

Steve Holland. 1st February 2009. Exodus 18.

Moses and the visit of Jethro

Intro

1. The lord has been speaking to me a lot over the last year about The Crown.
2. Recently as we started the New Year I was praying and God gave me two pictures of The Crown and a set of bible passages to study.
3. I had one picture from God before I did the bible study and another after.
4. I am going to make my preach today all about one of these bible passages.
5. Before I preach about the passage I will share one of the pictures from God and then after I will share the other.
6. I have already shared all this with Martin and he is happy with me sharing it with the Church.

Picture 1

1. I saw a tarpaulin on the floor in the mud.
 2. It was heavy and good quality – fit for purpose.
 3. God was unfolding it.
 4. As it was unfolded it was clear that it was a tent.
 5. It was the tent of the lords for meeting him in.
 6. It had a good strong tent pole.
 7. Tent was ready to go up big and strong
 8. It needed people to work together to put it up.
- The canvas was good and it was ready to go up.
I felt this was encouraging us that we are ready for growth with the right materials in place.

The following preach is one of three on the three passages I studied in response to this picture from God. The title of my series is “we are all in this together”. The overall theme is about how God wants and needs

each one of us to be involved in His mission of to see The Crown Church succeed as God has planned.

Turn in your bibles to Exodus 18.

I will tell you the story that unfolds in this passage. You may choose to follow on using the verses that appear on the screen or just listen to the story. I hope like me God will speak to you as we hear his word.

Jethro visits Moses

- We jump forward in time from the story of the Passover. Probably two years.
- Moses and the people of Israel have escaped from Egypt and are travelling in the desert to the land God has promised them.
- They have received the Law from
- They are camped near to the mountain where God met with Moses.
- They have set up as God commanded them a tent of meeting called the tabernacle.
- Moses is about to get a visit from his in laws, His wife's family.
 - Wife and two sons sent away earlier.
 - Moses Sons names Show faith in God
 - Gershom, "I have become an alien in a foreign land";
 - Eliezer, "My father's God was my helper; he saved me from the sword of Pharaoh."
- Moses father in law is the leader of the family and a very important man
- He sends a message to say I am coming and bringing your wife and two sons.
- Imagine the feelings
 - Love for his wife
 - Pleasure to see the boys - how have they grown?
 - Wanting to please his father in law

1 Now Jethro, the priest of Midian and father-in-law of Moses, heard of everything God had done for Moses and for his people Israel, and how the LORD had brought Israel out of Egypt.

2 After Moses had sent away his wife Zipporah, his father-in-law Jethro received her 3 and her two sons. One son was named Gershom, ^[a] for Moses said, "I have become an alien in a foreign land"; 4 and the other was named Eliezer, ^[b] for he said, "My father's God was my helper; he saved me from the sword of Pharaoh."

5 Jethro, Moses' father-in-law, together with Moses' sons and wife, came to him in the desert, where he was camped near the mountain of God. 6 Jethro had sent word to him, "I, your father-in-law Jethro, am coming to you with your wife and her two sons."

- Moses goes out to the edge of the camp to greet his honoured guest.
- He bows down low and kisses his feet.
- He takes him into the tent of the meeting (the best place they have and the place where they go to meet with God) and they have much to talk about.
- Jethro has heard that God has rescued the people from Pharaoh in Egypt and wants to know all about it.
- Moses tells him all about the plagues
 - The Passover
 - The many challenges they have had
 - The armies that God has defeated.
 - How God stopped the millions of them starving to death in the desert by miracles of giving them food and water.
 - About the hard times and the good times.

7 So Moses went out to meet his father-in-law and bowed down and kissed him. They greeted each other and then went into the tent. 8 Moses told his father-in-law about everything the LORD had done to Pharaoh and the Egyptians for Israel's sake and about all the hardships they had met along the way and how the LORD had saved them.

- Jethro is very pleased to hear all the news and praises God for rescuing them from Egypt.

- He says that the God they worship “Jehovah” is greater than all the gods of Egypt and other countries.
- Jethro is a priest and he says let us make an offering to God to thank him for all that he has done and recognise that he is great.
 - Moses agrees and so a worship service is held and offerings of animals and bread are made to God (almost certainly in the way God has told Moses)
 - All the leaders of the people are called to attend a party including Moses Brother Aaron.
 - As is normal at these sacrifices some of the meat is offered to God as a burnt sacrifice and then they all sit down to eat the rest at a big party.
 - Everyone is happy.
 - They are celebrating how God has rescued them and looked after them.
 - Perhaps the people had forgotten how amazing it was, but as the stories are told again to Jethro the wonder of God’s rescue plan hits them again.
 - What a party, food, good company and worship of God.

