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Grace Evangelical Church
Sunday, October 5- Communion Sunday
Life Lessons From Biblical Personalities
"The Quality For Living We All Need" – Moses, Joshua & Christ
Numbers 12:1-8; Deuteronomy 34:9-10; Exodus 17:8-13; Joshua 5:13-15; Philippians 2:5-11

I understand that in the summer of 1986, two ships collided in the Black Sea off the coast of Russia. Hundreds of passengers died as they were hurled into the icy waters below. News of the disaster was further darkened when an investigation revealed the cause of the accident. It wasn't a technology problem like radar malfunction—or even thick fog. The cause was human stubbornness. Each captain was aware of the other ship's presence nearby. Both could have steered clear, but according to news reports, neither captain wanted to give way to the other. Each was too proud to yield first. By the time they came to their senses, it was too late.

Stubbornness certainly is our experience at times. It comes from that old pride within us that we all have to deal with at different times, yes, that old attitude that exhibits a certain haughtiness and self-importance comes through loud and clear in one's life. It can even be exhibited by a minister as I understand one minister said that he had a wonderful sermon on humility but was waiting for a large crowd before preaching it.

And when we come to one of our text's today in Numbers 12:1-8, we find in verse 3 this said about Moses, "Now the man Moses was very humble, more than any man who was on the face of the earth" (Numbers 12:3). That's an amazing statement to say the least.

The context of these words, that describe Moses, is found in Miriam (Moses' sister) and Aaron (Moses brother), where the verb, spoken against, is in the feminine, telling us that Miriam is leading the charge of criticism against Moses for his marriage to a foreign woman. Knowing that God speaks to Moses, they said that can't God also speak through us not just through Moses? Evidently, there is jealousy here on the part of Miriam and Aaron.

Hearing this, the LORD had Moses, Miriam, and Aaron come to doorway of the tent, the tabernacle and spoke to them in Numbers 12:6-8, telling them that God had chosen to speak directly to Moses, not in visions and dreams, but directly, openly, not in the dark. Because of their questioning Moses relationship with the LORD, Aaron asked the Lord for forgiveness, while Miriam was plagued with leprosy for 7 days, even though Moses asked the Lord to heal her (Numbers 12:9-16).

Although some of these things are hard to understand, it's apparent that to go against God's way of working with people is up to Him and not to the individual. To question God's action is serious business.

So I ask this question?

I. What does the word humble mean in Numbers 12:3?

It comes from a root word mean to force, afflict, and to oppress, but also the idea of being brought low, of submitting to another's will. So in this setting of Numbers 12:3, it is being said of Moses that he was a humble man because he in his position before God placed his absolute dependence on God. So humility is a denial of one's selfish desires and putting one's complete dependence upon the LORD.

It means giving up directing one's own life, stopping trying to push it along one's self and putting one's trust in and dependence on the Lord. It is renunciation, of course, but not impoverishment, as Dr. Paul Tournier has said. It is renunciation for love, and not for fear. It is not denying one's self fulfillment, but giving up depending upon one's self to attain it.

II. Does Moses exhibit humility in his life as he serves the Lord?

1. First 40 years of Moses' life (Exodus 2:1-18; Acts 7:20-22).

The life story of Moses begins Exodus 2, where it tells us that Moses was born into a Jewish family, the house of Levi. Being in Egypt at that time, the king had ordered the male boys that were born to be killed to keep down the growth of the population of the Jewish people. Moses mother hid her baby boy for 3 months but could no longer do that so she got a wicker basket, covered it with tar and pitch, put Moses in it, and set it among the reeds by the bank of the Nile River.

The daughter of Pharaoh comes to bathe in the Nile River and discovers Moses in this little craft. Hearing him cry, she is moved with compassion, saying that this is one of the Hebrew children. Moses' sister was watching all of this from a distance, and when she saw what was happening, she ran to Pharaoh's daughter, and asked her she could go and get a nurse from the Hebrew women to take care of the child.

Moses' sister went to his mother and had her come to Pharaoh's daughter, and she told Moses' mother to take and nurse the child, take care of him, and she would pay him wages.

Can you imagine, ladies, being paid directly to raise your own child. God was certainly orchestrating this circumstance behind the scenes. Moses grew and then his mother brought him to Pharaoh's daughter, and she became his son (perhaps Moses after Moses was weaned at age 2 or 3). His name was called Moses, because it means, "one who draws out." Moses had been drawn out of the water.

