

CONGREGATIONS OF THE AELC
TRINITY OAKEY, ST PAUL'S GREENWOOD, ST JOHN'S AUBIGNY, BETHLEHEM TOOWOOMBA
TRINITY MARBURG, ST JOHN'S MINDEN, OUR SAVIOUR LOWOOD

10 May 2020

Bulletin for the 5th Sunday of Easter

ORDER OF SERVICE WITHOUT HOLY COMMUNION

THE INVOCATION

In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. **Amen.**

HYMN 191 THE CHURCH'S ONE FOUNDATION 191

1
The Church's one foundation
Is Jesus Christ her Lord;
She is His new creation
By water and the Word;
From heaven He came and sought her
To be His holy bride;
With His own blood He bought her,
And for her life He died.

2
Elect from every nation,
Yet one o'er all the earth,
Her charter of salvation
One Lord, one faith, one birth;
One holy name she blesses,
Partakes one holy food,
And to one hope she presses
With every grace endued.

5
Yet she on earth hath union
With God the Three in One,
And mystic sweet communion
With those who rest is won:

3
Though with a scornful wonder
Men see her sore oppressed,
By schisms rent asunder,
By heresies distressed,
Yet saints their watch are keeping,
Their cry goes up, "How long?"
And soon the night of weeping
Shall be the morn of song.

4
Mid toil and tribulation,
And tumult of her war,
She waits the consummation
Of peace for evermore;
Till with the vision glorious
Her longing eyes are blest,
And the great Church victorious
Shall be the church at rest.

O happy ones and holy!
Lord, give us grace that we,
Like them the meek and lowly,
On high may dwell with Thee

THE CONFESSION

Dear friends in Christ: Let us draw near to God our Father with a true heart to confess our sins, and ask Him in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ to forgive us.

Our help is in the name of the Lord. **He made heaven and earth.**

I said, I will confess my sins to the Lord. **Then He forgave the guilt of my sin.**

Almighty God, our Maker and Redeemer, we confess to You that by nature we are sinful and unclean, and that we have sinned against You by thought, word and deed. Therefore we flee for refuge to your infinite mercy and plead for Your grace for the sake of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Most merciful God, You have given Your only Son to die for us: Have mercy on us, and for His sake grant us forgiveness of all our sins. By Your Holy Spirit increase our knowledge of You and Your will, and make us obedient to Your Word, so that by Your grace we may come to eternal life; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Almighty God, our heavenly Father, has had mercy on us, and has given His only Son to die for us, and for His sake forgives us all our sins. To those who believe in His name He has given the right to become the children of God, and has given them His Holy Spirit. He who believes and is baptised will be saved. Grant this, Lord, to us all. Amen.

THE INTROIT

Praise the LORD! Praise the LORD, O my soul!
Let me praise the LORD throughout my life! Let me sing praise to my God all my life!
Do not trust in noble people, in a descendant of Adam, who cannot save!

When his spirit departs, he will return to his earth. On that day his plans will perish.

Blessed is the one who has the God of Jacob for his help! His hope is in the LORD, his God, who has made heaven and earth, the sea and all that is in them, who remains faithful for ever, who provides justice for those who are oppressed and who gives food to those who are hungry. The LORD sets prisoners free.

The LORD opens the eyes of blind people. The LORD raises up those who are bowed down. The LORD loves righteous people.

The LORD watches over resident-foreigners. He helps up the orphan and the widow. However, He makes the way of wicked people crooked.

The LORD will reign for ever, Your God, O Zion, for all generations. Praise the LORD!

Psalm 146

THE GLORY TO THE FATHER

Glory to the Father and the Son, and the Holy Spirit, as it was in the beginning is now and will be for evermore. Amen.

THE LORD HAVE MERCY

Lord have mercy, Christ have mercy, Lord have mercy.

THE GLORY TO GOD IN THE HIGHEST

Glory to God in the highest.

