

October 17, 2021

“Rejoice! For the Day of the LORD Is Near.”
Joel 2:18-3:21

FCF: A perpetually gloomy outlook

PROPOSITION: (magnet) Let us rejoice
(anchor) for the day of the LORD is near.

SCRIPTURE INTRODUCTION:

Let’s consider Winnie the Pooh and our friends in the Hundred Acre Wood - specifically, an old gray stuffed donkey named Eeyore. He is perpetually pessimistic, continually gloomy, a sadly depressed sort of fellow. Here are a few quotes from his thistle-eating mouth (**READ**):

“It’s not much of a tail but I’m sort of attached to it.” “Thanks for noticing me.” “Sure is a cheerful color. Guess I’ll have to get used to it.” “The most wonderful thing about Tiggers is that you’re the only one.”

Eeyore is a great literary character. He really is. But he has a really lousy outlook on life.

His pessimistic gloomy outlook ought not to be ours, not if we are Jesus’ disciples. Why? Well, that’s where we’re going in this second part of this two-part series in the book of Joel.

SCRIPTURE READING: Joel 2:18-3:21**PRAYER FOR ILLUMINATION****SERMON INTRODUCTION:**

As we saw last week, “the day of the LORD” is the major theme of Joel. This refers to both the once-for-all final day as well as the ongoing continual visitations of the LORD, as He comes to intervene in this sinful world. That message has a double meaning, a certain effect on the hearer, depending on where you are when it lands on you. What do I mean? Imagine you are in Germany at the end of World War II. News of the eventual fall of Berlin is spreading. What is your response? Well, it depends. If you are an Allied POW or someone in a concentration camp, then it’s a call for celebration. But if you are a German soldier, especially if you are a Nazi, then that’s a whole other thing. The message means different things, depending on where you are.

That’s what we see with this news of the day of the LORD. On the one hand, as we saw last week, it means a day of judgment and a call to repent. But, on the other hand, it means a day of salvation and a call to rejoice. It is news not only of destruction but deliverance, salvation in the fullest sense - going as far as the curse is found, fully realized in the mission of the Messiah.

Here’s the wondrous thing. When you embrace the news of what He has done for you, when you are made one with the One who died and was raised for you - the floodgates of eternal unshakeable benefits are opened for you. So let us rejoice for the day of the LORD is near.

Why are we to rejoice? We see three things in our text. First, God’s judgment on His enemies. Second, the renewal of His creation. And then, third, His presence with His people.

I. GOD’S JUDGMENT ON HIS ENEMIES

First, God’s coming judgment on His enemies. This is good news and a call for rejoicing.

A) What Was Coming

1. A reversal

What was coming? A reversal of what had come upon God’s people, of what they had suffered.

2. Their just due

And Joel is showing us that this judgment was the just due upon the surrounding nations.

B) Why It Was Coming

1. Immoral stupor

Why was it coming? Because of their immoral stupor, their willful blindness and rebellion.

2. Social injustice

Because of crass immorality and cruel injustice toward vulnerable fellow image bearers.

That is why God's judgment was coming. And that sure reality was good news, even as we consider that, harsh as what Joel is speaking of, it points to an eternal judgment yet to come.

Application:

And that is good news. How could this possibly be? Two reasons. First, it means God is just. It means that all wrongs will be made right. Which is both a warning to oppressors and a comfort to the oppressed. Which leads to the second reason. This enables us to entrust things to the Lord, not have to take up the burden of the vigilante but rather to leave it in His just court.

God's judgment on His enemies. Let us rejoice for the day of the LORD is near.

II. GOD'S RENEWAL OF HIS CREATION

The second reason we can rejoice is the hope we have of the renewal of God's creation.

A) The Pain It Suffered

1. In those times

Look at Joel's images of pain the natural world was suffering - crops failing, livestock perishing.

2. Traced to the Fall

And while tied to this immediate time of judgment, it was ultimately traced to the Fall itself.

B) Yet Would Be Set Free

1. Relief was promised

Yet the assurance is given here that it would be set free. Relief was promised, great abundance.

2. Pointing to a greater restoration

All of which, as stunning a change as this would be, pointed to something else on a cosmic scale.

