

December 15, 2019

“THE NECESSITY OF REPENTING” BY PASTOR ED TERRY

COLOSSIANS 1:9-14; LUKE 3: 1 – 18; LUKE 13: 1 – 9; JOEL 2: 1, 12 – 19 (SERMON)

The prophecies of Joel were primarily written to the Southern Kingdom of Judah around 800 B.C. However the prophecies of God recorded in Joel are just as applicable to every Christian today as they were to the Jews 2800 hundred years ago. I say that because all scripture is divinely inspired by God and God’s Word is timeless. We need to mediate on Joel’s prophecies today because the spiritual condition of the Jews described by God in 800 BC is very similar to the spiritual condition of many Christians throughout the United States today.

God clearly states the deplorable spiritual condition of His people. We find the first key to the people’s spiritual condition is in Joel 1:5. God said; ***“Wake up you drunkards and weep! Wail all you drinkers of wine. Wail because the new wine has been snatched from your lips.”*** The people in Joel’s day were spiritually asleep and they were intoxicated with worldly pleasures. They were filled with pride and arrogance and they had forgotten they were God’s people and that God is in control. The joy of The Lord had been snatched away from these Jewish people because they were not seriously committed to obeying God nor were they engaged in serving The One True Living God.

Another key to understanding the spiritual condition of the people in Joel’s day is in 2:13. The Lord said; ***“Return to me with all your heart.” “Rend your heart and not your garments.”*** These people were half-heartedly worshipping God. They were simply going through a ritual of worship. They obeyed the letter of the law but not the spirit of God’s law. They went to the Temple on the Sabbath but they thought, they talked, and they acted like the rest of the world during the remainder of the week.

Another key to understanding the spiritual condition of the people in Joel’s day is found in several references to the priest and the Temple. We see that in 1:9, 1:13, 1:16, and 2:17. The priests were not concerned about the deplorable spiritual condition of the people God called them to serve. The priests were more concerned about their pay and their needs being met rather than praying for the people, making intercession for the people, and warning the people about their sins.

Judah was a nation that outwardly looked very religious, but inwardly they were far from God. They were lukewarm and indifferent. If we are honest, the spiritual condition of Judah in Joel’s day is similar to the spiritual condition of many Christians in the United States today. We need to remember that The Book of Joel God was inspired by God and was written to His people. God’s Word to us today calls for us to seriously look at ourselves and for us to heed God’s warnings to us.

In our text from Joel we find several commands. The first command is in verse 1. ***“Blow the trumpet – sound the alarm.”*** Trumpets in that day were blown to get peoples’ attention so they would listen to an important announcement. The reason God said to blow the trumpet was to warn all people that ***“The Day Of The Lord is coming. It is close at hand.”*** The day of The Lord is God’s judgment of sin. We do not like to think of ourselves as sinners, but Romans 3:23

is crystal clear. ***“We have all sinned and fallen short of the glory of God.”*** Romans 6:23 is equally clear. ***“The penalty of sin is death.”*** There are the sins of commission, there are sins of omission, and there is also the sin of indifference. Today Jesus is calling each one of us to heed His warning. If we do not judge ourselves God will judge us severely. There is only one cure for sin and that is the second command we find in verse 12. ***“Return to me with all of your heart.”*** Notice God says ***“with all of your heart”*** – not just part of your heart. Many times we are guilty of going through the motions of worship. Many times we are guilty of doing a half-hearted job for The Lord. Being a Christian is much more than coming to church on Sunday morning. Being a Christian is living our life for Jesus 24/7. The Lord Jesus must be The Lord of all or Jesus is not your Lord at all. Jesus is to be the Lord over every aspect of our life. This morning Jesus is calling each one of us to return to Him with all of our heart.

A very important aspect of returning to The Lord is confession. We find that in verse 13. ***“Rend your hearts and not your garments.”*** In Biblical days a sign of confession was to tear one’s clothes and put ashes on their head. True confession is much more than parroting some words or reading a Prayer of Confession printed in the bulletin. True confession only comes when we meditate on how much our thoughts, our words, and / or our actions have brought grief and disappointment to Almighty God. True confession only comes when we realize that our actions or our inactions have separated us from God. Genuine confession involves being so sorry for what you have done or failed to do that you do not want to ever repeat your mistake. So what God is saying to us today is for us to do more than go through the motions of confession and asking God forgiveness. Confession is necessary but confession is useless unless it comes from the heart and true confession always leads to repentance.

