

Summer Sermon Series – Joel
Joel 2:1-13, 28-32a
June 14 & 15, 2015

Joel: The Day of the Lord Prophet

Mike Tyson, the American boxer, once said: *“Everybody has a plan, till they get punched in the mouth.”* That is true, isn’t it? We all make plans in our lives. Sometimes things go according to that plan. But then there are those times that something comes along and drastically changes that plan. An unexpected illness comes; a sudden death happens in our family; the stock market tanks; our retirement fund dwindles away; someone turns and hurts us instead of encouraging us; the list could go on. When that challenge comes into our lives, we suddenly have to change the plan.

The author C.S. Lewis once wrote: *“God whispers to us in our pleasures, speaks in our conscience, but shouts in our pains. It is his megaphone to rouse a deaf world.”* Often when pain comes into our lives, it changes our perception of life. When things are going well, it is easy to keep on going. Pain can take away a false sense of happiness in our lives. Pain can also cause us to question God. *Why is this happening to me? What’s God trying to tell me?* Not only can pain cause us to question God, it can also have the danger of *destroying* our faith in God. Pain cause our world to turn upside down in a very quick way.

Judah’s world was being turned upside down. Disaster was hitting their country in such a way that they never had seen before. A locust plague was destroying their land. **“What the locust swarm has left, the great locusts have eaten; what the great locusts have left, the young locusts have eaten; what the young locusts have left, other locusts have eaten.... It has laid waste my vines and ruined my fig trees. It has stripped off their bark and thrown it away, leaving their branches white. ... The fields are ruined, the ground is dried up; the grain is destroyed, the new wine is dried up, the oil fails. Despair, you farmers, wail, you vine growers; grieve for the wheat and the barley, because the harvest of the field is destroyed.”**

It is hard for us to imagine the kind of destruction that locusts can bring to a land. The year was 1875 in our country. A swarm of locusts had formed in the West. It was not like any swarm that had formed before and even after in our country. Some estimates say that it contained 3.5 trillion locusts. This species of locusts wasn’t just annoying little grasshoppers. This species destroyed everything in sight. Some have estimated that this swarm cut a path across our country that was 1,800 miles long and 110 miles wide. 198,000 square miles was utterly destroyed. One account describes it this way: *“When women threw blankets over their gardens, the locusts devoured the blankets then feasted on the plants. Farmers lit fires, blasted shotguns into the swarms and scoured their fields with so-called “hopperdozers,” large metal scoops, smeared with tar or molasses to grab as many of the offenders as possible. But it was all to no avail.”* ([New York Times.](#))

Have you ever thought?: *“Things can’t get any worse than this...; then they do.”* That was happening to Judah. Joel describes this plague in our text: **“They have the appearance of horses; they gallop along like cavalry. With a noise like that of chariots they leap over the mountaintops, like a crackling fire consuming stubble, like a mighty army drawn up for battle. At the sight of them, nations are in anguish; every face turns pale. They charge like warriors; they scale walls like soldiers. ... They rush upon the city; they run along the wall. They climb into the houses; like thieves they enter through the windows. Before them the earth shakes, the sky trembles, the sun and moon are darkened, and the stars no longer shine.”** Sounds bad? However, it was going to get worse. Then came the drought.

Joel writes: **“The fields are ruined, the ground is dried up; the grain is destroyed, the new wine is dried up, the oil fails. Despair, you farmers, wail, you vine growers; grieve for the wheat and the barley, because the harvest of the field is destroyed. The vine is dried up and the fig tree is withered; the pomegranate, the palm and the apple tree — all the trees of the field — are dried up. Surely the joy of mankind is withered away.”** (Joel 1:10-12)

What the locusts and the drought didn’t kill, the fires did. **“Before them fire devours, behind them a flame blazes. Before them the land is like the garden of Eden, behind them, a desert waste — nothing escapes them.”** Can’t get any worse? It did. It was destruction of *biblical proportions*. There was nothing that they could do to stop it. They had no pesticides to kill the locusts. They had no water to irrigate new crops or to put out the fires. In a very vivid way, Joel tells

the people that there is no way to turn God's wrath away. **"The Lord thunders at the head of his army; his forces are beyond number, and mighty are those who obey his command. The day of the Lord is great; it is dreadful. Who can endure it?"**

The answer to Joel's question is: *"No one can endure the wrath of an almighty and perfect God!"* So what does God want to see happen. He wants to bring his people to repentance. He wants the hearts of his people once again. **"Return to me with all your heart, with fasting and weeping and mourning.' Rend your heart and not your garments. Return to the Lord your God, for he is gracious and compassionate, slow to anger and abounding in love, and he relents from sending calamity. Who knows? He may turn and have pity and leave behind a blessing — grain offerings and drink offerings for the Lord your God."** (Joel 2:12-14)

God wants to deliver his people not only from the locusts, lack of water and fires. He wants to rescue them from Judgment on the Day of the Lord. **"And afterward, I will pour out my Spirit on all people.... And everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved."**

God brings deliverance for each of you here this morning. He wants to bring it to your children; to your grandchildren; to your great-grandchildren. Isn't that what you want also? I do. I want to see my wife there someday. I want to see my children in heaven with me. I want to see my grandchildren there. I want to see my great-grandchildren, whoever they might be a ways down the road yet. We want family reunions in heaven, don't we? That's why we work together, isn't it? We want to see family reunions in heaven. We want God to pour out his **"Spirit on all people"** so that **"everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved."** That is the comfort that Joel, this Day of the Lord Prophet, was bringing to God's people. This is God's plan for you. Trust it; hold on to it. Let's all look forward to that giant Christian family reunion in heaven. Amen.