

# An Order of Worship for the Home

June 21, 2020

The Book of Joel – week 3

---

*This service is written for two speakers. Ideally, family members can speak and declare God's grace to one another following this format. For those who live alone, this worship outline can be followed with a brother or sister in Christ over the phone. You may call on a friend to fill this role, or your elder or pastor can worship with you by phone.*

*There is an "offering prayer" included in this outline. As we shelter in place, please continue to worship through giving. You can mail offering envelopes and checks to Calvary or visit [www.CalvarySLZ.org](http://www.CalvarySLZ.org) to give online.*

## **Invocation**

Reader 1: The prophet Joel wrote, "Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved." (Joel 2:32)  
Reader 2: And so, we call on His name as we begin our worship.  
Reader 1: We gather in the name of our God...  
Reader 2: who is Father, Son and Spirit...  
Together: Amen.

## **Psalm 46**

<sup>1</sup> God is our refuge and strength,  
an ever-present help in trouble.  
<sup>2</sup> Therefore we will not fear, though the earth give way  
and the mountains fall into the heart of the sea,  
<sup>3</sup> though its waters roar and foam  
and the mountains quake with their surging.  
<sup>4</sup> There is a river whose streams make glad the city of God,  
the holy place where the Most High dwells.  
<sup>5</sup> God is within her, she will not fall;  
God will help her at break of day.  
<sup>6</sup> Nations are in uproar, kingdoms fall;  
he lifts his voice, the earth melts.

<sup>7</sup> The Lord Almighty is with us;  
the God of Jacob is our fortress.

<sup>8</sup> Come and see what the Lord has done,  
the desolations he has brought on the earth.

<sup>9</sup> He makes wars cease  
to the ends of the earth.

He breaks the bow and shatters the spear;  
he burns the shields with fire.

<sup>10</sup> He says, "Be still, and know that I am God;  
I will be exalted among the nations,  
I will be exalted in the earth."

<sup>11</sup> The Lord Almighty is with us;  
the God of Jacob is our fortress.

### **Confession & Absolution**

*Make sure each person present has opportunity to confess to a brother or sister in faith.  
Go through both parts as many times as needed to accommodate all who are gathered.*

*"...rend your hearts and not your garments." – Joel 2:13*

Christian Confessing: God, you've asked that my repentance be inwardly true, and not just an outward show. I confess that I too often pay attention to outward appearance, without addressing the ugliness inside my heart. You hate the sin which clings to me. Help me hate it too. By your grace and mercy, let me know your love for me. Change my heart and in so doing, change my life. Lord, have mercy!

Christian Responding: Your God is "gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love." (Joel 2:13) He knows your sin, and he knows your struggle. He sent his own Son, Jesus Christ, to deal with your sin. By his death your sin is put to death. By his life, you have new life as well. You are forgiven. You are loved. He is making you new day-by-day.

Together: Amen.

### Joel 3:1-21

*Please read from your own Bible. This is the basis for the today's message.*

### Apostles' Creed

I believe in God, the Father Almighty, maker of heaven and earth.

And in Jesus Christ, His only Son, our Lord, who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died and was buried. He descended into hell. The third day He rose again from the dead. He ascended into heaven and sits at the right hand of God the Father Almighty. From thence He will come to judge the living and the dead.

I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy Christian Church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting. Amen.

### Luke 18:1-8

And he told them a parable to the effect that they ought always to pray and not lose heart. <sup>2</sup> He said, "In a certain city there was a judge who neither feared God nor respected man. <sup>3</sup> And there was a widow in that city who kept coming to him and saying, 'Give me justice against my adversary.' <sup>4</sup> For a while he refused, but afterward he said to himself, 'Though I neither fear God nor respect man, <sup>5</sup> yet because this widow keeps bothering me, I will give her justice, so that she will not beat me down by her continual coming.'" <sup>6</sup> And the Lord said, "Hear what the unrighteous judge says. <sup>7</sup> And will not God give justice to his elect, who cry to him day and night? Will he delay long over them? <sup>8</sup> I tell you, he will give justice to them speedily. Nevertheless, when the Son of Man comes, will he find faith on earth?"

### Message

#### **Longing for Justice**

Listen to the widow's cry – "Give me justice!" There are so many in our world who are crying for justice.

There are so many in our world who have been wronged. And we're out-of-line if we simply encourage them to "let it go." Don't misunderstand me. Forgiveness is still a Christian practice. We want to encourage that exercise of grace. But we

abrogate our responsibility as God's people if we tell those who've been wronged they ought to forgive, while we fail to call a stop to the injustice and those who commit the wrongs!

Justice is not ignoring wrongs. Justice is not sweeping things under the rug. Justice is not covering up.

Why are people protesting across our country? It's a call for wrongs to be righted. It's a desire for justice.

As God's people, we should be able to engage this conversation. Our God is concerned for justice. I'm not saying that every voice calling for change is justified in what they say, or that every voice crying out offers a good solution for addressing injustice. What I am saying is the desire for justice is a place where we find common ground with our neighbors.

Here's the reality I've seen when it comes to talking about justice. You only really understand if you've been hurt. You never really "get it" unless you can think of those times when you've been wronged. You have to feel the pain of injustice, inequality, and disparity. You have to tap into those memories of when you've been treated unfairly. Then you can start to understand the cry for justice. Then, you might cry out with the widow and with our neighbors, "Give me justice!"

