

## A Lesson from the Prophet Joel

May 10, 2020

I think all of us would agree that the Corona virus pandemic is unlike anything we've ever experienced. Because the virus is highly contagious, and life-threatening since there is no vaccine, millions around the globe have been ordered to stay in their homes and thousands of businesses have shuttered. In America, workers have been laid-off, while many who are still employed are working from home, and still others have seen their pay cut-back.

I've not seen governmental rations on goods like they did during the Great Depression, but stores have often instituted their own limits on high-demand items like milk, meat, or paper products. And because of the great need for hand sanitizer, disinfecting wipes and face masks by the healthcare industry, these items aren't available to the public at all.

I enjoy the descriptive poetry found in Old Testament books of wisdom and prophecy. Today's devotional is from the prophet Joel, whose name means "Yahweh is God". Joel's message speaks of a great national disaster, Israel's response, and Yahweh's restoration.

Read Joel 1:1-12

- 1) Why does Joel emphasize hearing and retelling (vv. 2-3)? What does that say about how faith is born and nurtured?

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- 2) Israel's history and God's mighty acts were passed down from generation to generation. What might Joel's hearers have recalled from the plagues brought upon Egypt?

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- 3) How does Joel describe this disastrous event? How complete is it? How do you respond to his vivid, poetic images?

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Read Joel 1:13-20

- 1) When have you felt like your resources (spiritual, financial, physical) were drying up or burned out? Did you or could you cry out to God? Why/Why not? What happened?

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Chapter two describes another army invading Israel. Some understand this as a second illustration of the invading locusts; and some believe it's foretelling of a literal attack by an enemy army.

Read Joel 2:12-32

- 1) What specific "great things" does God do which correspond to the concrete situation of Israel (in 1:1-20)? What does this correlation say about the effectiveness and completeness of God's restoration?

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- 2) What does this tell you about God's love, power, and uniqueness? About his care for creation? For his covenant people?

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Here's what I think we can draw from our reading today. At some time in Israel's ancient history, they suffered a great destructive event. Their response to this event was to turn to the Lord, who is "compassionate and gracious, slow to anger and abounding in love and faithfulness". Because of his great grace and faithfulness, the Lord restored the people, the vitality of their livestock and the bounty of their land.

Let's be patient in our current trial. Let's be constant in prayer. And let's be joyful in the hope of the abundant life God has planned for us!