



Sermon, Sunday, November 19, 2023

“Never Again Will My People Be Shamed”

SCRIPTURE: Joel 2:21-27 Do not fear, O soil; be glad and rejoice, for the LORD has done great things! ²² Do not fear, you animals of the field, for the pastures of the wilderness are green; the tree bears its fruit; the fig tree and vine give their full yield. ²³ O children of Zion, be glad, and rejoice in the LORD your God, for he has given the early rain for your vindication; he has poured down for you abundant rain, the early and the later rain, as before. ²⁴ The threshing floors shall be full of grain; the vats shall overflow with wine and oil. ²⁵ I will repay you for the years that the swarming locust has eaten, the hopper, the destroyer, and the cutter, my great army that I sent against you. ²⁶ You shall eat in plenty and be satisfied and praise the name of the LORD your God, who has dealt wondrously with you. And my people shall never again be put to shame. ²⁷ You shall know that I am in the midst of Israel and that I, the LORD, am your God and there is no other. And my people shall never again be put to shame.

Introduction: The Foundation for True Gratitude

Today is Thanksgiving Sunday. Today is a day to give thanks to the Lord for giving us our daily bread throughout the year. Also, it is a day to give thanks to the Lord for protecting our lives every day. However, we cannot always live with a grateful heart to the Lord. Because if we do not experience the peace of God given by Jesus Christ, our gratitude can only remain as a religious formalism. Therefore, people who live this kind of life cannot be truly thankful to God.

Today's text tells us what the basis is for sharing gratitude and joy in faith without our hearts being shaken by the environment. I hope that through today's text, our gratitude toward the Lord will become more sincere and abundant.

The Old Testament Book of Joel begins with the phrase, “**The word of the Lord that came to Joel son of Pethuel.**” The Book of Joel is a short document consisting of three chapters. In fact, Old Testament scholars do not know the exact date of the writing of this Book because there is not enough information in the Book of Joel to know this. The Book of Joel emphasizes ‘**an invasion of locusts**’ and ‘**judgment on the nations of the world**’, warning of the ‘**day of the Lord**’, so we know the Israelites suffered great disasters during Joel's time.

In this situation, the prophet Joel exclaims in chapter 2 verse 21; “**Do not fear, O soil; be glad and rejoice, for the Lord has done great things!**”. Also, verses 26 and 27 of today's text declare, “**My people shall never again be put to shame.**” Why did the prophet Joel encourage the Israelites not to be afraid and declare that they would never be put to shame?

Body: God is with us!

An invasion of locusts in today's Book of Joel not only refers to a natural disaster, but also includes international political difficulties experienced by the Israelites. Looking at Israel's history, northern Israel was destroyed by the Assyrian Empire in the 8th century BC, and southern Judah was destroyed by the Babylonian Empire in the 6th century BC.



In such a situation, the prophet Joel shouted not to be afraid, not to be ashamed, and to rejoice and be glad. But as Christians, why should we listen to the words of the prophet Joel?

Chapter 2 of Acts of the New Testament records the incident of the presence of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost. Peter's Pentecost sermon begins in Acts 2:14. Apostle Peter quotes the words of the prophet Joel in his Pentecost sermon (Acts 2:17-21 is Peter's quote from Joel 2:28-32).

This means that the early Christian church believed that the cry of the Old Testament prophet Joel was realized in the experience of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost. In other words, the cry of the prophet Joel became the foundation of the faith of early Christians.

Today's text, Joel 2:27 says: **“You shall know that I am in the midst of Israel, and that I, the Lord, am your God and there is no other. And my people shall never again be put to shame.”**

This verse is God's promise to the people of Israel. 1) God will be among the Israelites. 2) God will become the Lord of the Israelites. 3) The Israelites have no gods other than God. 4) The Israelites will not be put to shame by God's protection.