And on earth peace, among men with whom He is pleased. We praise You, we bless You, we worship You, we glorify You, we give thanks to You for Your great glory, O Lord God, heavenly king, God, the Father Almighty. O Lord, the only begotten Son, Jesus Christ, O Lord God, Lamb of God, Son of the Father: You take away the sin of the world; have mercy on us. You take away the sin of the world; receive our prayer. You are seated at the right hand of God the Father; have mercy on us. For You alone are holy, You alone are Lord, You alone, O Christ, with the Holy Spirit, are most high in the glory of God the Father. Amen.

THE COLLECT

The Lord be with you. **And also with you.**

O God, You make the minds of Your faithful people to be of one will. Grant that we may love what You have commanded and desire what You promise, that, among the many changes of this world, our hearts may be fixed where true joys are found; through Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. Amen.

THE FIRST READING

The First Reading for _____ is written in chapter _____ of _____, beginning at verse _____.

After the reading:

This is the Word of the Lord. **Thanks be to God.**

THE SECOND READING

The Second Reading is written in chapter _____ of _____, beginning at verse _____.

After the reading: This is the Word of the Lord.

Hallelujah Hallelujah Hallelujah.

THE GOSPEL

The Holy Gospel is written in the _____ chapter of the Gospel according to _____, beginning at verse _____.

Glory be to You, O Lord.

After the Gospel: This is the Gospel of the Lord. **Praise be to You, O Christ.**

THE APOSTLES' CREED

I believe in God, the Father Almighty, maker of heaven and earth. And in Jesus Christ, His only Son, our Lord, who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, dead and buried. He descended into hell. The third day He rose again from the dead. He ascended into heaven, and sits at the right hand of God, the Father Almighty, from thence He will come to judge the living and the dead.

I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy Christian Church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting. Amen.

HYMN 175 THOU ART THE WAY, TO THEE ALONE

1
Thou art the way, to Thee alone
From sin and death we flee;
and he who would the Father seek
Must seek Him, Lord, by Thee.

2
Thou art the truth; Thy Word alone
True wisdom can impart;
Thou only canst inform the mind
And purify the heart.

3
Thou art the life; the rending tomb
Proclaims Thy conquering arm;
And those who put their trust in Thee
Nor death nor hell shall harm.

4

Thou art the way, the truth, the life:
Grant us that way to know,
That truth to keep, that life to win,
Whose joys eternal flow.

SERMON - I AM THE WAY, THE TRUTH, AND THE LIFE. NO ONE COMES TO THE FATHER
EXCEPT THROUGH ME John 14:6

HYMN 206 STAND UP, STAND UP FOR JESUS

1
Stand up, stand up for Jesus,
Ye soldiers of the cross!
Lift high His royal banner,
It must not suffer loss.
From victory unto victory
His army He will lead,
Till every foe is vanquished,
And Christ is Lord indeed.
2
Stand up, stand up for Jesus!
The trumpet call obey;
Forth to the mighty conflict
In this His glorious day.
Ye that are men now serve Him
Against unnumbered foes;
Let courage rise with danger,
And strength to strength oppose.

3
Stand up, stand up for Jesus!
Stand in His strength alone;
The arm of flesh will fail you,
Ye dare not trust your own.
Put on the gospel armour,
Each piece put on with prayer;
Where duty calls, or danger,
Be never wanting there.
4
Stand up, stand up for Jesus!
The strife will not be long;
This day the noise of battle,
The next the victor's song.
To him that overcometh
A crown of life will be;
He with the King of glory
Shall reign eternally.

THE PRAYER

LORD'S PRAYER:

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be Thy name. Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread; and forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us; and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For Thine is the kingdom and the power, and the glory, for ever and ever. Amen.

THE BLESSING

The Lord bless us and keep us. The Lord make His face shine on us and be gracious to us. The Lord look upon us with favour, and give us peace. **Amen.**

HYMN 241 THINE ARM, O LORD, IN DAYS OF OLD

1
Thine arm, O Lord, in days of old
Was strong to heal and save;
It triumphed o'er disease and death,
O'er darkness and the grave:
To Thee they went, the blind, the dumb,
The palsied and the lame,
The leper with his tainted life,
The sick with fevered frame.

