

Lament Like a Virgin: Joel 1:8–14

Scriptures for Today:

Joel 1:8-14 Lament like a virgin girded with sackcloth for the husband of her youth. 9 The meat offering and the drink offering is cut off from the house of the LORD; the priests, the LORD'S ministers, mourn. 10 The field is wasted, the land mourneth; for the corn is wasted: the new wine is dried up, the oil languisheth. 11 Be ye ashamed, O ye husbandmen; howl, O ye vinedressers, for the wheat and for the barley; because the harvest of the field is perished. 12 The vine is dried up, and the fig tree languisheth; the pomegranate tree, the palm tree also, and the apple tree, even all the trees of the field, are withered: because joy is withered away from the sons of men. 13 Gird yourselves, and lament, ye priests: howl, ye ministers of the altar: come, lie all night in sackcloth, ye ministers of my God: for the meat offering and the drink offering is withholden from the house of your God. 14 Sanctify ye a fast, call a solemn assembly, gather the elders and all the inhabitants of the land into the house of the LORD your God, and cry unto the LORD,

Introduction

We are back in the book of Joel. This is the 29th book of the Bible and 2nd out of 12 minor prophets.

When we say minor prophets, we're talking about...

Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Jonah, Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi.

These are the last 12 books in the old testament scriptures. It's important to understand that the term "minor" prophets does not mean that they are of lesser importance. They are only referred to as minor prophets because they are smaller in size, but they still have a major message.

For example these books **expose the real condition of man in a major way**. The minor prophets are brutally honest about sin. They reveal empty religion, hypocrisy, idolatry, pride, greed, injustice, spiritual adultery, and rebellion against God.

These books reveal the true nature of God (Not the world's version of God, not the softened version of God that modern Christianity wants to present.)

We see God's holiness, extreme hatred for sin, and unquenchable wrath. (*This is the side of God that people don't usually want to talk about. Just because you don't talk about something doesn't make it untrue.*) We also see God's patience, mercy, and faithfulness.

Even though these books are called minor, their major message is still painfully relevant today.

They speak to things like corrupt leadership, false religion, moral compromise, national pride, spiritual laziness, people who want blessing without obedience...These are all things that we deal with to this day.

Even though these books are extremely relevant to us, no one wants to read them. Why? Because God's Word does not flatter us. His Word confronts us, strips away excuses, and forces us to look at sin, judgement and consequences for our actions. That is uncomfortable if you have a desire to stay in darkness. But discomfort is one of the most important things we need in our lives to help us move forward and grow. Discomfort is also extremely vital for both spiritual and physical protection.

For example, God allows us to feel pain so that we can be protected from things that cause us harm. Nobody likes going to the doctors and hearing bad news. A diagnosis can be painful, alarming, and scary. But if something is wrong, the worst thing would be to stay comfortable and never find out. The pain of hearing the truth can actually be the thing that saves your life.

That's what God does, He shows us over and over again the pain that sin causes. He exposes our condition so that we can be healed and protected.

When you hear a preacher talking about sin, don't close your ears and ignore the diagnosis. Understand that God is warning us for our own protection because He loves us.

When you have a desire to obey God, when you have a desire to walk in the Will of God and in truth, you will be very grateful for these amazing prophets that God used to reveal the consequences and destruction that sin will bring.

John 3:21 But he that doeth truth cometh to the light, that his deeds may be made manifest, that they are wrought in God.

That's the attitude and mindset that we want to have on a daily basis. Let's keep that in mind as we look at the book of Joel this morning.

Last time we were in this book was in November of last year 2025. We studied Chapter 1:1-7

Joel is a book about God using catastrophe to wake people up. The setting is the kingdom of Judah. The land has been hit by a devastating locust plague and drought. Crops are gone, vineyards are ruined, fig trees are stripped, and even the meat and drink offerings at the house of God are cut off. So this is not just an agricultural problem — it is a **national and spiritual crisis**.

This generation has no idea how to handle famine and barrenness in the land. Imagine if you woke up tomorrow and grocery store shelves were empty. What would you do? Would you start fighting and killing each other for food? (The majority of people in this world would) Or would you humble yourself and turn to the only one that is able to provide—the Almighty God?

