

ASH WEDNESDAY: STUDENT

A Call to Return

JOEL 1:1–20; 2:11–17

OPENING

Each lesson will begin with a reading of Joel 2:13 and a prayer specific to the theme of the study for that week, keeping with the theme, “Return to the Lord.”

Return to the LORD your God, for He is gracious and merciful, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love. Joel 2:13

Prayer: Gracious heavenly Father, You desire to draw Your people back to You through repentance. Help us to acknowledge our sinfulness in thought, word, and deed; what we have done and what we have left undone. In faith, let us see the love that You have for us all in the sending of Your Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, to be our Savior from sin. Lead us by Your Spirit to desire to know and do Your will, to walk in Your ways that You may be glorified. In Jesus’ name we pray. Amen.

INTRODUCTION

A plague of locusts. No, this is not Egypt during the time of Moses, though it may very well bring those days to mind in God’s people. God spoke to His people through the prophet Joel to bring the people to repentance and return to their loving heavenly Father. Read Joel 1:2–5.

God spoke to His people in a way that would remind them of the character of the God they love and serve. He spoke to them as the One who wanted to be their God and they His covenant people. The almighty and merciful Lord says to them (and to us): “Return to the LORD your God. For He is gracious and merciful, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love” (Joel 2:13).

QUESTIONS

Q1. What was going on in Joel’s time that led God to speak to His people through this prophet? It will be helpful to read through Joel 1 again. In addition, how then does God speak to this situation? How does that compare with the way we express repentance now? What is the “day of the LORD,” and how is it described (1:11)?

Q2. In the present, what is the Lord asking the people to do? Do these words have any application in our lives today?

Q3. In Joel 2:14, the prophet seems ambiguous but hopeful that God may relent of the destruction. Is God a God of destruction? Is God a God of blessing? Would it be wise for us to consider that He could be both? What kind of blessing is Joel expecting?

Q4. How were the people asked to prepare for worship? See Joel 2:15–17. How do you prepare for worship?

CONCLUSION

Like the locust plague that the people in Joel's time experienced, COVID-19 threatened our lives last year during Lent. This virus sent a scare into the world, which threatened our lives and our livelihoods. Did we make connections to this passage (2:13)? Were you able to hear God calling you to return to Him? Did you heed that call?

In the end, God showed His mercy to His people by sending grain, wine, and olive oil. God promised, "You will be satisfied" (2:19). God also assured His people that He would no longer make them a reproach among the other nations.

CLOSING

Prayer: Almighty God, lead us to repentance of all our sins of thought, word, and deed; what we have done and what we have left undone. You have blessed us by the sending of Your Son, our Savior, Jesus Christ. Help us always to hear You calling us back to return to You in faith toward You, love toward one another, and obedience to Your holy will for our new lives in Christ Jesus. In Jesus' holy name we pray. Amen.