



Sermon Transcription • Abbotsford

After the Locust - (Joel 1:13-20)

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[Please Note: This transcript has been lightly edited for ease of reading. Also, some headings have been added in square brackets to aid the reader in locating portions of the sermon.]

[video clip of locusts] So good morning. [Good Morning] Can you imagine? 40 miles wide, billions of locust. For us it's like, "Yeah that'd be kind of neat to see." But if you're a farmer, it's not neat to see. Can you imagine if you're entire community was dependent upon the growing of grain. What you would do if you saw a swarm of locust that size coming toward your property. There's no way to stop it, they're going to devast everything in their path, there will be no food for your animals, therefore probably no animals. They will end up dying. It will kill everything. This is the plight actually of the book of Joel. Joel writes after a swarm of locust like that has come and eaten all the vegetation in the land that he's in. And he relates this then and says, look this a sign from God, basically. It's a warning of the day of the Lord. The day that's going to come and he's going to judge all the ungodly. So take heed, recognize what's happened as you stand here in the devastation and look around you and recognize that I've warned you over and over again. And now you're here, just understand what God's doing and what's he's trying to yell at you through this particular circumstance.

It's almost like maybe in our world, if you have a friend who is a poor driver. And some of you came here with someone just like that. And you remind them repeatedly, if you drive this speed, or you turn that direction or you act that particular way on the roads that eventually somethings going to go wrong and you're probably going to end up in an accident and I'm going to have to come and help you and stand by the side of the road. And I don't want to be there on that day and tell you that I told you so, so stop driving that way. But you know they don't listen because they're like seventeen or whatever and they keep going and eventually you're proven right. And you're standing on the side of the road and their actions have affected dozens of people, the person they hit, the traffic now that's backed up. And you're standing there next to the wreck and say, "Let's survey the wreckage. This is a moment of clarity, do you want to keep going down this path leading to more and more devastation or do you want to turn around?" This is what the book of Joel is, it's Joel basically saying, look it's a moment of clarity. Perhaps we should consider another approach to our relationship with God. The question that the book really interacts with is, what happens, what do you do when the bottom falls out. And the bottom falls out of your life, not because of somebody else's actions against you, but because of *your* actions. *You've* chosen to lie about that thing and the lie has been found out. *You've* chosen to seek that relationship and try to keep it private and now it's been found out. *You're* the one who's brought about the mess and the devastation and now you're standing there looking at all that's happened. What do you do now?



[Turn Away From It]

Well in this passage Joel 1:13 you get some answers to that question. Three of them I'm going to point out. Number one, he says you should turn away from it. Number two, you should own up to it, and third you should cry out about it.

1. Turn Away From It
2. Own Up to It
3. Cry Out About It

Those are kind of the headings that we'll be using to organize our time together. So the first of those, turn away from it. Joel 1:13-14, he says,

“Put on sackcloth, you priests, and mourn; wail, you who minister before the altar. Come, spend the *night* in sackcloth, you who minister before my God; for the grain offerings and drink offerings are withheld from the house of your God. Declare a holy fast; call a sacred assembly. Summon the elders and all who live in the land to the house of the Lord your God, and cry out to the Lord.”

