

Devotional
“Joel: God’s Promised Spirit”
Joel 2:12-13, 28-29

Monday: “Return” - Joel 2: 12

If you read chapter 1 and the first half of chapter 2 of the book of Joel, you will notice that a lot is going on. One could even describe it as calamity. Locusts are attacking the land - destroying both food crops and lively hoods. Enter Joel. We aren’t sure where Joel served as a prophet, but we do know what his name means: Joel - Yahweh is God.

The people have forgotten that Yahweh is God. So they need a prophet to remind them. A prophet to give them God’s message - return to Yahweh. Return with repentance and God will redeem you.

Often we think of salvation as a one time event. You give your heart to Christ, have a conversion experience and then life changes. But the truth is, we all need to repent again and again and again for the sin our lives. Just because we have accepted Christ as our savior, it does not mean that we are perfect in our human flesh. We still struggle. We still need to confess, just as the Israelites did long ago.

How is the act of repentance part of your life?

Prayer: God, we confess that sometimes we think that it is other people who need to repent - not us. Yet, you call us again and again to rend our hearts before you. To seek your forgiveness for our transgressions. For we have all fallen short and need your grace. Forgive us, we pray. Amen.

Tuesday: “Relents” - Joel 2: 13

God calls the people to repentance and says that things do not need to be this day. For the day of the Lord, the day of judgment is coming. If they come and confess their sins, this could be a day of hope - a day of restoration. But if they continue down the same path, the result will be destruction.

Almost call of the prophets of ancient Israel that we find in our scriptures call the people to change their ways. And they speak of who God is. God is gracious and compassionate. God wants to forgive, but we first must admit that all is not well with how we are living our lives.

For the ancient Israelites, they had confused worship of God in a particular manner with the purpose of God, all the while forgetting to actually represent God in the world. We, too, can fall into the same trap of thinking if we say the right things then it does not matter what state our heart is in. But God is calling us to repent, out of a sense of compassion for us.

How have you experienced God’s graciousness and compassion in your life?

Prayer: Lord, you are so good to us. We confess that we stand unworthy of your love, yet you show us compassion again and again and again. May we seek to accept and live into your invitation for transformation.

Wednesday: “Pour Out” - Joel 2: 28

The tenor of the second part of the book of Joel changes. All of sudden there is an image emerging of hope. Of how things could be different. Today’s scripture verse is found within the larger setting of this picture of a blessed future.

It is here that God speaks through the prophet about an outpouring of God’s Spirit. A generous outpouring that will cause people to prophesy, see vision and dream dreams. While we

often think of this text in conjunction with the day of Pentecost, the birth of the church, where Peter preaches from it, it is still happening here and now today.

How are to understand both this call to repentance and this vision of how things can be renewed through an outpouring of the Spirit? I think it is a call to what is possible in this blessed future, not because of us, but because of God.

What do you seen as a word of hope in this section of Joel?

Prayer: God, we thank you that you do not leave us as we are. You create a whole new vision of what can be and of who we can be in you. Thank you, O Lord! Amen!

Thursday: “My Servants” - Joel 2: 29

In so many ways this verse reminds me of Paul’s writing to the church in Galatia. Paul writes, “There is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither slave nor free, nor is there male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus.” And Joel writes that the Spirit being poured out on men and women, young and old.

This is a reminder that all are welcome to be servants of the living God. What matters most is an obedient and willing heart. What is in your heart this day? If the heart is the seat of all that we truly are, how can you give your heart to God?

What is in your heart this day?

Prayer: Lord, we join Paul and Joel in proclaiming that nothing that this world uses to define us can keep us from you. Let us give our hearts to you Precious Lord. Shape us and mold us, we pray. Amen.

Friday: “Ways of God” - Deut. 30: 9-10 and Amos 4:6-11

In many ways the prophet Amos and the writings in Deuteronomy seem to stand in such contrast to one another. Amos speaks of painful things that came to the people of God, ways that they strayed and ways that God responded to get their attention and to have them repent. But Deuteronomy speaks of prosperity, the blessings of God that can abound when we love God with all our heart and soul.

But in many ways they are two sides of the same coin. It speaks of what happens when we give our hearts to God. Now does that mean that everything goes smoothly all the time? No. But it does speak of how God is trying to reach out to us because our hearts and our love for God and each other matters.

How has God got your attention in the past?

Prayer: Lord, thank you for going so far all for our sake, even when we failed to love you as we should. Thank you for speaking to our hearts again and again and again. Amen.