9 Jethro was delighted to hear about all the good things the LORD had done for Israel in rescuing them from the hand of the Egyptians. 10 He said, "Praise be to the LORD, who rescued you from the hand of the Egyptians and of Pharaoh, and who rescued the people from the hand of the Egyptians. 11 Now I know that the LORD is greater than all other gods, for he did this to those who had treated Israel arrogantly." 12 Then Jethro, Moses' father-in-law, brought a burnt offering and other sacrifices to God, and Aaron came with all the elders of Israel to eat bread with Moses' father-in-law in the presence of God.

- The next day they get up and Moses Gets back to work.
- Jethro as honoured guest was probably allowed to lie in and have breakfast and get dressed when he likes.
- Picture the scene – Jethro comes out about 11 am to find that Moses has already been hard a work for several hours.
- Jethro joins him for a while to see what goes on.
- People come to see Moses to sort out disputes.
 - One is between two men over who owns a goat.

- Another is between two tribal leaders over how to share out the water between their hundreds of animals. If both tribes go to the watering hole at the same time the animals all get mixed up and a couple of times their men have started fighting. Moses suggests they take turns to go at various times of day and the two men discuss how to organise this while Moses chips in occasionally.
- This continues till 1pm when they break for lunch.
 - Jethro and Moses have some flat bread a nice cool drink and some fruit.
- By 2pm Moses is back at it again and finally as the Sun goes down at 7pm he stops and come back to the family tent to eat.
- As he leaves some people who have been waiting all day go away moaning because they had not been seem yet and will have to come back in the morning and queue again.
- Moses is really tired and as they share the evening meal Jethro starts to tell him what he thinks of what he has seen.
- “Why do you sit as judge keeping the people waiting all day to speak to you” he asks
- What are you achieving for the people by doing this?
- Moses explains that God has given the Law to Moses and that He knows the way God does things. He explains that the people want to know how to do things Gods way so come to him to find out.
- If they have disputes I sort them out and so peace is kept in the camp.
- I tell them the Laws of God and how God says they should live.

13 The next day Moses took his seat to serve as judge for the people, and they stood around him from morning till evening. 14 When his father-in-law saw all that Moses was doing for the people, he said, "What is this you are doing for the people? Why do you alone sit as judge, while all these people stand around you from morning till evening?"

15 Moses answered him, "Because the people come to me to seek God's will. 16 Whenever they have a dispute, it is brought to me, and I decide between the parties and inform them of God's decrees and laws."

- Jethro tells it Moses straight – What you are doing is not good.
 - You will get work out doing all the work
 - The people will get worn out waiting to see you.
 - The work is much too heavy for one man to do alone
 - You can't keep going like this or you will have a breakdown.
- Jethro says – I have some advice for you.
 - I think my advice is good by God but you can decide for yourself if you think it is good or not.
 - What do you think?
 - Would you like to know my opinion?
- Moses agrees and this is what Jethro says.
- Firstly there are things that you should be doing instead of sitting here judging cases all day. Here is what you Moses should be doing.
- V20 Teach them the decrees
 - God's Ways – preaching and teaching
 - How to worship
 - How to run the tribes God's way with fairness.
- and laws,
 - Teach them a whole system of morality
 - What is right
 - What is wrong
 - The 10 commands of God and much more
 - How to apply God's way of thinking to every area of life.
 - Individually how they should behave
 - How to behave to each other.
 - How to behave to family
 - How to behave to outsiders
 - How to behave in marriage
- and show them the way to live
 - Show the people how to live to please God.
 - Live the way that pleases God yourself as Moses did.
 - Teach them how to live God's way.
 - Relying on God for salvation – not trying to make it by yourself
 - Not trying to live to please yourself but living life as worship to God a
- and the duties they are to perform
 - Teach them what to do!

- Make sure that they know what to do and that they actually do it.
 - Tell them practically what they need to do
 - The tasks that are needed in the camp for them all to live together.
 - The things they need to do to be ready to take the land that God has promised them.
 - How they need to give money
 - How they should get involved in prayer
 - How they should care for each other.
 - What they should actually do
- Jethro went on to say That Moses needed to share out the work with others
 - V21 But select capable men from all the people—men who fear God, trustworthy men who hate dishonest gain—and appoint them as officials over thousands, hundreds, fifties and tens.
 - This is what the men you choose should be like
 - Four characteristics of all the leaders he is to choose
 - Able – have the ability to do what you ask
 - Fear of God – wise- follow God not their own ideas
 - Trustworthy – seek to do what is right not to make things better for themselves of their friends and family
 - Honesty – always truthful – always reliable
 - Note – no special skills beyond these three
 - They are capable men but their capability varies says Jethro so give them the amount of responsibility that they can cope with. Give them the work they are suited to.
 - Give some thousands to look after
 - Give some hundreds
 - Give some ten to look after.
 - 22 Have them serve as judges for the people at all times, but have them bring every difficult case to you; the simple cases they can decide themselves.
 - Give them delegated authority
 - Let them make decisions on their own.

