

Return and Find Mercy

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Date: 19 September 2021

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[0 : 0 0] Well, we're going to turn now to our Bible reading for this morning. You'll find it in the Old Testament and in the book of the prophet Joel. Now, Joel is one of those tricky little ones to find.

So, if you find Daniel, and after that is Hosea, and then between Hosea and Amos is sandwiched this little book of just three chapters. And David Ely, who's one of our ministers in training, is going to be preaching to us this morning from this passage.

And as we see, it's a solemn passage indeed. The Bible is a book that hides nothing of reality. There is great light, but there is also great darkness.

And that's the reality of our world. And this is a chapter of solemn warning, of alarm, where God is sounding a trumpet of alarm through his prophet to wake up his people to the realities of their predicament.

And especially the results of their sin. So, this is a difficult passage. We're going to read Joel chapter 2 from verse 1 right through to verse 18.

[1 : 1 1] Joel chapter 2 and verse 1. Let's an chapter 1 through to ■. Let all the inhabitants of the land tremble.

For the day of the Lord is coming. It is near. The day of darkness and gloom. The day of clouds and thick darkness. Like blackness there is spread upon the mountains.

A great and powerful people. Their like has never been before. Nor will be again after them.

Through the years of all generations. Fire devours before them.

And behind them a flame burns. The land is like the garden of Eden before them. But behind them a desolate wilderness. And nothing escapes them.

Their appearance is like the appearance of horses. And like war horses they run. As with the rumbling of chariots. They leap on the tops of the mountains. Like the crackling of a flame of fire.

[2 : 1 4] Devouring the stubble. Like a powerful army drawn up for battle. Before them peoples are in anguish. All faces go pale.

Like warriors they charge. Like soldiers they scale the wall. They march each on his own way. They do not swear from their paths. They not jostle one another.

Each marches in his path. They burst through the weapons. And are not halted. They leap upon the city. They run upon the walls. They climb up into the houses. They enter through the windows like a thief.

The earth quakes before them. The heavens tremble. The sun and the moon are darkened. The stars withdraw their shining. The Lord utters his voice before his army.

For his camp is exceedingly great. He who executes his word is powerful. For the day of the Lord is great and very awesome.

[3 : 1 4] And who can endure it? Yet even now declares the Lord. Return to me. With all your heart. With fasting.

With weeping. With mourning. Rend your hearts. And not your garments. Return to the Lord your God. For he is gracious and merciful. Slow to anger. And abounding in steadfast love.

And he relents over disaster. Who knows whether he will not turn and relent. And leave a blessing behind him. A grain offering and a drink offering.

For the Lord your God. Blow the trumpet in Zion. Consecrate a fast. Call a solemn assembly. Gather the people. Gather the people.

Consecrate the congregation. Assemble the elders. Gather the children. Even nursing infants. Let the bridegroom leave his room. And the bride her chamber. Between the vestibule and the altar.

[4 : 1 0] Let the priests. The ministers of the Lord. Weep. And say. Spare your people O Lord. And make not your heritage. A reproach. A byword among the nations.

Why should they say. Among the peoples. Where is their God? Then. The Lord became jealous. For his land.

And had pity. On his. People. Amen. May God bless us. This word. And it's a solemn word.

Isn't it? As so often. The call of the gospel. Is serious. And yet full of hope. Well.

Good morning. To you all. It is great. To be back. With you again. This week. For another dose of Joel. Just a few words of recap. As we come back.

[5 : 07] To this book. Lament. Like a virgin. Wearing sackcloth. For the grain offering. And the drink offering.

Are cut off. The fields. Are destroyed. The ground. Mourns. The wine dries up. And the oil. Languishes.

Judah. The people of God. Are thoroughly. On the ropes. Locusts. Had come. And they were everywhere. They had come. And devastated.

The land. And so now. There is no. Food. Left. And everything. Everything. That makes life. Worth. Living. Anything. That makes life. More than mere existence. Has dribbled away. Through the cracks. And out of this devastation. There is a voice.