I want you to notice a few things there what he's trying to get at here. He says, the first thing we need to do in the face of all this devastation before us is we need to put on sackcloth. This was the way that they did, in the ancient world, Israel, the way that you showed that you were repentant or mourning is that you would dress in a particular way to show that your outside matched the state of your inside. So sackcloth was like, you've had those potato sacks, the rough potato sacks? I don't buy potatoes so I have no idea if they still do this, but I do remember they used to have these brown sacks potatoes came in and I never have met anybody who's held those up after buying the potatoes and said, “You know, these will make a lovely pair of shorts,” because they're rough. We like our clothing to be, you know, loose fitting and cottony and nice and we seem to be developing like, even more comfortable things all the time. The idea though for them wearing sackcloth was like look I feel rough on the inside, my way is rough, my life is rough, therefore outside needs to match that. We look at stuff like that and think, “Oh that's a little bit weird.” Right? But it's not, we have our own ways of doing this. Making our outside match our inside. When we're told something bad, if I came to you today and I said, “Oh here's this piece of bad news.” You might have started by standing up and smiling and then I give you this piece of bad news and you go, “Ugh.” <slouch over> Now I didn't give you anything that you made you slouch. You're not holding some barbell now. But you're like, no, no, no, the reason I slouch physically outside is because I *feel* burdened. Sometimes if the news is really bad then you'll go and you'll spend the night in your bed and won't get up for like three days. And you'll be laying there in your bed. Now there's nothing actually keeping you in your bed. But laying in your bed, pulling your covers over your head is a way for you to physically display the state of your heart. I want to hide. I don't want to face the world and the oppressive outside of my home world. So I'm staying in here. If an Israelite from those days, fast forwarded in time, came to you, they'd go, “That's weird. You should wear sackcloth.”
[Laughter]



What's interesting about this little passage though, I don't know if you noticed it, but he says, "Put on sackcloth you priests and mourn. Wail you who minister before the altar, come *spend the night* in sackcloth." Now that's weird, even for them that's weird. Mourning was usually a day time activity right, 9-5. And when you're done you go home and you put on your jammie pants. Like everybody does, right? You come to my house at five o'clock in the evening all the people in my home are wearing the jammie pants and they're ready to go to bed, and when you go to bed at night you try to find the loosest, best fitting thing, or nothing, as the case may be so that you can sleep well. Well what he's trying to say, listen I don't want you just to discomfort yourself for the day, I want that to extend through to the night, because this isn't just some garden variety repentance. This isn't just some normal sorrow. You need to understand this is a *big* moment. He even makes a point of that, he says declare a holy fast and call a sacred assembly.

People of Israel had regular times in the year where they would have fasts and they would have sacred assemblies, usually to signify some big event in their history. You know crossing the Red Sea or coming across the Jordan River. Where they would get together and they would have a solemn day or a celebration, this is not that, he's saying this is the all hands on deck moment. Cease what you're doing and we are all getting together at the temple and we are all going to focus our attention solely on God and figure out together what it is that we've done before him to lead to this devastation. Some of us, we're in workplaces you know where you make widgets and then the widget goes on a massive recall and you're business is at stake and the boss comes over the loudspeaker, <speaking into a microphone>"Everybody in the conference room." And you go to the conference room. All hands on deck, I don't care what else you were planning to do today, we're not doing it. What we're doing now is focusing all our attention on this thing, cause it's too important. That's what Joel's saying. Which is of course important because we've asked the question, what's the first thing you need to do when you've been caught in your sin? What's the first thing you need to do when the bottom falls out, when you see the devastation created by your sin? You turn away from it. Like seriously turn away from it, not just like pandering, "Oh yeah, yeah, yeah God I'm sorry about that." But genuinely, "I mean it Lord!" Sackcloth all night, I mean it, sacred assembly all day, cancel all the other plans, that kind of I mean it.

You know the Romans, since we've already talked about, I've shown you a video clip of a bunch of locust eating things and grossed you out, I'd like to add to that now. The Romans were some of the most, deliberate killers in the history of the world. I mean they made the Nazi's look kind. The Romans back in the time of Jesus. One of the things that they would do, they were very expansionist nation, and so they'd go out and they'd win a battle in another land and then on their way back they would often kill people in the field, in the place of battle. And on their way back though they would take some captives, now there were different ways that they would try to kill those captives to try to make a point about how great they were as a nation. Sometimes they'd bring them back to Rome and they'd display them on crosses across a mainstreet or something. Crucifixion was a very brutal way of killing people and it was a very public way. And it was a way to say, look how great Rome is, don't mess with us. But sometimes they just didn't have room or they felt like, you know what we need to kill off these people, these captives quicker. Now you'd think they'd just take a sword and run them through and be done with it. But the Romans were, like I said, creative and they wanted to make a point. Not only are we going to