Certainly, as Acts 7:22 tells us Moses was educated in the learning of the Egyptians and became a man of power in words and deeds. He was in the court of Pharaoh for some 40 years.

2. The second 40 years of Moses' life (Exodus 2:1-25; Acts 7:23-30).

Then at the age of 40 (Acts 7:23-29) Moses visited his brethren (the Israelites), and saw the hard labor they were experiencing as slaves of the Egyptians. He saw an Egyptian beating one of the Hebrew brethren, and Moses struck the man and hid him in the sand. Then, the next day Moses went out and saw two Hebrews fighting with each other, and Moses said to the offender, why are you striking your companion? The man answered, "who made you judge over us? Are you going to kill me as you did that Egyptian?" Moses became afraid and realized that it was known that he had killed the Egyptian. Then Pharaoh discovered what Moses had done and wanted to kill him. Moses fled to Midian located on the East of the Gulf of Aquab or on the Sinai Peninsula. This was actually inhabited by the nomadic sons of Abraham by Keturah (Genesis 25:2).

In Midian, Moses became friends of the priest of Midian, Jethro, married one of his daughters, and took care of Jethro's flock of sheep. As Acts 7:29-30 tells us in Stephen's message before the Sanhedrin, Moses lived in Midian for 40 years.

3. The third and last 40 years of Moses' life. (Exodus 3- Deuteronomy 34; Acts 7:30-44)

One day tending Jethro's sheep near Mt Horeb, or Mt. Sinai, the LORD appeared to Moses in a burning bush. Moses turned aside to see the bush for it didn't burn up. God called to Moses out of the bush. God told him not to come near, but to take off his sandals for the place that he was standing was holy ground. God told him that He was the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. Moses hid his face for he was afraid to look at God.

Moses was starting to learn something about humility before God. He must be listened to and obeyed Moses was beginning to hear from God in a direct way, and I believe that he took off his shoes as God commanded him to do.

The LORD told Moses that He had seen the affliction of his people Israel in Egypt, He was aware of their awful suffering, and had come down to deliver the Israel from the Egyptian suffering and wanted to bring them to a land flowing with milk and honey, the land of the Canaanite, the Hittite, the Amorite and the Perizzite, the Hivite and the Jebusite.

(1) God's Call On Moses Life to serve Him.

Then God told Moses that He wanted to send Moses to Pharaoh – a different Pharaoh than before, for he had died, and to lead the Hebrew people out of Egypt . Moses started saying that he wasn't qualified but God reassured Moses that He would be with him. Moses asked who should he tell them was the name of the God of their fathers. The LORD made this statement, "Tell them that I AM, Who I AM" is the one sending you, meaning the "SELF-EXISTENT" God is the one who is sending you.

Of course Moses offered excuses (learning something about submitting to the Lord, but not completely – Again Moses was learning humility), about being the one to lead the Israelites out of Egypt, and finally God selected Aaron, his brother to be the spokesman for Moses, although Moses was the leader and used to perform the miracles in Egypt, as well as be the leader of Israel.

Moses told his father-in-law, Jethro, that he wanted to return to his people in Egypt, so Moses took his wife and his sons to Egypt, but it seems from Exodus 4:18-26 & 18:1-3, that Moses sent his wife and sons back to her father in Midian.

(2) God used Moses to deliver Israel from Egyptian bondage.

God used Moses to bring 10 plagues on the Egyptians and the final one was the death of the first born. The Israelites were to take the blood of the lamb and put it on the lintel and the doorpost, really as a sign of the cross, and when angel saw the blood, he passed over the Israelite household, but the Egyptians did not have the blood applied, and the first born both of man and beast (Exodus 12). This became the Passover Feast, which is still commemorated to this day – God’s deliverance from Egyptian bondage. Also, on the eve of Passover, was the beginning of the Feast of Unleavened Bread which lasted for seven days.

God delivered Israel from the Egyptians opening a way for them through the Red Sea on dry ground. The waters came together and the Israelites exited the Sea and the Egyptians pursuing Israel perished.

(3) God gave the 10 commandments, the ordinances and the worship system through Moses to Israel (Exodus 19-31).

God spoke to directly to Moses during this time providing the directions for the people’s spiritual and physical health.