I want to do a quick recap of verses 1 – 7:

(v. 1) The word of the LORD comes to Joel

Joel begins by making it clear that this message is from God.

(vv. 2–3) The whole land is called to hear because this judgment is unheard-of. Unprecedented judgement that had not been seen.

The elders and all the inhabitants are told to listen, because this event is so significant that it must be remembered and passed down to future generations.

(v. 4) The locusts come in wave after wave until nothing is left

Palmerworm, locust, cankerworm, and caterpillar each consume what the previous one left behind. This shows how destruction often comes in stages, each wave leaving less than before.

(v. 5) The people are called to wake up and weep because their comforts have been cut off

The drunkards and drinkers of wine are confronted because the new wine is gone.

(v. 6) The swarm of locusts is described like a mighty invading nation

It is strong, without number, and their teeth are fierce like a lion. This could also be a picture of the enemy nation of Babylon that God would use to destroy Jerusalem which we saw in Lamentations last week.

(v. 7) The land's fruitfulness is stripped bare

The vine is wasted, the fig tree is barked, and the branches are left white and bare.

Up to verse 7, Joel has been describing the devastation. Now in verse 8, he starts calling for the **right response** to that devastation. The response is not indifference, not business as usual — it is **deep mourning**.

Verse 8

Joel 1:8 Lament like a virgin girded with sackcloth for the husband of her youth.

This verse opens with a command to Lament. Last Sunday we were in the book of Lamentations where we saw great mourning over severe judgement from God.

Lamenting is much stronger than just being sad. It means to wail, crying aloud, mourning, grieving openly, expressing deep sorrow.

God is calling for a visible, heartfelt brokenness. The people are not supposed to look at what God has done and shrug. They are supposed to feel the weight of it.

When you sin in your life, it's important to understand the weight behind that sin you are committing. Jesus Christ died for our sins. Every time we sin it's like we are mocking or forgetting the suffering that Christ had to go through because of our wrongdoing.

Imagine if you worked hard your entire life. Let's say it was 60 years of hard labor, and you diligently saved your money. And after 60 years someone that you cared for greatly asked for some help and you gave them your entire life savings. And then they took those life savings and burned it up right in front of your face. Not only would that be very sad, but it would probably make you a little angry.

Imagine how God feels when we continue to sin against Him after all that He gave for us. And no, we will not get things perfect because we live in a sinful flesh. But we should try our absolute best to obey the Lord. Thank God salvation is a free gift and not based on our obedience because we fall short every day.

But we should have heartfelt brokenness and we should lament over sin in our lives.

Joel 1:8 Lament like a virgin girded with sackcloth for the husband of her youth.

A virgin here is speaking of a young woman, especially one in her youth, who is pure and has the expectation of being married. Instead of being clothed for joy, and celebration, she is girded with sackcloth.

Sackcloth was clothing of mourning, humiliation, grief, and repentance. So the image is dramatic. God is saying through Joel: mourn like a young bride whose joy has been suddenly turned into sorrow.

What is she mourning for? It says **“For the husband of her youth”**

This is deep personal loss. The idea that a young woman is grieving over the loss of the man who she would be joined to. The one tied to her love, her hope, her entire future. It's taken from her. It's a horrible tragedy.

That's the picture that is being painted. God is not asking for shallow religious sadness. He is calling for the kind of sorrow that comes when something precious has been lost.

This is bitter, unexpected, life-altering grief. That's the kind of sorrow that comes along with God's judgement and that is the response we should have when we sin against our Savior.

Verse 9 - 10

Joel 1:9 The meat offering and the drink offering is cut off from the house of the LORD; the priests, the LORD'S ministers, mourn.

Because the land was stripped bare by the palmerworm, locust, cankerworm, and the caterpillar, the devastation was so severe that even the offerings in the temple could no longer continue.

The meat offering in the Bible is not animal flesh. The meat offering is actually referring to flour.

Leviticus 23:13 And the meat offering thereof *shall be* two tenth deals of fine flour mingled with oil, an offering made by fire unto the LORD *for* a sweet savour: and the drink offering thereof *shall be* of wine, the fourth *part* of an hin.

