

The Need for Spiritual Leadership

by Stephen Kaung

Stephen Kaung's sermon highlights the vital importance of spiritual leadership in fulfilling God's purpose among His people.

Duration: 1:05:49

Scripture: Genesis 12:1-3, Genesis 26:2-5, Genesis 28:13-15, Matthew 9:35-38

Topics: "Leadership"

Description

In this sermon, the Lord Jesus uses two parables to convey a message to his disciples. The first parable is about sheep and a shepherd, emphasizing that the sheep are harassed and cast away because they lack a shepherd. The second parable is about a harvest and workmen, highlighting the need for more workers to gather the abundant harvest. Jesus expresses compassion for the crowds and urges his disciples to pray to the Lord of the harvest for more workers. The sermon also emphasizes the importance of discipleship and commitment to the Lord, as well as the discipline and molding that comes with it.

Transcript

I'd like to read just one passage to start with. Will you please turn to the Gospel according to Matthew. Matthew chapter 9. We'll read from verse 35 through verse 38.

And Jesus went round all the cities and the villages, teaching in their synagogues and preaching the glad tidings of the kingdom, and healing every disease and every bodily weakness. And when he saw the crowds, he was moved with compassion for them, because they were harassed, and cast away as sheep, not having a shepherd. Then said he to his disciples, The harvest is great, and the workmen are few.

Supplicate therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he send forth workmen unto his harvest. Let us pray. Lord, we are before thee, speak that thy servants may hear.

We praise and we thank thee because thou hast redeemed us. We are not our own, we are thine. How we do desire that we may serve thy purpose.

We know that in ourselves there is nothing that can serve thee. But Lord, thou hast given thy life to us, and thou art working in us. We pray that thou mayst get much for thyself among thine own.

We commit this time into thy hands. We ask thee to strengthen our inner man as well as our outer man, that we may be able to enter into that which thou hast for us tonight. And to thee be all the praise and the

honor and the glory forever and ever.

Amen. Our Lord Jesus, he went around in the cities and in the villages. He saw the crowds that came to him, and he was moved with compassion.

He told his disciples that they were as sheep, harassed and cast away without a shepherd. And the Lord said, supplicate the Lord of the harvest, that he might send forth workmen to the harvest. Now brothers and sisters, here you'll find our Lord Jesus was using two different parables.

One is the sheep and the shepherd, and the other is the harvest and the workmen. What is it that the Lord is trying to speak to his disciples? The sheep, they are harassed. They are cast off.

And the reason for it is they do not have a shepherd. The harvest is there. There is a harvest to be gathered.

But where are the workmen to go out to gather the harvest? God's people are sheep, but sheep need shepherds. Without a good shepherd, the sheep will be harassed and will be cast away. There are great potentials in God's people, but you need people who can gather them, who can build them up and help them so that there will be a harvest.

What I feel the Lord is saying here is, here are the sheep, but where are the shepherds? Whether you call them shepherds, under-shepherds, harvesters, reapers, workmen, or whatever name you may call them, I think there is a principle here which is of essential importance, and that is the need for spiritual leadership among God's people. It is true. God's eternal purpose is the body of Christ.

As we have heard last night and this morning, God has an eternal purpose, and he is working to have that purpose fully realized. He is the one who is working. That is his purpose.

He will never change that purpose. Sometimes we may think that God is like us. When things are going a little bit hard, you try to find an easy way out.

You change the course. And sometimes we even quote the scripture and say, does not God repent? It is true. God did repent, and he does repent from time to time.

But the repent there does not refer to his purpose. It only refers to his method. He may change his method, but he will never change his purpose.

God's eternal purpose is that he may get a people, a flock, a body, a bride for his son. This is God's purpose. And we do need to look to the Lord to open our heart and understanding to see this.

But for God's purpose to be realized, in his plan there is a divine principle of God's working. God's purpose is there. But how is God going to work towards that purpose? And in working towards that purpose, that is to say in God's plan of operation, there is one principle which is of tremendous importance, and that is spiritual leadership.

