

A Plea for Repentance and Prayer

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[0 : 0 0] I'm going to turn back with me to the Old Testament, the prophecy of Joel in chapter 1. Let us read again, verse 1. The words of the Lord that came to Joel, the son of Pethuel.

Hear this, you elders, give ear all inhabitants of the land. And such a thing happened in your days, or in the days of your fathers.

Tell your children of it, and let your children tell their children, and their children to another generation. What the cutting locust left, the swarming locust has eaten.

What the swarming locust left, the hopping locust has eaten. And what the hopping locust left, the destroying locust has eaten. Before we turn to God's word, let us bow in a word of prayer.

Heavenly Father, as we come to your word, and perhaps a portion of scripture that is unfamiliar to some.

[1 : 1 3] We pray, Lord, that you would teach us this evening. That we would come with a desire to be taught. A desire to be fed. A desire to know and to love our Saviour, Jesus Christ.

More and more. We pray that we would heed the warning that comes in this passage tonight. And the passage in which we even dwelt and meditated upon this morning.

That the day of the Lord is coming. And that we must be ready for that day. So lead us, guide us, cast the evil one from us. In Jesus' name we pray.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

I don't know if you've ever played the game of life. I have not. But when I recently did my placement down in South West, a few weeks ago, in the house I was staying in, there was a board game called The Game of Life.

[2 : 1 6] and I looked at this board game and I thought there's definitely something I can put into a sermon here and sure enough as I looked at this board game it was intended to be fun, to test your general knowledge and for you to go around the board in order to go through every different stage of life that you and I go through.

You start off as a young person seeking to get a career and to go through your career and to have a family and to come to the end of your career and to retire and that is the goal of the game is to retire and to retire well.

But subtly I think that the game reflects how many of us are actually living our lives. That retirement seems to be the goal.

On the side of the box there is this one quote. It says there is a thousand ways to live your life. But Christ says that he is the way, he is the truth and he is the life.

We come here to this prophecy of Joel. And while this book may be slightly unknown to some of us, perhaps you've never even heard a sermon from these three small chapters from the book of Joel.

[3 : 4 3] Even in Mordo's Prophed Bible here I see the very first words, there's a wee blurb at the start. Little is known about the prophet Joel. And that is very true, little is known, little to nothing is known about the prophet Joel.

Apart from this is his name and he is the son of Pethuel. But here he is in this land of Judah. He is the prophet being sent by God.

And he is one of what we would call these, as they are grouped in our Bibles, the minor prophets. And there is twelve minor prophets that we find in our Bibles.

And you can research these for yourselves later on. Twelve minor prophets, as opposed to those major prophets that you have, as you know, through Isaiah and Jeremiah, etc.

But I want to stress that today there is no more need for this office of a prophet before we begin.

[4 : 48] No man now intercedes between us and our God. Why? Because it is Jesus Christ who now stands in that role. Because he is now the prophet.

He is our prophet. He is our priest. And he is our king. The prophet Joel is thought to have ministered around the 8th, 9th century in the land of Judah.

And it was exciting times under the king Uzziah, if these dates be correct. Because there was much prosperity in the land of Israel and Judah. There was much to be excited about.

There was much to be pleased about. Because the land was progressing in its military. It was progressing in its administration. In its commercial aspects and in its economy.

Things were going good for the land of Judah. And it was in this time of much and plenty. That God was raising up these great writing prophets.

[5 : 53] That he was raising up these prophets like Joel. So subtle. Maybe some of us don't even know anything about what happens in these three chapters.

But Joel and the other writing prophets. They are patriotic. And they had a deep spiritual concern for their own people.

They had a deep spiritual concern for the people. For Joel, the people there in Judah. And when he sees them strain.

It hurts him. And it pains him. As they turn away from their God. And so to set the scene. We look at these first four verses.

As introduction. Just like Hosea and others. Joel introduces himself. And his lineage. He introduces himself. He gives his name.

[6 : 51] And he says who is the son of Pethuel. But more important than describing who he is. He credits everything that he says.

And everything that he does. To the Lord. The word of the Lord. That came to Joel. The son of Pethuel. Everything that he does.

Everything he says. Everything he is going to say. It is all from the divine. He is a prophet. And what is it that a prophet does?