So, clearly, this world matters to God. It is not everything. But it is not nothing.

Application:

God cares for this world. He cares for it and all that He has made. He cared enough to make it. And He cares enough to remake it. We are then called to steward and care for it well.

God's renewal of His creation. My friends, let us rejoice for the day of the LORD is near.

III. GOD'S PRESENCE WITH HIS PEOPLE

Which brings us to the third and final point, God's presence with His people. This too is a call to rejoice (**READ Joel 2:28-29**). I want to spend a few more minutes pressing in here.

A) What Had Been

Something new was breaking in. Consider Israel's experience up to this point.

1. Moses' longing

In this era, the Spirit visited only certain people at specific times to carry out particular tasks. So we read of Moses longing for the day of the Spirit's pervasive presence with God's people.

2. Joel's theme

This theme of the Lord's presence is repeated in Joel - being in their midst, dwelling with them.

3. Joel's vision

And, tied to that, Joel has this vision of a time of the fullness of God's Spirit, the democratization of His Spirit. A time when all God's people would have all they would need of His Spirit.

B) What Would Be

Which takes us from what had been to what would be. And what has come.

1. Who was included

Who was included? No longer merely a select few set aside but all without any restrictions. The only requirement being a believing trust - young, old, male, female, slave, and free. For all.

2. When this would be

When would this be? Not at the end of time but in the last days, these days, the era begun with the death, resurrection, and ascension of Jesus. This is what we read in Acts 2 with the coming of the Spirit at Pentecost. Peter is clear on this. "What you have just seen is what was foretold."

3. What it all means

And what does it all mean? That outpouring has now come - the ultimate life giving shower from heaven upon this hard cracked earth. The Spirit is a universal gift for universal ministry. In this era, in ways like never before, God is making Himself known through us all and to us all.

For His Spirit has come. This is good news of great importance, of great significance.

Application:

Some of you are familiar with Francis Schaeffer. The plan is to take a look at the Lord's work through his life and ministry in a couple of weeks. Schaeffer went through a crisis at one point. As a pastor, looking at his own heart and the infighting among believers, he came to see that the Christian life is not just about conversion but about a daily living out of the grace of God in the presence and power of the Holy Spirit. Reflecting on this, he said to his wife ([READ](#)):

I wonder what would happen to most of our churches and Christian work if we woke up tomorrow morning and everything concerning the reality and work of the Holy Spirit, and everything concerning prayer were removed from the Bible? I don't mean just ignored, but actually cut out—disappeared. I wonder how much difference it would make?

That is a stunning question to ask. And really quite sobering. How would you answer it? What if someone was to do such a surgery on your Bible? Would it make any difference to your life?

God's presence with His people. Let us rejoice for the day of the LORD is near.

CONCLUSION:

I want to conclude by reading the lyrics of this old hymn to you, “Come, O Come Thou Holy Spirit.” Actually, I want to do more than read it. Let’s let it serve as a prayer (**READ**):

1. Come, o come Thou Holy Spirit
Light and life Thy grace imparts
Blessed Source of consolation
Guide our minds and fill our hearts
Grant my mind and my affections
Wisdom, counsel, purity
That I may be ever seeking
Only that which pleases Thee
Only that which pleases Thee

2. Savior lead us to adore Thee
By the true and living way
Then with angel hosts before Thee
May we worship, love and praise
Dwell within us, precious Spirit
Where Thou art no ill can come
Bless us now through Jesus' merit
Reign in every heart and home
Reign in every heart and home

3. Holy Spirit, strong and mighty
Thou who makest all things new
Make Thy work within me perfect
Help me by Thy word so true
In Thy faith, O make me steadfast
Let not Satan, death or shame
Of my confidence deprive me
Lord, my refuge is Thy name
Lord, my refuge is Thy name

4. When my final hour approaches
Let my hopes grow yet more bright
Let Thy love which never fails me
Dissipate the gloom of night
From that height which knows no measure
Fairer far than voice can tell
In Thy glorious courts of heaven
There, redeemed by Christ, to dwell
There, redeemed by Christ, to dwell

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