kill you, we're going to punish you prior to killing you so we want to make your death slow. One of the ways they would do this is they would take the bodies of fallen soldiers on the field and they would take those bodies, those decaying, dead bodies, and they would attach them to the front of the captive, the living captive, so that the face of the dying body was straight in front of them, the hands would be pinned and tied together like this, and the legs would be tied together. So, if you were one of the captives you would have a permanent dead body stuck to the front of you. What this did ultimately, would kill you slowly by the decaying corpse in front of you. You would end up breathing in the fumes of the corpse and you would eventually die. You're glad you came today? Christian preachers would use this image to try to describe what they mean by repentance because what they'd say is look, this is in the early days, they would say, look, what every human being has is a dead man, a sinful body that is attached to the front of them This is the state of humanity is that we are attached to sin and sin is slowly killing us. We don't often know if but that's what happening. And the only way to get out from this predicament is for you to turn away for the living person to turn away from the dead thing that's killing it. That's the word *metanoia*, the word repent means, to turn away. We're going to die unless we turn away. So the question then you have to ask is, okay why is it though that people don't repent? Why don't they turn away from their sin? And the answer is because they don't see the sin as a dead corpse killing them. What they see, what we see in our sin is something that offers us the good life and that's the lie of the devil, that's constantly being told to you through a number of different means is that if you actually pursue the way of the world, if you pursue the way that is contrary to God you will actually be happier and yet it's killing you, it's actually a dead corpse who's smells are killing you. You need to turn away from it. So how do you get somebody to turn away from it? At what point in their lives are they open to realizing that this sin, this thing, is actually hurting them. And the answer is, when the locust come, isn't that the case? I mean CS Lewis said it, "God shouts to us in our pain." When Joel is standing there saying to the people of Israel, listen this is a clarifying moment right here. I know it feels like God is judging us and he is, but this judgement is actually an act of grace. He's given us this pause and showing us, look this is the effect of your sin. You're standing over the wreckage of the car accident and you have a moment here to decide whether or not you want to go forward in the way you were going and leading to more destruction or turn away. It's an act of grace when God intervenes, when he messes with your life, it's an act of grace.

[Own Up to It]

So you need to turn away from it. Second, own up to it. Look at Joel 1:15-16,

"Alas for that day! For the day of the Lord is near; it will come like destruction from the Almighty. Has not the food been cut off before our very eyes—joy and gladness from the house of our God?"

Now I want you to focus on the beginning of verse 15. "Alas for that day! For the day of the Lord is near." Joel's quoting another prophet here, okay. So the people of Israel know their Hebrew Scriptures, the Old Testament, they know it. And so he says, that line, he's referring to Ezekiel 30. So what I want to do is I want to show you Ezekiel 30 the thing that he's quoting so that you understand what the people instantly understood in their day when he quoted it. So here's Ezekiel 30:1-5,



“The word of the Lord came to me [me being Ezekiel]: ‘Son of man, prophesy and say: “This is what the Sovereign Lord says: ‘Wail and say, [Now here’s the quote.] “Alas for that day!” For the day is near, the day of the Lord is near [Okay but what are we talking about when we’re talking about the day of the Lord, what’s going to happen then. Well it’s]—a day of clouds, a time of doom for the nations [Which ones? What nations are we talking about?]. A sword will come against Egypt, and anguish will come upon Cush. When the slain fall in Egypt, her wealth will be carried away and her foundations torn down. Cush and Libya, Lydia and all Arabia, Kub and the people of the covenant land will fall by the sword along with Egypt.””

Did you hear what he’s saying? He’s saying, Ezekiel’s saying, listen on the great day of the Lord, God is going to judge the enemies of Israel, *all* the oppressors and the enemies of God who are against his ways, he is going to inflict punishment on them, on this great day of judgement. Now, here’s my question, when Joel quotes that passage, does he apply it like Ezekiel, to the nations around Israel, or does he apply what it’s teaching to Israel? So listen to Joel 1:15-16 again,

“Alas for that day! For the day of the Lord is near; it will come like destruction from the Almighty. Has not the food been cut off before *our* very eyes—joy and gladness from the house of *our* God?”