A prophet is one who stands in the presence of God. He intercedes between God and his people. For that is what Judah is. As they are the people of God.

And very often the prophet has to come. With a message of impending judgment. To the people. Because of their waywardness. And Joel throughout his three chapters.

[7 : 51] Throughout this prophecy. He demands the people's attention. You will see that he uses imperatives. As we will come to see. Imperatives seeking to grasp the attention.

Of everybody who is listening to him. He is alerting them of the danger. That they are in. And that they need to get out of this danger. They need to repent.

They need to turn again. Into their Lord. And so demands the attention. Of every one of us. This evening. Who are reading Joel's prophecy.

The prophets. They very often. They wrote. In poetic. And very stylistic ways. In very detailed ways. And so we see there.

We read it. Two times. How he begins. His. His writing. To the elders. In the community. And goes down. Through the children's. And to the children's.

[8 : 49] Children. He goes down. The generations. Just as we saw. A wee bit. Through Peter. In his. Chronological writing. This morning. And then he goes on.

To describe. The damage. Of the locusts. Because this locust. Is the judgment. Upon the people. Of Judah. And four different.

Describing words. Are used. For these locusts. The cutting locusts. The ESV translates. The cutting locusts. The swarming locusts. The hopping locusts. And the destroying.

Locusts. Four different words. To describe. These locusts. That have come. Been sent. By God. They are pictured.

As the army. Of God. And shows. The intensity. Of the destruction. That has come. Into the land. Because these locusts.

[9 : 46] Were God's army. Bringing judgment. On Judah. Because as Joel. Goes on. To describe. And show. Judah has turned.

And rebelled. Against. Their God. So just. Two things. This evening. Joel. Joel. Joel. Makes. Two pleas. In this chapter. His first plea.

Is to the people. To plea. Is a plea. Of repentance. We see this. In verses 5. Down to verse 13. 13. And he warns. Three different.

Groups. Of people. In the land. Of Judah. It is a warning. To the pleasure seekers. In verses 5. To 10. There is the warning. To the farmers.

In 11. To 12. And the warning. To the priests. In chapter. In verse 13. Each of these sections. From verse 5. Verse 11. And verse 13.

[10 : 41] They all begin. With what we call. An imperative. A command. To awake. To not be ashamed.

To put on. He is commanding. The people. To attention. To action. To do something. Because the plague.

Of this locust. Is so serious. And they cannot. Just come. With a simple. Message. To you. A simple. Information.

As to what is going on. And do what you will. With it. But Joel. Was so patriotic. For his people. And the people. In Judah. And so much more.

A love for his God. That he was demanding. That the people. Wake up. That they become alert. To the situation. This plague.

[11 : 37] Is so serious. But more so. It is this local. Plague. In the land of Judah. But as we saw.

This morning. It is also. Pointing forward. To this final. Judgment. That is going to come. How the day. Of the Lord. Is going to come.

And that will be. Far worse. Than this plague. Of locusts. It will be far worse. Than the flooding. In Noah's day. It will be far worse.

Than anything. We have experienced. For those. Who are outside. Of the good news. Of the gospel. The problem. The problem.

Here. In the land. Of Judah. You may not. Wouldn't take too long. To work it out. Or to guess. What it would be. But it is money. That has plagued them.

[12 : 34] It is money. It is wealth. That has brought them. To their knees. Wealth. Wealth. Has been the downfall. For Judah. Just as it was.

For the northern kingdom. Even though. King Uzziah. Had a tentative sympathy. For spiritual things. And for the worship. Services.

He was all too. Inconsistent. What is it. Our Lord says. No one can serve. Two masters. You see in verse 5.

Awake. Awake you drunkards. And weep. And wail. All you drinkers of wine. Because of the sweet wine. For it is cut off. From your mouth.

Awake you drunkards. He is calling the people. Out of their numbness. He is saying to them. Can you not see. What state you are in.

[13 : 36] That you. Who are meant to be. The people of God. Are going. And drinking yourself. To oblivion. Instead of worshipping. Your Lord.

This moral corruption. Has now led. To national disaster. As the wealth. As the money. Has grown. The spiritual things.

Have declined. The free flow. Of wine. Was for Hosea. It was for Amos. And now. It is for Joe. It is the choking.

