

Sermon on **Numbers 11:16, 24-29** – 10/3/21
St. Paul's Lutheran – New Ulm, MN – Pastor N. Scharf

This week I attended the funeral of a good friend. He served a church and school in Overland Park, Kansas. He was full time pastor and part-time principal of the school there. He was a husband and father, a capable, gifted man. And the Lord in his wisdom and mercy called him home to heaven at the age of forty.

It was a beautiful service of comfort and confidence in the promises of our risen and reigning Lord Jesus. It was neat to see the rallying of family, friends and the congregation, and the greater body of believers across our synod. The questions flew around in my mind, who will serve this family, who will help his associate serve this congregation, who will serve the school, there is already too much to do. But Pastor Hirsch, our district president in the Nebraska District shared a beautiful message about how our God walks with us and provides us with courage and certainty in his promises because of Jesus.

In God's Word for us today, Moses was between a rock and a hard place in his struggles with leading the children of Israel in the wilderness. He complains – not to his buddies, or to his spouse. He brings his problems and his complaint to the LORD, a desperate cry for help. The LORD God responds.

**The LORD in his grace provides:
Help for the weary worker.
Humility for the heralds and helpers.**

Numbers 11 - *"The LORD said to Moses: "bring me seventy of Israel's elders who are known to you as leaders and officials among the people. Have them come to the tent of meeting, that they may stand there with you. So Moses went out and told the people what the LORD had said. He brought together seventy of their elders and had them stand around the tent. Then the LORD came down in the cloud and spoke with him, and he took some of the power of the Spirit that was on him and put it on the seventy elders. When the Spirit rested on them, they prophesied – but did not do so again. However, two men, whose names were Eldad and Medad, had remained in the camp. They were listed among the elders, but did not go out to the tent. Yet the Spirit also rested on them, and they prophesied in the camp. A young man ran and told Moses, "Eldad and Medad are prophesying in the camp." Joshua, son of Nun, who had been Moses' aide since youth, spoke up and said, "Moses, my lord, stop them!" But Moses replied, "Are you jealous for my sake? I wish that all the LORD's people were prophets and that the LORD would put his Spirit on them!" (NIV 11)*

The LORD in his grace provides: Help for the weary worker. *"The LORD said to Moses: "bring me seventy of Israel's elders who are known to you as leaders and officials among the people."* Jethro, Moses' father-in-law had suggested this earlier and Moses enlisted the help of elders to listen and give judgments to the problems of the people back in the book of Exodus. It helped. Here as the burdens of Moses' call loomed large and pressed sorely, God tells him to enlist 70 helpers. They were qualified elders – capable, proven, examples to their fellow Israelites, godly men. The burden is too great for you, Moses. Here is help. There is work to do, and it's not going to be lessened, but here is help. As a farmer looks over the great harvest they must get in, the solution isn't to lessen the harvest or let it rot, it's to get more workers and sent them out into the harvest fields.

“So Moses went out and told the people what the LORD had said. He brought together seventy of their elders and had them stand around the tent. Then the LORD came down in the cloud and spoke with him, and he took some of the power of the Spirit that was on him and put it on the seventy elders. When the Spirit rested on them, they prophesied – but did not do so again.” God gave a great gift to Moses and to his people – 70 elders who could help with the people and all the duties of leading them. This did not diminish Moses’ role that God had given him or the gift of the Spirit that he had been given. It has been said that just like a flame can light a thousand candles and not be diminished in its light or vibrance, so here. God raised up more leaders from among their own number. Moses brought his problems and complaint to the LORD, and He answered him.

What do we do with our problems and complaints with our lot or duties God has placed before each one of us in this life? Do we bottle them up and let the worry, anxiety, anger, or fear intrude on our daily tasks, conversations, and relationships? And we can only think about them, about how they affect us, and they rob us of focus and contentment. Or do we vent them abroad and find people we can rile up along with us and find someone or something to blame, but no solutions will be reached, just a slow, swirling, souring of our attitude and outlook. Or do we let our God-given vocations become drudgery devoid of love and just quit? Our sinful hearts are so perverse that they love to do this and blind us to our source of help and relief who stands and invites us with nail-marked hands, *“Come to me all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest.”*

The LORD condescended to a sinful human bought by his grace, and patiently helped Moses, and showed him and ordered him to get help. Then he confirmed this great gift was real when he had the elders *prophesy*; a special display to help God’s weary worker and all God’s people see he provides the help needed for the work he sets before us.