You may call it shepherd or under-shepherd, or you may call it whatever name it may be, but the substance is there. Spiritual leadership is a divine principle in God's plan, in God's operation. The sheep are very innocent to the extent of being ignored.

If you leave the sheep by themselves, they cannot protect themselves. They will get into all kinds of situations, and they cannot get themselves out. They can easily go astray, and they are not like dogs, they can find their way home.

They have to be stopped and to be brought back. If the sheep do not have good shepherds, only highlings, then when dangers come, the highlings will flee, and the sheep will be devoured. The sheep need shepherds.

Spiritually speaking, God's people are so innocent. Thank God there is an innocence in God's people. Everywhere you go, you'll find God's people are so pure to the extent of being naive.

Everywhere you go, you'll find God's people do have a heart for the Lord. There is nothing wrong with God's people. What is wrong is with those who lead them.

What is wrong is there is no one to lead them. You remember in Matthew chapter 15 the Lord said, the blind leading the blind. And if it is the blind leading the blind, then both will fall into the ditches.

What is very of urgent need today among God's people is spiritual leadership. God is the God of Abraham, of Isaac, and of Jacob. Even though God's purpose is the nation of Israel, but how is God going to get that nation? Here you'll find He gets that nation through Abraham, through Isaac, and through Jacob.

It is through the divine principle of leadership that God is able to get the nation that He is after. God's purpose is to deliver the children of Israel out of Egypt. That is God's purpose.

But He has to raise up a man, Moses, to lead them out of Egypt. God's purpose is to establish His kingdom on earth. It's to build His house among His people, to dwell among His people.

But in order to arrive at that tremendous purpose, He has to raise up David and Solomon to do that. It is true. God Himself is working.

God Himself is working out His purpose. But God's way of working out His purpose is to raise up spiritual leadership, to lead the people, to help the people, to build up the people, that God's purpose may be fulfilled in His people. This is the direction of God's sovereign operation.

Even after the children of Israel have gone away from the Lord. As you'll find in the book of Judges, God led them into the Promised Land, and yet you'll find very soon they fell away from God. And God had to raise up Judge after Judge.

When God raised up a Judge, the nation returned to God. But the Bible says, when the Judge was living, they served God. But after the Judge died, immediately they fell off again.

And later on, even when the Judge was living, they began to disintegrate. In the book of Kings and Chronicles, you'll find how, what the relationship, what intimate relationship between the kings and the people. When you have a king whose heart is perfect towards God, a king that loves God, you'll find the whole nation began to turn to God.

But when you find a wicked king, a king that did not fear God, and the result was the people fell away from God. Leadership is of such tremendous importance. After the children of Israel were taken into captivity, you'll find the same thing.

It was God's purpose that the people should return to Jerusalem and rebuild the temple. But in order to have that realized, God has to raise up people like Zerubbabel, Joshua, Ezra, Nehemiah. And under their leadership, you'll find the people began to work with Him.

And when you come to the New Testament, you'll find the same principle is working. When our Lord Jesus was on earth, He chose 12 to be His disciples. And with these 12, with 70, with 120, you'll find God, the Lord, was using these to accomplish the work that He desires to accomplish.

It is so. So far as the work of redemption is concerned, our Lord Jesus is alone. He does not need your help.

No one can help Him. He alone accomplishes the whole work of redemption. And thank God He does.

But other than the work of redemption, the gathering in of the living Son, the building up of the Son, the shepherding and all these things, you'll find He will raise up leadership to cooperate with Him to bring what He desires into fulfillment. It is said in Ephesians, God gave to the church some apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, some teachers and pastors for the perfecting of the things with a view to the ministry, which is the ministry of the body. And God raised up elders in the church to take care of the sheep.

And also you'll find in the Bible there were people who were called leaders, leading brethren. For instance, in Acts chapter 15, you remember Paul and Barnabas? They went to Jerusalem for that conference. And after that, the apostles and the church in Jerusalem, they wrote a letter to the different churches.

