



Life Group Sermon Study Notes

“Love the City: Help for the City”

Sr. Ps. James Lowe – October 25, 2020

Warm Up (10-15 minutes)

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

- As a child, what did you want to be when you grew up, and why?
- What’s your favorite snack food?
- What is a trip or experience that had a big spiritual impact on you and why?

Word (10-15 minutes)

Sermons can be heard online at www.bethelworld.org

Nehemiah 10: 28 – 29 ESV

²⁸ “The rest of the people, the priests, the Levites, the gatekeepers, the singers, the temple servants, and all who have separated themselves from the peoples of the lands to the Law of God, their wives, their sons, their daughters, all who have knowledge and understanding, ²⁹ join with their brothers, their nobles, and enter into a curse and an oath to walk in God's Law that was given by Moses the servant of God, and to observe and do all the commandments of the Lord our Lord and his rules and his statutes.

The idea of home is connected with a physical place; but often it is representative of belonging and psychological connections that are independent of one specific location. What makes someone feel at home varies and has to do with what puts our heart at ease. Our hearts can be easily captured by multiple things. Ps James looks at the Israelites who decided to go back to their home – Jerusalem– and ultimately what turned their heart back to God.

The book of Nehemiah highlights the journey of rebuilding Jerusalem after some of the Israelites returned from exile. They came back to a city where the temple was destroyed, gates burned down, and walls broken. By the time we get to our text, these things had been rebuilt. They rebuilt with a hammer in one hand and a sword in the other to defend against their enemies. Although they made progress in rebuilding their home, they needed more for them to fully embrace being there. They needed an increase in faith towards the good nature of God.

Nehemiah, chapters eight and nine, tells of Ezra, the priest, reading the Law of Moses to the people. Ezra recalled the covenant God made to Abraham to give him offspring in Canaan, which became Israel; the mighty hand of God in delivering them from slavery in Egypt; and God's providence to allow Israel to defeat their enemies to possess the promised land. Throughout this history, Israel was a rebellious, disobedient people who found pleasure in being like the people from other nations. Their worship of the gods of other nations is why they found themselves in exile.

The time with Ezra reminded them that God was good and merciful despite their unfaithfulness. The people acknowledged that they were slaves in the land that God had given their forefathers to enjoy, and this was due to their own sins. In other words, they recognized that Jerusalem could once again become the place they felt secure physically and internally if they committed to God. Their faith in God was strengthened, and their hearts captured to obey and worship God alone. It showed up in their act of worship and giving to the house of God.

As important as the physical place we live is, it's more significant to guard what captures your heart. We can evaluate where our heart is when we look at what gets our attention and money. Consider your time on social media or tv, compared to engaging with the Bible. Has connecting with the people of God become an afterthought? Do you give your best towards the work of God? There are always things in life tugging at our hearts. Unless God is our top priority, people and things can never bring true joy. Through an understanding of the Word, we can grow and maintain a commitment to God being preeminent.

Discussion (10-15 minutes)

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

- Share a time when God asked you to separate from something so that he would have more of your heart.
- What things do you intentionally do to keep God first?

Prayer (10-15 minutes)

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

- Thank God that he keeps his promises even when we are unfaithful.
- Ask God for a revelation of His power to transform our lives.
- Ask God for strength to separate from things and people that take our hearts away from His ways.