(4) God used Moses to save His people after they built the golden café, for God was ready to destroy the people he had chose (Exodus 32-33).

While Moses was on the mountain of God, Mt. Sinai, received the revelation from God, the people became impatience, and didn’t know what had happened to Moses, so they under Aaron’s leadership made a golden café out of all their gold ear rings. He told them that this was their god who brought them out of Egypt. Of course, total idolatry, breaking the first commandment. God seeing what was happening was furious, and told Moses that He was going to destroy them.

What did Moses do? He interceded on behalf of his people. One of the great passages in the Bible (Exodus 32:11-15). God listened to Moses and saved His people. This showed Moses’ submission to the LORD, and his concern for God’s people and their reputation.

When Moses came to the camp and saw the people worshipping of the golden café, he broke the two tablets containing the ten commandments, (showing His dependence on God – humility - and his heart for holiness) and said to the people, “whoever is for the LORD, come to me!” all the sons of Levi came to Moses, and they slew about three thousand people that day. God’s judgment came upon the people for getting involved in idolatry. There was a great repentance upon behalf of the people.

Then there is that incredible prayer of Moses in Exodus 33:12-23 – a passion for God’s presence and glory!!!

(5) Moses returns by God’s direction to Mt Sinai, and two new stones are made of the 10 commandments. (Exodus 34 – cf. 34:27).

(6) The tabernacle is constructed as God had given the blue prints to Moses, and at the end of the book of Exodus, the glory of the LORD, the presence of the living God, fills this worship tent that God had given Israel by which to come to God.

(7) In Leviticus the worship system of the sacrifices, the priestly service, the feasts and vane various standards for living pure lives are given. The people are to be holy for God is holy (Leviticus 11:44; 19:2).

(8) Numbers finds Israel on the march in the wilderness to the land into which God promised that Moses would lead His people.

In Numbers 11, Moses becomes very discouraged about the people complaining about the food and God became very angry. Moses asked the Lord to take his life, for he couldn’t carry the burden of this people, of course forgetting here that God was the one who could take care of his people. Not too good of a picture of a humble person.

At Kadesh-Barnea (Numbers 13-14), spies are sent out to look over the promised land. Ten spies come back saying it is impossible to take the land because the cities are fortified and the people strong. Two spies, Joshua and Caleb said that they could take the land with the Lord's help. The people followed the advice of the 10 spies, so the people didn't get into the land, and had to wonder 40 years in the wilderness for the first generation would not get into the land because of unbelief.

In Numbers 20, when people are complaining for lack of water, God came to Moses and told him to speak to the rock before him. Instead of speaking to the rock, Moses struck the rock twice with his rod. Water came forth, but God was displeased because He was not obeyed. Not a very good picture of a humble person either.

As a result, Moses took the glory to himself, and God told Moses that he would see the promised land, but would not enter it, and that happened in Deuteronomy 34:1-4.

(9) The book of Deuteronomy is the re-giving of the law and other directions to the second generation who are about ready to go into the promised land.

The book ends with these words about Moses.

"Since then (Moses) no prophet has risen in Israel like Moses, whom the LORD knew face to face, for all the signs and wonders which the LORD sent him to perform in the land of Egypt against Pharaoh, all his servants, and all his land, and for all the might power and for all the great terror which Moses performed in the sight of Israel." (Deuteronomy 34:10-12).

Then Deuteronomy 34:5 & 6 tell us that Moses died there in the land of Moab, according to the word of the LORD. Although Moses was 120 years old when he died, his eye was not dim, nor his vigor abated.

As we took a brief over view of Moses' life, is it clear that Moses, as Numbers 12:3 stated, that "Moses was the most humble man on earth"?

He certainly didn't obey God at all times. He had all kinds of excuses for God when God came to send him to lead Israel out of Egyptian bondage. He struck the rock rather than speaking to the rock as God said. He became so discouraged over the complaining of God's people that he wanted to die. Is that a picture of humility?

But as Hebrews 11:23-28 tell us, as we discovered in Abraham, Noah, Joseph, there are no flaws given, only the faith of the individual in God and doing His will. – the same is true of Moses?

There are at least five key passages to show Moses' humility.

(1) Exodus 3:1-5 – when God called to Moses out of the burning bush –telling him to take off his shoes for the place that he was standing was holy ground. He recognized God's presence.