And when they sent that letter to the different churches, they also sent two brothers to go with Barnabas and Paul. And in chapter 15 of Acts it is said, Judas, also called Barnabas, and Silas, they were the leading brethren. The leading brethren.

They were not elders, and yet they were leaders in the church. So in other words, it is not a matter of what position you occupy, it is a matter of God's divine principle of working. God must have spiritual leadership in His people in order to bring His people into His fold.

That's why you'll find in 1 Thessalonians chapter 5, we are told that we should remember those leaders, those who labor among us, those who take care of us, those who are deeply concerned with our spiritual welfare. And these people we need to regard them, to esteem them. And you'll find in Hebrews chapter 13 the same thing.

Remember those who have met you. Notice the issue of their conversation. Imitate them.

So brothers and sisters, I have a burden for the evening to share with you on this matter of spiritual leadership. Spiritual leadership is a must. Spiritual leadership is a necessity.

Without spiritual leadership, God's purpose cannot be fulfilled. God is looking among His people for spiritual leadership. And if He cannot find spiritual leadership, His work cannot be done.

It is as important as this. But spiritual leadership, how does it come about? Spiritual leadership cannot be made by man. People may appoint some people into some position, but that doesn't give them spiritual leadership.

Spiritual leadership is not based upon natural talent. No matter how talented you are, how skillful you are, how intelligent you are, how naturally capable you are, these are not the qualifications for spiritual

leadership. In other words, spiritual leadership cannot be made by man.

Neither by yourself nor by any other man. You may assume a position. People may put you on a position.

But without spiritual authority, there is no spiritual leadership. No matter what position you occupy, or you assume, spiritual leadership comes from God. It is God's choice.

It is not man-made. I would like to read you two quotations. One is not exactly a quotation, but it's a note I took in 1957.

In 1957, I visited England for the first time. And there, our dear brother Spock took a number of us to Scotland for a time together. And our brother Lance Lambert was there.

That was the first time I met our dear brother. And when we were together in Kill Cragdon in Scotland, just spent, I think, a week or so together, we came together every morning just to wait upon the Lord. And during some of the morning, our brother shared with us something that was upon his heart.

And one of the things he shared that impressed me very deeply at that time was on leadership. Of course, he spoke a lot on leadership. But I would like to read you a note I took at that time.

It was not a direct quotation, but it's a note I took. Leadership is the direction in which divine sovereignty peculiarly works. That's just like Mr. Spock.

I'll read it again. Leadership is the direction in which divine sovereignty peculiarly works. Divine sovereignty is God acting himself without consultation with anyone.

That's divine sovereignty. He does not consult you, nor me. So leadership is a divine choice.

True leadership bears the mark that it is something God has done. Universally speaking, there is nothing to support the natural. It is a peculiar manifestation of divine sovereignty.

The initiative of God is found in leadership. Men do not take the initiative. Leadership can never be of man's assumption.

It must be of God. It is not professional. A leader is one who is there by the act of God.

The apostle in Latin is a man with a mandate. He has the faith behind him. And even if hell raises itself, he will fulfill his mission.

This is the position of a leader. I think it is very clear that leadership is not something that is initiated with man. It is God's prerogative.

It is God's divine sovereignty. It is an act of God. He calls.

He chooses. And he puts people in leadership, in the place where a person should be. And I like to quote another one.

I quote people who have already gone before us. And there is another one. A. W. Tusa.

And here is what he said. That's a quotation. A true and safe leader is likely to be one who has no desire to lead, but is forced into a position of leadership by the inward pressure of the Holy Spirit and the

pressure of the external situation.

I think that is beautifully put. He is a true and safe leader. Safe leader.

Such were Moses and David and the Old Testament prophets. I think there was hardly a great leader from Paul to the present day but was drafted by the Holy Spirit for the task and commissioned by the Lord of the Church. To fill a position, he has little heart for.

I believe it might be accepted as a fairly reliable rule of thumb that a man who is ambitious to lead is disqualified as a leader. Strong word. But true.

