



LIFE GROUP SERMON NOTES

“Reach Down”

Bp. Rice Brooks & Ps. James Lowe – April 20, 2014

WARM-UP (10-15 minutes)

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

- Have you ever served in a charitable or non-profit organization other than a church or synagogue? What was the organization's mission?
- If so, what did you do? How do you think your service affected the lives of others?
- If not, what kind of organization would you like to serve, if you were to do so? Why?

WORD (10-15 minutes)

Sermons can be heard online at bethelbrentwood.org/media.



Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.
(Philippians 2:5-11 ESV)

Jesus Came As God's Servant

The great difference between Christianity and the other great religions lies in the following great truth. Other religions emphasize our need to work our way up to God, but the Gospel reveals that God himself came to us to rescue us from our sin and the righteous eternal judgment we deserve. God the Son became what he was not (human) without ceasing to be what he eternally was (divine). The Son of God became human and gave himself fully as a servant according to the will of God the Father for the benefit of humanity. His appearance on earth has impacted the world down to this day.

Jesus Suffered

Jesus was obedient to the Father even though that obedience entailed suffering, both physical and psychological. Though he would have preferred to avoid the torture and crucifixion he was to undergo, he voluntarily submitted to such horrible suffering because it was necessary for our redemption. Our sins

deserve death and separation from God. Jesus endured both for our sake when he took our sins upon himself on the cross. He exchanged his perfect sinless righteousness for our sinful guilt, so that we might receive forgiveness and reconciliation to God. Our sin is more offensive to God than we realize. Jesus' sufferings are described by the apostle Paul as a demonstration of God's justice. Yet Paul also describes Jesus' sufferings as a demonstration of God's love, because it is the means by which God has provided for our salvation. As it has been said, never in history has someone so great made themselves so small, so that we who are so small might become so great.

Jesus Secured Our Victory

Jesus rose from the dead in the very location where it would have been easy to disprove such a claim. Both the Jewish and the Roman rulers in Jerusalem had a strong vested interest in not allowing Jesus to pose a threat to their status quo. Were he indeed still dead when the disciples began to proclaim Jesus as risen from the dead, the authorities would have produced his corpse as irrefutable evidence that he was not alive. They did not because they could not, for he had truly risen from the dead. The eleven apostles were convinced of his resurrection because of their numerous interactions with Jesus after he had died and risen. They spoke with him, ate with him, and touched him. They went on to suffer greatly for their commitment to him, ten of whom suffered martyrs' deaths rather than deny that Jesus had risen from the dead and was Lord of creation.

Jesus Sat Down In Heaven

The apostles also saw him ascend to heaven, being lifted up from the earth and then disappearing in the sky. He now resides physically in heaven and awaits the appointed day and hour of his return to the earth in power and glory. Every sentient creature in heaven, earth, and hell will face a final judgement, whose presiding judge is Jesus himself. Everyone will come individually before him to give an account of their lives. Every one will be compelled to acknowledge both his rightful supreme authority and his righteous judgement. He has forever secured forgiveness and salvation for all who now acknowledge his authority, put their trust in him, and submit to him in this present life. For those who reject him and rebel against him, there will be no mercy, but only a terrifying expectation of God's righteous judgement.

The most important questions we will ever answer include: Who is Jesus? Did he rise from the dead? What did he accomplish through his sinless life, sufferings, death, and resurrection? Will I accept God's forgiveness on the sole basis of what Jesus suffered on my behalf? Will I unconditionally submit to him and follow him?

PERSONAL APPLICATION (10-15 minutes)

Choose an item below to discuss, or introduce another related topic for discussion.

- The Gospel demands a response. As C.S. Lewis said, Jesus' claims can mean only one of three things: He is either a liar, a lunatic, or truly Lord of creation. What do you believe? What is your response to the Gospel?
- The Bible says that the Spirit of God who raised Jesus from the dead lives in all who genuinely repent and believe in Christ. If you are a Christian, how does your life reflect the power of Jesus' resurrection within you? If you are not a Christian, how do you think a believer's life should be affected?
- How does the hope of our own future resurrection affect the way you live your life today?

PRAYER (10-15 minutes)

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

- That God would open our hearts to more fully appreciate the magnitude of his love, the riches of his grace, and the greatness of his salvation that he has given us in Jesus Christ.
- That God would open our eyes to the spiritual needs of people around us, and empower us with wisdom and boldness to engage them in conversation that focuses on the Gospel.
- That God would open the hearts of family members, loved ones, and friends in our lives who do not believe in Jesus or are not serving him with their whole hearts, granting them both repentance and faith.