

Minister's Message – July 2010

Who is the Greatest

Young men from various villages would come to our residential college for one year training in rural development and leadership. The coordinators decided to have the group elect a leader according to democratic principles. The election went smoothly and a fine young man was elected leader. One of his duties was to buy meals for the group when the mess was closed on the weekend. The leader was given money for this purpose. Ideally he would buy supplies and they would cook together – or he could give a share to each trainee.

After some time the trainees started to complain that the leader was not using all the money to buy food. He was keeping some for himself. It was hard to believe that this fine young man was abusing the authority and responsibility given to him by the group that had elected him. The coordinator was very disappointed that leadership had brought out a flaw in this young man's character.

God appointed Moses to lead his people out of slavery in Egypt. He appointed Joshua to lead his people into the land of Canaan. He appointed other men, and a woman, to lead as judges in Israel. But one day the people came to Samuel demanding a king. They rejected God as their king and wanted to be like other nations. Samuel warned them that such a king would take their sons into his army and their daughters as his servants. He warned them that a king would take their land and tax them heavily (I Samuel 8). Many kings in Israel were corrupt and cruel.

The disciples of Jesus argued about who would be the leader when he went away. They argued about who would be the greatest. Jesus said, 'The kings of the Gentiles lord it over them but it will not be that way with you' (Luke 22:24). Throughout history men and women have jostled and fought for positions of power in society.

While democratic election may be the best we can do in order to get a leader, this process does not rule out the corrupting influence of power. Leadership brought out the worst of the trainee's character. The people of Israel were warned of the way human kings would rule. Leadership has the potential to bring out the worst in any person. The saying that 'Power corrupts and absolute power corrupts absolutely' is a sad reality.

The sad reality is that every man and woman is a sinner. The sad reality is that all of us are vulnerable to corruption. We are all prone to act in self interest, or in the interests of family or friends, even if we are elected to serve impartially. Only one man has ever served impartially and without corruption. The only perfect leader of men is Jesus Christ. Some wanted to make him an earthly king but he said, 'My kingdom is not of this world'.

Those who have Jesus as their heavenly king are much better prepared to serve as leaders among men and women in this world. To the extent that leaders follow the example and the teaching of Jesus, they will be great leaders. That example and that teaching can be found in the Bible. We are thankful that the leaders of our nation have been taught about Jesus in their youth. We pray that they will not forget what they were taught. We pray that they will seek the favour of God, and serve the people in the fear of God.

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