In the final section of Joel, we hear about justice. It follows on the heels of what we've been studying. We started with the question, "When disaster strikes, how do God's people respond?" Joel helped us see that our response is prayer and fasting; connecting to the hurt we want healed and expecting our God to deal with it. When we do this, God responds: He removes threats; he restores life; and he empowers his people.

However, when we come to the place where threats are removed and we've regained our footing in life, here's our sinful tendency: We want revenge. We want to get back at someone. We want to bring justice, and in our minds we're the ones able to do it.

But we can't. We have no more power to bring justice than the widow in our gospel reading. We're too connected to the struggle. We're too close to the problem. And, like the widow, we're disempowered. We're in no position to bring justice. We can

lash out, but we only cause more pain when we do that. Our attempts at justice can't bring the pain to an end. Only true justice can do that.

When recent protests have become violent, we've seen that lashing out. But what lies behind those actions? It's the desperation of disempowered people. It's people longing for justice and feeling like there is no other way it will be found.

You've lashed out like this too, if you've ever gotten mad enough to hit someone; angry enough to verbally assault; so upset you had to tell someone just how evil that other person was. (That's gossip, by the way – an eighth commandment issue.)

As God's people we have to seek empathy. We have to learn to listen for understanding. Empathy does not mean we agree with someone. Empathy does not mean we defend all that they do or say. Empathy does not mean we justify their words or actions. Empathy means we have insight into their heart and their perspective. If you cannot empathize with the longing for justice, ask God to soften your heart. Ask God to adjust your vision. Ask God for empathy.

When we empathize with our neighbor, we can seek justice together. Justice doesn't come from you or I. Justice comes from the Judge.

*Let the nations stir themselves up  
and come up to the Valley of Jehoshaphat;  
for there I will sit to judge  
all the surrounding nations. (Joel 3:12)*

Joel tells us the Lord will call all people to himself in order to judge them; in order to bring justice on the earth. His justice is not punishment. His justice is the elimination of wrongs; the end of discrimination; the annihilation of inequities; the full stop of all types of abuse and mistreatment.

*The Lord roars from Zion,  
and utters his voice from Jerusalem,  
and the heavens and the earth quake. (Joel 3:16a)*

His justice alone is true justice. And all who've done wrong ought to fear his justice. That's good news for the cause of justice, but it's also troubling for you and I, if we're honest.

You and I cannot bring justice because we've not been just toward others. By our words and actions we've mistreated, abused, discriminated, domineered, ridiculed, and disrespected. We've caused hurt. We've added to the injustice of this world.

Still, the greatest injustice this world has known is the condemnation of the innocent. When someone who does not deserve to die is killed, our world condemns that injustice. But not always...

The world celebrated when the sinless Son of God was crucified. Jesus did nothing wrong. In fact, he did everything right. He lived the only perfect human life, yet he allowed himself to be put to death; the greatest injustice this world will ever know. He did this so you and I could be made just. He did this so you could know justice and live. He did this to eliminate the sin and injustice within you.

That's why you and I find hope in the God who brings justice.

*But the Lord is a refuge to his people,  
a stronghold to the people of Israel. (Joel 3:16b)*

You and I need the justice God brings. More than that, we need the satisfaction for justice that Jesus provides. Only then can we join him in seeking greater justice for our neighbors.

Last week, we were reminded by Joel's words that our God empowers us. He empowers us for this justice work. You're not empowered to be an avenger for someone else. You're not empowered to seek revenge for the wrongs you've suffered. You're not empowered to be the judge.

You are empowered to be an advocate for justice. You are empowered to speak justice on behalf of your neighbor. You are empowered to bring your neighbor to the justice Jesus offers. This is the justice you know and the justice you bring.

You know justice because Jesus lives in you.  
You bring justice because Jesus lives through you.  
Amen.

## **Offering Prayer**

*If you have an offering present as you worship, you may place your hands over it during the offering prayer.*

Reader 1: With thankful hearts we receive from you, O Lord.  
Reader 2: With thankful hearts we respond.  
Reader 1: Receive our thanks and praise.  
Reader 2: Receive our offerings.  
Together: Receive us as your own.

## **Prayers and the Lord's Prayer**

*Share prayer requests with one another. Pray over the requests shared, then pray the Lord's Prayer together.*

Our Father who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name,  
thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.  
Give us this day our daily bread;  
and forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us;  
and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.  
For thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever and ever. Amen.

## **Blessing** (Joel 2:27)

Reader 1: God's word was given to the prophet Joel...  
Reader 2: *You shall know that I am in the midst of Israel...*  
Reader 1: *and that I am the Lord your God and there is none else...*  
Reader 2: *And my people shall never again be put to shame.*  
Reader 1: We live in this promise of God's presence.  
Reader 2: We live in this promise of God's protection.  
Together: Amen.

*As applicable, please share this resource with others who would benefit. An electronic version is available at [www.calvaryslz.org](http://www.calvaryslz.org). We can also add friends to our mailing list if that is preferred.*

---

Scripture quotations are from the ESV® Bible (The Holy Bible, English Standard Version®), copyright © 2001 by Crossway Bibles, a publishing ministry of Good News Publishers. Used by permission. All rights reserved.