

CREATED GAY

But They Forgot

by Gary Simpson

This morning, we will reflect on the story of Korah in Numbers, Chapter 16. This may be one of the saddest stories in the Bible. God's people bickering over power and prestige. Korah and his followers challenged Moses. Korah attempted to create a priestly order, without God's sanction.¹ Aaron was appointed by the Lord,² but Korah was not appointed by God.

When Moses learns of Korah's plans, Moses throws himself on the ground³ and prays. After he prays, Moses proclaims the next day, the Lord will show everybody who was chosen as His priest. And we pick up the story in verse 29, with Moses telling the people how they will know who the Lord chose.

Numbers 16:29 to 32 (CEV) If these men die a natural death, it means the LORD hasn't chosen me. ³⁰But suppose the LORD does something that has never been done before. For example, what if a huge crack appears in the ground, and these men and their families fall into it and are buried alive, together with everything they own? Then you will know they have turned their backs on the LORD!" ³¹As soon as Moses said this, the ground under the men opened up ³²⁻³³and swallowed them alive, together with their families and everything they owned. Then the ground closed back up, and they were gone.

Now Moses is one incredible speaker. Talk about dynamic. I wished I could illustrate my proposals at work and on the church board that way. I could calmly say, "The Lord will show which method is better. If my way is not good, you will all die old men and women in your beds. If my approach strategy is better, the floor will open up and swallow you." And then the floor opens up and swallows all who disagree. That beats a computer animated presentation! Nobody would sleep through board meetings and committee meetings when I was there!

And sermons! The floor opens up and swallows all everybody who does not come forward for an altar call! Move over Billy Graham! Here I come! Eat your heart out Tony Campolo! You are dynamic Tony, but you are not that dynamic! Nobody would nod off in a sermon like that. Every eye glued on me. Everybody sitting on the edge of the pew. And the altars would be full!

Ahh! Praise God for boring sermons! That is too much drama even for a queer church. The drama queens among us cannot compete with the drama of God, as we see in this story.

Back to the point. Why was God so concerned about who was the priest, about who carried out the priestly duties? The story of Samuel stepping down and being replaced as CEO by Saul, Israel's first king gives us a bit of a clue to God's concern about who is a priest. We pick up part of Samuel's retirement speech. In his speech, Samuel gives a brief summary of Israel's history.

1 Samuel 12:8 - 9 *(Moffatt Bible)* When Jacob went to Egypt, the Egyptians oppressed them, and your fathers cried to the Eternal; then the Eternal sent Moses and Aaron to bring your fathers out of Egypt, and settled them in this place. ⁹**But they forgot the Eternal their God. So he sold them into the hand of Sisera, commander of the army of Jabin king of Hazor, and into the hand of the Philistines, and into the hand of the king of Moab, who fought against them.**

The Lord did wonderful things for the children of Israel. Samuel talks about that. God sent Moses and Aaron to deliver the people from slavery. God gave the children of Israel the promised land. But they forgot God. But they forgot. But they forgot the Eternal their God! That is why it is important who represents the Lord. Too many pastors are in the pulpits of this nation for personal prestige, for spiritual power. And there is a lot of power in the pulpits. You can make people feel loved by the Eternal or hated by the Creator. You can help make people feel like they are dancing with the angels in the presence of God or are tormented by the fires of hell. But power is not the name of the game for a real priest, for a real shepherd. When power is the name of the game, the focus of people turns from God to political power in the church.

Our God wants people who serve the people large portions of grace. The priestly role, by nature, is a role of grace. Those who long for a priestly role, a shepherding role with God's people need to be the kind of people who extend grace to people from the pulpit, from the counsellor's chair, and from the prayer closet. Pastors who are not prepared to extend grace from the pulpit, from the counsellor's chair and from the prayer closet to gay, lesbian, bisexual, trans-identified and intersex people do not belong in pastoral ministry. Those who do not extend grace to women, to people of color, to the poor, to those society is uncomfortable to be around do not belong in pastoral ministry. They are unfit for pastoral ministry, because they do not understand grace and are not prepared to extend grace, as God extends grace. As ministers of the faith, we are to remind people that God has delivered them, is providing for the Creator's people, and will take the Eternally Faithful's children to the heavenly promised land. God wants pastors to constantly remind us of grace so it will not be said of us, "But they forgot . . ."

The priestly function represents God's work of salvation. Priestly work in the temple pointed forward to Jesus Christ. The priests were important, because they represented salvation. They were to help ensure the people did not forget God. Pastors have a lot of responsibility. To many people in church, they represent salvation and God. Good pastors help people remember God, help people make room to see God in the daily grind of their lives.

The texts this week point help us understand that representing Calvary. They help us see that extending salvation to people is far more important than power and

prestige. When we fight for power, when we fight for priestly church positions, we take our eyes off the target – off Calvary, we do not remind people of Jesus, we cease to be priests.

The challenge is for us to focus on what is most important - serving people - and let God take care of the power, the prestige, the fame. The Lord will reward those who do not try to get praise in this life.⁴

Notes

¹Merrill F. Unger. *Unger's Bible Handbook*. (Chicago: Moody Press, 1967), 130.

²See Hebrews 5:4.

³The Christian Community Bible translation reads, "When Moses, heard this, he threw himself face downward on the ground."

⁴Matthew 6:1 and 4 When you do good deeds, don't try to show off. If you do, you won't get a reward from your Father in heaven Your Father knows what is done in secret, and he will reward you.