[6 : 03] Crying. A voice. Speaking. The words of God. And what does he say? He says. Judah. My people.

I am the one. Who sent. This disaster. And Judah. Oh Judah. My people. I sent this to you. So that you might.

Wake up. So that you might. Stop pretending. That everything. Is all right. Between us. Chapter one.

Of Joel. Is the alarm. Wake up. Dare to ask. The question. Could this. Could this. Be the hand. Of God.

Set against us. So then. With that said. Let's turn to these. First. Eighteen. Verses. Of Joel. Chapter two.

[6 : 59] Blow a trumpet. In Zion. Sound. An alarm. On my. Holy mountain. A trumpet. That cuts. Through the whales. Through the sobs.

Of grieving Jerusalem. So that all. Inhabitants. Of the land. Might tremble. For the day. Of the Lord. Is coming. It is near.

Now. Our passage. This morning. Is loosely. Arranged. Around. Two messages. To Israel. Around. Two blasts. Of this trumpet. From Jerusalem. Verse one. A warning.

Blast. And then. In verse 15. A trumpet. Blast. Of summons. Bringing. The people. Of God. Together. And so. We'll look. At this passage.

Loosely. Arranged. Around. Those two. Trumpet. Blasts. Around. These two. Points. Firstly. Beware. For no one. Can endure.

[7 : 55] The day. Of the Lord. And secondly. Repent. For mercy. Surely. Follows. So let's look. At the first.

Of these points. Together. Be aware. No one. Can endure. The day. Of the Lord. The alarm. Goes up. In Jerusalem. The day.

Of the Lord. Is coming. It is near. Now in chapter one. Our gaze. Has been. On. What has just. Happened. To Judah. On. On the locusts.

That have swept in. That have destroyed. Everything. In the immediate. Past. In chapter two. We lift. Our gaze. Slightly. To the. Immediate. Future. To what is about.

To happen. To Judah. What is just. Around the corner. What is coming. And as it stands. It is a bleak. Prospect. This is essentially.

[8 : 50] What Joel says to them. He says. The Lord. Is on the move. Again. And this time. This time. He really.

Means. Business. You thought it was bad. Last time. Well you've seen nothing yet. Now before we look at some of the details of the passage.

We need to stop and think for a moment. About this phrase. This idea of the day of the Lord. It comes up a lot in the book of Joel. So it's good to get a bit of a handle on it at this point.

The day of the Lord. Is the day. When God takes his seat on the throne. And settles things. The day when he judges. Between those who oppose him.

And those who love him. The day when he wisely dishes out justice. The day when he fulfills. The promises he has made. And the direction of the whole Bible's storyline.

[9 : 49] Is towards a great day of the Lord. The ultimate day of the Lord. The day when every event. When every heart. When every person.

No matter where in the flowing streams of time they have come. Is retrieved by the Lord. And brought to his throne. To be dealt with. Once and for all. The day when all the criminals of the cosmos.

Are dealt with. When all the rebels are brought to nothing. And when every promise. Every blessing. Is fulfilled. Completely.

The day of the Lord. But Joel. Amongst others in the Bible. Speak of other days of the Lord. Smaller ones. In history. Days of the Lord.

Amongst the unfolding of things. Days when something of that great and final day. Is tasted. In small measure. By the living. Chapter one of Joel.

[10 : 48] Was a small day of the Lord. It was such a taste. Of that great day. A glimpse. A momentary sense. Of the flavor of things to come. All aimed. At waking Judah up.

Chapter two declares. That a bigger. Day of the Lord. Is right on the doorstep. For Judah. And as it stands. As Judah is at the moment.

They are on the wrong side of it. Once again. God is sending enemies. Against them. Book of verse two.

There's a day of darkness. Of gloom. Clouds. And thick darkness. Coming. The book of Exodus. Tells us that when God judged Egypt. He sent darkness. Just like this. We're told there. That the darkness. In Egypt. Was so thick. That it could not just be seen.

