Worship that Carries One Another

Deuteronomy: Choose Life | Week Nineteen | Deuteronomy 18:1-8

THE BIG IDEA

When Israel received the land, the Levites received none of it, because the LORD himself was their inheritance, and the rest of God's people carried them with the first and best of what they had. Following Jesus will cost us some portions that everyone else seems to get. But we are not the poorer for it. Jesus gave up every portion that was rightfully his so that God himself could be ours, and that is an inheritance no one can ever take away.

01 SHARE LIFE

Take a few minutes to catch up before you open the passage. Everyone gets a turn.

1. What was a high point and a low point from your week?
2. Where have you seen God at work this week, and where has it been hard?
3. When we last met, we each named one step to take. How did it go, and what got in the way?

02 SETTING THE SCENE

We are in the section of Deuteronomy about worship and community life. Moses is preaching to a new generation on the plains of Moab, and he is laying out the kinds of leaders God will give his people in the land. Last week it was judges and kings. This week it is the priests, and next week it will be the prophets. Very soon every tribe will receive its share of the Promised Land, a portion of fields, vineyards, and pastures to pass down for generations. In a farming world, land meant food, security, and a future for your children. Every tribe gets a portion except one. The tribe of Levi receives towns to live in but no territory of its own, and God tells them why: the LORD is their inheritance.

03 READ THE WORD TOGETHER

Have one person read the passage aloud, slowly. If you can, read it a second time with a different person reading.

DEUTERONOMY 18:1-8 CSB

1 The Levitical priests, the whole tribe of Levi, will have no portion or inheritance with
Israel. They will eat the LORD's food offerings; that is their inheritance. 2 Although Levi
has no inheritance among his brothers, the LORD is his inheritance, as he promised him.
3 This is the priests' share from the people who offer a sacrifice, whether it is an ox, a
sheep, or a goat; the priests are to be given the shoulder, jaws, and stomach. 4 You are to
give him the firstfruits of your grain, new wine, and fresh oil, and the first sheared wool of
your flock. 5 For the LORD your God has chosen him and his sons from all your tribes to
stand and minister in his name from now on. 6 When a Levite leaves one of your towns in
Israel where he was living and wants to go to the place the LORD chooses, 7 he may
serve in the name of the LORD his God like all his fellow Levites who minister there in the
presence of the LORD. 8 They will eat equal portions besides what he has received from
the sale of his family estate.

First impressions

4. What word, phrase, or image stood out to you as the passage was read?
5. What did you notice, or what surprised you, about how God provides for the priests?

04 STUDY THE SCRIPTURE

The sermon looked at this passage from three angles: what the Levites gave up, what the rest of Israel was asked to give, and what it means for us to be God's priests today. Reread the verses for each part as you go.

NO PORTION BUT THE LORD *Read verses 1-2 again.*

1 The Levitical priests, the whole tribe of Levi, will have no portion or inheritance with
Israel. They will eat the LORD's food offerings; that is their inheritance. 2 Although Levi has
no inheritance among his brothers, the LORD is his inheritance, as he promised him.

Picture the land being handed out tribe by tribe while Levi waits at the end of the line and hears, all of this is for your brothers, and none of it is for you. The Levites would not build the kind of security everyone else was building. They could not plan their children's future the way their neighbors could. That is a real loss, and the passage does not pretend otherwise.

But verse 2 turns it around. Levi has no inheritance among his brothers because the LORD is his inheritance. God had made this promise to Aaron years earlier (Numbers 18:20). The Levites received both nothing and something far better. They would not be kept by their own fields. They would be kept by God himself.

6. If you had been a Levite watching the land being handed out, what would have been hardest to give up? What would it take to believe that the LORD is better than land?

7. Good gifts like a career, a family, a ministry, or a home can quietly become the thing we lean on as our inheritance. Which good gift are you most tempted to treat that way?

CARRIED BY GOD'S PEOPLE *Read verses 3-5 again.*

> **3** This is the priests' share from the people who offer a sacrifice, whether it is an ox, a sheep, or a goat; the priests are to be given the shoulder, jaws, and stomach. **4** You are to give him the firstfruits of your grain, new wine, and fresh oil, and the first sheared wool of your flock. **5** For the LORD your God has chosen him and his sons from all your tribes to stand and minister in his name from now on.