Of the people's. Spiritual concern. Wine itself. It is not evil. But the misuse.

Of it is. jazzed. And so we must be on guard. In our own consumption of it. Whether it be in public.

[14 : 33] Or private. And the same goes. For every luxury. Which God has blessed us with. Whatever it is. In our own lives.

is it choking your spiritual concern is it consuming your mind night and day is it taking the place of Christ on his throne the locusts we read off in verse 4 this judgment given by God this judgment of the locusts as stripped bare the vine trees and the fruit trees and Joel calls the people for them to weep and to wail because the vine trees and the fig trees they are symbols of God's blessing on his people and in the land of Judah there was an abundance of these trees of the vine and fig trees because they are the people of God and so he gave them these trees as a symbol of his love for them symbol of his blessing poured out upon them but now after the locust plague they lay naked in the land and no sign of potential fruit the prophet of the Lord was grieved but how much more the Lord himself as he looked down on his own people but far worse than the ruined luxuries the wine taken away from them far worse than this that was the crime of the people of Judah the people of God was that they had now compromised the worship of God and Joel he illustrates it in verse 8 lament like a virgin wearing sackcloth for the bridegroom of her youth he illustrates it like the virgin's husband been taken away before the wedding day there is now the loss of the agriculture there is no meal there is no drink offerings or burnt offerings because these were to be offered daily the burnt offering was a symbol of the complete dedication of life the meal offering is the believer's service that should naturally follow and the drink offering was the constant joy in the believer's heart as he serves God and so daily they were to come with their burnt and their meal and their drink offerings before the Lord their God and to worship him to bow down to him alone but for them now the offerings of these had become ritualistic they had become meaningless they had been turned into a time of drunkenness and not only had they done drunkenness but they were now bound down to any and whoever God they desired to the pagans

God and so Yahweh he takes away the privilege of the offering he takes away the opportunity to worship as their land has been laid bare and so this is a severe sign of chastisement upon the people that they are a people who are impure that they are not right in the eyes of their God and so we understand a little bit more now why Joel is so demanding and commanding to them alerting them to awake from their slumber alerting them to get up maybe we need to ask ourselves two things at this point tonight as first of all has your worship become routine has your worship become routine are we going through the spiritual motions are we turning up and walking out or are we coming hungry to the house of

God are we coming looking forward to the midweek meeting and Bible studies are we seeking to be in the fellowship with the Lord's people or are we coming because we've always come has our worship become routine and secondly ask ourselves or note the severity of God's judgment sin sin is serious and God does not play with your sin he does not play or dance around in our games as we like we mentioned through Peter this morning the dog returning to his own vomit sin is serious and my friend we all need to deal with that sin in and through

Jesus Christ alone he is the only one who can forgive us for our sin so there is Joel's plea first of all for repentance and secondly there is Joel's plea for prayer there is Joel's plea for prayer this plague of locusts it warned it's a forewarning of yet more judgment in verse 14 consecrate a fast Joel says call a solemn assembly gather the elders and all the inhabitants of the land to the house of the Lord your God and cry out to the Lord Joel calls for the solemn assembly to meet for prayer and fast this is quite the contrary to the gluttony and going through the spiritual motions in worship he is calling them to prayer and to fast national prayer he calls them to and to come and to fast before the

[21 : 35] Lord these are extraordinary measures but desperate times call for desperate measures you'll recall just the end of last year I'm sure you engaged in it also the national day of prayer through our denomination and how needful it was then and how needful it is now that we come as a congregation that we come as an island that we come as a denomination oh and as a nation that we come together and pray how needful we are for dedicated prayer oh and how we need a national day of prayer but we need more than that we need every day to be a day of prayer we need as individuals as the people of

God as the Lord's army to be constantly in prayer prayer because that is who you are this is the Lord's army gathered here this night you may look around and wonder some army this is men and women all different ages and abilities but this is who the Lord has chosen and this is the victorious army we are his soldiers we are his who are to go into the battle but we never go alone the Lord is with us he is guiding us he is our shield if he is for us then who who could stand against us he is calling us to pray let us return unto our