[11 : 49] It could be felt. This is that. This is the same idea. This is what. God is sending. To Judah. There are so many enemies. Coming.

That when Judah looks out. At the hills. Surrounding it. They've turned black. With the swarms. Of enemies. Verse three. As they pass through the land.

They devour it. Like a raging fire. The land is green. Before they come. It's like the garden of Eden. It's lush. And pleasant. But after these enemies. Have been.

It is nothing. It is desolation. It's death. For look at verse seven. This enemy.

Is filled. With a singular purpose. Destruction. They don't get distracted. They can't be thrown off their game. Nothing will turn them aside. Verse eight.

[12 : 46] Nothing. Will stop them. Verse nine. None of the works of man. Will put a dent. In their ferocity. Nothing will dash their plans.

The city walls. The defenses. That people worked so hard to build. That they rely on for safety. Completely useless. These enemies. Climb up walls. Squeeze through windows.

Barge through doors. There is nothing. That will hold them back. Verse ten. The earth. Quakes. Before them. The sun and moon.

Themselves. Are darkened. Even the stars. In the sky. Those unreachable. Untouchable stars. Even they. Seem to be extinguished. And verse eleven.

Perhaps most shocking of all. Marching at their head. The general. The king. Over this assembled. And dreadful host. Is the Lord God himself.

[13 : 45] He gives this army. Their orders. And they do it perfectly. Now there are a couple of options here. For who these enemies might be.

This chapter carries over some of the locust imagery from chapter one. But it also infuses a lot of military imagery about armies and conquest. And so there seem to be two basic options really. Firstly. Firstly. This could be a human army. Described poetically. In the same way that the locusts were. Drawing the links between them. Or this could be a sort of supernatural mega plague of locusts.

Described like an army. For what it's worth. I lean towards a second. I think this is a supernaturally mega plague. Supernaturally empowered mega plague of locusts.

Described like an army. But whichever is true. Whichever option is the right one. All of this. Builds to the point. At the end of verse 11.

[14 : 45] For the day of the Lord that is coming. The day that is on the horizon. Is great. And very awesome. Who can endure it?

Blow a trumpet in Zion. Sound an alarm. For the Lord is on the move once again. And this time he really means business.

That first plague. Was a warning shot. Do you think you'll be able to stand. When it isn't? Now the storyline of the Bible is littered with men and women who thought that they could stand against God.

That they could endure the day of the Lord. Take Pharaoh for instance. He thought that he could endure the day of the Lord. That he could stand under God's hand. And so he was sent at least nine warning shots. Depending on what you count as a warning shot. Each worse than the last. But he would not listen.

[15 : 49] Because he thought that he could endure the day of the Lord. But it turns out. He couldn't. Another example.

King Nebuchadnezzar was warned. Don't boast. You're not much compared to the God who made you. And yet he thought that he could stand under the hand of God. That he could endure the judgment.

That God might send his way. But it turns out that he couldn't. And so he was driven mad for seven years. And spent all that time living as an animal eating grass.

Though to the glory of God he got the message after that. And in Jesus' day. The rulers of Israel thought that they could take the people for themselves. And so when the son of God himself came. The son of the owner of the vineyard. They killed him. They thought that they could endure whatever God might send their way. That they could keep the inheritance if they slew the son.

[16 : 52] But it turns out. They couldn't. And the inheritance was taken from them. And given to others. All of these men thought that they could endure whatever God sent their way.

That they could in fact be the ones to endure the day of the Lord. Well it turns out. That they couldn't. And yet today.

Who has learnt this lesson? There are so many today who think that they are in fact different. That they are the special ones. Who think they can get away with whatever they want.

No matter what the Lord feels about it. That they can endure the day of the Lord. What could he possibly do against them? We in this country.

We live in a whitewashed tomb. A nation of neat civility. That looks free and pleasant. And yet so much of what we see in this country.

