

# When The Lord Is Among Us

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[ 0 : 00 ] All right, thanks, Lisa. Good morning again, everyone. If you got your Bible, go ahead and turn to Joel chapter 2. And we're gonna start in verse 28. And we're gonna read a bigger portion of Scripture today.

We're gonna go all the way to the end of the book of Joel. So we'll be reading all of chapter 3 as well. And this picks up from where Elliot finished last week in the sermon he gave, which was on the passage of God's restorative promises.

Joel starts with God talking about the desolations that his people have endured. And really, he's trying to bring them to a place where their hearts would be rent in conviction.

And he's trying to lead them to repentance and get them to respond in repentance. And then he makes this promise that if they do and when they do, there is coming restoration and comforts from the Father to his people.

And so those are his promises. And what we see throughout all of these things, whether we are in a time of desolation or in a time where God is rending our hearts, cutting us to the core with conviction over our sin, or he's bringing us into the good blessings and comforts of his restorations, he is in all those things.

[ 1 : 15 ] He is in everything he does with his people and what his people go through. And when the Lord is among us, it is always to bring about his good and perfect will, no matter what that looks like in the moment.

And that's what we're gonna see him doing and continue to do in our passage today. And as we read, I want you to open up your hearts to consider the ways. What do we see in the text we're reading today of God showing himself to be at work when he is among us?

Let's read together. And it shall come to pass afterward that I will pour out my spirit on all flesh. Your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, and your young men shall see visions, even on the male and female servants.

In those days, I will pour out my spirit. And I will show wonders in the heavens and on the earth, blood and fire and columns of smoke. The sun shall be turned to darkness and the moon to blood before the great and awesome day of the Lord comes.

And it shall come to pass that everyone who calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved. For in Mount Zion and in Jerusalem, there shall be those who escape, as the Lord has said.

[ 2 : 33 ] And among the survivors shall be those whom the Lord calls. For behold, in those days and at that time, when I restore the fortunes of Judah and Jerusalem, I will gather all the nations and bring them down to the valley of Jehoshaphat.

And I will enter into judgment with them there on behalf of my people and my heritage Israel, because they have scattered them among the nations and have divided up my land and have cast lots for my people and have traded a boy for a prostitute and have sold a girl for wine and have drunk it.

What are you to me, O Tyre and Sidon and all the regions of Philistia? Are you paying me back for something?

If you are paying me back, I will return your payment on your own head swiftly and speedily. For you have taken my silver and my gold and have carried my rich treasures into your temples. You have sold the people of Judah and Jerusalem to the Greeks in order to remove them far from their own border. Behold, I will stir them up from the place to which you have sold them, and I will return your payment on your own head.

[ 3 : 44 ] I will sell your sons and your daughters into the hand of the people of Judah, and they will sell them to the Sabians, to a nation far away, for the Lord has spoken. Proclaim this among the

nations.

Consecrate for war. Stir up the mighty men. Let all the men of war draw near. Let them come up. Beat your plowshares into swords and your pruning hooks into spears.

Let the weak say, I am a warrior. Hasten and come, all you surrounding nations, and gather yourselves there. Bring down your warriors, O Lord. Let the nations stir themselves up and come up to the valley of Jehoshaphat.

For there I will sit to judge all the surrounding nations. Put in the sickle, for the harvest is ripe. Go in, tread, for the winepress is full.

The vats overflow, for their evil is great. Multitudes, multitudes in the valley of decision. For the day of the Lord is near in the valley of decision.

[ 4 : 49 ] The sun and the moon are darkened, and the stars withdraw their shining. The Lord roars from Zion and utters his voice from Jerusalem.

And the heavens and the earth quake. But the Lord is a refuge to his people, a stronghold to the people of Israel. So you shall know that I am the Lord your God who dwells in Zion, my holy mountain.

And Jerusalem shall be holy. And strangers shall never again pass through it. And in that day the mountains shall drip sweet wine. And the hills shall flow with milk.

And all the stream beds of Judah shall flow with water. And a fountain shall come forth from the house of the Lord and water the valley of Shittim. Egypt shall become a desolation, and Edom a desolate wilderness for the violence done to the people of Judah.

Because they have shed innocent blood in their land. But Judah shall be inhabited forever in Jerusalem to all generations.

[ 5 : 57 ] I will avenge their blood. Blood I have not avenged. For the Lord dwells in Zion. This is God's word to us.

So this passage opens with a pretty well-known one for those who have been in church for any great period of time. And it's a great promise. It says, In those days, something amazing will come to pass.

I will pour out my Spirit on all flesh. On all ages. On all genders. On all types of people. Servants even. The lowly. And this will happen not by man's will.

