



Life Group Sermon Study Notes

“Circles: Your Circle”

Sr. Ps. James Lowe – September 20, 2020

Warm Up (10-15 minutes)

Choose a question below to answer, or ask another. No right or wrong answers.

- Who has been a spiritual hero in your life?
- What is one fictional character that you wish was a real person?
- Even if you have moved a lot, everyone has a "heart home." What is that place for you?

Word (10-15 minutes)

Sermons can be heard online at www.bethelworld.org

Exodus 18: 1-7; 13- 24

Jethro, the priest of Midian, Moses' father-in-law, heard of all that God had done for Moses and for Israel his people, how the Lord had brought Israel out of Egypt. ² Now Jethro, Moses' father-in-law, had taken Zipporah, Moses' wife, after he had sent her home, ³ along with her two sons. The name of the one was Gershom (for he said, "I have been a sojourner in a foreign land"), ⁴ and the name of the other, Eliezer (for he said, "The God of my father was my help, and delivered me from the sword of Pharaoh"). ⁵ Jethro, Moses' father-in-law, came with his sons and his wife to Moses in the wilderness where he was encamped at the mountain of God. ⁶ And when he sent word to Moses, "I, your father-in-law Jethro, am coming to you with your wife and her two sons with her," ⁷ Moses went out to meet his father-in-law and bowed down and kissed him.... ¹⁷ Moses' father-in-law said to him, "What you are doing is not good. ¹⁸ You and the people with you will certainly wear yourselves out, for the thing is too heavy for you... ²⁴ So Moses listened to the voice of his father-in-law and did all that he had said. ²⁵ Moses chose able men out of all Israel and made them heads over the people, chiefs of thousands, of hundreds, of fifties, and of tens. ²⁶ And they judged the people at all times.

“Can’t see the forest for the trees” – this familiar expression means that we sometimes cannot see situations as they really are while we are in the midst of them. We need perspective from others to help us see the multifaceted nature of situations. Ps. James looks at the life of Moses to show that doing life with others comes with challenges, but the reward is great.

Moses has the distinguishing title of being the prophet who spoke with God face to face. God used Moses to deliver millions of Israelites from the oppression of the Egyptians. Yet Moses struggled with family life. As a child Moses was estranged from his Hebrew family and raised by Pharaoh's daughter in the royal house. As Moses got older, he chose to suffer oppression with the Israelites rather than settle into the comfortable life in Pharaoh's house. Moses tried to show his allegiance to the Hebrews by killing an Egyptian who was beating a Hebrew. This act was not received well by the Hebrews. Moses went on the run and that led to him meeting Jethro and his daughters in the land of Midian.

Although this was a time of estrangement and confusion, it was the beginning of a trusting relationship that would be a source of guidance throughout Moses' life. Jethro showed a level of confidence in Moses by giving him what mattered most to him, one of his daughters, Zipporah. He also gave him a job as shepherd over his flock. Zipporah showed her commitment to Moses by circumcising their son, lest God kill Moses! Jethro and Zipporah were people who were in Moses circle and did the hard, selfless acts for the betterment of Moses.

Fast forward to our text. Moses was elated because the Israelites were free from the hand of Pharaoh, and we see Jethro come on the scene to reunite Moses with his wife and children. There isn't consensus among scholars for why Moses sent them back in the first place. At any rate, there was tension for keeping them around and Jethro provided the perspective to reunite them.

This passage teaches us the value of having people in our circle who will give us good guidance. Jethro helped Moses get better at leadership by advising him to delegate responsibilities and we can imagine how that improved his family life. Moses sharing the deliverance story of the Israelites affirmed the greatness of Yahweh over all other gods for Jethro. It serves us well to be open to who God brings into our lives.

Discussion (10-15 minutes)

Choose one of the points below, and discuss how the lesson applies to our lives.

- Can you relate to Moses who was successful in one area of his life but struggled in another area?
- Share a time when someone gave you advice that you wouldn't have thought of yourself? How did it change the situation?

Prayer (10-15 minutes)

Pray for any of the following, as well as other requests you may have.

- Thank God that he puts us in community to give us a broad perspective on life.
- Ask God to give us discernment on who to trust and not trust.
- Ask God for a humble spirit to receive counsel from others.