Where does flour come from? It comes from grain which is grown in the fields. But remember, the crops were completely devastated.

Joel 1:10 The field is wasted, the land mourneth; for the corn is wasted: the new wine is dried up, the oil languisheth.

Everything that was needed to make sacrifices to the Lord was consumed and taken away. The priests, the ministers of the Lord, were mourning. The temple service had been interrupted. There was nothing to offer to God.

That's what happens when you elevate earthly things above God in your life. You can have wealth and abundance and give big offerings to God, but if you are not obeying the Lord, those offerings are actually an abomination to Him.

God gets tired of the hypocrisy, the fake worship, and the idolizing of carnal things. He says "Take these things away from my presence."

Amos 5:21-23 I hate, I despise your feast days, and I will not smell in your solemn assemblies. **22** Though ye offer me burnt offerings and your meat offerings, I will not accept *them*: neither will I regard the peace offerings of your fat beasts. **23** Take thou away from me the noise of thy songs; for I will not hear the melody of thy viols.

Without obedience all of those things are empty and meaningless. So if you won't stop the fake offerings and sacrifices, then there's a good chance that God will stop it for you.

The things that we could have been offering and giving to the Lord...
Our time, our money, our talents, our resources—all of those things can be taken away.
Just like the flour, the oil, and the wine were stripped from the land.

The priests no longer had anything to offer and worship came to a halt.

Verse 11 - 12

Joel 1:11 Be ye ashamed, O ye husbandmen; howl, O ye vinedressers, for the wheat and for the barley; because the harvest of the field is perished. **12** The vine is dried up, and the fig tree languisheth; the pomegranate tree, the palm tree also, and the apple tree, *even* all the trees of the field, are withered: because joy is withered away from the sons of men.

Again, we see a call to respond to the judgement that has taken place. But this response is to "be ye ashamed".

This is a call to the farmers and vinekeepers — the ones whose whole livelihood depended on the land. They had put in the labor, they had worked the fields, they had expected a harvest — and now all of it is gone. It all perished.

This shows that when God judges, human effort cannot overcome divine judgment. You can have your plans, your systems, your work, your schedule, your investments — but if God blows on it, it dries up and withers.

So the call to be ashamed is more than just sadness over hard times. This is shame over what brought those hard times.

A lot of people are usually sorry for consequences but are never ashamed of their rebellion. People get upset that they got caught. Upset that their life is falling apart, but they are not truly broken over the fact that they sinned against God...

Like Esau (Who God calls a fornicator and a profane person) cried over the loss of his birthright and blessing. But he did not have sorrow over his sin. In fact, he actually rebelled and sinned even more.

He was not ashamed. You do not want to get to a point in your life where you are hardened through the deceitfulness of sin.

Be ye ashamed, be humble be broken over your sin.

Psalm 51:17 The sacrifices of God *are* a broken spirit: a broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise.

Notice how everything has been destroyed.

12 The vine is dried up, and the fig tree languisheth; the pomegranate tree, the palm tree also, and the apple tree, *even* all the trees of the field, are withered: Why? because joy is withered away from the sons of men.

We have example after example of sin taking everything away from people throughout the Bible.

Adam and Eve – Lost Eden (The garden of God) and death passed upon all men.
Achan took the accursed thing and brought destruction upon him and his family.
Saul lost the kingdom and his life because of disobedience.
David lost peace in his home and many of his children died during his life.
Ananias and Sapphira lost their lives.

There is so much pain and sorrow recorded throughout scripture that is a result of sin.

Joy will always be taken away from you when you go against the commands of God.

That's what we see here in Joel. The land is withered. Everything has perished. Joy has withered among men.

Verse 13 - 14

Joel 1:13 Gird yourselves, and lament, ye priests: howl, ye ministers of the altar: come, lie all night in sackcloth, ye ministers of my God: for the meat offering and the drink offering is withholden from the house of your God.

The focus is turned back onto the priests, the ministers of God. God is looking for a response from the spiritual leaders of the land. If the way that you worship God has been taken away, what are you going to do?