[17 : 51] The freedoms we have. This mask of noble civility clatters. With the sound of bones if we shake it too much. If we look too deep. And we look too far. This is a nation.

That is a whitewashed tomb. Built on blood and lies. In many ways. And we've built it that way. Because we think. We honestly think. That we can endure the day of the Lord.

That it doesn't matter what he thinks. Because we can withstand what he might send. We think that we can charge onwards into rebellion. And never pay the price.

And that sadly includes so many. Who would call themselves churches. Who would take the name of Jesus Christ on their lips. And yet who would also devour widows houses. Who would see the son of their Lord coming.

And kill him. To try and take the inheritance. For themselves. We think. That we can endure the great. And awesome day of the Lord.

[18 : 51] Yet who can. No one can. And yet perhaps. Perhaps it is near.

So is that it? If we were to look around. And ask the question. Is this the hand of the Lord against us? And if we were to do that. And come to the conclusion.

That the hand of the Lord is against us. Is that it? For we cannot endure that day. Is there then no hope at all?

Well imagine for a moment. That our God. The God we worship. Was like the gods of this world. Imagine he was like. For example. The God of Islam. Arbitrary. Cold.

Distant. Well if our God was like that. Then there truly would be no hope. None could stand. And none would. Or imagine he was like the God.

[19 : 54] Who rules over current social media. Who dredges through the past. Who never forgets. Who never forgives. Who never relents. Well if our God was like that.

Then there truly would be no hope. For none could stand. Who could endure the days of these lords. No one. No one could.

But these gods. Are not Lord. And our Lord. The true and living God. Who actually rules this universe. He is not like that.

And so. Wading through the thick darkness. Of Joel chapter 2. We come at last. To verses 12 to 14. We come to verse 13.

Return to the Lord your God. For he. Is gracious. And merciful. He is slow to anger. And abounding in steadfast love.

[20 : 59] And he relents. Over disaster. And so. In verses 12 to 14. We come to the turning point. Of this book.

The hand of the Lord. Has been heavy. On his people. Up to this point. And now. Only now. Do we start to get a little relief.

A little hope. And this hope. Rests. Entirely. On who God is. On what he is like. God is. Gracious. And merciful. He is slow to anger. He abounds. In steadfast love. And he is well known. For relenting. Judah. In Joel's day. Can look back. On hundreds of years. And see example. After example. After example. Of mercy.

[21 : 58] Of grace. Of kindness. From the Lord. For example. In the days of Moses. When God rescued them. Not because they were worth anything in themselves.

But because he had bound himself to them. In love. And in Moses day. When God forgave them. Because he had bound himself.

Like a father. Like a husband. To them. In promise. And in blood. Or in the days. Of the judges. When faithfulness. Gave way to faithlessness. Time and time again. And yet God. Who is slow to anger. Overflowing impatience. And mercy.

Saved his people. Time and time again. How many times. Did they deserve. That salvation. Not once. And yet it happened.

[22 : 53] Time and time again. And so the Jews. Jews of Joel's day. Have seen the overflowing fountain. Of God's steadfast love. For them. They've seen that. Time and time again.

They know that this is what their God. Is like. They had seen so much. Enough. To know him. And to see clearly. That their God abounds in love.

And yet we today. We privileged people. Have seen. Even more. They had seen. Fountains. Of love. And we have seen. Roaring floods.

We have seen. Billowing cataracts. Of living water. Of steadfast. Abundant mercy. And love. From the hand of the Lord. Like them.

We have been bound. To this God. By blood. By the blood. Of God himself. Spilled for us. On the cross. Of Jesus Christ. And so.

[23 : 50] Verse 12. There is still hope. Yet. Even now. Even as the hammer falls. Even as the hills themselves. Are darkened.

By the swarms. Of the enemy. Even as thick. Gloom. Rolls over the stars of heaven. In this. Final hour. There is hope. There was hope for Judah.

In Joel's day. And there is hope for us today. Because the true and living God. Is not like the dead gods. Of this world. Because he is different.

