endure, and all those people also will go to their place in peace.

So if Moses follows Jethro's advice, he follows his counsel, then God will be honored as his commandments are obeyed. Moses will find relief and rest so that he can endure the heavy load of leadership.

The people are going to enjoy peace with one another. Their relationships will be restored and made well as they learn to live righteously and justly, as they all together adhere to the same set of expectations that God has for their relationships with one another and with him.

They're all on the same page, and man, that creates such harmony in our relationships when we all can agree to follow the Lord's will and not our own competing and clashing desires.

The Lord will extend his goodness by directing his people through qualified leaders. Now, all of this sounds great in theory.

[ 41 : 03 ] It sounds great on paper. It sounds great in the abstract. Let's talk about real life. You and I, we all know people who don't like being corrected. You're looking at one of them.

We don't like being corrected. We don't like Chef Ramsey barging into our lives, telling us all the stuff we're doing wrong and telling us what to do. We don't like that. But we need that if we're going to experience the goodness of the Lord.

Moses wants to experience the goodness of the Lord. Moses longs to experience the goodness of the Lord. He longs for that more than he wants to preserve his own sense of pride and dignity.

Moses is a man who is humble. He's a man who's not too proud to admit that he's been doing things wrong.

Not even to his own in-law, by the way, his own father-in-law. He'll humble himself enough to say, yeah, you're right, I'm wrong. I'll follow your advice. Verses 24 through 25.

[ 42 : 04 ] Moses listened to the voice of his father-in-law and did all that he had said. Moses chose able men out of all Israel and made them heads over the people, chiefs of thousands, of hundreds, of fifties, and of tens.

Moses is a teachable man. And that's so necessary for a good leader, to be teachable, to be humble. So the Lord extends his goodness by directing his people through qualified leaders.

It's not just the singular chosen prophet, the singular mediator, who is caring for the people of God.

That's a job for others as well. The Lord prepares leaders for this ministry of teaching, of judging, of counseling, of shepherding.

The same is true today. It's not just Jesus Christ who leads, teaches, judges, shepherds, counsels his people. This is part of our responsibility in the family of God towards one another.

this division of the people we see in verse 25 into thousands, hundreds, fifties, tens. It's quite distinctive language. It's not very common in the Bible a phrase like that, but it does occur later on.

[ 43 : 19 ] It actually occurs, it's echoed that language in the ministry of Jesus Christ. Because there's one point in Jesus' ministry where he is also, just like Moses, he's surrounded by this huge crowd of people.

This crowd, the men alone, numbered 5,000, let alone all the women and the children. And like all the people of Israel in the wilderness, these people need somebody to feed them.

They need somebody to shepherd them. They need somebody to teach them. And so Jesus takes five loaves of bread and he takes two fish for the entire crowd. And then in Mark chapter 6 we read this, then he commanded them all to sit down in groups on the green grass.

So they sat down in groups. Here's the language. By hundreds and by fifties. By hundreds and by fifties. And taking the five loaves and the two fish, he looked up to heaven and said a blessing and broke the loaves and gave them to the disciples to set before the people.

He gave them to the disciples to set before the people. From beginning to end in the story, Jesus, he could have done everything he wanted to do himself. He could have just had all the bread magically appear in front of everybody.

[ 44 : 27 ] He didn't have to have the disciples divide them up neatly into groups and to take charge over certain groups in certain sections. He didn't have to have the disciples distribute the bread and the fish before all the people, but he did. And he divided the two fish among them all and they all ate and were satisfied.

They all ate. They were satisfied. They experienced the Lord's goodness in all its fullness. just as Moses did long before.

Jesus divides that crowd up by hundreds and by fifties. Jesus appoints his disciples to care for them and so it is with you and me today. Jesus has appointed leaders in his church to care for and shepherd the flock.

I think first of all of the formal leadership structure of our church that the New Testament writings have called us to, that God has called us to. We have elders, we have deacons or ministry leaders. These elders, we're in great need of elders. Right now it's myself, Carl Neufeld, Doug Lye. We're in great need of future elders in our church.

[ 45 : 32 ] Of men who are able to stand up and to lead God's people and to care for them and to shepherd them. We're in great need of ministry leaders. We're in great need of men and women who are eager to take on the ministry of the church to free the elders for prayer and ministry of the word.

We're in great need, outside of even the formal leadership structure, we're in great need of disciple makers. People who are willing to be mentors. People who are willing to take others alongside them and say, hey, I'm not super far along in my Christian walk, but maybe I'm a couple steps in front of you.

Why don't you come along with me? Why don't you follow me around, learn to live life with me? Why don't we study something together? The Lord is looking for leaders in our church, for people who are stepping up.

If Jesus has called you to be a Christian, if he has called you to be a Christian, then he has called you to this task. There are disciples of Jesus Christ here this morning that I know Jesus is calling you and urging you to step up in a time of need.

Because are you not the ones through whom Jesus, to whom God our Father extends his goodness? Are you not the ones through whom the Holy Spirit is working?

[ 46 : 48 ] The Lord extends his goodness by directing his people through qualified leaders. By making disciples of one another, and then by bringing his good news beyond the confines of our church family, bringing his good news to our community, to our world.

When we do that, we're like that root system. The goodness of the Lord extending outward, welcoming foreigners into his family, making them part of the family of God.

God's influence is growing. God's kingdom is expanding. His goodness is extending outward through us. And that's why Jesus says in Mark chapter 4, God's kingdom is growing.

And that's why we compare the kingdom of God. Or what parable shall we use for it? It is like a grain of mustard seed, which when sown on the ground is the smallest of all the seeds on earth. Yet when it is sown, it grows up and becomes larger than all the garden plants and puts out large branches so that the birds of the air can make nests in its shade.

[ 48 : 05 ] that's what the kingdom of God is like. It doesn't stay small. It grows. This is the God who extends his goodness through his church to the world.

Let's pray.