

An Order of Worship for the Home

June 7, 2020

The Book of Joel – week 1

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 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 104:27-35

²⁷ These all look to you,
to give them their food in due season.

²⁸ When you give it to them, they gather it up;
when you open your hand, they are filled with good things.

²⁹ When you hide your face, they are dismayed;
when you take away their breath, they die
and return to their dust.

³⁰ When you send forth your Spirit, they are created,
and you renew the face of the ground.

³¹ May the glory of the Lord endure forever;
may the Lord rejoice in his works,

³² who looks on the earth and it trembles,
who touches the mountains and they smoke!

³³ I will sing to the Lord as long as I live;

I will sing praise to my God while I have being.

³⁴ May my meditation be pleasing to him,
for I rejoice in the Lord.

³⁵ Let sinners be consumed from the earth,
and let the wicked be no more!

Bless the Lord, O my soul!

Praise the Lord!

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.

Matthew 6:16-21

Please read from your own Bible. This is the gospel reading for today.

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.

Joel 1:4-10 and 2:12-14

Please read from your own Bible. This is the basis for the message which follows.

Message

When Disaster Strikes, How Do God's People Respond?

You might be familiar with disaster...

- ...like when a pandemic kills 3700 people daily over 3 months' time.
- ...like when racial tensions come to a flashpoint.
- ...like when we see authority abused by those called to protect.
- ...like when our cities are suffering from rioting and looting.

When disaster strikes, how do God's people respond?

If you've started reading Joel with us, maybe you've got some idea where this will go. If not, I invite you to follow our reading plan over the coming weeks as we unpack the message God has given us through his prophet.

Joel will deal with disaster on several levels. His book opens with reference to a natural disaster – a plague of locusts.

*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. (Joel 1:4)*

Crops were devastated. Trees stripped of leaves. Olive groves left in tatters. Vines scarred with no fruit remaining. When locust swarms swell in size, they are merciless on vegetation. It was a disaster for the people of Judah. Grains would be scarce. There would be no grapes for wine, or olives for oil.

There would be some food. Milk and cheese would come from herds which continue to feed on stubble. Animals could be slaughtered. Honey could be harvested. But there was another problem Joel saw.

*The grain offering and the drink offering are cut off
from the house of the Lord.
The priests mourn,
the ministers of the Lord. (Joel 1:9)*

The routine of worship included offerings of bread, grain and wine. These were a part of daily worship and special events. Israel's worship patterns would be upended because of this disaster.

Note the connection to our setting: Joel writes about a plague of locusts disrupting the worship of God's people. We're experiencing a pandemic which has disrupted our worship as well.

The question hits home. When disaster strikes, how do God's people respond?

*Consecrate a fast;
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 1:14)*

God's people respond to disaster by fasting. They put on sackcloth. They take actions to feel for themselves the brokenness of the world, and the brokenness of their own lives. They humble themselves and call on God.

Not just they...we.

We fast. We make ourselves uncomfortable. We bear remorse for the broken world in which we live and remind ourselves that we are broken too.

- If you're upset by the state of the world, tap into that emotion as part of your worship.
- If you're not upset (when you should be), take action to help yourself feel the world's pain.

Joel makes this call to the people of Judah, not because they were the cause of any specific hurt or pain. He calls for a fast, but he doesn't say the people strayed far from God. The world is hurting. God's people are caught up in the disaster. In response, God's people fast. We call on our God.

What will fasting do? It won't earn you God's favor. It won't help you work your way into heaven. Instead, fasting is part of our repentance. It will chip away at our pride and our natural desire for someone else to change first.

The invitation to fast is an invitation to repent and feel how small we are. Once we recognize our weakness and frailty, we become overwhelmed by the brokenness in the world...and in ourselves. When we experience this overwhelm, the solitary hope offered in Jesus becomes ever more clear. Our God alone has authority to bring the justice we fervently desire. Our God alone has compassion to bring the healing we desperately need.

This is Joel's call as God's people face disaster. But, it's not the entire message of Joel. In the later verses of chapter 1 and into chapter 2 he seems to be talking about more than just locusts. The language gets muddled because sometimes it fits the swarming insects, but other times the allusions are much bigger.

*Let all the inhabitants of the land tremble,
for the day of the Lord is coming; it is near,
a day of darkness and gloom,
a day of clouds and thick darkness! (Joel 2:1b-2a)*

This is bigger than locusts. And this is bigger than a virus, or looting in our cities, or even racial injustice. The day of the lord is a day of judgement for all. The day of the lord is a day when every sin is condemned and banished.

Disaster drives God's people to very real, very active repentance. When we actively repent, we realize how big an issue sin actually is – both in our world and in our lives as individuals. This realization brings us face-to-face with the reality of judgement – a reality which culminates on the day of the Lord. Yet, hope is found in the response of our God.

*Who knows whether he will not turn and relent,
and leave a blessing behind him,
a grain offering and a drink offering
for the Lord your God? (Joel 2:14)*

Do you hear the hope? See what God has already done? Let your heart rejoice!

In Jesus, your God provided for every missed grain offering and every lost drink offering. Even when disaster would disrupt our connection to God, he provided an answer. Jesus gave his life as the one sacrifice sufficient for all time.

In Jesus, your God provided a blessing in the midst of disaster. Look to Jesus in humble repentance, and look to him in confident hope. In Jesus, you will find justice as God deals sin a decisive blow. In Jesus, you will find healing as God brings new life to a world caught in the grip of death. Jesus is changing you, and through you he desires to bring hope to this world.

The prophet Joel raises the question, “Why should they say among the peoples, ‘Where is their God?’” Indeed, why should anyone say that? Your God is here, and he is reconciling you and I to himself and to one another. Joel calls us to start by fasting, and repenting, and desiring Jesus ever more, so that we can live in his grace, and his power, and his calling forever more.

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.

A Call to Fast

In response to God's word, we will be fasting over the coming week. Fasting is typically a practice of "going without." There are many ways to fast. Please choose something which is appropriate given your own health. Maybe you'll go without one meal daily. Maybe you'll go without drinks other than water. Maybe you'll go without meat. Or maybe you'll choose to fast from something other than food.

This week we will allow ourselves to feel our own weakness. As we do this, we train ourselves to look to our God who alone has the strength our world needs.

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

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