2
And, lo, Thy touch brought life and
health,
Gave speech and strength and sight;
And youth renewed and frenzy calmed
Owned Thee, the Lord of light.
And now, O Lord, be near to bless,
Almighty, as of yore,
In crowded street, by restless couch,
As by Gennesaret's shore.

3
Be Thou our great deliverer still,
Thou Lord of life and death;
Restore and quicken, soothe and bless
With Thine almighty breath:
To hands that work and eyes that see
Give wisdom's heavenly love,
That whole and sick, that weak and
strong,
May praise Thee evermore

Introduction

The prophecy of Joel is about a coming disaster in Israel, the hope of repentance and reformation, and the promise of international justice. We do not know the full nature of the hardship we are facing, but we know that it is from the Lord. It is for our good, it is for His glory, and it is part of His plan to fill the earth with the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea. But one of the great lessons of Joel is the centrality of worship to all of life. Joel confronts our national sin of thinking that worship is not related to plagues, politics, economics, and family life.

A Summary: The Locusts & the Acquittal

The book opens with the word of the Lord describing a locust plague of epic proportions (1:2-4), but by the end of the book the Lord is declaring the condemnation of Egypt and Edom and the acquittal of the bloodshed of Judah (3:19-21). So we need to know how Joel gets from locusts to the judgment of nations. A big clue is found in the canonical run up to Joel. It's striking that Daniel foretells the coming of four kingdoms (Dan. 2: image dream, Dan. 7: four beasts). In the latter vision, Daniel sees a lion, a bear, a leopard, and a great beast representing four empires (Dan. 7:2-23ff). And Hosea follows also promising that God will be to Israel like a lion, a leopard, a bear, and a wild beast (Hos. 13:7-8). So when Joel tells us that four kinds of locusts are coming, we should take note (Joel 1:4, 2:25). On the one hand, locusts are one of the plagues of judgment that God promises to send on His people if they forget Him and break His covenant (Dt. 28:38-42). Foreign nations are also described as devouring locusts in various places (Jdg. 6:5, 7:12, Jer. 51:14, 27, Nah. 3:17). Putting this together, I take Joel to be describing an actual, literal locust plague (past, present, or future), but he is also clearly using that to foretell the invasion of foreign nations (1:6, 2:2-11, 20). And this is confirmed by the resolution of Joel's prophecy being the great judgment of the nations in the Valley of Jehoshaphat (3:2-12, 19). So the judgment of locusts is a sign of an international crisis facing Israel. Whatever it is that we are facing in this moment – whether it is a plague of a virus or a plague of complete panic or both, biblically literate Christians should ask what is God saying to us? And for that answer, we must look to His Word and not the newspaper and not our best guesses.

A Famine of What?

What is striking about the book of Joel is how he connects the judgment of God to the international political situation they are facing. And one way to see that is by noticing what's missing. There are at least two major things missing in the book of Joel. There's a great plague coming, and repeated calls to lament, wail, fast, sound the alarm, cry out, mourn, and return, but the prophet does not dwell on "what" they should cry out, mourn, return from. There are a few hints, but the sin of Judah is not described in much detail. So a great deal of the message of Joel is: you know what you need to do. Turn, cry out, repent. You know what you need to do. This is what true repentance and conviction looks like. When God is at work, you know exactly what needs to be done.

Second, the effects of the locust and invading nations are not what you'd expect. Yes, there's "wasted land" and "food is cut off" (1:10, 16) and the earth has become a "desolate wilderness" (2:3), but that isn't the worst of it. "Lament like a virgin girded with sackcloth for the husband of her youth. The grain offering and the drink offering have been cut off from the house of the Lord." (1:9). "Be ashamed, you farmers, wail you vinedressers, for the wheat and the barley... Gird yourselves and lament, you priests... for the grain offering and the drink offering are withheld from the house of your God" (1:11-13). "So rend your heart and not your garments and return to the Lord your God, for He is gracious and merciful, slow to anger and of great kindness; and He relents from doing harm. Who knows if He will turn and relent and leave a blessing behind Him – a grain offering and a drink offering for the Lord your God?" (2:13-14).