Because he overflows. With steadfast love. With forgiveness. With mercy. Because that is who he is. And because God is like that.

And only because God is like that. Does the central command. Of this passage. Indeed of the whole book. Make any sense. It is only because.

[24 : 50] The ears of the Lord. Are open. That Joel now calls. God's people. To repent. So that brings us on. To the final.

Point this morning. Repent. For repentance. Leads to mercy. Remember.

These words were given to Joel. For a reason. They declare. That all joy. Has been taken. From Judah. But that is so. They might find it. Again. Much more of it.

Than they ever had before. And if we look around us. If we ask the question. Has God judged us? And if it seems. Like he has. Then these words. Hold out the same hope.

To us. As well. Wake up. Return. Repent. And find life again. Notice here. That Joel offers.

[25 : 43] No third option. It is repentance. Or it is judgment. There's no other way. And so. A second. Trumpet blast. Sounds.

From the walls of Jerusalem. There in verse 15. Blow the trumpet. In Zion. Consecrate. A fast. Call. A solemn assembly.

Gather. The people. Judah. If you want to escape. If you want joy again. Well this is how. Repent. In a few moments.

We're going to. We're going to see. What real repentance. Looks like. In this passage. It has a lot. To tell us. About that. What is repentance. If we're to do it. But before that. We do need to step aside.

For just a moment. And seek to answer. Quite an important question. How do we know. What we need to repent. Of. If we do get to the point.

[26 : 41] Where it seems. That God may have moved. In judgment. Against some group. That we're part of. Be it church. Be it family. Be it nation. If we have become. Convinced of that. How do we know.

What it is. We need to repent of. Where. Where does our guilt lie. How do we find that out. What sin. Are we guilty of. That has set the hand. Of the Lord. Upon us. Now this is where.

The book of Joel. Is a little bit more tricky. Than some other parts. Of the of the Bible. Many of the Old Testament. Prophets. For example. Specify exactly. What the people of God. Have done. And what they need.

To repent of. So. For example. If you read through. The book of Malachi. The Jews. They ask God there. What have we done. That your hand. Is against us.

And he tells them. Plainly. Amongst other things. Your sacrifice standards. Have slipped. You're taking the poor. Blemished animals. And offering them to me. As as the best things.

[27 : 37] That you're willing to give to me. Repent of that. Stop doing that. And I will relent. Well we briefly saw last week. That Joel is not like that.

There are no explicit sins. Mentioned in this book. It is not clear. What Judah are doing. There are no clear. Ways of dating the book. So that we can look at. Other parts of the Bible. And work out what it is.

That was going on. So what do we make of that. As we read Joel. How do we know. What Judah needs to repent of. In Joel's day. And if God calls us.

To repentance. In the same way. How do we know. What to repent of. Well this is where we need to remember. That the book of Joel. Is self-consciously.

Not the only book. In the Bible. It is a message. Written to people. Who already have. The words of God. Who have.

[28 : 31] A great body. Of instruction. Who have. The royal law. Of the Lord. The law. That was delivered. Through Moses. To teach every generation.

Of God's people. The law. That would one day. Be embodied. Fulfilled. Affirmed. By Jesus Christ. These people. Have that great lamp. That guides the feet.

Of the people of God. They have. The perfect mirror. In which to look. And so if the Lord moves in judgment. Let them. Humbly hold up their lives.

To that perfect standard. And if they do. They will find themselves. Not short. Of answers. How do we know.

What to repent of. Well let us take a look. In the mirror. Of the royal law. Of the Lord. If we do that. Humbly. Honestly. Asking the Lord. For the answer.

[29 : 27] And we will not. Come away. Short. Of conviction. Let's come back. To these verses. There is one way. Out of this mess.

There is one way. Of approach. To the throne. Of God's grace. Repentance. And so Judah. Is summoned. To do just that. As are we.

What does God. Desire. From his people. It is summed up. There in verse 13. Rend your hearts. And not your garments.

