



CELL GUIDE

TOPIC Jephthah

SPEAKER

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THEME Life Lessons from Judges

DATE

20-21 August 2022

MESSAGE SUMMARY

INTRODUCTION

Today's message is set in the context of the post-Egypt era, after the deaths of both Moses and Joshua. This is a period where the Israelites went on a downward spiral, where they grew further and further away from God by serving other gods. God would then bring judgement upon the Israelites through foreign oppression. However in His mercy and grace, he would raise a deliverer or judge when his people cry out in true repentance and turn back to Him (Judges 10:16). One such deliverer was Jephthah, whose life could be described as a Fugitive, Fighter and Father. His responses at the various milestones in his life serve as good reminders for how we should respond towards our own.

LESSONS FROM THE LIFE OF JEPHTHAH, THE GILEADITE

Jephthah as a Fugitive (Judges 11:1-3): He was born the son of a prostitute and was driven out by his family because they did not want to share their inheritance with him. However, a few years later, the elders of Gilead pleaded for him to return to fight against the Ammonites, recognising that being a warrior was more important than him being a son of a prostitute. Jephthah went with them and became the head and leader over them. He was feted by former foes.

Lesson 1a

We learn that we should not scorn others, especially since you may never know when you might need their help! As Jesus preached at the Sermon on the Mount, we are reminded to treat others in the same way you wish to be treated. (Matthew 7:12).

Lesson 1b

What Jephthah experienced reflects God's mercy and his grace for His people, because when they truly repent, He will save them from oppression.

Jephthah as a Fighter (Judges 11:12-29): One of the first things he did was to ask the king of Ammonites for a reason for his attack on Gilead. The Ammonite king was manipulating the truth and Jephthah used the Word of God to correct and appeal to him. However, that was disregarded by the Ammonite king, who proceeded to attack Gilead anyway (Judges 11:28-29). As a result, the Spirit of the Lord gave the land of Ammon over to Jephthah.

Lesson 2

In situations that involve disputes, it is important for us to be careful with what we say. It is helpful for us to be grounded in facts and the truth. As Christians, we also have the Word of God which guides us in these situations. Are we spending enough time in understanding the Word and how we can apply it in our lives? Are we letting the Word guide our words and actions as we encounter these situations in our lives? We must remember that Jesus has called us to be Peacemakers (Matthew 5:9). We cannot do that without being grounded in the Word of God and letting the Holy Spirit guide us.

As a Father (Judges 11:30-40): Due to the depravity of the environment and the culture in which the Israelites were living in, Jephthah wrongly believed that God would be pleased with a burnt offering. As a result he made a vow that forfeited his family, specifically, his daughter. He had failed to recognise that a human sacrifice was detestable to God (Deuteronomy 12:31) and for vows that involved a human being, it was not intended for it to be a human sacrifice, but rather, in the form of payment or their service to the Lord (Leviticus 27:2-4). If he had known and understood the laws of Moses, he would not have made such a vow.

Lesson 3

It is important for us to be careful in how we speak to the Lord. To negotiate with the Lord shows a lack of obedience to our God Almighty. Our obedience should be absolute and should not come with any strings attached. We are reminded in Matthew 5:37 that “let what you say be simply “Yes” or “No”, anything more than this comes from evil”.

CONCLUSION

Jephthah has earned his place as a Judge as he did rescue Gilead from the Ammonites. While he was not perfect and his failure forfeited his daughter’s life, he should be recognised for his faithfulness in answering the call and fulfilling what he was called to do. It shows that faith is for anyone and everyone. When we are called, are we faithful to answer it?

QUESTIONS

1. As we contemplate the life of Jephthah, can we recount the time where (a) we may have inadvertently scorned others because they are different from us? How do we show true repentance for our failures there? Or (b) where we have been a victim of being scorned? What should our response be and how do we demonstrate true forgiveness?

2. Jephthah forestalled the fighting by talking to the enemy, hoping to come to an amicable agreement. When faced with disputes and disagreements in your life, consider how your responses have been and share some of the ways in which you have been able to manage those situations in a peaceful manner.

3. Jephthah foolishly sacrificed his daughter in a moment of rashness. Elder Leon also gave a couple of examples of faithful people who inadvertently sacrificed their family by spending less time and attention on them in favour of other pursuits, such as ministry. Upon reflection, is there anything precious you feel you are inadvertently sacrificing? If nothing comes to mind, ask the Lord to reveal it to you.