

Joel 2:12-19

“Repent”

February 10, 2016

Joel is warning the people that they face a plague of locust because of their sinfulness. He is calling the people to repentance and telling them that maybe God will relent of His anger. Notice that Joel does not promise that God will relent of His Judgment. They are to accept God whether He relents or brings the plague of locusts upon them. Remember, God is God and we are His people no matter what we face in this life. Whether we face good times or bad times, He is God our Creator and Lord.

As I was traveling, I caught a religious station where the pastor was preaching to his church. It seems that they were an inter-city congregation which time had left behind and he was given the job of revitalizing them. As he preached, he was telling them about all the changes that they needed to make, I was struck by his constant references to God. He was bringing up God again and again, but he did not mention the Lord Jesus Christ. This left me wondering, “How can we be a Christian Church and not point again and again to the Lord Jesus Christ if we want to be revitalized?”

Today is Ash Wednesday. This day is devoted to reflecting upon our sins and being sorry for all the pain and sorrow we cause our Savior by our words, our

actions, our thoughts and our desires. We grieve Him because we are not what He wants us to be. We grieve Him so much that He sometimes sends things like a plague of locusts, earthquakes, storms and other natural disasters to call us back to Him. Likewise, He sends sickness and death to call us back to Him. Of course, if we are followers of Christ, He is discipling us, but if we reject Him, then He does more than discipline. For in our unbelief, we are condemned to hell. In our rejection of Him we are condemned to hell unless we repent. If we don't believe that, then we allow those we love to walk the wide path that leads to hell without a word of protest. Keeping our mouths shut is not an act of love. Pointing our fingers at their sinfulness is not an act of love. Instead, we gently warn. Instead, we wait for God's time and offer the hand of hope.

In the Old Testament, they called to people to show their sorrow over their sin by putting on sackcloth and ashes. They were to tear their clothes, sit on the ground and cover themselves with ashes. When we receive ashes, we are going back to the Old Testament custom of showing that we are truly sorry for our sins. Yet, our text calls the people to rend their hearts not their clothes to show that they were truly sorry. It is easy to put on the appearance of repentance by having the ashes placed upon us, but true sorrow is of the heart and not of appearance. I hope that your sorrow is true. If your sorrow is not true, we have the days of Lent to work on recommitting ourselves to the Lord Jesus Christ so that we are ready for

celebrating our freedom from our sin through the sacrifice of our Savior Jesus Christ on the Cross at Calvary.

Another time I was listening to religious radio while I was driving. It turned out that I was listening to a Moody Bible station out of Chicago. They made the comment that all Christians lose their way at one time or another in their lives. They added to that statement by saying that our society does not help in the process with all of the temptations we see and hear around us. Even if we were to turn off our radios and televisions the influence of the world would continue to bombard us. Just as our sinful flesh bombards us and our thoughts and desires lead the way.

He went on to say that Martin Luther showed us that the undeserved grace and mercy of our God through the Lord Jesus Christ was there for us. He then added that we know that underserved grace and mercy because it has called us back to our relationship with our God. As we all sit in these pews, we are here because Christ on the Cross at Calvary has called us back to Him. His undeserved grace and mercy has brought us forgiveness because Christ has paid for our sins with His life. We don't need to fear hell even after we catch ourselves straying from the path because in our faith in Jesus Christ, we are called back to Him. This is the hope we offer to the world. This is the hope we offer to those who have strayed and don't see hope of God's underserved grace and mercy. Amen.