Do you hear what he’s doing here? He’s saying, all you guys, I know all this time you’ve been focused on the judgement God’s going to bring against all the enemies of Israel. And they are all outside of our borders and outside of our community. But what this is showing us, this devastation from the locust, what’s it’s showing us is that God’s concerned with the enemies of Israel, in Israel. We’re so focused out there, on what *they’re* doing and all the wrong things, *they’re* doing. Well God’s concerned certainly with that, but just as much with this. So then he takes this tour, he takes you on a farm yard tour. He wants to say, okay listen, so we talk about the warning sign of God, let’s take a tour of what God’s doing. You see it in Joel 1:17-18,

“The seeds are shriveled beneath the clods.[So he takes his little tour and you know a little hat and umbrella and walks over to the clods of dirt. He says is there anything growing here? No it’s all shriveled.] The storehouses [you walk over to the location where the granaries and storehouses are, the storehouses] are in ruins, the granaries have been broken down, for the grain has dried up. How the cattle moan! The herds mill about because they have no pasture; even the flocks of sheep are suffering.”

Everywhere around you the whole farm is done. *All* of your money is gone! It’s the total devastating mess. My sister was really into horses as I’ve said before, she also, before that was really into showing dogs. So we had our house filled with dogs at different points. They were all mutts of some variety or another. She would actually collect dogs from our neighbourhood. No kidding, some of our neighbours would sometimes come to our house if their dog was missing because my sister had basically stolen it. [Laughter] So she could bring the dog into the house and care for it. So she got into dog showing, you’ve not lived unless you’ve been to a dog show. I go to these dog shows from time to time and watch her show the dog. She got into training in order to do this. Right if you want to show the dog you have to teach dogs who are usually really amenable to training. Now this was back in the 1980’s alright, so some of what I’m about to say might sound dark and backward to you, but it was the 80’s okay, most



things were dark and backward. The way that you would train the dog back in the 80's, and I've been told since it's not the way you do it now because we're more enlightened apparently. The way you train the dog, if the dog made a mess on the carpet you would take the dogs nose, she would drag the dog, seriously four hours, five hours after the dog did this, she'd drag the dog across the carpet and she'd shove the nose of the dog in it. Which I always thought was sort of dumb because dogs are sort of dumb. My dog doesn't know the difference between a blade of grass and a person in the backyard, I doubt very much that he would know whether or not that was his mess. Right, so anyway she would do this, she would take the nose and, "Look what you've done, look what you've done!" And she'd say you have to hold the nose of the dog there so that they get the idea.

This is exactly what Joel is doing to the people of Israel. He's taking them, he's dragging them out to the devastation, what they've done. You guys see this right? You've ruined everything! We've warned you, we prophets, and you've ruined everything around here. We have to make a change. Listen this is really important because an important part of true repentance is owning up to the affects of our sin. A truly repentant person doesn't shrink back from taking that tour. A truly repentant person isn't pulling back from facing up to the devastation that they've caused. Some of you will know the alcoholics anonymous 12 step program, which has been adopted by all sorts of different organizations and groups to deal with addiction. You have drug addict anonymous and you have sexual addict anonymous and you have alcoholics anonymous, so all of them seem to use some version of the 12 step program. I don't want to tell you all 12 steps, but the fourth one is particularly important. The fourth step is this, "Make a searching and fearless moral inventory of yourself." What this often involves is the addict to go and speak to their friends and family and say to them, "What is it that I've done to you while I've been drunk or high, what is it that I've done to you that's had colossal and devastating effects on you?" And then there job is to sit and listen, to actually investigate and ask for people to tell them, what their sin, their addiction has done to others. Now that's repentance. That's a willingness to face up to it, to take that tour. The problem is of course, is that you and I, we don't do that, do we? Are apologies aren't usually apologies, instead of owning up to the affects of our sin we tend to make excuses for them.

