

Immerse Day 28: March 9 (by Karin Lundstedt)

Today's reading made me smile at the way God continues to reinforce the value and gift of community as His loving provision and as a tool in working out His purposes. The reading today illustrates this in many very different ways.

Galatians 6:2 Carry each other's burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ.

First, God calls His community to quite literally bear one another's burdens. Joshua is commanded to lead the fight against the attack of the Amaleks. But he doesn't do this in a vacuum, Moses, along with Aaron and Hur, climbs to the top of a hill and he holds the staff of God up in his hands to give the army a divine advantage. After time he physically can't hold up his arms anymore and when they fall the enemy gains the advantage. But look, God has provided community for Moses to aid him in his task. When Moses' arms become so tired that he can't hold them up anymore, his companions step in. It is beautiful in its simplicity and common sense. "Wait, let's find a stone for him to sit on. OK, now let's stand on each side of Moses, and hold up his hands." What a wondrous intersection of the divine power of God working with the simple efforts of man. They come together in community to fulfill God's plan. Joshua wins the battle and God wisely says to write this down as a permanent reminder of His provision.

Next, I was struck by the fact that Moses had sent his wife Zipporah and sons, Gershom and Eliezer, back to her father Jethro, who had taken them in. The text only says he had done this earlier. Was it before or during the exodus? It must have been before, because we later learn Jethro didn't know what God had done in Egypt. Was it for their protection, or to give him the ability to focus solely on the task that God had called him to? Maybe a combination of both, but Moses' family left one community to be 'taken in' by another.

And then I was startled by the visit in the wilderness. When hearing the story of the exodus in the past I never remembered or imagined that the huge wandering community of Israel had visitors. How did Jethro know where they were? He sent a message telling Moses he was coming and sure enough he arrived with Zipporah and the boys. The narrative takes a pause to tell a story with a story. "Moses told his father-in-law everything the Lord had done to Pharaoh and Egypt on behalf of Israel." Jethro praises God and now knows "that the Lord is greater than all other gods." He worships God and joins with the leaders of Israel "in a sacrificial meal in God's presence." Jethro, by joining with the community of Israel, is brought to a full understanding of God's greatness.

This wilderness visit culminates with God now using Jethro to bring some much needed vision and wisdom to his weary son-in-law. Sometimes an outside perspective helps us when we are so overwhelmed and exhausted by life's circumstances that we can't see a solution. We are all feeling this a bit as we continue through the ups and downs of the past year of COVID. We are tired, we are weary. Jethro sees that Moses is worn out and can't continue this way much longer. But Jethro has fresh eyes; he can see a solution and is led to give Moses clear and sensible advice, all the while keeping his counsel under the authority of God. Delegate the smaller cases of dispute to be heard by "capable, honest men who fear God and hate bribes." He wisely counsels that this will lighten the load and make the task easier. And most importantly he defers to God's confirmation, "If you follow this advice, **and if God commands you to do so**, then you will endure the pressures, and all these people will go home in peace." I'm sure Moses also felt a lifting of his overwhelming burden.

I am encouraged by the great love and provision that God provides in today's reading. As I reread it I see it more and more, God uses community to help us and to show us His deep love. He will walk beside us when we ask and when we don't. He will use us to help others and use others to help us, even when we can't see that we need it.

How very deep the Father's love for us.