Or after the promise of returning the years devoured by the locusts, Joel says: "You shall eat in plenty and be satisfied, and praise the name of the Lord your God..." (2:26). The real crucial issue for Joel is not merely the sin itself, nor the material, economic, or political effects of plagues and invasions – the really crucial issue is the lack of worship in the temple, the lack of grain and drink offerings, the lack of praise from God's people. "The Lord also will roar from Zion, and utter His voice from Jerusalem; the heavens and earth will shake; but the Lord will be a shelter for His people, and the strength of the children of Israel. So you shall know that I am the Lord your God, dwelling in Zion, my holy mountain... And it shall come to pass in that day that the mountains shall drip with new wine, the hills shall flow with milk... a fountain shall flow from the house of the Lord..." (3:16-17). Where does healing and fruitfulness flow from? The house of the Lord.

It slowly becomes clear that the real famine, the real tragedy caused by the locusts and invading armies is the lack of worship. It's not hunger and drought first and foremost – the lack of harvest means a lack of worship. Other prophets dwell on the precise sins (e.g. greed, injustice, idolatry, sexual immorality, etc.). It isn't that Joel doesn't care about those things, it's just that he knows the root problem is the lack of true worship of the true God. Joel says that it's lack of true worship that leaves them prey to the nations (2:19). It is lack of satisfaction in God's good gifts that leaves people vulnerable to sin. But when He sends the rain and the fruitful harvests, it is precisely so they will remember the Lord and rejoice in the Lord and so not be overrun by their enemies (2:21-27). The worship of God is their fortress.

The Spirit of God & Calling on the Lord

Joel's description of God's salvation is really quite striking. And what's striking is the order of events recorded in chapter 2, leading up to the pouring out of the Spirit (2:28). There was a very clear historic fulfillment of that promise in Acts 2 as Peter noted – which incidentally means that the "wonders" of earth, blood, fire, and smoke are symbolic of the great cataclysm of the end of the Old Covenant era, culminating in the destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple in 70 AD (e.g. Is. 13).

But Paul quotes this same passage in Romans 10: "if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved... For "whoever calls on the name of the LORD will be saved." (Rom. 10:9-13) This teaches us that Joel not only had a historic fulfillment at Pentecost, but Paul teaches us that Joel also gives us general description of Reformation and Revival. But what's striking is that when the people mourn their sin and turn to the Lord, the joy of the Lord fills their hearts and it's in that moment that they know that the Lord is their God – and then after that, the Spirit is poured out in power. First, the Spirit is poured out then people call on the name of the Lord to be delivered from their enemies (2:32). In other words, people don't call on the name of the Lord in order to receive the Spirit; they call on the name of the Lord because they have received the Spirit. This is true in the moment of conversion and the whole process, but it is also true for Reformation and Revival – the cataclysmic cultural and political turning of nations back to God.

The order of reformation and revival according to Joel is this: Mourning/repentance — Joy — Worship — Knowledge — Spirit — Deliverance — Justice. The Spirit is poured out because God's people have turned to Him and rejoiced in Him and in His good gifts and come to know Him. Of course God's Spirit is at work in every step of the way – we can do nothing apart from God, but there is the work of conversion and there is great deliverance from enemies.

Conclusion

The Spirit is not a genie that we summon up. The Spirit is poured out with power on those who seek God with all their hearts, who rejoice in Him, who study His Word and His ways. Joel teaches us that when God's people turn away from Him, the central thing they have turned away from is worship of Him, and so He removes His blessings from their midst. But if we call on the name of the Lord, if we turn back to Him with all our heart, and seek His Word and seek His ways, He will pour out His Spirit upon us once more and deliver us from all our enemies.

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