The true leader will have no desire to lord it over God's heritage, but will be humble, gentle, self-sacrificing and altogether ready to follow as to lead when the Spirit makes it clear that a wiser and more gifted man than himself has appeared. The making of a leader, a spiritual leader, is a divine, it is such. It is not for those who are ambitious for themselves.

On the contrary, you'll find that God put people into leadership, a position that they tried. One day, a brother, Matthew, he was with Saint Francis of Assisi. Probably some of you have heard about Francis of Assisi.

And he was with Francis of Assisi. And one day when they were together, this brother, Matthew, he began to speak aloud. He said, why thee, why thee? Why thee, why thee? Why is it that people follow thee? Why is it people hear thee? Why is it people obey thee? You have neither beauty, nor intelligence, nor of noble race.

Why thee, why thee? He was as if trying to mock Francis of Assisi. And when Francis of Assisi heard that, he bowed very low before the Lord. And as he raised his eyes, he entered into an ecstasy.

He was just full of adoration and praise. And after a while, he turned to that brother and said, do you want to know why thee, why thee? Let me tell you why. He said, the eyes of the Most High were looking upon the earth.

He was watching go the wicked and the good. And his eyes was trying to see if there is any sinner as small as myself. He has chosen me because I am nothing.

And he has chosen me to do his marvelous work, to confound the wise and the noble. That was his answer. Dear brothers and sisters, spiritual leadership is a necessity among God's people.

Especially in this time. God is moving among His people. Many are awakened spiritually to the Lord.

And they do have a heart for the Lord. They are seeking and searching. And yet, dear brothers and sisters, as you look out, it's almost like our Lord Jesus, when He was looking at His crowds, and He was moved with compassion and said, they are harassed, cast off as sheep without shepherd.

Oh, dear brothers and sisters, one thing we need to ask the Lord, and that is we need to ask the Lord to raise up spiritual leaders. Not just people who are ambitious. Not just people who are put in a position for true leadership.

God has to raise up spiritual leaders to lead His people into the realization of God's full purpose in His people. I wonder if this is something missing today. If there is something that we need to inquire of the

Lord and be before the Lord in a very, very special way.

But it is true. Spiritual leadership is God's divine sovereignty, His divine choice. And yet, when God chooses a person to be a leader, there is something which God has wrought already in that person.

In other words, it is God's sovereignty. No one can assume a position of leadership. It is up to God.

Nothing we can do. And yet, on the other hand, God chooses leaders because He has already worked something in them. And because He has wrought that in them, He is able to raise them up as leaders.

For one to lead, he has to know the direction. For one to lead, he has to know where to go. And therefore, brothers and sisters, how necessary it is that God may find people on this earth who are open to Him, who are humble enough before Him to allow Him to work in them.

And after He has wrought His work in them, in turn, He can work through them to the people. Look at Moses. Before God could use Moses as a leader, He had to do His work in Moses.

Not only for forty years He was in the wilderness, and there He had to be reduced to absolutely nothing. Moses himself said, the lifespan of a person is three scores and ten. And if it is strong, he will be four scores.

And when God called him to that work, he was eighty years old. In other words, in his own estimate, he was at his very end. God had to reduce him.

God has to empty him. God has to empty him of his eloquence. God has to empty him of his might.

God has to empty him of his talent, of his ambition, of everything of himself. God has to draw him to that point, has to work that in him, until he realizes he is but a bush, a thorn bush, and nothing else. Ready to be consumed, and yet by the grace of God, he is not consumed.

God has to work in a person before God can use him. But more than that, even his forty years in Egypt was God's sovereign arrangement. I remember Brother Sparks at that time also said to us, A leader is one who must not only know where to lead to, but also what to lead from.

In other words, he has to know where he has to lead out. He has to experience. He will be put into situations, not for himself.

Sometimes he may be put into situations that seem to be wrong even, unnecessary for himself. And yet, through such situations, he is to know the people. He is to know where he will lead them out.

