

Today I want to continue our series on the Minor Prophets we have titled: "Small Talk" Today: JOEL

Remember what we said last week. Just because something is small doesn't mean it is unimportant. Understanding that is incredibly significant to grasping what is going on in the book of Joel. The prophecy of Joel is prompted by the presence in Judah of some insects. You know, those tiny little bugs that are REALLY annoying. The important thing to remember is this. When a couple of them get together...they can be a problem.

TAKE A LOOK AT THIS VIDEO!

When the conditions are right and they swarm, these "grasshoppers" change a little...and we call them locusts! I did a little reading...some swarms: hundreds of square miles...with 120 MILLION PER SQUARE MILE: Billions! When they show up THAT way...they devour EVERYTHING! That is what is going on in the book of Joel.

1. Historical Setting of Obadiah:

CHART

- Very early: (Some place later, majority place him very near Obadiah chronologically)
- Preexilic Prophet: BEFORE the Babylonian Captivity
- TO Judah: Prophet that speaks to the Southern Kingdom

2. Quick BACKGROUND Facts About Joel That Give Us Perspective!

Since most of us don't know a lot about Joel, some historical facts will help

- TRIAL Judah was going through a very difficult time: Plague of locusts, one after the other 1:5-12 This had come upon the people as a judgment from God because people far from Him.
- SURFACE: Joel was living in a time of SURFACE SPIRITUALITY Going through the motions: 2:12-13 They were saying & doing all right things...Hearts were far from God! Locusts: "Can you hear me now?"
- JUDGMENT Joel's message: The locusts are judgment from God: Turn around... Worse Judgment coming
- The KEY to the book of Joel is found in phrase: *The Day Of The Lord!* This is a phrase with a VERY Specific eschatological meaning: (End Times!)
The Day Of The Lord = The time frame when God's judgment and wrath upon sin and unrepentant people is poured out and expressed.
It is used in TWO ways in Joel: NOW: The Day of Locusts: THEN: The Day of Final Judgment to Come

CHART

- QUOTED in the NT on Day of Pentecost: Acts 2:17- 21 Pour out my Spirit
- QUOTED by Paul: Rom 10:10 All call on name of Lord be saved

3. The Three-Fold Message of Joel:

Really easy to follow what is happening in the book of Joel.

- LOCUSTS: JUDGMENT NOW: 1:1-4 *You have NEVER seen anything like this!*
- CHANGE YOUR HEART, OR 2:12-13 You have the OPPORTUNITY to change! (Unlike Obadiah)
- JUDGMENT TO COME: THEN 3:9-16 Final Day of Judgment *"You Ain't Seen Nothing Yet!"*

4. Lessons For Today From Joel.

Every one of the minor prophets has something different to add to our understand of who God is and how He works in our life. Look with me at 4 Key Lessons from Joel.

Lesson #1: It's Not Smart To Play Spiritual Games With God! 2:12-13

Some of the harshest things Jesus had to say during His ministry, and some of the most severe Judgments we find in the entire bible are reserved for those who SAY one thing and DO another. It seems that God takes OFFENSE at those who ACT like they are doing something spiritual on the outside but on inside far from God.

Two or three times in the bible God calls people out saying "You honor me with your lips, hearts far from me!" That is the essence of what Joel is saying to the people of Judah.

The Judgment of the Locusts have come

You are ACTING like you are turning to me: Tearing your garments is a sign of sorrow and repentance.

Ch 2:12-13 But, you need to tear your heart...not your clothes! PIVOT POINT See-Saw

If not...Then the ULTIMATE Day Of The Lord will come!

Applic: Bible tells us that God doesn't see as man sees...but that God looks upon the heart.

When there is something in our life that we need to forsake...turn away from...leave behind. DO IT!

If you are here this morning...and you are struggling...come and ask God for the help...ask from Heart It is OK to struggle, To fall and Get Back Up: God has INFINITE Forgiveness for THAT; HYPOCRISY: NO!

LESSON #2: God Reveals Himself During Times Of Crises

2:13-14

Here is a key statement you should write down in the flyleaf of your bible, type in phone, Make a Meme

As Devoted Followers of God We LIKE Mountaintop Experiences, But We LEARN Down In The Valley!

