

Sermon Text For October 14, 2018

By Rev. Robert K. Bronkema

Exodus 18:13-27, Acts 6:1-7

“That’s not my job!”

On Thursday during preschool in the morning it poured, I mean it poured and it poured. Heather, one of our teachers, came in and said: “It looks like someone is taking a firehose to the window in my classroom.” I looked and the gutter was clogged on that side so all of the water was flowing over against the window. Once the rain stopped I got out our trusted ladders and unclogged it and the result was instantaneous, the water started to flow again out of the gutter to where it was supposed to be. For a brief second I thought, I’m pretty sure people are really not excited about me getting up on ladders, but it took all of 5 minutes, and I really, really enjoy doing things where you can see a result right away. I guess that is a part of me that is somewhat prideful where I want to see a result of my work. But I could have called someone said, uh, we have this problem and this isn’t my job.

One of the first things I tell the employees in this church is that when you sign on to work here at First Presbyterian there is always a line in your contract after your job description which lays out all of your tasks which states: and anything else which the pastor might ask you to do...that could include driving home a teenager who slept in the well overnight which happened last year because of issues at home, it could mean throwing away trash that someone else left out. I let the staff know that if something is amiss, whether it is your job or not, it becomes your job because no one else is going to take care of it. We are not allowed to say: that’s not my job.

There is so much going on in this church that you really need an army of people who will step up so that everything gets done. Often the lines blur as far as whose responsibility it is to do certain things and people can be heard asking: okay, whose job is it to do that? A favorite line to brush off responsibilities is universally: it’s not my job.

The beauty of the church is that everything that takes place around here is everybody’s job, not just the staff, but all of ours. The more things get rolling in this church the more we have to take on the thought that all that takes place is our responsibility, is our job.

In the New Testament in the early church, and specifically in Acts as we have been looking at, things are really rolling. People are coming to Christ left and right, more

and more people are joining the church movement and are understanding what it means to live in freedom that comes in knowing Christ. But, there's a problem. And a solution to this problem is really that everyone has to pitch in and contribute. What we find out today is that when you come to know Christ you see as your responsibility everything that takes place in the church.

READ SCRIPTURE

Have you ever had an experience where you could say beyond a shadow of a doubt that Christ came and lifted you up from whatever situation or life you were facing? What is your redemption, new life story? Some people have grown up knowing all along that God loves them and they in turn love God. I know when Christ took my life I just assumed that things would get easier and that those areas in my life where I wasn't very faithful, I would somehow become more adept and able to handle certain things.

Moses in our reading in Exodus, grew up knowing God and knowing that God had chosen him for great things. Think of his life story, from the time he was born he knew that he was chosen to do the extraordinary. He had been redeemed, he believed, but he still wasn't perfect. What we find in Exodus today is someone who loves God, but is a terrible administrator. Someone who has completely given his life to the one who gave him life, but in life, he can't quite make the cut as an administrator.

Here he was from morning to night playing the judge, the arbiter, the only one for an entire nation. As one who loved God and was redeemed and a believer he felt responsible for every single person under God's care. What a great attribute. A sign of redemption is a feeling of responsibility for every single person who steps through these doors. But it was impossible for him to keep that pace.

His father in law, a foreigner, who didn't worship the God of Israel, said: It is not your job, you have to delegate. You notice Moses didn't say it, but someone else had to say it for him. Usually we are the ones to say it in order to get out of responsibilities. Unless we have a work ethic and devotion and marriage to this church that is incredibly faithful, where we are looking to do things, and not get out of doing things. But Jethro said, you are going to wear yourself out. The enthusiasm that you have in your new life must allow others into the work of the church and the work of God.

But once you give your life to Christ, you want to do everything, but you can't. Jethro said to Moses, who do you think you are? There are people who are just as good

as you are, maybe even better, they are waiting to be called to duty. Otherwise the people and you will just waste away.

In Acts 6 we have a full community of people who took the care of their community seriously. They were redeemed and loved Jesus, let's start with that, and we have that going for us. They had new-comers, Johnny come lately, the Hellenists, who were being overlooked in favor of the old timers, the Hebrews, who got all the attention of the people in the church. Well the apostles see this problem and they try to handle it, but the preaching of the word was being overlooked now because they were serving tables. They say, this is important to understand this detail, that this job of taking care of all the people is too important for us to do because we can't give the time and the energy that this job needs because we are spending our days praying and preaching to build up this community as you called us to do. We need to find people that this is all they will do and make it and claim it as their job. The Word of God continues to spread.

Notice, and this is so important, it wasn't that this task was less important, it was that it was too important for the apostles to do because they were not going to be able to give it the time that it needed in order to do it right.

Have you been given a new life in Christ? Do you believe that Jesus saved you from a life of bondage? If you have, then once we have been redeemed we are each called to a task or a purpose. We are each given a job. Each new member here is called to see every program of the church as their responsibility and find the one area, or more than one, where they can thrive. All of us is given the same responsibility. We are so used to hearing, and probably even saying ourselves, at our workplace that's not my job in order to shirk some responsibility.

The new community embraces any task. Let me tell you about a church in New York City called 5th Avenue Presbyterian Church. It is situated in the highest priced district maybe even in the world. Homeless people have taken to sleeping on the steps of this church. Well, the members didn't think it was right for them to be sleeping on their steps, especially in this kind of neighborhood so they built them a homeless shelter with much pomp and circumstance.

If you have ever worked with the homeless you know that a large number of them don't trust and won't sleep in shelters so they continued to sleep on the steps of the church. Well, the church could have said, we did what we could, it's not our job to worry

about them any more. But instead, a group in the church began cooking breakfast for them, bringing out toiletries and letting them go in the church for showers. Welcome to God's house they would say when they came in.

The city got upset with someone saying this is my job, because no one had ever really cared about them before. They sent police-men to drive them away and the members were there in full force. They were tossed around and harassed, but it was their job and they were going to do it the way it was supposed to be done. The courts finally got it and a ruling came out: they stated that what the members were doing fell well within the understanding of the church's mission so it was legal to do that on their property. No kidding. We don't need a court to tell us our mission, we need members saying: this is my job.

There was a man who could have very easily said: this isn't my job as his disciples fell asleep on him in the Garden of Gethsemany. He could have said it's not my job as they kicked him and spat upon him in front of the high priests. He could have said it's not my job as Peter denied him three times. He could have said it is not my job as they beat him and put a crown of thorns on his head. He could have said it's not my job when they drove the nails in his hands and hung him on the cross to die. He could have said it's not my job as he gave up his spirit and was pierced in the side. He could have said, it's not my job when he descended into the fiery pits of hell.

But, instead, he said I love them so much that I am going to make it my job and he broke the bonds of death and of hell and rose from the grave and gave us a chance of redemption because he took that responsibility upon his shoulders to bear our sin.

How can we say to him, to this church, I won't do that, it's not my job? We have so many needs in this church. You see them on the slides as you come in. In a growing, fun loving church like this, there are so many jobs that we need done, and there you are sitting and waiting to be called upon. We are calling out to you to help. We need Sunday School teachers, people to help with the children's church, we need people to hold babies, we need people to come once a month and watch kids for parent's day out. We need elders and deacons to serve as officers in the coming years.

We need an army to get all of this done. Fortunately we have one. What's your job? Amen.