If the government came and bulldozed this property and chased us out of one place to the next. If we had constant persecution and our ability to worship God was always being hindered. What are we going to do? Many people would throw in the towel. Many people would go back to their homes and get discouraged, get bitter, become fearful, and just quit. Many would say, "Well, I guess that's it. I guess we tried. I guess there's nothing left to do."

God is saying you need to gird yourselves, lament, howl, and lie all night in sackcloth!
When worship is hindered, especially because of sin, there needs to be brokenness.

Today, there is a serious lack of brokenness over sin and a lack of humility from church leaders. There are many pastors today that commit grievous sins and there is no lamenting, there is no mourning. They actually puff themselves up and try to justify their sin. There is no fear of God.

Hey, how about we humble ourselves, lay in sackcloth all night and cry unto God. If more pastors and leaders followed this example, things would be a lot different in this world. God might have mercy on this country if we show some humility.

Humility is hard to come by nowadays.

Joel 1:14 Sanctify ye a fast, call a solemn assembly, gather the elders *and* all the inhabitants of the land *into* the house of the LORD your God, and cry unto the LORD,

This is what should be happening in this country, the leaders should be sanctifying a fast, they should be calling a solemn assembly (the people should be gathered together) Everyone in the entire land should be gathered into the house of the Lord and we need to cry out to God.

But what do we do? We have literal pride months and boast in our wicked sins.

Jonah 3:5-10 So the people of Nineveh believed God, and proclaimed a fast, and put on sackcloth, from the greatest of them even to the least of them. **6** For word came unto the king of Nineveh, and he arose from his throne, and he laid his robe from him, and covered *him* with sackcloth, and sat in ashes. **7** And he caused *it* to be proclaimed and published through Nineveh by the decree of the king and his nobles, saying, Let neither man nor beast, herd nor flock, taste any thing: let them not feed, nor drink water: **8** But let man and beast be covered with sackcloth, and cry mightily unto God: yea, let them turn every one from his evil way, and from the violence that *is* in their hands. **9** Who can tell *if* God will turn and repent, and turn away from his fierce anger, that we perish not? **10** And God saw their works, that they turned from their evil way; and God repented of the evil, that he had said that he would do unto them; and he did *it* not.

What a difference it would make if we all had this attitude and mindset toward sin in our lives.

So in verses 8 – 14, Joel calls the people to respond to God’s judgment with deep mourning, shame, and repentance. The devastation has become so severe that even the offerings in the house of God are cut off, the land is withered, and joy has dried up. The priests are commanded to lead in lamentation, and the whole nation is called to fast, gather together, and cry unto the LORD.

Application

1. When God exposes sin, don't respond with indifference.

Joel does not tell the people to move on like nothing happened. He tells them to lament.

A hardened heart does not tremble, a proud heart does not mourn. Remember that Christ died for the sins that you are committing every day. The right response is to have deep sorrow.

2. Don't wait until everything is gone before you wake up.

In Joel, the land had been stripped bare. The harvest was gone. The wine was gone. The oil was gone. The offerings were cut off. Joy had withered away. That is what sin does. It takes and takes and takes until finally people look around and realize how much they have lost. Don't wait for the destruction.

3. Spiritual leaders should be the first to mourn over sin.

God called the priests and the ministers of God to lament, howl, and lie all night in sackcloth. But instead, leaders usually do the opposite. Pastors, fathers, and husbands should not be puffed up when things are wrong. They should be broken before God.

4. The right response to judgment is to cry unto the Lord.

When God exposes the seriousness of sin, the answer is not business as usual. The answer is to humble yourself and seek Him. The same way that Ninevah did when Jonah warned them of coming judgement.

This country is moving further and further away from God each and every day. There is no humility. We are a nation that is proud and lifted up. If we do not humble ourselves quickly, destruction will soon be upon us. Unfortunately, the kingdom of Judah did not humble themselves. And that day of total destruction did come. They had plenty of warning, but they failed to listen.

Will you listen to God's Word today? It starts with us individually. We must examine ourselves. Believe on Jesus Christ. Without him you will be totally consumed by sin.

But with God on your side, you have total victory. You have already overcome because Jesus conquered it all for us. Let's Pray.