So I was going online this week and I was reading about a celebrity, and this celebrity, who I won't name, he was very upset with his daughter, his adult daughter for some of the things that she apparently had done. So he left a message for her on her voicemail and it was about four minutes long, and it was a profanity laced tirade in which he compared his daughter to several farm animals. He must have been drunk or something because he left it on her voicemail in a digital form; permanent. And this is exactly what twitter is for. So she took that, she recorded it and she put it on her twitter account and instagram and all the other social media outlets so that people could know that this is what this famous celebrity, who everyone thinks is wonderful is actually like. So it goes out publicly. He's dealing with a media firestorm now. Like how could you possibly say that to another person? Those are horrible words that you've used to describe your daughter. Parents should not speak to their children like that. Anyway, so his publicist comes out and writes a PR apology, here is the guts of that PR apology. "Although my client acknowledges he should have used different language in parenting his child, everyone who knows him privately, knows what he's been put through for the past six years." In other words, I know its violent horrible what he did, but you should've seen what she did to drive him to it.



Now that should sound familiar to anybody anywhere who's ever had a relationship with anyone.

[Laughter]

From time to time this might surprise you, from time to time my wife and I *dialogue*. She's largely a perfect woman, except for the fact that I've said before in years ago, is that she has this habit of taking the stickers off of apples and she takes that sticker and she puts it on the sink instead of in the trash. Like, I think Hitler did the same thing. [Laughter] It's not hard, you take the sticker, you open, you put it in, but she can't do this one act. She can't do it. Okay, so I want you to pretend, it's her only fault, seriously. I want you to image though that I come into my house and I see the sticker on the sink and I say, in this tone, <shouting> "What are you doing? It is not hard, do you realize children are watching you put the sticker, are kids are going to be taught to put stickers on everything instead of using the trash! They're going to be vagrants, woman!" [Laughter] Okay so I probably wouldn't have done the last part, you get the idea. She would respond to that, I know her, I know her pretty well. She would respond to that with probably one of these moves, "Hmmm? Well let me tell you a few things about what you do, here and there." She wouldn't have a lot to work with, admittedly, [laughter] "You do here and there and this and what you do?" <shouting> "How dare you!" I would then respond. "Bring all those other issues up. We are not talking about those things. But on your sticker crazy fanaticism. Why do you call me that!?" Then she would respond in kind and we would elevate and elevate and elevate, elevate. And then we'd spend the next three hours of our *dialogue* unravelling this, "Well I said this to you, but why did you say that?"

"I said that to you because you said this."

"Yes but I only said that, because you said this."

"But I only said that because the sticker." The only time in this dialogue that we would ever find peace, listen now, is if one of us, most often admittedly her, one of us, says, "You know what, here's where I've been wrong." You will never move forward with God or with other people unless you're willing to own up to your own error. Marriages die on these rocks. They shipwreck there. We use language, like there's so much water under the bridge. No actually, that's just a phrase we use to say, I'm not willing to admit my part to play in all of this. I will instead focus on all the ways that you're doing it to me. Joel's like, you will never move forward that way, with God. When you face the devastation that your sin has caused the thing you need to do is what all the alcoholics know you should do, own it. I did that. Sure there lots of reasons for it, but I'm a free man, I'm a free woman and I did that and I didn't have to.

[Cry Out About It]

Turn away from it, you own up to it, third you cry out about it. Look at Joel 1:19-20,

"To you, Lord, I call, for fire has devoured the pastures in the wilderness and flames have burned up all the trees of the field. [He's saying that the locusts are basically like a fire. They've done the same thing flames would have done had we just set fire to all the fields. It's the same affect.] Even the wild animals pant for you; the streams of water have dried up and fire has devoured the pastures in the wilderness."

He's standing there in the midst of all this desolation, it looks like fire has come and the one he turns to, right, the one he cries out to in this moment, even though all this devastation was brought about by



there sin, the person and God has visited upon them. The one he cries out to is the very God who brought them judgement.

