

In this part of the book, the prophet Joel is reminding the people of Israel that God does not send disaster upon them in order to crush them, but as a way of bringing to them even greater blessings than they can even imagine. That's what we heard last week in our Lenten series on the book of Joel, but this week Joel takes a very unusual turn. He now goes, fast forwarding, all the way to Pentecost. And we know that because at Pentecost in Acts chapter 2, Saint Peter quotes this passage as a way of talking about what was happening on that day. But why would Joel do this? Why would he fast-forward away from where he was and look at something so far away into the future? What do grasshoppers have to do with Pentecost? What does the coming of the Holy Spirit have to do with disaster?

To understand that, we have to understand the argument that Joel is making. Because in the first part of this book all the way up to where we are at the end of chapter 2, Joel has been talking about the day of the Lord, the day when God sends his judgment upon his people, a day when he pours out his wrath as a way of calling us back to himself, as a way of calling us to repentance. For Israel, that day of the Lord was the day that he sent those grasshoppers. Those grasshoppers were God's judgment, and meant to call the people of Israel back to himself. All of these things were meant as a way of calling them to repentance. And there are many such days of the Lord as well. When we experience disaster sent by the hand of God himself, those are also a day of the Lord, a day in which he sends darkness so that he would call us back to himself.

But God does not send a day of judgment in order to crush us. God does not send these things in order to destroy us. God sends these things in order that he might bless us, bless us afterward in ways that we can't even imagine, in ways that we never even would've dreamed of. For Israel, they had lost their crops, but God would give them back a harvest beyond their wildest expectations. And for us as well, when we have suffered when God sends judgment and sends disaster upon us, he will also give back to us those things which we have lost. Because God is not seeking to destroy us. God wants to set us free. And that's exactly what Joel has been talking about.

But to prove his point, and to really drive this all home, Joel looks forward into the future. Because he was looking to a great Day of the Lord, in fact the greatest day of all, the day which would come when God would pour out his wrath in a way that he had never done before, and he would pour out his judgment in a way that he never would again. That day, Christians, was Good Friday, when God poured out the wrath and the judgment that we so richly deserved because of our sins upon his own Son Jesus Christ. When God did that, pouring out his judgment upon Jesus, that was a day without parallel, a day of judgment unlike any other, a disaster unlike anything the world has ever seen. Because the Son of God has died. That is what God has done for our sake. It was a day of gloom, a day of darkness, when the sun itself refused to shine from the sixth hour until the ninth hour. In that day, God poured out his judgment and poured it out on Jesus

But God does not pour out his judgment, Christians, to destroy us. He does not pour these things out in order to crush us. God does not send the storm so that we would be destroyed. God sends these things to bring us a blessing, a blessing unlike any other. Because Jesus died on that day, Christians. Jesus died on Good Friday, but he laid down his life so that he could take it up again, rising on the third day never to die again. Jesus is alive. Death has given way to life. Darkness has given way to light. And this blessing which we have received in Jesus is a blessing unlike anything else we have ever known. Because he gives us that life and that forgiveness which he won for us on Good Friday.

And the surest proof that we have of that, Christians, the surest confidence that we have in all of this is Pentecost. When God poured out the Holy Spirit upon us, poured Him out to give us a harvest beyond anything that had ever come before. Because we have the Holy Spirit now. The Holy Spirit causes us to

cry out to him, to cry out "Abba, Father!" Because we have become the temples of the Spirit, and we have that confidence, in Jesus and in the Spirit, that everyone who calls on his name will be saved. Yes, dear Christians, this is our hope, that God gives us his Son and gives us his Spirit as a way of calling us to himself and giving us that sure confidence that will never be taken away.

So when we suffer days of the Lord, when God sends the storm into our lives, we need not fear. God is not seeking to destroy us. And we have that sure and certain confidence in Jesus Christ, who has been raised from the dead never to die again. And we have that confidence in the Spirit who has come into our hearts to make us his people. And because we belong to God, all of these things which happen to us, whatever the disaster might be, are meant for our good. And we will not be destroyed, because God works all things together for good for those who love him.

So turn to him, Christians. Turn to him who gives himself to you. He does not willingly grieve the children of men. He is not seeking to destroy us. All of these things are meant to build us up, to bring us closer to him. And we have that sure and certain confidence in Jesus Christ and in the living Holy Spirit who now dwells within us.

Now to him, the most holy Trinity, the Father, Son, and the Holy Spirit, be all glory, honor and worship, now and forever. Amen.