Tear your hearts. And not just your clothes. Let's briefly note. A few. Of the characteristics. Of godly repentance. Displayed. For us here.

Firstly. Repentance. Is wholehearted. Tear your hearts. Not your clothes. It's no good. Saying the right things. Acting sorry.

[30 : 24] On the outside. If the real thing. Isn't happening. On the inside. There's no good. Moping around. Putting on a good show. If nothing is going on. In the depths. Real repentance.

Starts. At the heart. And sweeps. Everything with it. It is more than. It is more than wholehearted. It is whole person. Flowing. From the heart. It is whole body.

And that's. Clear. Even when that body. Is larger than just one. Individual person. When it's the body. Of the people of God. The elders. Lead the way. In verse. 16.

The children. They come as well. Even the nursing infant. That the child. That has no idea. What is going on. The brides.

And the grooms. They need to be there. Even though. They're often. Excused. From various things. They're not. Excused. From this. This repentance.

[31 : 21] Is top to bottom. Inside out. High to low. The whole heart. Of the people of God. Must be torn. Not just the clothes. Repentance here.

Starts on the inside. But it rarely. Stays there. Judah are told. To weep. And mourn. To gather together. To do this. It starts. With the heart.

Here. But it doesn't. End there. Secondly. Repentance. Here. Is not. Arrogant. Notice.

The tone. Of these verses. Perhaps. God. Will relent. Who knows. He might. Judah. Obviously. Know. What their God is like.

We've seen that. Already. They know. The God. They're coming to. And besides. It is God himself. Who's called them to come. But there is a big difference.

[32 : 16] Between confidence. In the mercy of God. And presuming. Upon the mercy. Of God. When Judah. Comes to repent. There must not be. A shred.

Of arrogance. There. They mustn't. For a moment. Pretend. That they deserve. Mercy. That they are. Owed. Mercy. Or that they have. Earned. Mercy. There must be.

No excuses. Humility. Is in order. Thirdly. These repentant. People. Are to care. More. Than about. Themselves.

What should Judah. Be thinking about. When they come. To God. It's God's glory. It's God's name. We see that in verse 17. This repentance. Is not. Self-obsessed.

Sin. Is. Self-obsessed. So Judah. Repentant Judah. Are not concerned. Just with their own safety. With just avoiding. The disaster. But their repentance.

[33 : 12] Moves them. To care deeply. About the reputation. The name. The glory. Of God. Himself. They don't want his name. To become. A word. Used. For laughter.

Or for mockery. In the nations around. Real repentance. Lifts its eyes. From the selfishness. That brought trouble. In the first place. It lifts its eyes.

To the good name. To the glory. Of God. Instead. And so true repentance. Here is wholehearted. It is humble. And it faces heavenward.

People of God. Yet. Even now. Turn back. To the Lord. With all your heart. And perhaps. He will relent. And perhaps.

He will leave blessing. Instead of curses. Now of course. As we think about. The implications. Of this passage. For us. There are many implications.

[34 : 08] That hit us. On an individual level. When you become aware. Of sin. In your life. Well there is one thing. To do. Repent. Do it.

Do it quickly. Now we often. Try and ignore our sin. We often try and paper over it. We feel the guilt. But we try and keep on going. Without actually ever. Coming to the point. Of repenting.

We feel the guilt. But we never let it. Drive us to our knees. Or if we want that. Dealt with. If we want the. The misery of sin. Dealt with.

If we want the joy. Of our salvation. Restored. Then there is only one. Thing to do. Repent. Come to the Lord. And ask for mercy. But the more direct.

Implications here. Come when we start. Thinking larger. Than our own. Personal. Lives. Our own. Personal. Sin. When a nation. Has dived.

[35 : 01] Headlong. Into sin. Or perhaps. Some church grouping. Or even a family. What do they. Tend to do. When the signs. Of God's judgment. Fall upon them.

Where do they. Tend to go. What is their plan. What is the solution. They look for. Well often. It's things like. Well. Let's tweak the policies a bit. Let's try and. Deal with the symptoms.

