

*"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?' 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, you will be able to endure, 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."*

Dear Friends in Christ, and fellow redeemed:

When we first contemplated this sermon series on spiritual gifts, the rationale for doing it was not simply to tell you about the gifts that are in the Scriptures. Rather, the hope is that we see those gifts at work, and then think about the ways in which God has given His gifts to us. We keep going back to the Spirit-given Word: *"Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit; and there are varieties of service, but the same Lord; and there are varieties of activities, but it is the same God who empowers them all in everyone. To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good."* (1 Corinthians 12:4-7, ESV) We repeat again those words of St. Paul: *"Having gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, let us use them."* (Romans 12:6, ESV) God's church is always at its best and grows to His glory when each and every one of us remember that we have gifts, given by the Spirit, for our mutual service to one another and to the Lord, who has done so much for us. That is what these sermons are about: helping you to know how God, the Holy Spirit, has gifted *you* as part of His body in the church. As you consider the ways in which God has gifted you, I truly hope and pray that you—and that we all—will use our gifts to His glory in His church.

That brings us to our focus today on the gifts of leadership and administration. It isn't hard to see that God is a God of order and that He appoints leaders and managers for the sake of His people. God has established government to guide and provide for people in the land. He has given the shepherds, elders, deacons and other who lead His people in the truth of His Word. He appointed the judges to lead when the people first came into the promised land, and when they asked for a king like the nations around them, God gave them a king. Even in their wilderness wanderings, God gave His people leaders. Moses may arguably be the greatest leader of Israel, even though Moses himself would argue that he was not a good leader. When God spoke to Moses from the burning bush, appointing him to go and lead the people out of their bondage in Egypt, Moses tried to come up with every reason for not going. He told the Lord: *"Oh, my Lord, I am not eloquent, either in the past or since you have spoken to your servant, but I am slow of speech and of tongue."* Then the LORD said to him, *"Who has made man's mouth? Who makes him mute, or deaf, or seeing, or blind? Is it not I, the LORD? Now therefore go, and I will be with your mouth and teach you what you shall speak."* But he said, *"Oh, my Lord, please send someone else."* (Exodus 4:10-13, ESV) God didn't send someone else. He knew the leader He wanted. Moses was the man, and God blessed him with the gift of leadership.

Being a leader doesn't mean you can do everything, as our text reminds us. We can see Moses' frustration and struggles as we read through Exodus, Leviticus and Numbers. At one point Moses actually said to God: *"I am not able to carry all this people alone; the burden is too heavy for me. If you will treat me like this, kill me at once, if I find favor in your sight, that I may not see my wretchedness."* (Numbers 11:14-15, ESV) God had blessed Moses in many ways, but leading God's people was also exhausting. Moses' father-in-law, Jethro, could see that Moses was being overwhelmed and needed help. Jethro told Moses: *"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, you will be able to endure, and all this people also will go to their place in peace.”*

Note how Jethro speaks of gifts of leadership: *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.* What a blessing it would be to have people like this who make and administer the laws of our land! We definitely want such leaders within the church: able people, who trust in the Lord, who are honest and diligent in the work to which they are called. What a gift this can be for our world and for our church!

God gives leaders. He blesses leaders. When they need help, God provides those helpers, too. He doesn't promise that the work is always easy, but it is necessary. Leaders provide needed structure, direction and even protection for people. We may grumble and complain that our worldly leaders are less than ideal, and in many ways they are. They are sinful, fallen people, just like you and me. Yet Peter tells us: *“Honor everyone. Love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honor the emperor.”* (1 Peter 2:17, ESV) Paul tells us: *“Let every person be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and those that exist have been instituted by God. Therefore whoever resists the authorities resists what God has appointed, and those who resist will incur judgment.”* (Romans 13:1–2, ESV) We have seen good government and not-so-good. The difference is that our worldly leaders are not given the *spiritual* gifts of leadership. They may have abilities that can make them good leaders, but not the Spirit's gifts to help them do this to the glory of God.

In contrast to the world, God works in the church to bless us with all we need to carry out the Lord's mission and ministry in our midst. Remember that God the Spirit gives us those gifts in His church so that *“speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ, from whom the whole body, joined and held together by every joint with which it is equipped, when each part is working properly, makes the body grow so that it builds itself up in love.”*

(Ephesians 4:15–16, ESV)

So what does all this mean for us? God gives leaders, like those who serve on our boards and committees. He gives us leaders who administer what we refer to as the temporal affairs of the congregation: looking after the utilities and the building and insurance and all the things that still need to be done so that the work of ministry may continue. What a blessing these faithful leaders are to the church! Yet we also know that it is often hard to find the leaders for our congregations. In our office devotions each morning, we regularly pray for those who lead in this congregation and in all the congregations of our church. We pray for our synodical leaders and those who serve through our regional mission and ministry councils. We pray that our leaders may be blessed with the gifts that they need to serve the Lord and His people. We pray that our leaders may find joy in their work together in the name of the Lord. And we pray that God would raise up the leaders that we need for our churches. If you look in our bulletin today you will see a note from our Board of Stewardship, noting that we currently have vacancies in the positions of Chairman, Board of Evangelism and Board of Human Care Ministries. I know that God will provide those leaders and the gifts they need for their work. Perhaps God is calling you to use your gifts in these leadership roles within the church.

Pray that God would raise up these leaders! As you pray, ask Him, “Lord, is this how I can serve?” Those of you who do lead, please know that we pray for you; that I pray for you. I pray for you leaders in Didsbury, too. The task is not always easy. Yes, it means meetings and work and other things. It means doing things that often go unnoticed or unappreciated by the members of the church. But we know that we have the example of the greatest of all leaders, our Saviour, Jesus Christ. He not only gives us those gifts we need; He has taught us how to use them. He tells us: *“You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great ones exercise authority over them. It shall not be so among you. But whoever would be great among you must be your servant, and whoever would be first among you must be your slave, even as the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.”* (Matthew 20:25–28, ESV) Our great Lord and King lives a life of loving obedience to His Father and a life of willing service to others. As our Lord, He lives a life that was perfectly lived for us, and then gives that life to pay the price for our sins and guilt on the cross. He lives and has ascended to His heavenly throne, where He continues to rule for the sake of His church. That greatest of leaders is the One who called Moses, equipped Moses, and provided Moses with the help He needed. He is still the Living One who blesses those whom He sends to lead and guide His church. He empowers us to serve in His name and with His Word and Spirit.

Thank you, Lord, for faithful leaders. Bless them with the gifts that flow from your Spirit and give them joy in serving in Your

name, to Your glory and for the good of Your Church. Amen.