(2) Exodus 32:10-14 - He prayed that God would not destroy His people. Moses' heart for God's choosing of Israel (32:11); God's name (32:12); and for the promise made to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob – to fulfill that promise of the land; yes and his heart for the people of God.

(3) Exodus 32:19- 20 – Moses when he came near the camp from the Mt. Sinai, he broke the tablets of the ten commandments and had the golden calf burned, ground it to powder, and made the sons of Israel drink it mixed with water. Moses had a passion for the one and only holy God.

(4) Exodus 33:12-23 – Moses prayer to God after the repentance of Israel to God for going after the golden café, getting involved in idolatry. He wanted to be in God's presence and behold His glory. Here Moses didn't see that fully there, but later on the Mt of Transfiguration, Moses saw the glory of Christ when he appeared with Elijah.

(5) Numbers 11:28-29 –

Moses is not interested in self-exaltation as Joshua tells Moses that there are two men who are prophesied in the camp. Moses tells Joshua that he wished all men were prophets, that God had put

His Spirit upon them. Moses was not threatened by the action of the two men, and didn't put them down, or act superior, like he was the only prophet that God used.

Because humility is not wanting what I want or what you want, it's not pushing my wares, or you pushing your wares, but giving up on that selfish bent and submitting to God's will. Moses certainly displayed that humility in his life, even though he exhibited selfishness at times. Moses had a passion for God's presence, willing to submit to his will. God honored him because of that.

How about Moses' successor, Joshua?

II. Did Joshua display humility like his mentor Moses?

1. Joshua comes on the scene in Exodus 17;8-16.

There we find Joshua following Moses' instruction to fight against the Amalekites.

2. In Exodus 33:11, Joshua is called the servant of Joshua.

3. In Numbers 11:28, Joshua had been an attendant of Moses since his youth.

4. Joshua along with Caleb were the two spies that said they could take the land God had promised to them. Numbers 14:6-8.

Joshua the son of Nun and Caleb the son of Jephunneh, of those who had spied out the land, tore their clothes; and they spoke to all the congregation of the sons of Israel, saying, "the land which we passed through to spy out is an exceedingly good land. If the LORD is pleased with us, then He will bring us into this land and give it to us – a land which flows with milk and honey. Only do not rebel against the LORD; and do not fear the people of the land, for they shall be our prey. Their protection has been removed from them, and the LORD is with us; do not fear them."

5. Deuteronomy 1:38 Moses told the second generation that Joshua who stands before you, he shall enter the land; encourage him, for he shall cause Israel to inherit it.

6. Deuteronomy 4:28 tells us that God told Moses to charge Joshua and strengthen him for he would lead the people into the promised land.

7. In Deuteronomy 31:6, Moses tells Joshua to be strong and of good courage for he will lead the people into the promised land.

8. In Deuteronomy 31:23, Moses commissioned Joshua to be the leader of the nation of Israel to take them into the land God had promised them.

9. In Deuteronomy 34:9, before Moses dies, he laid his hands on Joshua and transferred the leadership and responsibility of himself to Joshua. Israel now listened to Joshua.

Yes, it appears in the various texts that Joshua was a humble man as he followed Moses' direction and was available to be the leader of the nation of Israel.

10. But recorded in Joshua 5:13-15, there is one major instance of Joshua's humility after he led the nation of Israel into the land, after crossing the Jordan River on dry ground, while camping near Gilgal. Joshua was out doing some reconnaissance before seeking to take the city of Jericho.

There a man met him with a sword drawn. Joshua said to him, "Are you for us, or for our adversaries?" The reply was, "NO. Rather I have come as the Captain of the host of the LORD."

This person, probably a pre-incarnate manifestation of Jesus Christ, was telling Joshua that the battle to take the land God promised him was the Lord's battle and Joshua and the people were just instruments that the LORD was using.

What did Joshua do? He fell on his face to the earth, and bowed down – Really he worshipped, for He realized that this was not just a normal person, but rather God, and said, “What has my lord to say to his servant?”

The LORD said, as he did to Moses many years before, “Remove your sandals from your feet, for the place where you are standing is holy.” And Joshua did so.

Did Joshua display humility here? Big time. He submitted to the Lord acknowledging that He was the One who was in control of his life and that of the nation of Israel. He acknowledged that his dependence must be on the Lord. **And as they came to Jericho, God gave the nation of Israel victory. Hebrews 11:30 tells us that “by faith the walls of Jericho fell down after they had been encircled for seven days.”**

At the end of his life, Joshua still displayed that spirit of humility before the Lord. He told Israel to fear the Lord and serve Him with sincerity. Then his famous words still ring down through the halls of biblical history, “As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord.” (Joshua 24:14-15).