That are coming. Let's make a new action plan. To deal with what's going on. Let's deal with these symptoms. Or indeed. Let's embrace a new vision. A new. Set of.

Methods. Of revival. And renewal. Or tragically. More often. It's let's head on further. Let's go deeper. Deeper.

And deeper. Into the swamps. Of the disobedience. We're in. As if there's not enough mud. On our boots already. As if the answer. Is to head in further. Where the fog. Is more blinding.

[35 : 56] And the mosquito bites. Threaten more. Than just. Annoying itches. That is the way. That people. That's where the nations. And groups of people. Often act.

When the judgment of God. Falls on them. But if that is our solution. Then we're stuck. In Joel chapter one. We're stuck. Blind drunk. On the remnants. Of God's past. Generosity. Still forgetful. Of the fact. That he is actually. The Lord of all. And demands. Our loyalty. And tragically. There is actually. A solution. There is actually. Real hope. For mercy. If only. We turn around. And go the right way. Instead. In Joel's day. In Joel's day. All of Judah. Was called together. The greatest. To the smallest. Oldest. To the youngest. Those without. Good excuses. To stay at home. And those with. Good excuses. To stay at home. They were called together. To do the one thing.

[36 : 52] That might. Actually change something. To declare. To the Lord. That they know. They deserved. Every drop. Of judgment. Coming their way.

That 34.4 billion locusts. Was quite frankly. Far too few. For what they deserve. They were called together.

To call out. To the one. Who holds it. All in his hands. To call out. To the one. Who is in fact. The slowest to anger. The one who abounds.

Most in mercy. And steadfast love. For yet. Even now. Even as the thick gloom. Gathers on the horizon. Even in the final hour.

Before disaster. Perhaps. If we call out. To God. And repent. He will relent. And actually.

[37 : 47] Looking at verse 14 again. Do more. Than relent. Not simply. Hold back. His anger. But flip it around. To joy. And leave blessing.

In his wake. And so. As we come to a close. This morning. Look at. Verse 18. That. Verse 18. Is just a little. Historical note. And yet. In its simplicity. It is one of the. Simplest things. That we could. The sweetest things.

We could read. At this point. Of the book. Especially. After we've been through. The ringer. Of chapter one. And two. So far. Then. The Lord.

Became jealous. For his land. And he had pity. On his people. The people returned. And their faith in him.

[38 : 40] Proved well founded. They found. The mercy. That follows repentance. And so. As a husband. Returning to his. Faithless bride. In his jealous. Love.

God remembered. That they were his. Judah has woken up. They have cast. Themselves to the ground. Before God. And now.

He will lift them up again. It may well be. That the need. Of our hour. Is wholehearted. Repentance. From the country. We live in.

From the churches. That meet in it. And from the families. That call it home. Perhaps. The hour is late. Yet. Even now. If we cry out.

To God. The God. Of abundant. Patience. Of steadfast. Covenant. Love. Well then. Perhaps. He will give mercy. More than mercy. Perhaps.

[39 : 37] He will leave. Blessing. Behind him. The life. That you have been. Placed in. Is a small arena. Really. But the rest. Of the book of Joel.

Shows. That the spirit. This spirit. Of true. Hearted. Repentance. In whatever. Small arena. That you have been. Put in. Will lead to. Far more.

Than mere mercy. In the end. Let's pray. Amen. Father God.

We know. That you are. The Lord. Of abundant mercy. Of steadfast. Love. And we rejoice.

In that Lord. So father. Please. Show us. Our sin. Show us. Where we fall short. Of your standards.

[40 : 38] And bring us. To our knees. In repentance. Bring us. To our knees. Holding on. To nothing. Of our own. But instead. Calling out. To you.

For mercy. And Lord. We pray. That you would give it. And lift us up again. We ask this.

In the name of Jesus Christ. Whose blood has bought us. To be yours. We ask it in his name.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

Amen.