So imagine a man who has started a relationship with a woman who's not his wife. Doesn't matter how it began, he didn't intended to go here. But it has. He's been married for 20 years, 10 years, 15 years, starts this relationship, keeps it quiet of course, he's got children, he doesn't want his wife to know. It's all in another location, all this sort of thing. He's always got an excuse for why it is that he's late or he's going to this particular occasion. But you know, you know how it works. Eventually there's somebody in their sphere of relationships who sees him with that other woman in that other city because they just happened to be travelling for business there. And they come back and say to the wife, you know I saw your husband the other day, he was with... So she starts to wonder, so she finds my iPhone and notices that many of the times he says that he is going to a particular location he's not actually doing it, he's somewhere else. One thing leads to another, this information, that information over time finally she confronts him and it all comes out. He's been caught. "I wouldn't be doing it if it weren't for the way you treat me," he says to her. She's in tears, a mess, he gathers all his things up. He starts to march out the door of the house. "I am leaving." His children clinging to his legs. Brushes them off, pushes them aside, leaves them behind, gets in his car, drives off to the woman of his dreams, he thinks. But you know what, three months, six months, a year, two years later he realizes that that relationship that he has run to is just as dysfunctional or more so than the one he came from. So that doesn't go well and eventually she leaves him. Now he's lost his children, he's lost his name in the community, he's lost his wife, he's sitting there in a what, an artless condo, one bedroom place with a refrigerator with some spam in it. And he's watching an old TV and he thinks to himself in this particular moment, <whispering>"What have I done?" The locust have eaten everything. <whispering>"What have I done?" Now you get to walk in and you get to counsel him to whom will you tell him to turn? Who in all the universe can fix this? Every Christian, everywhere should have the name of God on their lips. The same God who brought the destruction, is giving you this moment of clarity because of his grace towards you and he wants you to turn from it. He wants you to look at it, own up to it, but ultimately he's the only one who can make it work. He's the only one who can fix it and believe it, God has a habit of redeeming broken things. He will relent to those who cry out. Now I say that because, look I've got lots of evidence for it.

Jonah is a prophet of Israel who God comes to and says to him, listen I want you to go and I want you to proclaim judgement to the people of Nineveh. Now Jonah thinks, "If I proclaim judgement to the people of Nineveh they might repent and you might back off of the judgement you're declaring. So I don't like that idea, cause I hate Nineveh! Stikin Nineveh doesn't deserve anything." So instead of going where God calls him, he gets on a boat and goes the opposite direction to Tarshish. He's on the boat, the sailors are there and they say, "Hey why is there a massive storm just hovering right above our boat." Well, says Jonah, "It might be my fault."

"Alright, over you go." They throw him into the water God sends his little messenger fish, who grabs him, takes him for a few days, and he spits him up on a shore, and Jonah heads to Nineveh. Corrected, but his heart's still not in it. And when he arrives there, he preaches to these people. <pathetically speaking>"Repent for the kingdom, God will judge you." He doesn't want them to repent, he doesn't



want them to have the opportunity. “Just repent.” When the king of Nineveh hears those words, wherever they were spoken, Jonah 3:6-9,

“When Jonah’s warning reached the king of Nineveh, he rose from his throne, took off his royal robes, covered himself with sackcloth and sat down in the dust. This is the proclamation he issued in Nineveh: ‘By the decree of the king and his nobles: Do not let people or animals, herds or flocks, taste anything; [massive fast] do not let them eat or drink. But let people and animals be covered with sackcloth. Let everyone call urgently on God. Let them give up their evil ways and their violence. Who knows? [Says the pagan king, who knows?] God may yet relent and with compassion turn from his fierce anger so that we will not perish.’”

You know what God does? He relents and he turns from the judgement that he had planned for them. Jonah’s like, <yelling> “AHHH! That’s exactly the problem with you God!” Listen Jonah 4:1-2,

“But to Jonah this seemed very wrong, and he became angry. He prayed to the Lord, ‘Isn’t this what I said, Lord, when I was still at home? That is what I tried to forestall by fleeing to Tarshish. I *knew* that you are a gracious and compassionate God [*I knew it!*], slow to anger and abounding in love, a God who relents from sending calamity.’”