God and cry out to him what is the reason for this need what is the reason that Joel is demanding this repentance and prayer is because of the day of the Lord because the day of the Lord it stands near at hand and it is to be understood as we are focused on in this eschatological sense in this end time sense in this time when Christ is going to return and when the judgment on the world shall happen he will appear in splendor and holiness as a warrior making war and will judge righteously in his courts this is the reason for the repentant cry that the Lord is coming for those who are outside of Christ it will be the most terrible day of fear but for those who are in

Christ they shall be sheltered you shall be protected in the shadow of the almighty you will be safe in the arms of your Lord and when will this happen well Joel Jeremiah Paul Peter Christ himself did not know the date but they did know that it was imminent and not only is it imminent but it is certain it is certain because the prophet is calling the people to turn and to repent Joel had no trouble in believing the promises of his God again do we have problem believing the promises of our heavenly father do we believe that Christ is going to return in the concluding verses in verses 19 and 20

Joel says to you oh Lord I call to you oh Lord I call because to whom else shall we go we've spoken much about the final judgment this morning and this evening and maybe here tonight you're still sitting and still saying I will not have this man to rule over my life I will not have Jesus Christ change my ways because what will my friends say well to whom else are you going on that final day of judgment when the day of the Lord will come those in here tonight who love the Lord their God it is Christ who shall testify for them who will testify for you but my friend today is the day of opportunity today is the offer of salvation to you to come to join this army like no other army before it may not look anything special but this army is triumphant and is victorious and shall be all the way to the gates of righteousness

[27 : 36] Joel says to you O Lord I call because to whom else shall he go he runs himself as the example and cries out to the Lord because it is God alone who can forgive all of our trespasses the land of Judah it lay there in utter ruins we can only imagine the scene the locust plague the drought the loss of the harvests the fig trees the fruit trees taken away the worship denied to them how this would have impacted the people physically how it would have impacted the people physically and even practically but it impacts the immediate here in the local through the plague of the locusts the real issue is pointing to the eternal and to the global the deeper concern is how it distorts their spiritual lives and their relationship to

God the real issue is pointing them to this final judgment that is to come for Joel the message that he has been given by God to proclaim it is plain the barrenness of the land is a symbol of the dryness and the decay of the hearts of God's people resulting in God's judgment upon them if the people remained unrepentant a far worse judgment looms and the same is true for us here this evening the final judgment awaits our time in this world is sailing past how is your heart how is your relationship with Jesus

Christ as a Christian we must also repent and it's amazing even in these two sermons we've heard today how the Bible is so linked and joined together as Joel here in the 8th century is proclaiming the same message there as Peter is Peter also says repent and be a holy people and so we conclude as we began in the game of life if there is a thousand ways to live there is but one way that leads to the courts of heaven that is in and through Jesus Christ our Lord and the question is how will you live yours amen let us pray oh heavenly father we are aware of our own shortcoming our failure our sin but we are thankful for the warning of the coming judgment we are thankful that tonight the offer of the gospel is laid bare before us and our prayer is that every one of us here this evening would cling on to the promises of

Jesus Christ the one who says I am the way the truth and the life oh Lord we stumble and fall but we come again this evening seeking the forgiveness of Jesus Christ our Lord thanking you for the provision that has been made through the sacrifice of your son so lead us guide us bless us as we part one from another Lord in your name we pray Amen let us conclude in singing together in Psalm 130 in the Scottish Psalter Psalm 130 familiar words Lord from the depths to thee

I cried my voice Lord do thou hear and unto my supplications voice give an attentive ear Lord who shall stand if thou Lord should mark iniquity but yet with thee forgiveness is that fear thou mayest be Psalm 130 in the Scottish Psalter to the praise of God Mark on the death to thee I cried my voice Lord do thou hear unto my supplications boy give an attentive ear

[33 : 52] Lord who shall stop give thou O Lord cheer to those who mark iniquity but yet with thee forgiveness is the fear thou mayest be I wait for my soul that wait my hope is in his word more than they are for morning watch my soul wait for the

Lord I say for thou may not do what the morning lies to see let Israel hope in the Lord for with him mercy be a blessed be of redemption is ever found within and from all his iniquities he

Israel shall redeem now may grace mercy and peace from God the Father Son and Holy Spirit rest and abide in each one of you now and forever more Amen