- They will be able if you teach them right to cover everything.
- They will always be available because there are more of them.
- They can bring difficulties to you if they need to
- You do not need to know all the ins and outs of all the cases any more.
- If you do this says Jethro your Load will be lighter because you will have shared it out amongst more people.
- If you do it you will find that you can cope from week to week with your workload.
- If you do this then the people will not be dissatisfied any more but will go home each day knowing their needs have been met.

17 Moses' father-in-law replied, "What you are doing is not good. 18 You and these people who come to you will only wear yourselves out. The work is too heavy for you; you cannot handle it alone. 19 Listen now to me and I will give you some advice, and may God be with you. You must be the people's representative before God and bring their disputes to him. 20 Teach them the decrees and laws, and show them the way to live and the duties they are to perform. 21 But select capable men from all the people—men who fear God, trustworthy men who hate dishonest gain—and appoint them as officials over thousands, hundreds, fifties and tens. 22 Have them serve as judges for the people at all times, but have them bring every difficult case to you; the simple cases they can decide themselves. That will make your load lighter, because they will share it with you. 23 If you do this and God so commands, you will be able to stand the strain, and all these people will go home satisfied."

- Moses listened to Jethro and decided to do as he advised.
- He stopped doing all the judging and instead gave his time to teaching the people.
- First he chose the leaders and taught them what he wanted of them.
- Then he taught all the people as they came to listen to his teaching.
- He chose men from all the people not just a few select ones or you immediate family and friends.
- Everyone was represented, each tribe, each group, each clan, No one was left out.

- Some of the leaders looked after 10 people, some hundreds and some thousands.
- They sorted out all the cases and problems brought to them.
- If they had a difficult case then they took it to Moses but this did not happen to often because Moses had been teaching them so well.

24 Moses listened to his father-in-law and did everything he said. 25 He chose capable men from all Israel and made them leaders of the people, officials over thousands, hundreds, fifties and tens. 26 They served as judges for the people at all times. The difficult cases they brought to Moses, but the simple ones they decided themselves.

- Moses wanted Jethro to stay a round and we think he did for a while.
- Soon though Jethro wanted to go back to his family in Midian and so Moses sent him off.
- A very different Moses and a very different people of Israel from when Jethro arrived a few months before.

27 Then Moses sent his father-in-law on his way, and Jethro returned to his own country.

2nd Picture

So I studied the passage and two other passages in Exodus and then the Lord took me back to the picture of the canvas on the ground. Now the picture had changed. It was the same canvas but now it had been pulled up to become a massive tent, with flags flying from the top and thousands of people of all different colours and races going in to hear the word of God and worship. I felt that God was saying that this is a picture of the future for the Crown Church. Now we are fighting with a bit of canvas in the ground but in the future it will be a massive tent where many people can come and worship God.

How do we apply this passage and these pictures to where we are today in the Crown.

1. God is building his church.
 - a. The Crown is Gods Church.
 - b. He wants to catch us all up in the vision of building a church where thousands of people of different races and colours can worship together.
 - c. A place where many people in Handsworth and beyond can come to know Jesus Christ and learn to follow him as part of our church family.
 - d. I do not know weather God wants us to have one massive church or plant lots of smaller ones of a few hundred members but I do know that what God has called us to in building a deliberately multicultural church that honours the truth of the bible and the work of the Holy Spirit is exciting. It worth giving my life to.
 - e. In twenty or 40 years time as we look back on where we have come from we will be amazed at what God has done. What Jesus has done in our lives it too big to keep to ourselves?
 - f. What God is doing in bring us together from such different backgrounds to work together and worship him is amazing. Kurds, Iranians, Punjabis, English, Latinos, Scottish, Africans, Shi Lankan, welsh, Swedish, Greek, and many others living in a community that cares for each other. It is amazing and it does not happen in the world. It is a witness to the amazing love and grace we find in Christ Jesus
2. God is at work on his church and needs to change some things about us.
 - a. Just as Moses had to teach the people God's ways we need to let God peak to us.
 - b. Just as Moses had to listen and see that there was a better way to do things we need to change our behaviours and thinking.
3. We are all in this together.
 - a. The New Testament has a way of putting it which we call the Priesthood of all believers.