6 Things We Learn About God In Joel

- 1. God is Gracious: *To be warmly courteous; to be kind polite and pleasant! To treat gently, kindly*
- 2. God is Compassionate: *To be full of mercy for those that are struggling: Heart FOR YOU*
- 3. Slow To Anger: *Doesn't get angry with us quickly, patient and longsuffering*
- 4. Abounding in Love: *An exceeding abundance of Love for us! Overflowing with Love*
- 5. Relents from Judgment: *Looking for a way to keep from sending judgment to us! WANTS to withhold!*
- 6. Wants To Bless Instead: *It is the heart of God to give us GOOD! Looks for ways to do that!*

Applic: Here is what Joel is saying to us. Yes God will judge. But because His heart is toward us...because He is FOR us...God is looking for every opportunity to turn from Judgment and send blessing instead! If we will do what He tells us to do...RETURN to Him, In Repentance, from the heart ask for Forgiveness...He gives it FREELY!

Here is what I have to say: If you are far from God today...WHAT ARE YOU WAITING FOR? RUN TO ALTAR!

LESSON #3: God Always Has A Remnant:

3:17-19 Now Judgment: Then: vs 20-21 Remnant

This is so important to remember. It is true in individuals' lives. It is true in churches. It is true in every spiritual group of people. God ALWAYS has a remnant! Regardless how many have walked away, Regardless how severe the judgment may have been, Regardless of how dismal and hopeless it appears...Always A Remnant!

Illus: Elijah 1Kings 19:18 Jezebel, Run, Hide, Cave, Complain: *"Yet I have reserved 7000, not bowed to Baal!"*
Elijah, there is a remnant, there is a reserve, it isn't hopeless...I have some that STILL are with me!

Applic: I want to encourage you with those words today. God has a remnant. You may FEEL like you are alone: You may feel like everyone has abandoned you. You may FEEL like No Hope, No Help, No support. God has a remnant! It is NEVER hopeless when God is involved. It is never "just you" God is there...and He has resources, and people and support that you don't see yet! Trust Him. Lean into Him. Believe He will deliver. HE WILL!

Illus: Ruth: 4:1 Ch 1-3 Everything is AWFUL! Desperate Situation: No Help: Promised: Not Yet: MEANWHILE!

Applic: I don't know who this is for today: But listen to me. *God is FOR YOU! He is WITH YOU.* You can't see Him, You can't imagine any way your situation will work out...No one, No where, No way it can work out...Remember this one word: MEANWHILE! Listen to Me: **YOUR reality isn't REAL. God's REALITY IS REAL!** You don't have to see it: God Sees it: You don't have to Know it...Understand It....Explain It: God is all you need

LESSON #4: God Can RESTORE What Has Been Destroyed!

2:23-27

Oh, this is one of the GREATEST promises of the entire bible! It is written to those who are living with the aftermath of the plague of locusts. EVERYTHING is gone...Everything is destroyed...Everything is hopeless BUT GOD! God is able to do exceedingly abundantly above anything we could ever ask or imagine!

But God Can RESTORE! Lit = *To make good again; To make full again; To make complete again*

God can restore it...and make it better! Look at Job...He lost everything...

Job 42:12 "The Lord blessed the latter part of Job's life MORE than the former part!"

I have seen this over and over and over. God can and will restore those who turn their hearts to HIM!

- Marriage Restored
- Families Restored
- Children/Parents Restored
- Churches Restored
- Broken Friendships Restored
- Finances Restored
- Health Restored
- Faith Restored!

YOU may think it is hopeless. YOU may think there is nothing that could ever make it better...

But, It isn't hopeless: It's NOT a one to one equivalence: New children not "make up for" lost

But at the end of the day...Job was RESTORED!

I don't know what you may have had "eaten by the locusts" But GOD does...come...ask Him to RESTORE!

CONC:

- Prayerfully ask God to restore. He is big enough....Powerful enough
He can do it...but you have ASK...And you have to do HARD WORK of repentance and trusting
Starts right down here at the altar. You come...Get from Him what you need!
- Don't play Games with God: He plays for keeps!
- Find Him in the midst of Crises: You will learn more than you ever imagined
- Look for the Remnant in YOUR life: There is SOMETHING there God can build on