Or by man's strength. Or by man's doing. It is because of God's will. And because God is going to do this thing. And because of that, the Spirit is going to break in. And He's going to break out in a particular manner that had never been heard of or imagined before.

And it deposited something into the possibility of the people of Israel of what God will do someday in the coming future.

[ 7 : 04 ] But for us, we live in a time where that has been fulfilled. And so then what can we expect? Well, when the Lord is among us, expect wonders only He can do.

We know we are in those days because we know that this passage was fulfilled at Pentecost. We see that in Acts 2. But remember, things weren't always this way.

Did God put His Spirit on people before then? Absolutely. But it was always a select few people for a short period of time for a very specific purpose.

God's Spirit would come on a prophet to prophesy. He would come upon a king or a warrior at a particular time to fight a battle and bring about victory or to help defeat His people's enemies.

But now something new is happening. Something coming that God promised and that has been fulfilled. And we are in those days. We are in the days when the Spirit has been poured out on all flesh because of Jesus.

[ 8 : 04 ] Jesus, when He ascended into heaven and before He did and took His seat on the throne there, He promised this to His disciples. He said, wait here, don't move until I send the Spirit and you will be baptized with power from Him.

And that's what happens at Pentecost. He baptizes His church in the Spirit. And guess what, friends? The church of God has been immersed ever since. That wasn't a one-off moment.

We are a people. We are the people of God who swim in the Spirit. We are drenched with Him. He is in us, around us, over us, working through us, all of those things.

And the Spirit kicks off this new age in splendid fashion. Let's read from Acts 2, verses 2 through 11 about this particular moment.

And suddenly there came from heaven where the disciples were meeting in this room. There came from heaven a sound like mighty rushing wind and it filled the entire house where they were sitting and divided tongues as a fire appeared to them and rested on each one of them and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit.

[ 9 : 10 ] Began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit gave them utterance. Now they were dwelling in Jerusalem. Jews, devout men from every nation under heaven.

And at this sound, the multitude came together and they were bewildered because each one was hearing them speak in his own language. And they were amazed and astonished, saying, are not all these who are speaking Galileans?

How is it that we hear each of us in his own native language? And among these guys were Parthians and Medes and Elamites and residents of Mesopotamia and Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt, and parts of Libya belonging to Cyrene and even visitors as far as from Rome.

Both Jews and proselytes, Cretans and Arabians. They're saying this. We hear them telling in our own tongues the mighty works of God.

Pentecost just got an upgrade. Jesus' disciples just got an upgrade. Peter, in response to this, in response to all this bewilderment by all these people looking on this, he stands up to explain what is happening.

[ 10 : 26 ] And what he does, he goes back to Joel. He connects the dots. Peter, standing with the eleven, lifts up his voice and addresses them. Men of Judea and all who dwell in Jerusalem, let this be known to you.

Give ear to my words. For these people are not drunk, as you might suppose, since it's only the third hour of the day. Right? It's not happy hour all the time there.

But this is what was uttered through the prophet Joel. Joel, in the last days it shall be, God declares that I will pour out my spirit on all flesh, and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams, even on my male servants and female servants.

And in those days I will pour out my spirit, and they shall prophesy. Joel gave this prophecy as God led him and put into him to say, but he did it with partial understanding.

He uttered the words of the Lord, not fully understanding and knowing what was to come of it. And to be honest, who in Joel's days could have imagined the implications of this? Now the argument is that this was unique, this Pentecost moment that happened.

[ 11 : 40 ] This is a unique one-off event that God used to fulfill Joel's prophecy and mark the start of the last days, the days of the church, until the days that Jesus would return. And yes, that is true. And yes, it did all of that, and it fulfilled Joel's prophecy, but let's take a look at an important detail.

In Joel 2.18, it says, in those days I will pour out my spirit on all flesh. It doesn't say in that day I will. It is not referring to one day, but to an epoch in God's redemptive plan.

It's at the epoch that began at Pentecost and will last until before the day of the Lord comes, that great and magnificent day that Joel talks about in chapter two, verse 31.

And Joel mentioned some other things that mark this time, this season, of God's redemptive plan. And he says there's gonna be other things like fire and vapors of smoke.

Well, what's that? That sounds a bit creepy. Sounds like haunted house stuff. What's going on there? Well, those were just common signs in the Old Testament of God's presence among his people. Fire and smoke.

[ 12 : 47 ] When you think about Israel coming out of Egypt and then leading them through the wilderness, how is God's presence manifest among them? A pillar of fire and a pillar of cloud. So did God do something unique to that one moment at Pentecost that was never going to happen again?