- b. Some types of Christianity teach that you need a priest – a special person to come between you and God.
 - c. The wonder of the Gospel is that all of us can know Jesus for ourselves. We do not need someone to make a way for us to know God. Jesus made a way and we can know God for ourselves. We can have a personal relationship with the God who made the heavens and call him daddy, papa, Father, Abbi.
 - d. It is a theological point that many of us agree with but do our actions match our belief? Others do not have a clue what I just said but let me illustrate
- Ask people what is Church
 - Put a picture of a church building up
 - Ask if it is church.
 - What is church then?
 - Church is the people not the building.
4. Illustrations of ways our views of Church can be distorted.
- a. Imagine it is Monday morning. Act this out in pairs
 - i. What did you do on Sunday
 - ii. I went to church.
 - b. Ask for a couple of people to give their answers.
 - c. Ask the question again
 - i. What is church?
 - ii. How can you go to something that you already are?
 - d. Our language gives away what we actually think.
 - e. We think that church is something that we attend.
 - i. I go to school
 - ii. I go to church
 - iii. I work for School part time 3 days a week
 - iv. I work for church part time in a voluntary capacity 2 days a week.
 - f. I get it wrong too
 - g. I am part of Church, we are church.
 - i. When we sit down to a meal at John and penny's we are church,
 - ii. When we help at the contact class we are church

- iii. When a group of us help a single mum move house we are church.
 - iv. When a woman visits another woman in an abusive relationship who can't come here on a Sunday we are Church.
 - v. When we all go to a funeral for the mother of someone who has died we are church
 - vi. When we meet to practice songs for Sunday we are church
 - vii. When we are here at 9 am setting up we are church.
 - viii. When we have breakfast at the Blecker-Davis's we are church
 - ix. When we meet at the Lewis's to pray we are church
 - x. When we get together to watch DR Who, play games or endure the Eurovision song contest we are church.
 - xi. When we see that we are church we will want to get involved
 - xii. When we understand that we are church we will include others in things we do.
 - xiii. When we see that we are church we will welcome others who are not yet church.
 - h. If we see church as an event we attend we will be spectators.
 - i. We could be at a film
 - j. We could be at an Aston villa game
 - k. If we see it as a service we will be consumers.
5. We live in a consumer generation. Everything is about what other people can do to serve us. It affects how we think.
6. God does not want us to think like this he wants us all to be caught up in the mission he has called us to. To be a community with a purpose.
7. God wants all of us to be involved. He does not want any of us to be left out.
8. In 20 or 40 years he wants us to be able to look back at how we have each played our part in seeing the tent go up. As thousands of peoples lives are changed by the Crown church, as people from many nations worship together giving Glory to Jesus he wants us to be pleased that we are part of it.

9. The Crown Church is going to grow. God wants us to be involved.
 - a. When I went to Newday and we say hundreds of young peoples lives changed it was nice to watch.
 - b. Being involved however was better than just being a spectator. We may have just walked round in the mud, and knocked in tent pegs but God had used us to build his Church.
 - c. As s student here you can come and worship here on a Sunday. You are welcome and your parents will be pleased if you have church you call home in Birmingham.
 - d. How much better if in three years time you can look at what God has done through you getting involved in the life of the Church.
10. Many people here are serving God in lots of ways but there are lots of opportunities to get involved. God does not want you to miss out, you are important in his plans to build the Crown Church. He can do it without you but he would rather have you in on it.
11. We all have different skills, we all have different capabilities. Some can cope with leading ten people come to Christ and join the Crown in the next 20 years, some fifty, some 100 and some a thousand but all of us can be involved.
12. The point of the story today is that all of us are like the leaders Moses chose. None of us are left out, we can all take part.
13. The message puts it very well at the end of Ephesians chapter 2 when it says

19-22 That's plain enough, isn't it? You're no longer wandering exiles. This kingdom of faith is now your home country. You're no longer strangers or outsiders. You belong here, with as much right to the name Christian as anyone. God is building a home. He's using us all—irrespective of how we got here—in what he is building. He used the apostles and prophets for the foundation. Now he's using you, fitting you in brick by brick, stone by stone, with Christ Jesus as the cornerstone that holds all the parts together. We see it taking shape day after day—a holy temple built by God, all of us built into it, a temple in which God is quite at home.

Let's Pray.

- If you do not know Jesus for yourself, if you have relied on someone else's belief to get you through, you can come to him today and follow him for yourself. It will change your life for ever.
- For others of you, you recognise that you have been happy to be a spectator at times. God has grabbed you this morning and got your attention. If that is the case you need to respond.
- If you want to join God in this great adventure of building his Church. If you want to throw your self into the mission of seeing the Church built as God intends I am going to ask you to stand.
- Do not look at what others are doing. This is between you and God. I am going to ask God to come by his holy spirit and speak to you.
- As you stand and say I want to be part of this I believe God will meet with you. There may be actions required of you in the future but for now he simply asks you to come to him and say "I want to serve you lord, please help me."