

Our Mission:

*To share Christ with the world
and grow disciples for Jesus*



Loving God and Loving Neighbor as Ourselves

Background:

Scholarship is divided upon the dating of Joel. Some argue for a time early in Israel's formation as a nation, and others suggest a time following the exile. The opening chapter describes a locust plague that sets the stage for a call to repentance. Yet, the prophet promises that a change in heart will be met with compassion and love from God. Even in their rebellion it is God who promises them union with him through the gifts of the Holy Spirit.

Theology Connection:

The text starts with the phrase, 'Even now.' This is significant. It alerts us to God's patience despite our transgressions. Advent is a season of preparation. It is not simply celebrating a holiday, rather it is a call to prepare ourselves for the presence of God in our midst. Even now, despite our rebellion, God will not allow our sin to stand in the way of his coming. Yet, there is a warning; without a change of heart (repentance), we may just miss the gift God is offering.

Application:

Those familiar with our liturgy, recognize in today's text the Lenten Gospel acclamation: 'Return to the Lord your God, for he is gracious and merciful, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love.' In the book, the Polar Express, the child asks for a sleigh bell from Santa, which sadly cannot be heard unless you 'believe.' As we prepare for a vision of the promised presence of God, the gift is ours for the taking, but do we believe?

The Text: Joel 2:12-13, 28-29

¹²"Even now," declares the Lord, "return to me with all your heart, with fasting and weeping and mourning."

¹³Rend your heart and not your garments. Return to the Lord your God, for he is gracious and compassionate, slow to anger and abounding in love, and he relents from sending calamity.

²⁸"And afterward, I will pour out my Spirit on all people. Your sons and daughters will prophesy, your old men will dream dreams, your young men will see visions.

²⁹Even on my servants, both men and women, I will pour out my Spirit in those days.

ADULT

Following the celebration of Thanksgiving we all admit that in the past we were far too busy preparing for the celebration of Christmas and as a result had little time to anticipate the coming of Christ. This Advent, in this time of pandemic, gives us an opportunity to rethink our past practices. Even now we can carve out an opportunity to celebrate a simpler more holy Christmas.

Does that sound appealing to you? If so, you might want to check out the following video (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dcNJlop-0Eg>)https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_cunOkJlLe4

YOUTH

Please read Joel 2: 12-13, 28-29

These verses bring good news. They are basically saying God's goodness, grace and mercy is open to ALL. Trust in His word and remember goodness as we will be forgiven for our sins and have life everlasting. According to the scripture fasting, with weeping and mourning is associated with repentance of heart. I think it is important and wise to take note of the things we outwardly demonstrate can inwardly change our hearts.

Let us pray:

Dear God, thank You for this scripture, which bears witness of your goodness and grace, to all who will trust in your word. Teach us your lessons and keep us from making mistakes. We pray that you help us make our outward life a demonstration of a changed, inner life through you. In Jesus' holy name we pray, Amen!

CHILDREN'S

Do you follow God with your whole heart? We know how important it is to follow Jesus, and to accept Him as our Lord and Savior. God wants us to follow Him so that we can live lives full of grace and love! God blesses every one of His children, that's us, and we are called to shine His light with everyone that we meet. We also know how important it is to ask for forgiveness when we make mistakes. God teaches us how to ask for forgiveness, and how to be forgiving to others!

Think:

1. In what ways has God shown you His love?
2. Why is it so important for us to forgive? (because He forgave us first)
3. What do you think the Holy Spirit is like?

Let us try our hardest to be gracious, compassionate, slow to anger, and abounding in love! In everything we do let it bring glory to You!

Pray:

Dear Heavenly Father,

Thank you for giving us instructions on how to live our lives. We know that true happiness comes from following You and sharing Your love! Please keep us all safe, happy, and healthy.

In Jesus' name we pray, Amen!