Do you realize that God loves to respond to the cries of the desperate even though their desperation is a result of their own sin. So Peter, standing over a fire and a little girl across from him. Jesus is up being tried, being found guilty when he’s not. Going to go to the cross. The little girl says, “So aren’t you with that guy who we just got arrested?”

“Hmph, no.”

“Nah, I’m pretty sure you were.”

“I told you I’m not.”

“I’m pretty sure I saw you with him.”

<yelling> “I’m not the man!” The rooster crows, Peter remembers the promise of Jesus that you will deny me, everyone’s going to deny me, and you Peter are going to deny me three times and then the rooster’s going to crow. Even though Peter in the moment, “I will never leave you!” Utter failure. Peter goes off and he goes fishing. Jesus dies, he rises again, he ends up on a beach after the resurrected Jesus is on a beach. Peter is in his boat fishing out in the water. He’s got some of his friends with him, they’ve been fishing all night, haven’t caught anything. Jesus from the beach, “Hey, why don’t you put out your nets on the other side.” Peter’s squinting, he doesn’t know who that is, but he has heard that before somewhere. “Ahh, okay.” Puts them on the other side, the fish are jumping into the net, into the boat. Peter’s like I’ve only been around one guy who’s been able to do that before, so he knows that it’s Jesus. He just launches himself into the water. He’s swimming like crazy, dripping wet.

<excitedly> “Jesus!” They have breakfast, it’s fish, eww [laughter]. After breakfast they’re over a fire. Peter on one side, Jesus on the other. John 21:15-19,

“When they had finished eating, Jesus said to Simon Peter, ‘Simon son of John, do you love me more than these?’ ‘Yes, Lord,’ he said, ‘you know that I love you.’ Jesus said, ‘Feed my lambs.’ Again Jesus said, ‘Simon son of John, do you love me?’ He answered, ‘Yes, Lord, you know



that I love you.' Jesus said, 'Take care of my sheep.' The third time he said to him, 'Simon son of John, do you love me?' [Why did you have to ask three times Jesus? I was trying to forget that and here you are rubbing my nose in it, making me look straight at it.] Peter was hurt because Jesus asked him the third time, 'Do you love me?' He said, 'Lord, you know all things; you know that I love you.' Jesus said, 'Feed my sheep. Very truly I tell you, when you were younger you dressed yourself and went where you wanted; but when you are old you will stretch out your hands, and someone else will dress you and lead you where you do not want to go.' Jesus said this to indicate the kind of death by which Peter would glorify God. Then he said to him, [Jesus said to Peter, the failure, the mess maker, the sitting in his apartment looking at all the rubbish that he has brought on himself. The standing by the side of the road, seeing the crash, seeing what the locust have taken. Jesus says to *that* man, *that* sinner. You, you come] 'Follow me!'"

Cause here's the thing, that if you're willing to repent, Jesus isn't done with you. He's never done and you might look around and say that the devastation that I have caused in my life is insurmountable. And I'm telling you that you have a very able God, who just might relent. So if you're willing to turn away from it, own up to it, cry out about it, this God can even restore what the swarms of locusts have eaten.

Let me pray, Father I'm so thankful for your character as it's expressed in these stories. And I'm particularly thankful for the book of Joel as Joel forces us to consider what the next step is for so many of us. Lord I know that there are a lot of people who are listening who are not in a place where they're like, "Well I'm not not sitting in that devastation." But Father I recognize that life as it is and our, our propensity to wander often times leads us into these places, Lord. And in those moments I pray that you would bring this message back to mind and for those here Father who are in that place now Lord would you show them once again that there sin is killing them Father, unless they turn away it is going to end them. So would you in your grace, take this moment and use it to call forward something beautiful. Even out of this devastation. And we ask it in Jesus' name. Amen.