Now look at it from the side of everyone else. The other tribes are told to give the priests a share of their sacrifices and the firstfruits of their grain, wine, oil, and wool. Firstfruits meant the first and best, given before you knew how big the harvest would be. Some may have grumbled that they were working the fields while the priests were not. Others likely saw the beauty of it: one people with many parts, each carrying the other.

Verse 5 tells us why the priests were set apart. God chose them to stand and minister in his name. When Israel saw a priest, they were meant to think of the LORD. Supporting the priests was not charity. It was worship, a way the whole community kept God at the center of its life.

8. When you think about supporting the people and work of the church, which reaction is closer to your heart right now, the grumbling or the gratitude? Why?
9. Who has carried you in your faith along the way, and who might God be asking you to help carry right now?

A ROYAL PRIESTHOOD *Read verses 6-8 again.*

> **6** When a Levite leaves one of your towns in Israel where he was living and wants to go to the place the LORD chooses, **7** he may serve in the name of the LORD his God like all his fellow Levites who minister there in the presence of the LORD. **8** They will eat equal portions besides what he has received from the sale of his family estate.

The passage ends with a Levite from any town who comes to serve at the place God chooses. He serves alongside the others and eats an equal portion, no matter where he came from. In Christ, this priesthood has been opened to all of God's people. Peter calls the church a chosen race, a royal priesthood, and a holy nation (1 Peter 2:9). And Jesus was honest that if we follow him, we will sometimes go without what everyone else seems to get: a promotion we lose because we will not mistreat others, an invitation that never comes, a family member who no longer understands us, a community that will not accept us.

The point is not that we lose. It is that we have been given something far greater. God himself is our portion, and that changes how we see everything. Instead of seeing enemies, we see people God loves. Instead of living without hope, we know that good is coming because God is coming. And instead of grasping for our own share, we are given a church that builds one another up. Like the priests, we now stand in God's name in the places he sends us, so that when people see us, they think of him.

10. What has following Jesus cost you, or what might it cost you this year? How does knowing that the LORD is your portion change the way you carry that loss?

11. Where will you be this week where you can stand in God's name for someone, so that when they see you, they think of him?

05 BACK TO JESUS

How does this passage point us back to Jesus?

The Levites point us to a greater priest. Jesus is our great High Priest, and he is the image of the invisible God, the one through whom everything was made. Yet he told a would-be follower that foxes have dens and birds have nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay his head. The one who made every nest had none of his own. When the crowds in Jerusalem were ready to make him king, he did not take the portion every other king would have taken. He emptied himself, took the form of a servant, and laid down his life on a cross. He gave up every portion that was rightfully his so that God himself could be ours. Now we are heirs of God and coheirs with Christ, and no loss in this life can touch that inheritance.

12. Jesus gave up his portion so that God could be yours. How does that change the way you see the things you have lost or given up for him?

APPLICATION

What is God telling me to do today? Write down one specific step you will take this week.

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06 PRAY TOGETHER

Share one request with the group and pray for one another, naming the step each person wrote down.

Prayer requests

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A PRAYER TO CARRY WITH YOU

Father, you have promised to be my portion, and yet I keep counting what others have and what I lack. Forgive me for wanting your gifts more than I want you. Jesus, you gave up everything that was yours so that I could share in all that is yours. When following you costs me something, remind me that I have not lost my inheritance. Holy Spirit, make me someone who carries others with the first and best of what I have, and who stands in your name wherever you send me this week, in Jesus' name. Amen.

Before we gather again

Before we gather again, take these three steps on your own.

- Read Deuteronomy 18:1-8 again on your own and ask God what he is saying to you. Then pray Psalm 16:5, LORD, you are my portion and my cup of blessing.
- Take the one step you named and tell someone in the group you have done it.
- Reach out to the person God brought to mind this week. We will talk about how it went next time.

07 NOTES AND REFLECTIONS