

Monday, February 11

Joel 2:1-2, 12-17

Return to the Lord

I don't like threats. I don't like presidents who use them or parents either. I don't like fear being used as the basis of company policy or the school board's either. But the Bible, especially among the writings of the prophets, is full of threats. Joel may be unique in organizing the threat as army of locusts, but most, including Jesus, offer threats.

Army worms - I remember the summer they swept through our county in Western PA when I was a kid - eating, munching, crawling, stripping grass, corn, wheat, oats to the roots, leaving the ground bare. They were the topic of every conversation. They spawned a thousand homemade remedies. Nothing stopped them. They were nature gone haywire.

There's never been anything like it
and never will be again.

Wildfire burns everything before this army
and fire licks up everything in its wake.

Before it arrives, the country is like the Garden of Eden.
When it leaves, it is Death Valley.

Nothing escapes unscathed

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But the most horrible twist - God's doing it.

God's causing it. God's out to get you.

Blow the ram's horn trumpet in Zion!
Trumpet the alarm on my holy mountain!
Shake the country up!

God's Judgment's on its way—the Day's almost here!
A black day! A Doomsday!

We are good at identifying threats - global warming, loss of values, breakup of the family, breakdown of the political process. Usually we have 'the answer' - stop cutting rainforests, marriage for 1 man and 1 woman only, get the money out of political campaigns, etc.

Joel's only interested in God, Yahweh, the LORD:

"Come back to me and really mean it!
Come fasting and weeping, sorry for your sins!"

And here's why...

And here's why: God is kind and merciful.
He takes a deep breath, puts up with a lot,

This most patient God, extravagant in love,
always ready to cancel catastrophe.

We harvested crops that summer after the army worms - I don't know how. God is kind. Ignore the threat. Hear the invitation. Maybe, when all's said and done, there'll be blessings full and robust for your God!

A Way to Pray – Weep

- ✓ Muse – what are the things that bring tears to me?
- ✓ Wonder with each – what's so important that I weep?
- ✓ Muse – I wonder what makes God weep...