

Pastor's Message
Dec 6, 2020

Hi Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

Congregational meeting –The second annual congregational meeting will be held virtually after church on December 13th to approve the budget and elect members to the GSELC Church Council.

2021 Offering Envelopes – The 2021 offering envelopes are here and ready to be picked-up. You can pick them up on December 6th between 11:00 a.m. and 1:00 p.m. at the church. Masks and social distancing are required. In addition to your own envelopes, please pick up those for family members and/or friends that you would be willing to deliver to their houses.

Christmas Eve Worship Service – the Christmas Eve worship service will be on December 24th at 7:00 p.m. via Zoom.

Communion Sundays – There will be communion each Sunday in Advent starting on November 29.

God's Peace!

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Joel 2

A reading from the second chapter of Joel.

[And God told Joel to tell the people]

“Come back to me and really mean it!

Come fasting and weeping,
sorry for your sins!”

[So, Joel said to the people]

Change your life, not just your clothes.

Come back to God, *your* God.

And here’s why: God is kind and merciful.

He takes a deep breath, puts up with a lot,

This most patient God,
extravagant in love,

always ready to cancel catastrophe.

Who knows? Maybe he’ll do it now,

maybe he’ll turn around and

show pity.

[For God has said]]

“I will pour out my Spirit
on every kind of people:
Your sons will prophesy,
also your daughters.

Your old men will dream,
your young men will see
visions.

I’ll even pour out my Spirit on
the servants,
men and women both.

The word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

Sermon

Grace and Peace to you from God our Father and Jesus Christ our Lord and Savior. AMEN

Let us pray:

Loving Lord,
When we have strayed, you have called us to come home to you. May we with all our hearts return to you, and gratefully accept your gentle love, for the sake of the one whose spirit lives in us, Jesus Christ our loving savior. Amen.

In the book of Joel, we hear once again about a time of great suffering for the Israelites. Although they have returned from exile and are once again living together on the land that God had given them. They are still living under the control of foreign adversaries.

In addition, to being subject to foreign rulers, they were also in the midst of a natural disaster brought on by the infestation of locusts. The locusts were everywhere. And more than just being a nuisance, the locust destroyed all of the vegetation leaving the people with no food to eat and no hope for the foreseeable future for their crops had been totally destroyed.

And it is probably an understatement to say that there was great suffering and fear of what was in store for them for the future. As they lived in the uncertainty of how they would feed themselves and their families today, but also if those in charge would allocate them seed to plant new crops for the future.

The people had such high hopes that life would return to normal when they were allowed to come back home and be together again. But things had changed, their temple had been destroyed so gathering to worship and make sacrifices to God would not happen in the same way that it had before they had gone into exile. And now, their precious land was not providing them with the sustenance they had relied on because of these unwanted pests.

And it is the prophet Joel who has been called by God to share God's message to the people of Israel. As God tells Joel to remind the people of the many ways that they have strayed from living as God's chosen people. And in spite of their lack of trust and faithfulness, God reaches out to God's people and beckons them to come together as a community of faith and trust that God is with them not only in the good times, but also in times of suffering and hardship.

Joel relays God's message to the people telling them first of all that God is reaching out to them in this time of suffering and desperation and calling them to return their attention back to the one who has time and time again rescued and restored their people and to now put their trust in the one and only God, the God of their ancestors.

And in this text, Joel reminds the people of who their God is. As Joel states that God is kind and merciful. God is patient and loves them unconditionally. And even though we lose our way and make unwise choices, God is always looking for ways to restore God's people.

The prophet Joel's words from God are words of hope, as he tells the people that God will not only find a way where there seems to be no way, but God will pour out God's spirit on each and every one of them, so that their eyes may be opened, and they

can see new ways of being God's people.

Joel urges the people to come together as God's faithful people to love and support one another, to find ways to gather together to reflect and repent of their sins and put their trust in the one who has never forsaken them and who will bring them out of these challenges renewed and restored for whatever the future may hold.

As we hear this story, we probably can all agree that this was great advice and guidance for the Israelites, whose lives at this point in their history are plagued not only with the pesky locusts, but also with the uncertainty and anxiety that living through a natural disaster elicits

But isn't this also great advice and guidance for us today as we

are plagued with the uncertainty and anxiety of living through a world-wide pandemic. And like the Israelites we long for it to just go away so that we can return to "normal".

And it is during this season of Advent, just as God beckoned the Israelites to live in hope and put their trust in God, so too we are reminded each week as we light one more candle on the Advent wreath that we are again called to live in hope and put our trust in God. And that God has filled us with God's Holy Spirit so that our eyes may be opened to the new ways that God is working in us, through us, and among us to carry us through these uncertain times to bring us to the future that God will create for us.

AMEN

Blessing

May the quiet fire of God's love

Arise in you.

May its flame of joy and peace

Enlighten your steps in the world

And may you be like the burning bush,

The presence of God for each other.

That holy healing light of love,

The breath of God made manifest

In you.

AMEN

Written by Bob Holmes