

NEED FOR COMPASSIONATE LEADERS

Throw the Rascals out! That is usually the call before an election and even with that kind of rhetoric the vast majority of those in office get reelected. Why are people so disapproving of their Congressmen, Senators, and other elected officials? Some people are concerned over the possibility of new taxes or special interest issues, but those do not seem to be an overriding concern. I think that, in general, most people believe that the elected officials care only for themselves and how they can look good to get reelected. Years ago some of us may have thought that those we elected to office cared for their constituents and worked for their best interest. Few people think that any more. Even though most of "the Rascals" get reelected it is claimed that the close races in certain areas sent a message to them to do better and look out more for the interest of those that sent them to represent them.

The world of religion and even in the area of the Christian church we see evidence of the rise of the "professional church worker". This is a person who enters the ministry solely as a means to make a living; that is, it is a vocation rather than a calling. Many such people will be more concerned with the number of days off during a week, the number of paid vacation days during a year, the number sermon they don't have to preach, the size of the housing allowance, mileage allowance, how fancy the office, and a host of other such items rather than looking out for the spiritual welfare of the church members. When such "professionals" are discovered, they too should be sent a message that they should change.

Years ago, during the time of Babylonian captivity, God sent a message to the leaders of Israel. Jerusalem had already fallen and God had begun to send a series of encouraging messages to his people to give

them hope for the coming restoration. However, in the midst of giving hope a stern rebuke was given through His prophet Ezekiel to those that were, or someday might be, in leadership.

EZEKIEL 34:1-6 Ezekiel was a prophet in exile. He was carried away with the first groups of captives that were taken to Babylon. The first 24 chapters of the writing of Ezekiel related to the coming total devastation of Judah and especially Jerusalem. After that, his messages related to God plan for restoring His people to what they should be. Part of the problem that resulted in Israel's fall was the lack of real leadership. There were persons in position of leadership, but they were people who were for the most part self-centered and would fit in with the culture that we see today all around us – looking out for No. 1. If God was going to bring about a restoration, then it was going to be necessary to provide reliable leadership for His people.

The first area in which the leaders failed to perform was in providing proper food for those under their care. There is a need for leaders to make it possible for the populace to feed themselves. Freedom, fairness, reasonableness in administration can create a proper economic climate so that people can make a living. We see ample evidence of the result of corrupt leadership in many of the third-world countries. The leaders take bribes and make themselves rich while the common folks are literally starving to death. There is more at issue than just physical food for the body, there is the issue of what people are taught, what value systems are modeled and encouraged, what world view is promoted. I see a change in the direction of our society that has happened over the past several decades with the government not only NOT encouraging

the teaching of Christian moral value but also the advocacy of values contrary to Biblical teaching. We have allowed the pollution of our land and our people with an “anything goes” attitude rather than recognizing the danger that such looseness poses for a society.

Like the shepherd that does not care for his sheep, we seem unconcerned about the homeless, the kids strung out on dope, those that are caught up in prostitution and sordid other things. Most of our states have legalized gambling – it's called the lottery. This is a way to raise revenue that really preys on the poor and is designed to keep them that way.

EZEKIEL 34:7-10 In the case of Israel, God saw the people as His flock and He still cared enough to do something about the situation. His solution was to kick the Rascals out. Those that had been in leadership positions would no longer be allowed to lead. They had proven to be unreliable. So there would be no doubt in their minds why they were being relieved of the privilege of leadership, God had Ezekiel spell out the failure and the results on the people. If people in leadership positions just realized that they are ultimately answerable to God and not just to some political organization, then we might have true leaders, people that could be trusted and not someone that is in it for what he or she can get out of it.

God's judgement on those that would abuse their position of trust and leadership for personal gain is sobering. He said: "I am against you and I will hold you responsible."

It is not a workable situation for there to be no leadership. Someone has to lead. This leadership is would be provided by God Himself.

EZEKIEL 34:11-12 The immediate application of this prophecy would come to pass at the end of the captivity in Babylon.

When Jerusalem fell in 586 B.C. many of the people were scattered to other areas besides Babylon and these people would be drawn back to their homeland. The cloudy and dark day is likely referring to the fall of Jerusalem. God would raise us leaders among the people and He would also influence the actions of those that held the Jews captive. There was a return to the land and a rebuilding that did happen.

A spiritual application of these words of prophecy is found in the coming of Jesus. Jesus is the Good Shepherd who came to seek and to save those that were lost. In this case God, incarnate in Jesus, was among His people calling them to come back to Himself.

The promises of God to provide leadership for His people should be encouraging to every Christian. In a day when leadership is so uncertain and the character of our leaders is constantly in question is it good to know that the Good Shepherd is a leader worthy of being followed and will never fail us. All of us have some responsibility in being leaders. It may not be an official position; nevertheless, there is some one that you influence and guide in life. We should learn from the example that Christ set for us.