God in his grace and mercy sent his Son to weary sinful human beings lost in ourselves and our sin. He condescended to bear our sin on the cross. He became weary and burdened to free us of the burden of guilt, shame, and sin. He suffered hell to spare us from it. He gave his life so that we have life, life eternal. He died the death we deserved and rose from the grave to conquer death and open heaven to all believers.

Our loving and merciful God sees his weary workers with all that he gives us to do, and he shows us the one who has borne our true burdens once and for all on the cross and how he continues to bear us up under the crosses we carry. And our burden becomes light. He provides grace and every blessing. He provides forgiveness for our sin delivered through his Word, through our Baptism, through the Lord’s Supper. We share this with each other. He provides strength to serve. He provides family in Christ to help us do this work together, not just as individuals, but as brothers and sisters who see the harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few. We each take the task he gives us gladly and we let his work our pleasure be.

And when it comes to leaders, we offer ourselves for service whether helping with coffee, a committee, or some service. When it comes to preaching and teaching, we consider studying for the ministry, we encourage those around us in whom we see those gifts and we encourage them with our words, our prayers, and our offerings. **The LORD in his grace provides: Help for the weary worker.**

The LORD in his grace provides: Humility for the heralds and helpers. *“However, two men, whose names were Eldad and Medad, had remained in the camp. They were listed among the elders, but did not go out to the tent. Yet the Spirit also rested on them, and they prophesied in the camp. A young man ran and told Moses, “Eldad and Medad are prophesying in the camp.” Joshua, son of Nun, who had been Moses’ aide since youth, spoke up and said, “Moses, my lord, stop them!” But Moses*

replied, "Are you jealous for my sake? I wish that all the LORD's people were prophets and that the LORD would put his Spirit on them!"

Joshua was jealous for Moses' sake. He had seen what a wonderful leader Moses was and how much garbage he had to take from the people. He saw the weight he carried and from his youth tried to help him. So, when two guys who didn't show up for the installation started prophesying back in camp, he was offended for Moses. They should have been there, but now they were doing this anyways? Moses taught Joshua about service and ministry.

It's not about us. *"Are you jealous for my sake? I wish that all the LORD's people were prophets and that the LORD would put his Spirit on them!"* "There is no "I" in team," the coach says, but I think, "there is a m and an e." Moses puts this idea down. Moses rejoiced in the people God used to share the work and serve the LORD and his people. It isn't a place for competition, or of vying for the top spot. It isn't a place for promoting self. It's a place to promote Christ, otherwise we get in the way.

If we are about our own honor and love of popularity, then we often won't speak the truth in love, rebuke a fellow believer when they need it, or share Jesus and his love for the world because Christianity can be controversial to some. If we are about having our own needs met first, it will be difficult to serve selflessly. If we are always trying to prove to everyone that we are the best or can do it all, we'll often neglect those closest to us or our own health and be more and more poorly equipped to serve. If we are about our own ideas of how things should go, we'll resent teammates who have opposing views and run over others to get our way, or sulk when we fail to be first.

But if we are about Christ's honor, we'll keep our eyes on him, and recognize we are wonderfully blessed and forgiven children of God, and he values us enough in his mercy to give us work to do and opportunities to serve whether big or small, whether needed or foolish in the eyes of the world. With his strength, forgiveness, and with the brothers and sisters in Christ he gives us we can serve as a team. And we can have contentment and joy in the work he gives us to do, on the difficult days and the easy days. We'll identify opportunities and help one another take them. We'll continually raise up new leaders and encourage more young people around us to pursue being a herald of the Gospel as pastors, teachers, and staff ministers. It's about him, and not us. **The LORD in his grace provides: Humility for the heralds and helpers.**

I was very sad about my friend passing, but am comforted because of the one he followed, our Savior Jesus. Because of Jesus, I'll see my friend again. Because of Jesus, I know God's love for me and you, the forgiveness we don't deserve but he's showered upon us, and the work he calls us to do and the joy and strength and team he gives us all to do it. **The LORD in his grace provides: Help for the weary worker. Humility for the heralds and helpers.**