Humility before God is the key for having God’s victory in one’s life.

Yet, Moses – known as the most humble on earth, the one through whom God gave the law, and Joshua, the great leader who led Israel into the promised land, were men who had feet of clay, they had their faults, yet they left us an example of challenge to have humility in our lives before the Lord. But. . . .

III. Is there one who has lived on earth who has displayed humility without any flaw, without any sin?

1. The life of Christ -Romans 15:3.

Listen to these words from Romans 15:3, “For even Christ did not please Himself; but as it is written, “The reproaches of those who reproached You fell on me.” (From Psalm 69:9). When Christ was criticized and unjustly condemned and finally crucified, He did not strike back, He did not revile when He was reviled, while suffering He uttered no threats. Yes, Christ committed no sin, neither was any deceit found in his mouth, but He committed Himself to him (His heavenly Father) who judges righteously. (cf. I Peter 2:22-23).

John records these words of Jesus, John 8:29, “I always do the things that are pleasing to Him, that is to His heavenly Father.”

2. The death of Christ –Philippians 2:5-8.

Christ emptied himself of the insignia of His majesty, His glory, and came to earth to take upon himself the limitations of humanity that was sinless for him, as He was God and flesh, the God-man.

But it says in Philippians 2:8 – that Jesus humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross.

The word humbled in this verse means to be brought low, to descend, no pride, giving of one’s self completely to God, submitting to him. The same idea as used to describe Moses in the Old Testament.

And that’s what Jesus did for us, as our perfect substitute for sin, representing you and me, he went to the cross, was made sin for us, died, was buried. Christ submitted totally to the Father’s will, although it wasn’t easy as His experience in the garden tells us. He learned obedience, that is he learned to submit to the Father’s will, and did, and won our redemption.

3.The bodily resurrection of Christ (Philippians 2:9-11).

Then Jesus conquered the grave bodily to win for us His forgiveness and eternal life. God has highly exalted Him and given Him a name above every name, and at that name of Jesus someday every knee will bow, submit to Him, and give Him the glory, whether a believer or not a believer.

4. The invitation to us today (John 1:12).

As many as received Him to them the Lord gave the right to become children of God, even to those who believe on His name (John 1:12). I trust that you have made that decision to follow Jesus Christ. If you have, His life of humility lives in you.

The challenge for each of us as followers of Christ is to daily submit to Him in the power of the Holy Spirit so that Christ's life of humility comes through us to the glory of God.

Yes, the first test of true greatness is humility. It is not the doubt of one's own ability, or hesitation in speaking what's right in love, but that inner complete dependence on God, not self, in serving Him for His glory. Andrew Murray said, "Humility is the perfect quietness of the heart. It is to expect nothing, to wonder at nothing that is done to me, to feel nothing against me. The humble man feels no jealousy or envy. He can praise God when others are preferred and blessed before him. He can bear to hear others praised while he is forgotten because ... he has received the spirit of Jesus, who pleased not Himself, and who sought not His own honor. Therefore, in putting on the Lord Jesus Christ he has put on the heart of compassion, kindness, meekness, longsuffering, and humility."

Many years ago, Christian professor Stuart Blackie of the University of Edinburgh was listening to his students as they presented oral readings. When one young man rose to begin his recitation, he held his book in the wrong hand. The professor thundered, "Take your book in your right hand, and be seated!" At this harsh rebuke, the student held up his right arm. He didn't have a right hand! The other students shifted uneasily in their chairs. For a moment the professor hesitated. Then he made his way to the student, put his arm around him, and with tears streaming from his eyes, said, "I never knew about it. Please, will you forgive me?" His humble apology made a lasting impact on that young man. This story was told some time later in a large gathering of believers. At the close of the meeting a man came forward, turned to the crowd, and raised his right arm. It ended at the wrist. He said, "I was that student. Professor Blackie led me to Christ. But he never could have done it if he had not made the wrong right."

May our lives show the humility of Moses, of Joshua, but most of all the humility of Christ this week as we let His life live out through us in our thoughts, attitudes, words, and actions to the glory of God.