

St. Matthew AME Church
Bible Study
Monday, September 20, 2010

Spirit of Leadership Part 1
Exodus 2

Leadership is one of the most sought after and yet misunderstood of all topics in the world. So much has been written about leadership that there are more books than we can count. Yet there is no simple, universally accepted understanding of what leadership is. This is not only true for the secular world, but for the church as well. All the money in the world can make you rich, and all the power in the world can make you strong, but none of these things can make you a leader. You can inherit a fortune but never leadership. The Christian church is in great need of good Christian leaders, and St. Matthew Church is in great need of good Christian leaders.

The secret that I want to make known is that within every believer, every child of God is a hidden leader. The most important quality of true leadership is “the spirit of leadership.” Every human possesses the leadership spirit, but only those who capture the spirit of leadership become truly effective leaders. The thinking of a leader is what separates him or her from the followers. True leaders are distinguished by a unique mental attitude that comes from an internal discovery of self, which creates a strong, positive and confident self concept and self worth. This is what is called the spirit of leadership. This attitude gives the leader a sense of confidence, faith, and belief in possibilities. It is birthed in the womb of a personal revelation within the leader and manifests itself in characteristic qualities.

The Problem

The problem is that leadership has become a role one plays rather than a life one leads. Contemporary leaders are attempting to divorce their personal lives from their public responsibilities and their personal standards from their public lives. To many, leadership is an act, not a calling. When they are in their offices, they act a certain way, but when they leave, they lead double lives. This is a contradiction of true leadership.

The Hidden Leader in You

“An army of sheep led by a lion will always defeat an army of lions led by a sheep”

There was a farmer who lived in the African nation of Zimbabwe and owned a farm out in the country. One day he took his sheep out to pasture, and while they were grazing, he heard a strange noise coming from a patch of grass. It sounded like a kitten. Led by his curiosity, he went to see what it was and to his surprise he found a shivering lion cub, obviously separated from his family. He waited until it was dark to see if the lion cub’s parents returned. It did not and the farmer took the lion cub home. Over the next eight months, the shepherd hand-fed

this cub with fresh milk and kept him warm, safe and secure. The cub went daily with the sheep out to graze. During this time the cub grew into a playful, energetic ball of shiny muscle. The sheep accepted him as one of their own and he acted like one of them. After fifteen months the lion cub had become an adolescent lion, but he acted, sounded and behaved like one of the sheep. In essence the lion had become a sheep by association.

One hot day, four years later the sheep gathered by the river to drink water. Suddenly across the river, there appeared out of the thick jungle a large beast that the lion cub had never seen before. The sheep panicked and ran back toward the farm. It made a noise that seemed to shake the forest. It bowed its head and when he lifted it back up he held in its mouth the lifeless body of a lamb from the flock. Seven days passed and the flock gathered again by the river to graze and drink. As the lion bent over the water, he suddenly panicked and ran wildly for the farmhouse for safety, but the sheep did not run. The lion wondered why, believing he had seen the beast again. After awhile the young lion went back to the flock gathered by the water. As he bent down to drink he saw the beast again and froze. He realized it was his own reflection in the water that he saw.

While he tried to understand what he was seeing, suddenly the beast appeared out of the jungle again. The flock ran for the farmhouse, but before the young lion could move, the beast stepped in the water coming toward him and made that deafening sound again. The beast came to him and growled again as if to say, "try it, and come and follow me." As fear gripped the young lion, he tried to make the same sound but he sounded like a sheep. The beast responded with an even louder burst that seemed to say, "try it again." After seven or eight attempts, the young lion suddenly heard himself make the same sound as the beast. He also felt stirrings in his body that he had never felt before. He was experiencing a transformation in mind, body and spirit.

The big beast started turned to the young lion as if to say come on and started walking away, and the young lion turned towards the farmhouse where the shepherd was watching. The young lion knew that his day of decision had come, and he would have to decide whether to continue as a sheep or to be the self he had just discovered. It was an invitation to a "sheep" to become the king of the jungle. More importantly it was an invitation for the body of a lion to possess the spirit of a lion. After looking back and forth at the farm, the young lion turned his back on the farm and the sheep with whom he had lived and walked into the forest to become who he had always been – a lion king.

When Moses was born his mother hid him for three months, until she could no longer guarantee his safety and then placed him in a basket in the Nile River. Moses mother attempted to save his life, because his birth signals a new beginning, a new genesis. His name Moses indicates his future role. Placed in the Nile by his mother, he is drawn out of the water by the daughter of Pharaoh, who has come to bathe. Later she calls him, "Moshe", explaining "I drew him out of the water," (2:10) the name teaches us that he will eventually not only take his people out of slavery, but also draw them through the waters of the Red Sea on their journey toward Mt. Sinai and the Promised Land.

Moses is the product of two worlds. He is born to a Hebrew mother, and nursed by her in his early years at the request of the Egyptian princess, who knows that he indeed is a Hebrew. When he is grown, he is brought to the palace, where he matures in the context of Egyptian power and culture (2:7-10). He is exposed to a classic Greek education and to models of both authority and leadership. Such experiences will prepare him for what lies ahead. If Moses grows physically before being brought to the palace, he matures and gains stature once he lives there.

Leaving the place of his youth, Moses goes out to his kinfolk. (2:11) He leaves behind the comfort of the palace to see his brothers and sisters, and in so doing not only changes his life, but will change the life of his people. What seems to drive Moses is an intense desire to connect with his brothers and sisters. Though they live in different worlds, he is a prince, with rights and privileges of the palace; and they, hungry, persecuted slaves- he feels compelled to join them. Moses is not blinded by the wealth and power of his surroundings. He is able to truly see the enslaved Hebrews as his brothers and sisters. He not only saw them but he also saw their circumstances. He saw their burdens, he saw an Egyptian beating a Hebrew. With all that he saw he was unable to bear it. The spirit of leadership will move leaders to action.