This verse in the Book of Joel has the same meaning as **“Immanuel (God is with us),”** which expresses the coming of Jesus in the New Testament. This verse also means that if the Israelites could clearly recognize and believe that God is among them, they would clearly know that there is no other god.

However, the challenge of our religious life here is that, just like in Joel's time, it is difficult for us to experience the fact that God is with us in our lives.

To overcome these challenges, what we need is to know who God is. The Bible says that God is both the Creator and the Savior who freed us from sin. The Bible testifies to what God, the Creator and Savior, has done for the people of Israel and the world. What is important is that we must be able to agree with such biblical testimony. Of course, our consent must be voluntary.

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ! What is oppressing you in your life? Is it financial difficulty? Is it a desire for power? Or do you just want to be recognized? There are probably various factors in our lives that make things difficult for us.

However, those who experience God as their creator and savior can enjoy freedom without fear, and with joy and freedom, as the prophet Joel declared. Such people not only see the locusts devouring our food, but they also see that God sent the early and the later rain, the threshing floors shall be full of grain, the vats shall overflow with wine and oil. (Joel 2:24).

How does your life look in your eyes right now? Do you just see swarms of locusts devouring your food? Or are you already overflowing with what the Lord has given us, and are we singing with joy that the Lord is with us?

Perhaps in response to my question, some people may think, **“champagne problem, high class problem.”** I understand and respect such thoughts because we cannot deny the fact that our lives themselves are difficult. And there are many people who live that life. I do not deny the hardships of people in difficult situations. But regardless of our circumstances, it is important to have the right perspective on our lives. Some people place greater value on what they do not possess, while others place greater value on what they do possess.

Please remember, Christians cannot experience God the way the world encourages human desires. And such a society is not healthy.

The prophet Joel exclaimed, “In the midst of the locust invasion, God is in the midst of Israel.” Prophet Joel's cry is based on the conviction that the Israelites are already enjoying sufficient grace through God, even though they are during a disaster.



Also, Joel 2:27 says, “You will know that there is no other.” This verse means that if we only know that God is with us in our lives, there is nothing more to envy in our lives. This verse is in line with **Psalm 23:1, “The LORD is my shepherd, I shall not be in want.”** If there is nothing to be envious of in our lives, there is nothing to be afraid of. In other words, we will know that all the idols that shake our lives are not real but fake.

If we live focused on the fact that God, our Creator and Savior, is with us, we will not be held to worldly standards and fear what our fate will be. Instead, we will be able to rejoice and be joyful by accepting life itself as a gift given to us by God.

Additionally, the prophet Joel says in today’s text chapter 2 verse 27, **“My people shall never again be put to shame.”** However, we must not misunderstand this verse. This does not mean that invasions of locusts or droughts will not occur again. Also, this does not mean that the Israelites will never face hardships, never become poor, or never lose their country again.

What these words essentially mean is that those who know and experience God as the Creator and Savior who is present in our lives can be confident in the world and against idols (everything we rely on and love more than God).

Christians can move forward on the path of confidence through Jesus Christ. 1 Corinthians 13:13 says; **“And now these three remain: faith, hope and love. But the greatest of these is love.”**

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ! When all the idols in the world disappear, what remains is only love. And that love was delivered to us through Jesus’ death on the cross.

When we hold on to Jesus, the essence of love, we can live confidently toward the world. Everything we have achieved and want to achieve by following our desires will eventually disappear. Only the love of Jesus Christ will remain.

Conclusion: A life that becomes one with Jesus Christ

Now let’s summarize today’s message. Dear brothers and sisters in Christ!

Jesus died on the cross in the most shameful way. He entrusted his fate to God the Father.

However, since Jesus died on the cross, those who believe in Him as Christ no longer feel shame at the moment of death, because we knew and were convinced that the living God is with us in Jesus Christ. As we spend Thanksgiving Sunday in 2023, I hope that our experience of becoming one with Jesus will be enriched. Through such experiences, we will realize what it means to not be ashamed in our lives. I pray that we can all walk this path silently.