True repentance is turning away from our sin and turning to Jesus Christ. Repentance is not just a one-time experience when we are saved. True repentance is to be a way of life for all Christians. True repentance is a daily necessity for all Christians. We are all called to confess our sins, to ask for God’s forgiveness, and to repent. Colossians 1:10-14 gives us a good picture of true repentance. ***“And we pray this in order that you may live a life worthy of the Lord and may please him in every way: bearing fruit in every good work, growing in the knowledge of God, being strengthened with all power according to his glorious might so that you may have great endurance and patience, and joyfully giving thanks to the Father, who has qualified you to share in the inheritance of the saints in the kingdom of light. For he has rescued us from the dominion of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of the Son he loves, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.”***

Listen again to these components of repentance

- Live for The Lord each day
- Please the Lord
- Bear fruit
- Grow in the knowledge of The Lord
- Be Patient
- Joyfully give thanks to The Lord
- Be empowered by The Holy Spirit

In our lesson from Luke 3 we see that repenting is more than words. True repentance always involves a complete change of our attitude and true repentance always results in a change in our behavior.

The sins John addresses are greed, abuse of authority, and the love of money. John is saying if you are really thankful for your forgiveness you will not take advantage of other people. John is saying if you are really thankful for your forgiveness you will love God more than your money. John is saying if you are really thankful for God showing you mercy you will show mercy to the people around you.

Next in our lesson from Joel God makes several promises to all those who return to Him, repent of their sins, and obey His commandments. Look in verse 13. God is gracious, compassionate, abounding in love, and God will spare us from calamity. God wants to spiritually bless His people but to receive God's spiritual blessings, we have to be totally committed to Him and truly repent of our sinful ways. Not only will we be forgiven but also we will be free from all guilt and fear and we will be full of joy when we are totally committed to God. We see that in verses 18-23. God wants our joy to come from Him. If we are totally committed to The Lord, truly repent of our sins each day, live according to His commandments, and give Him the praise and thanks He deserves, God promises to supply all of our needs so that we can and we will stay in close fellowship with Him.

Then in verses 24-26 God promises to materially bless His people. Look at verse 24, ***“The threshing floors will be filled with grain and vats overflow with new wine and oil.”*** Not only does God promise spiritual and material blessings to us if we will be totally committed to Him, live according to His commandments, and praise Him; God will restore all that the devil has stolen from us during the time we were not living according to God's will. We see that in verses 25-26. God wants to bless us spiritually and materially so that the world will see the joy and the benefits of faithfully serving the One True Living God.

Finally God promises that we will enjoy His presence in our daily life when we are totally committed to Him, when we repent of our sins, when we live in accordance with His commandments, and when we praise God for all He has done for us. We find that promise in verse 27. ***“Then you will know that I am in Israel' that I am The Lord your God, and that there is no other; never again will my people be shamed.”*** (Joel 2:27) Not only will we experience God's presence but we will experience God's miracles in our daily life because God will fill us with His Holy Spirit.

The season of Advent is a time to seriously examine our lives as well as our relationship with Jesus.

God's Word to us today challenges all of us to heed God's warning that Jesus' return is near.

As Christians we all need to examine ourselves and we need to make repentance a way of life. As Christians we need to get serious about our relationship with our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. As Christians we need to be genuinely concerned for our unsaved friends and neighbors.

As Christians our job is to be a living example of our Lord's love, forgiveness, hope, peace, and joy to everyone we come in contact with.

This morning can you honestly say that during the past week God's priorities have taken priority over your personal priorities? This past week have you spent more time watching T.V. and / or reading for pleasure than you have spent time reading your Bible? Is studying and mediating on God's Word something you look forward to? Have you scheduled quality time with the Lord in prayer each day or just given Him the time that is left over? During the past year have you grown significantly closer to Jesus? If you can **not** say a definite yes to all of these questions, God's Word to you today is ***"Return to me with all your heart"***.

This morning can you honestly say that during the past week have you been a good ambassador for Jesus? This past week have all of your thoughts, words, and actions been pleasing to Jesus? This past week have you told your unsaved friends how much Jesus means to you and invited them to meet your Jesus? If you cannot say a definite yes to all of these questions God's Word to you today is ***"Repent"***.

This morning can you honestly say that you are excited about your relationship with Jesus? Are you serious about asking Jesus to use you this coming week? If you leave here today without being changed, you have missed the whole point of worship. Remember being a Christian is having a close personal relationship with Jesus and sin separates us from our holy God. That is why repentance is to be a way of life for all Christians. **AMEN**