Actually, I don't think so. Because the only difference there is the manner of the Spirit's manifestation. Like, is the Spirit among us?

Absolutely. Do we see it? Do we know it? Because when he's here, we all have tongues of fire over our heads? Isn't it the Spirit's sovereign choice to show up in the manner and measure as he sees fit to do in order to accomplish the good and perfect plans of God among his people?

Is he not sovereign as God? So then we have to believe that the Spirit of the Lord is still among us to do wonders. Because Jesus hasn't come back yet.

We are still in those days. And today, what I'm arguing is we have to go from stepping beyond believing this and step into a faith that expects these things to happen because the Holy Spirit is among us.

[14:08] There should be some expectation. There should be some desire. If we're not seeing these things and wonders happening, we should step back and be like, God, what's going on? It's a poor argument in the face of biblical evidence to say, yeah, just, but is that really necessary?

Because, I mean, we got the Bible, we got like really good stuff going on here. Isn't that enough? And here is a true truth in response to that.

Everything that God does is to fulfill his redemptive purpose. Everything that he has designed and ordained and said will happen is for his redemptive purpose and must happen for his redemptive purpose.

The Spirit among us has a redemptive purpose. Prophecies, visions, dreams, they have a redemptive purpose. Well, what? Well, to build and strengthen the church.

Paul talks about that in 1 Corinthians 12 and 14. The benefit of those things, the benefit of those gifts isn't so that we can look at somebody doing and go, wow, that guy's amazing or wow, that gal is amazing.

[15:17] You know what it is for? It's for the benefit of his people to build up their faith, to strengthen them. And that's important. But there's another piece of this and it's to proclaim to the unsaved that God is among us for salvation.

And so let's press into the expectation of the Holy Spirit to do wonders among us and through any of us. No, notice it says it pours it out on all flesh, not on the pastor.

So let's remember and let's come with expectation. Do you really believe that God can do wonders through you? Because he can.

The Spirit can do wonders through you. But let's also remember something else. Let's also be burdened that the Lord is among us in these days for salvation.

These are the days of salvation where everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved. That is the promise it says in Joel 2.32.

[16:21] City Grace Church, you, me, we are God's present day prophets who are called to herald this good news to all people in all places. We are still in the days of the Spirit being poured out on all flesh.

Therefore, we must proclaim salvation in the name of Jesus. That is what we get to do. That is our privilege. We get to invite people to call upon the name of the Lord.

And that doesn't work like some magical incantation. We don't go to somebody and say, hey, if you just say it, you're good. It's a response to a change in the heart.

Those who call upon the name of the Lord are those with unwavering conviction that can only come from the Spirit of God that the Father has sent his only Son to die on the cross for our sins so that we can be forgiven of a debt that you and I can never repay.

And instead of receiving the wages of that debt of sin, which is eternal death, now through Jesus and through faith in him, we can be brought into eternal life with God forever and ever.

[17:31] And to call upon the name of the Lord is to acknowledge and embrace and receive with joy all of those things to be true and to be fully dependent on God for your salvation.

That is the good news of God's salvation. And that's the good news that we proclaim. And we must proclaim this because we believe there is no other way to be saved. There is no other name on heaven and on earth that we believe that we can put our hope in.

And we want all people to experience this. We want all people to experience the flood of blessing that comes to those whom the Spirit is poured out on in these days.

And we want them to be saved because we know what's coming. We know what's coming on that day. The Lord will be among us one day for judgment.

Just about all of chapter three is talking about that day. The great and awesome day of the Lord. Joel 3, 1 to 2 opens it up this way.

[18:33] For behold, in those days and at that time when I restore the fortunes of Judah and Jerusalem, I will gather all the nations and bring them down to the valley of Jehoshaphat. And I will enter into judgment with them there.

What exactly will this be like? Well, we get some clues. Verses two through six is an indictment against the nations. God as a judge is saying, here is my issue with you.

You have been persecuting my people. You have been mistreating them. You have been doing evil and wicked things. And you have been trying to take my glory for yourselves. You have been robbing me.

And then he goes on to say, are you gonna pay me back? Are you gonna try to come against me? Are you trying to right some wrong that I've done to you nations? What God is implying, and he goes on to say very explicitly, is that you went to war against me.

That's a sobering indictment. We don't think of unbelief in these terms. Yet that's exactly how God is going to treat it on the day of judgment, in the valley of judgment on that day.

[ 19 : 44 ] He says in verse 9 to 11 of chapter 3, nations prepare for war. He's calling them out. You done all this stuff?

All right. There's a day of reckoning. Put on your armor. Beat your plowshares, your little farming tools. Make some weapons out of them. Let's come.

