

Life Group notes 1 Dec 2024 – A Message for Everyone

Preached by Jem <https://www.npbc.org.nz/series/a-message-for-everyone/>

Today we look at a passage from Numbers 13 as we start the Christmas series called “A Message for everyone”

We will look at the choice of simply going with the flow because you may fear being in the minority or having a different opinion. You may find that you look to others to see what the popular vote is and go with the majority instead of standing by the truth.

This phenomenon is known as *informational social input*, and it occurs when you rely on others to determine your course of action. You’re much more likely to use social influence when the situation is ambiguous, such as in a crisis or when you are uncertain about what to do.

Q: Can you share a time when you felt pressured to just go with what others are doing? Did you maybe witness someone else making a bad choice because of social pressure, even though they knew what was right at the time? Can you share in the group?

If our human instincts are to go with the crowd; then what if the crowd is walking away from God and His Kingdom? Believe it or not; this happens time and time again in the Bible – especially in the Old Testament. Often you had one or two people that were declaring: This is the way of the Lord.

Yet the crowd would say: No, that way is scary, let’s go this way instead – and often the crowd would lead the whole nation of Israel astray.

In our passage this week before Israel crossed the Jordan, they decided in consultation with God, to send in twelve spies to evaluate the land.

After 40 days the spies come back and bring a report to Israel, and this is where our passage begins.

Read: Numbers 13:26-14:12

Q: Can Anyone recall how Israel came to live in Egypt? How did they become slaves there?

Q: Who was called to lead the nation of Israel out of Egypt and to the promised land?

Q: Do you remember how long had they been wondering in the desert?

When the spies come and report back to Israel they have some good news – the Land that God has promised them is indeed good. It is flowing with milk and honey - meaning there is lots of pasture for sheep, goats, and cattle, and there are lots of fruit trees.

Just like Israel is informed that the Promised Land is GOOD – it is important for us to also remember that the Kingdom of God is indeed GOOD.

Q: What does the secular world think of the Kingdom? Has anyone ever pushed you away when you try and share the gospel with them or stand up for what you believe? What happened?

Q: Do you think there is a risk that the modern church creates a watered-down theology to accommodate the popular views and go with the flow? What sort of teachings have you heard that concern you?

We can't hide from the fact that there are so many voices trying to tell us that the Kingdom of God is not worth living for. We need to remember, that God's Kingdom is good, and our hearts are being transformed into the likeness of God himself. It is a Kingdom of healing and of restoration. It's a Kingdom that has the power to transform our world into a much better place because it attacks the heart of the issues – the brokenness of man. If we want the world to be a better place, then I do believe we will find it in the Kingdom of God.

Q: Can you think of ways that God transforms the heart? Share how God has changed you now that you are in His kingdom.

Back to our passage

Q: In verses 28-33 how did the spies describe the people of the land in their fearful state?

Archaeologists have found that much of the hill country was sparsely habited at this time of Israel's journey and had very few fortifications. The spies extend the parameters of their journey to include the heavily populated valley regions near the sea and along the Jordan and by doing this they falsely exaggerate the situation because they make it sound like the entire land is heavily populated and fortified - which is NOT the case!

Living for God in a secular world can be scary, and intimidating and overwhelming. We run a similar risk today of seeing the world the way that the 10 spies did – seeing a few scary cities and deciding that the Kingdom of God isn't worth pursuing.

Here are **4 Observations** that can help caution us, as we live out our faith in a fallen and scary world

1) They looked at the problem instead of looking at God

We see this in the fearful responses recorded in v28-33. These spies have seen God do these great and miraculous things as he led them out of Egypt and to the banks of the Jordan river, they saw the red sea divide and they walked through it safely. All those miraculous things are but a distant memory in light of the new problem that is standing before them now. Their eyes have shifted from God to the problem.

Q: Do you think the modern church spends too much time worrying about secular culture (the problem) instead of on God? Ever heard someone say they won't bring up kids in this world and choose not to start a family?

2) Don't distort the information to make a point.

The spies expanded the parameters and made it sound like the entire land was overly populated and fortified which was not the case. The spies exaggerated to make their point. How often do we do this today? We are to be a truthful people and we also need to remember that if God is behind it, then we shouldn't need to exaggerate – just say it as it is

3) Stop Spreading negativity

In verse 32 it highlights that the 10 spies spread a bad report about the land they had just explored. Unfortunately, this kind of behaviour can be all too common in church circles. When we are not happy with the direction or something that is happening, rather than going to the leadership, we start spreading negativity among the body of Christ. This kind of behaviour is so damaging. Be on guard against this kind of behaviour because it can so quickly divide a church and a community

4) Israel desired to go back

In 14:2-4 it highlights that Israel begins to wish that they were back in Egypt and they even talk about appointing a leader to take them back to slavery.

Q: Have you ever found yourself talking about the life you used to live before you became a Christian? Have you ever revelled in your sinful past as the “good old days”? What about yearning for how a church used to be or how a life group once was?

People will often put a heap of time and energy into trying to recreate that past so that they can live in that moment once again. Like Israel, we can't go back – so let's keep our eyes on Jesus and keep walking forwards. Let's trust God in the work that he is doing now.

5) We need to trust in God

Read: Numbers 13:30

Q: What was Calebs view as opposed to the 10 spies?

Q: What did Joshua have to say about the land in Numbers 14:6-9? How was different to what the others said?

Joshua and Caleb reemphasis this point that if God is behind it, then you don't need to be afraid. Caleb is standing before Israel saying: “Don't listen to the crowds; listen to the God who is leading you!”

Although Caleb is one of the twelve spies, (representing the tribe of Judah) his father was actually a Kenizzite. This means Caleb was not physically an Israelite by birth but had been adopted into the Israelite community. God really is a God who has a message for EVERYONE!

God doesn't care about your background and what tribe you might come from. He cares about your heart; and is always willing to welcome foreigners into His community that have a heart to love God and walk in His ways. God has a message for everyone, and we need to make sure that everyone around us has the opportunity to hear His amazing message of salvation.

Q: Do you find it scary to share the gospel with people? Do you feel like grasshopper when you try?

Conclusion:

As we consider the charge of the Great Commission– what voices are we going to listen to? Are we going to listen to the voice of the crowd that says: “The task is too big and scary you can't do it!”

Or are we going to listen to the voice of God who says at the end of the Great Commission: “And surely I am with you always to the very end of the age.”

As we near Christmas, we are celebrating that Good News of salvation for EVERYONE. How seriously are you going to take the Great Commission and God's message of salvation for EVERYONE?

Can you make God's story known to your family and friends this Christmas?

Are you looking at the obstacles instead of trusting God? Remember, God's message of salvation is for everyone, and we ALL have a part to play, in taking that message to the world around us. Until the whole world hears!