

St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church
Worship This Week June 22, 2025

SCRIPTURE INTRO – Last week we read about Jethro's spiritual awakening. Jethro was the father-in-law of Moses, the priest from the people of Midian. Jethro heard all about how God delivered the Israelites from Egypt and provided and protected them in the desert. So he had to see and hear the story for himself. Moses witnessed God's glory and Jethro believed. It was a classic example of someone providing testimony. A seeker approaches a believer and asks them to tell them more about what God has done. The believer tells the story and provides examples. The seeker is touched by the Holy Spirit and a new believer is born. They held a time of worship then had a celebratory meal together.

SCRIPTURE – Exodus 18:13-27

MESSAGE – After the celebration feast had ended and presumably everyone had a good night's sleep, it's Monday morning and back to work. In Moses' case, it was back to the grind. The author of Exodus states that Moses worked "from morning until evening" and notes that there were long lineups of people who waited for their audience with him. Because Moses knew God and His Word, he was able to fairly settle disputes among the children of Israel. Yet taking all this responsibility by himself was a massive burden. It would have been exhausting. It reminds me of the old Dunkin' Donuts commercial, "time to make the donuts." It opens with Fred the Baker waking up very early and shuffling out the door to another early-morning shift. He does it over and over, every morning. Every day, he produces several dozen donuts. The campaign became a cultural phenomenon and it continued for years. Fred was relatable. He may have been a fictional character, but there are many people like that. Everyone loves people like Fred – hard working, dedicated but when the people arrive eager for a taste, he greets them with joy. It's worth getting up at stupid-o'clock and doing the hard work when you are greeted by grateful people who really love their donuts. For Moses, he might have been thinking something similar. For the leader of Israel, it was worth the 12-hour days listening to problems and serving up advice because the people really needed it. The image of Fred the Baker is funny and powerful enough to mask the underlying reality that the man is working himself to death. Moses and Fred the Baker are workaholics. You see how Fred shuffles from the bedroom to the bathroom – he's barely able to get out of bed. The people love the donuts and that keeps him going. Moses was appreciated by the people also, otherwise they would not be lining up and waiting to tell him their problems. But sooner or later, he's going to crack. Jethro, ever the wise, saw this clearly. "This is

not good!” Moses’ father-in-law exclaimed. This was wisdom from someone older and more experienced. It wasn’t that Moses was unfit to hear their disputes; it wasn’t that he didn’t care about their disputes; it wasn’t that the job was beneath him, and it wasn’t that the people didn’t want Moses to hear their disputes. The bottom line:

- (1) Moses was overworked and simply could not cope with all he had to do;
- (2) the people were deprived of immediate attention and swift justice;
- (3) elders and other competent individuals were not given the opportunity to use their talents.

“You’re going to wear yourself out—and the people, too. This job is too heavy a burden for you to handle all by yourself.” Moses needed to delegate. Note Jethro’s reference to the people also getting worn out. Is he suggesting that the people would eventually get tired of Moses? Perhaps Moses might show signs of burnout and not be as sharp with his wisdom – or perhaps his tone might not be as loving. There are a limited number of problems and at some point, Mose would have seen and heard everything and might have got tired of the same issue being presented over and over.

SCRIPTURE – Exodus 18:19-23

MESSAGE – Moses is doing one thing right. He is representing the people before God. This is a divine duty for which Moses was anointed. He cannot refuse God’s call and command. As priest and prophet, Moses was also teaching God’s decrees, passing on His instructions and showing them how to conduct their lives. This must continue. But that is where he was to draw the line. He needed a team of people. I note the adjective “capable” to describe those who were to be chosen to be on the team. They were also to be “honest” and “hate bribes.” Capable means they were to be people of ability, to have the appropriate spiritual gifts. To receive gifts, they first needed to be Godly; they needed to know the Lord, to be submitted to truth and weather to seek and God’s will over their own. In that light, hating bribes meant they were people of honour. Their eyes were open to temptation. Given that the nation has a few million people, the task of appointing and organizing people in groups of 10, 50, 100 and 1,000 would have taken some time. But God would have honoured those who were appointed at any level; this was more logistics and than hierarchy. How did Moses respond?

SCRIPTURE – Exodus 18:24-27

MESSAGE – Much to Moses’ credit, he was teachable. The elder spoke and the son-in-law listened to Godly advice. There is a tendency by people to be too proud and not take advice. The result would be a smoother operation. In theory at least.

This method had the advantage of settling problems quickly because people didn't need to wait in line for Moses. The longer a problem is unresolved, the worse it becomes. We all know that. That truth is backed up when the Lord instructed in Matthew 5:25 to settle our disagreements with our adversaries *quickly*. It would also be a sustainable lifestyle. Moses would be able to concentrate on his primary calling. As we heard in last Sunday's message, we can learn from people from other cultures and religions. God can and does use them to teach His people. Secular schools of management should not be dismissed just because they don't quote scripture. This is especially true in the church. When God's people are teachable – like Moses – the Kingdom is in a position to grow. This was Israel badly needed in that moment in its history. They were being transformed from 12 tribes on the run and were becoming a nation. They needed to be less reliant on a single leader and more set up to be a team. In today's world, it's why we have job descriptions and organizational charts. Everyone has a job description and knows their specific area of responsibility. Everyone is aware of the lines of communication. This is necessary in all areas of human activity. I am going to suggest that it is even more important in organizations which operate largely by volunteers. Service clubs are a good example. I have belonged to a few over the years. Checks and balances. Most people have an innate sense that we are better when we work as a team, rather than a collection of lone wolves. Workload is often the killer. Some people find it difficult to set boundaries. Perhaps it is a disdain for laziness. Or they are a pleaser and want everyone to be happy. Sounds like Moses. This is not sustainable. If one person is doing too many things, what happens when that person is sick or departs for whatever reason. The organization, or the nation, can fall apart. Thank God for people such as Jethro. Men and women who are gifted with great wisdom. Who can instantly see the problem and can very quickly see the solution. Jethro – as I pointed out last week – was not raised under God's covenant promise. The church can learn from people who are not from our tradition. Of course, we must follow the commands of God as written in scripture and empowered by The Spirit. But we are also commanded to go into the world. Whether it's in exile in Babylon or exile on Main Street does not matter. We are not a gated community. It's why I literally put out the welcome sign during the week, not just on Sunday. It's why the Presbyterian Church has welcomed people from other nations. Proof of that blessing is the fact that our non-Anglo congregations (founded by Koreans, Hungarians, Egyptians, Jamaicans and others) are among the healthiest, spiritually speaking. The church is much more alive in the Third World and parts of Asia than here in North America. We

don't know what happened to Jethro after he returned to Midian. God brought him to Israel to share a great gift of wisdom, which played an important part of the nation's development. He returned as a believer in one God – Yahweh. Both groups (Israel and the Priest of Midian) were devoted to God and convinced of the need to serve him without condition. And yet we can still operate under our own cultures, languages and practices. What a powerful reminder of how we can all grow closer to God together. AMEN