In other words, everything that God is going to do to the people has to be brought out in him. He is the embodiment of the work that God is calling you. Dear brothers and sisters, it is not just we go out to do some work.

The work that God is calling you, the leadership that God has given you, is already being done in you. You are not a stranger to that. You have already allowed God to make you acquainted with the whole situation in principle.

And because of that, God is able to entrust you with leadership. Otherwise, it will be the blind leading the blind. Spiritual leadership is a very costly thing in the process of making.

Not only it is very costly when you are in a leadership position. It is very costly. But the very making of leadership is costly.

John Bunyan's greatest abomination is autobiography. I think we read, we read his history. It is the greatest abomination.

John Bunyan tried to tell us in his own experience. And sometimes, why it is so difficult for John Bunyan to get a desire to be saved. People do not even have a desire to be saved and God saved them.

And here you find John Bunyan very anxious to be saved. And yet, into equilibrium. He went through times of depression.

He went through... And he was still unsafe. Not safe. And sometimes you wonder why.

Isn't it? Thank God. Because John Bunyan went through all these things. Yes.

He is able to help people into the of salvation. To be a leader is one in whom God has to do some work. More than in anybody else.

Are you willing to let God do such a work? We often think of leadership as a very glorious thing. Oh, how we long to be leaders. Among the twelve disciples you'll find one thing that they thought all the time was who was the real leader.

Every one of them wanted to be the first. And even at the very last, when our Lord Jesus was already in Jerusalem for the last time. And there you'll find the two sons of Dabbedin.

They got their mother involved. And try to sit at the... Try to ask the Lord to allow them to sit on the right and on the left in positions of importance of leadership. And the Lord said, among the nations, the leaders, the kings, they lord over other people.

But this is not so among you. If you want to be the first, you must be the smallest. And the Lord said, the Son of Man comes to serve and not to be served.

And to give His life a ransom. Dear brothers and sisters, for the sake of God's purpose, for the sake of God's people, we need to so commit ourselves to the Lord, so give ourselves to the Lord, that we are willing to allow Him to work everything that He wants to work out among His people. Let it be first work out in me.

And unless we have such a heart, God is not able to use us as we need. Again, leadership is not based upon natural disaster. Some people are born leaders.

It is natural for them to lead. But that's a very dangerous, very dangerous. God either has to set them aside completely, or God has to deal with them so drastically that they are reduced to nothing before God can really use them.

Do nothing because you're not a natural born leader. Therefore, God will not choose you. God always supplies.

We are talking about true leadership. We are talking about the true work of God. We are not talking about work as such, as people in this world will recognize.

But we are talking about how God's purpose can be done. Again, it is God Himself who works. But He works through the leaders.

How does leadership come about? It is by way of discipleship. If a person is not willing to follow, he is not fit to lead. If we are not willing to follow the Lord, the Lord said, if anyone desires to follow me, let him deny himself, take up his cross and follow me.

If we are not ready to follow the Lord, whithersoever he goes, we are not fit. One day, someone came up to the Lord and said, Lord, I want to follow you. He was a scribe.

And the Lord said, do you know what he means? The birds have nested. The fox has hoveled. But the Son of Man has nowhere to lay His head.

Brothers and sisters, are we committed to the Lord? Do not think first of leadership. Think first of discipleship. Are you a true disciple of the Lord? Have you committed your life to the Lord in such a way that He is able to break you, to mold you, to make you as it pleases Him? Are you that committed to Him? And of course, the word disciple cannot be separated from the word discipline.

A disciple's life is a disciplined life. As we commit ourselves into the hand of our Lord, we leave it with Him to discipline us. Dear brothers and sisters, this is the way to leadership.

Are we ready? Many aspire for leadership, but few are willing to be disciples. As a matter of fact, there is only one in the whole universe who is fit to lead. You and I, none of us is fit to lead.

God has raised up one leader. You remember it is said, look up unto Jesus, the leader and the completer of our faith. Only our Lord Jesus is fit to lead.