Let's meet in this valley. This tells us something. Refusing God's salvation is not benign indifference to God. It is malignant enmity toward him.

And we can try to soften it. We can try to say it's no big deal, but that is what God is saying, how he sees it, and how he's going to treat it. That is sobering. Yet until that day, we have this wonderfully merciful, patient, gracious God who never stops calling these enemies that have gone to war against him to come to him and call upon his name to be saved from the judgment of this terrible day.

And we shouldn't be ashamed of this part of God's redemptive plan. We should not. It is an indivisible part of the good news of the gospel of Jesus Christ, friends. God has made a way of salvation for us to escape his judgment on that day.

[ 21 : 03 ] The Lord roars from Zion and utters his voice from Jerusalem and the heavens and the earthquake, but the Lord is a refuge refuge to his people, a stronghold to the people of Israel.

So the question for us, maybe you're here, you don't know where you stand with God. Maybe you're checking out Jesus. Maybe you're here just because your parents drugged you here.

Will you stay in unbelief and face the coming roar of the Lord's judgment? because it says even the heavens and the earth are gonna tremble at this.

Or will you run to Jesus as your refuge? Will you run to him right now as your refuge? Now let's take a moment to remember the two great promises so far.

One, in these days, these days that we're in right now, God pours out his spirit upon us and we get to see him do wonders because the Lord is among us.

[ 22 : 16 ] The second promise, in that day, the coming day of judgment, he will be our refuge. He will be our stronghold.

He will save us from the wrath that is to come. The wrath of God's judgment. And these are two great promises for you and I to hold onto in these days when it feels hard to do it.

In these days, we will experience persecutions. We will experience discouragements. We will experience temptations. We will experience the failures of our own sins and the guilt and shame that come with that.

We will often feel like we don't measure up to life in the spirit. We may find it hard to see God's power at work or that he is doing any wonders among us or through us.

Or we may prophesy in the spirit. We may see visions. We may dream dreams. We may warn others to put their faith in Jesus to escape the coming judgment. And for all this, we may very well be scorned, mocked, beaten, and in more extreme contexts, even killed.

[ 23 : 29 ] Despite this, we must endure in faith and hope as we await for the fulfillment of our salvation.

We too must continue to call upon the name of the Lord. We must wait earnestly, seeking and praying for God's wonders to manifest in these days.

We must continue to boldly go and proclaim because the harvest is ripe right now. It is all around us.

And we will do this. And we will look like fools to so many. And we will feel like fools at times because we see minor results and major setbacks.

And the question is when we face what we will face at this time in these days, the question that will ping in our hearts is this, is this really worth it?

[ 24 : 34 ] Let's listen to the final promise. You tell me if it's worth it. So you shall know that I am the Lord your God who dwells in Zion, my holy mountain, in Jerusalem, shall be holy and strangers shall never again pass through it.

And in that day the mountains shall drip sweet wine and the hills shall flow with milk and all the stream beds of Judah shall flow with water and a fountain shall come forth from the house of the Lord and water the valley of Shittim.

Egypt shall become a desolation and Edom a desolate wilderness for the violence done to the people of Judah because they have shed innocent blood in their land. But Judah shall be inhabited forever and Jerusalem to all generations.

I will avenge their blood, blood I have not avenged for the Lord dwells in Zion. people of God. no matter what we face these days, God will vindicate all who call upon his name. God will vindicate us as the band comes up and we look to respond.

[ 25 : 59 ] In a moment we're gonna take communion. If you're not yet a follower of Jesus, I wanna say to you, call upon the name of the Lord right now. Call upon him.

You are in these days. These days God is holding out to you the opportunity to call upon his name and be saved. Today you are in the valley of decision.

Right now you are in the valley of decision. And recognize that the day of the Lord is near. Do not delay. If you're already a follower of Jesus, as we come to the communion table, just a couple of reflections to think about before you come.

How great is your desire to see the spirit work wonders among us in these days? How great is your burden for those in the valley of decision that aren't safe from the Lord's judgment of that day? Consider those two things and come to the table. But come to the table remembering this and giving thanks because we are actually coming to a table in a sense of God's judgment upon his own son.

[ 27 : 20 ] He took our judgment upon himself and he invites us to come to him because you know what? He is among his people. When we take communion, what we are declaring and what we are saying as we believe it, yes, even today the Lord is among us and he will vindicate us.

Let me pray. Father in heaven, precious son of God, Holy Spirit, come and move on our hearts. Bring conviction that leads us to repentance or bring conviction that leads us into greater faith and hope in you.

Give us boldness where we need boldness. desire where we need desire and give us faith where we need faith.

We pray this in your name. Amen.