

**Victoria Ave/Emmanuel Baptist
Sunday, July 26, 2020
Joel 2:18-32 The God Who Restores!**

When you hear the term “jealous” or “jealousy,” what do you think of? What is your immediate mental picture and understanding?

In our culture, jealousy is an extremely negative emotion. It has been the theme of many classic books, movies, songs, poems... Perhaps you think of times when you have been jealous or the recipient of jealous behaviour. Insecurity that turns to anger that has been the cause of much heartache.

So how do we come to terms with the fact that God is called a “jealous” God and it is a good thing that he is? If jealousy is wrong...how can God be jealous?

As we wrap up our study of Joel, we come to the climax of the book. As we have seen the last couple of weeks, God is found in the darkness and out of darkness come a hope that will never disappoint us. Today we learn that the hope given to us begins with RESTORATION... Let’s hear from Joel 2:18-32.

***18 Then the LORD was jealous for his land
and took pity on his people.***

19 The LORD replied^[a] to them:

***“I am sending you grain, new wine and olive oil,
enough to satisfy you fully;
never again will I make you
an object of scorn to the nations.***

***20 “I will drive the northern horde far from you,
pushing it into a parched and barren land;
its eastern ranks will drown in the Dead Sea
and its western ranks in the Mediterranean Sea.
And its stench will go up;
its smell will rise.”***

Surely he has done great things!

**²¹ Do not be afraid, land of Judah;
be glad and rejoice.**

Surely the LORD has done great things!

**²² Do not be afraid, you wild animals,
for the pastures in the wilderness are becoming green.**

**The trees are bearing their fruit;
the fig tree and the vine yield their riches.**

**²³ Be glad, people of Zion,
rejoice in the LORD your God,
for he has given you the autumn rains
because he is faithful.**

**He sends you abundant showers,
both autumn and spring rains, as before.**

**²⁴ The threshing floors will be filled with grain;
the vats will overflow with new wine and oil.**

**²⁵ "I will repay you for the years the locusts have eaten—
the great locust and the young locust,
the other locusts and the locust swarm^[b]—**

my great army that I sent among you.

**²⁶ You will have plenty to eat, until you are full,
and you will praise the name of the LORD your God,
who has worked wonders for you;
never again will my people be shamed.**

**²⁷ Then you will know that I am in Israel,
that I am the LORD your God,
and that there is no other;
never again will my people be shamed.**

The Day of the LORD

**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.***

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

***³⁰ I will show wonders in the heavens
and on the earth,
blood and fire and billows of smoke.***

***³¹ The sun will be turned to darkness
and the moon to blood
before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the LORD.***

***³² And everyone who calls
on the name of the LORD will be saved;
for on Mount Zion and in Jerusalem
there will be deliverance,
as the LORD has said,
even among the survivors
whom the LORD calls.***

So, how do we come to terms with a jealous God? We first must remind ourselves that it is wrong to take a 21st century understanding of language and force it upon ancient materials. The question we need to ask ourselves is “how is jealousy defined and used in scripture.”

In the Bible, you will find that the Greek term that often appears in scripture, that we define as jealousy, often carries two different meanings. It can be defined as “zeal” or “envy.” Zeal should be understood as “a strong feeling to see something come about.” Envy, on the other hand, is often understood as “an intense desire to acquire something that is not yours.” Envy is always sinful. In an article of Biblical Jealousy, Dr. Erik Thoennes observes that:

Jealousy is a strong desire to maintain relational faithfulness that you believe does belong to you. Jealousy can be sinful if it is unwarranted or expressed in wrong ways, but it can also be an entirely appropriate and righteous emotion. (July 15, 2019, desiringgod.org).

Just as earthly parents are “jealous” of their children, they desire the best for them and are willing to protect and chastise as is needed, so God is “jealous” of his children. We are his creations and he know and loves each one of us.

From the very beginning, humankind was to have an exclusive relationship with God. The very first statement of our first covenant with God found in the 10 Commandments stated, ***“I am the Lord your God, you shall have no other Gods...for I am a jealous God.”*** Does it make any sense that a God who values a relationship with his children will not put up with them substituting idols of any type in His place?

In Joel’s day, God went to great lengths to bring his people back into relationship with him. Even though there was an aspect of punishment...it was punishment with a purpose. The people needed to rely fully on God. The purpose of God “jealousy” was for the sake of reconciliation, restoration, and blessings.

The reconciliation starts with God giving the people back the rain! Many of us don’t understand the immense blessing that rain can be if we do not make our living needing it. Judah was an agricultural society. They relied on the rainy season to provide for a good harvest. Sadly, when the droughts came, the people had cheated on God with the false idols of Baal. Instead of praying to God, they would go to the pagan temples and offer sacrifices to Baal, the God of storms and of fertility, both human and agricultural. God was making a point! Every blessing comes from Him and the rain would not come until they repented. Joel 2:18 begins with restoration of the land. When the people repent and turn their hearts towards God, the land will be restored. The ramifications are huge. The deserts will become gardens. There will be grain, wine, and olive oil...all significant in worship offerings. Animals will thrive and prosper and all the damage caused by the plagues of locust will be undone.

SPIRITUAL RESTORATION

God’s message then turns to spiritual restoration. When God’s people turn back to him and give their hearts to Him and Him alone...then spiritually we are right with God. When we are spiritually right with God, we are blessed with the God’s spirit being poured out upon us.

The primary place that we see this is in Acts 2 on the day we know of as Pentecost. After the God’s Spirit descended on those gathered, they went out into the busy streets of Jerusalem and preached the Gospel message. Peter preached to the crowds and quoted Joel 2, reminding the people of the promised

of God. Unfortunately, people tend to get fixated on the spectacular and end up missing the plain truth. God's outpouring was a promise of his continued presence for all people. Men and women, young and old, slave and free, Jew or Gentile. Many have focused on the gifts rather than the giver of gifts.

With the benefit of the Spirit comes obligation. God poured out his Spirit so that those who received it would turn their attention to those who are searching for the truth of God's love.

I often preach on the relationship we need with God. It is a theme that has and will be repeated over and over, just as it was in Scripture. Our loyalty, love, and obedience to God demands that we constantly search our hearts and ask ourselves if we are putting God first in our lives.

God's jealousy means that you are important to him. He wants to know you and be known by you. He wants to pour out his blessings upon you and see you instrumental in the work of His Kingdom.

If you are out of step in your relationship with God, perhaps even fully rebelling against Him, know that he wants your attention...not to punish you but rather to restore your relationship. If there are things in your life that you are not proud of, actions that you think God will never forgive...know that He loves you, He will forgive you, and he will restore you.

God is a God of Hope, Reconciliation, and restoration. What is preventing you from being in a relationship with your God?

Let's pray....