Why? Because He has learned obedience from the things which He suffered. Even though He was equal with God and is not something to be grasped at, and yet He emptied Himself. He took upon Himself the form of a slave.

And being in the likeness of a man, He further humbled Himself before God. And He was obedient to the Father even unto death, and that the death of the cross. Brothers and sisters, our Lord Jesus, when He came to this earth to be our man, how He followed the Father completely, every step of His way, even unto death and the death of the cross.

And because of that, God has made Him the leader. Spiritual leadership is in Christ. If anyone shall say, I'm going to lead, I'm able to lead, I am a leader, you disqualify yourself.

It is Christ in you. If it is not Christ in you who leads the people, you mislead them. Oh, dear brothers and sisters, how we have misled God's people.

We think we know. We think we are in a position to lead. We are ambitious.

We think we are capable. We try to lead, and both fall into deep. I think we need to realize one thing, and that is, we are not fit to lead.

We should learn to follow. Follow the Lord. It is the Lord in us who leads.

And how is it that the Lord in us will lead? Again, you'll find that is a mystery. It is the Lord who leads, and yet He leads in you and through you. Outwardly, it looks as if you are leading.

But actually, it is not you. It is the Lord. Now, how can it be? It is because by the Holy Spirit, the Lord Himself is being so organized in you, so wrought in you, God has not only made known to you His mind, but God has worked in you in such a way that He has such a place in you.

And that is your spiritual authority. And that is spiritual. Look into the life of Paul.

Here you'll find God raised up this man, Apostle Paul. And of all the people that God has used, Paul certainly is one of the greatest vassal instruments in God's hands for the purpose of God, concerning His people. Paul is a master builder and how God used him to build that spiritual house.

He was certainly a great leader. God has given him such leadership for the body of Christ. But dear brothers and sisters, you'll find everything that God has used Paul to bring people into the realization of the body of Christ God has first wrought in him.

Before his conversion, he was a great man. The Pharisee. Paul was not an unknown person.

He was a great man. He was born in Tarsus. He was reared, educated in Jerusalem, under the feet of Gamaliel, the great teacher.

He was a Pharisee of the Pharisees. He was a great man. But there on the road to Damascus, oh, this man's soul was such a person.

He was not only learned, he had such a dynamic personality. We were told by tradition that Paul was very small in stature. And yet, he was a dynamic person, no doubt.

He had such driving force. He did such havoc to the believers in the beginning. And God met him on the road to Damascus and reduced him to nothing.

He met the Lord. Never before he acknowledged anyone as greater than he was. He must be met.

And now he met the Lord. And his Lord, he said, Lord, his whole life was surrendered. He allowed the Lord to work in him to such an extent that Christ has such a place in his life.

And whatever Christ has worked in him and been in him, that is his authority. That is his ministry. And that is his leadership.

It is not Paul. Strangely enough, I do not know who gave him the name Paul. Whether he put it up himself or whether somebody else gave him that name.

But you know, Paul means little. So far as he himself was concerned, he was no longer Saul, that great man. He was Paul, little.

He even says he is the chief of sinners. Less than the least of all the saints. And yet, dear brothers and sisters, there is no doubt there is a spiritual leadership in that man.

He said, imitate me as I have imitated you. Oh, how he followed Christ. How he was disciples to Christ.

How he allowed Christ to break him and make him. He said, not I, but Christ. In my body, I bear in my body the dying of Jesus.

I die. I die daily. That the life of Jesus may be manifested in me and in you.

And this is spiritual leadership. So dear brothers and sisters, may we be before the Lord. I feel it is something of urgent need today among God's people.

Let us cry unto the Lord to raise up spiritual leadership. True leadership. In whom God has already wrought the work that He wanted to do.

And may we be before the Lord tonight and say, Lord, we are in Thy hand. We do not choose this. We do not try to get it.

But we are here in Your hand. Whatever you want, have Your way. Can we have some time of prayer together? Pour out this burden before the Lord.

As the Lord of harvest, to raise up spiritual leaders for the need of His purpose and His people.

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