



Life Group Study Notes

"The Tree"

Sr. Ps. James Lowe - December 3, 2017

Warm Up (10-15 minutes)

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

- What's your favorite fruit?
- What's the best nature park you've visited? What did you especially like about it?
- What activity makes you feel most alive?

Word (10-15 minutes)

Sermons can be heard online at www.bethelworld.org

Genesis 2:8-9, 15-17 ESV And the Lord God planted a garden in Eden, in the east, and there he put the man whom he had formed. And out of the ground the Lord God made to spring up every tree that is pleasant to the sight and good for food. The tree of life was in the midst of the garden, and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil... The Lord God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to work it and keep it. And the Lord God commanded the man, saying, "You may surely eat of every tree of the garden, but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die."

The world God had created was wonderful and good. The Hebrew word for Eden actually means luxury or anything that is delightful to the senses. We can only imagine how beautiful this garden was that God had planted. It was designed by God himself for the benefit of humans. God had a great purpose in mind when he created humans and placed them in this place of exquisite and stimulating beauty.

In this place God set before the first humans a choice. They could choose life and relationship with himself, which would retain their access to the beauty of the Garden as well as keep them in his purpose to fill the earth with his glory through them. Or they could choose death and separation from him, which would deny them access to the Garden and would corrupt and frustrate their participation in his purposes in the earth. This same choice continues to be presented to each of us. We no longer have access to the physical Tree of Life. Instead, we have access to Jesus who is symbolized by the Tree of Life. He is Life and is the source of eternal life for all who come to God through him.

Jesus is the Word of Life. John 1:1-4, 14 ESV *In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things were made through him, and without him was not any thing made that was made. In him was life, and the life was the light of men... And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth.*

Jesus is the Way of Life. John 14:6 ESV *Jesus said to him, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.*

Jesus is the Source of Eternal Life. 1 John 5:11 ESV *And this is the testimony, that God gave us eternal life, and this life is in his Son.*

God wants us to choose Jesus: to embrace him, to trust him, to follow him, to obey him. Jesus died for our sins and suffered the penalty of death to which we are all subject. Yet it was God's will to give us his Son to provide for our forgiveness and reconciliation back to himself. In exchange for our sin, Jesus offers us his righteousness, through which we gain access to God's abiding Spirit.

Through Jesus and the Holy Spirit we are given the gift of eternal life, so that we need have no fear of death. After we physically die, we are promised to go be with Jesus in heaven. Then when Jesus returns to the earth, we will accompany him and live on a renewed earth, enjoying life, glory, and honor in a permanent state of immortality. In the new creation we will again eat from the Tree of Life, and will enjoy Jesus forever.

Even now we have access to God and can enjoy spiritual life. We can enjoy God's blessings and engage in God's purposes in this life even though this world is fallen and far from what God had intended. God wants us to look to Jesus and to hold to the great hope of what he has promised for the future. He calls us to choose life, not death; to choose him, not something or someone in his place; to choose his purposes, not our own will, which is misguided and in the end leads to our own demise.

Discussion (10-15 minutes)

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

- How has God made his life and his blessings available to you?
- How can we practically live in an awareness and appreciation of the life and blessings that God is making available to us?
- How can we cultivate the life of God in us?

Prayer (10-15 minutes)

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

- Thank God for his goodness and mercy in giving us eternal life in Jesus Christ.
- Ask God to better see the Way of Life he has marked out for you.
- Ask God to help you bring others to Jesus and to help them follow him.