“Desperate Times Call for Desperately Seeking God” (Joel 1-2)

Sermon Outline and Discussion Questions
Faith Reformed Church, 4/19/2020

1. Introduction: A Burden and a Prayer
   a. Burden: We have neglected one of God’s measures for desperate times—fasting
   b. Prayer: That God would use this message to motivate you to desperately seek Him in fasting and prayer

2. Scripture Reading: Joel 1:1-20; 2:12-19

3. What is Fasting?
   a. Fasting is setting aside our physical hunger for food in order to satisfy our spiritual hunger for God
   b. Mark 2:18-22: We fast because we long for the presence of Christ, our Groom

4. Two Motivations to Desperately Seek God in Fasting and Prayer:
   a. Motivation #1: Our desperate times clearly call for it
      i. The locust crisis of Joel’s day was:
         1. Dissimilar to the past
         2. Devastating to the economy
         3. Dislocating worship
      ii. Similarly, the coronavirus crisis of our day is:
         1. Dissimilar to the past
         2. Devastating the economy
         3. Dislocating worship
      iii. Therefore, Joel’s call to desperately seek God applies to us
      iv. Desperate times are God’s wake-up call to His people!
   b. Motivation #2: Our Deliverer God powerfully responds to it
      i. When desperate times motivate us to desperately seek God in fasting and prayer, we know that God will respond powerfully, just not when or how
         1. Joel 2:14: Who knows what God will do?
         2. 2 Samuel 12:15-23: When David fasted for seven days, God didn’t change David’s circumstances, but God did change his heart
3. Joel 2:13: We know that God will respond in His time and in His way because it’s in His very nature to relent over disaster

ii. God’s powerful response to His people in Joel’s day:

1. Material blessings (2:18-27)
2. Spiritual blessings (2:28-32)—God responds to our fasting by giving the greatest gift of all: Himself (in the Person of the Spirit)

*In Scripture, God has a long track record of responding powerfully when desperate times motivate His people to desperately seek Him in fasting and prayer:*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Passage</th>
<th>Desperate Situation</th>
<th>Desperate Measure</th>
<th>God’s Response</th>
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<tr>
<td>Deut. 9</td>
<td>God’s wrath against Israel’s idolatry</td>
<td>Moses fasts and prays for 40 days</td>
<td>Spares Israel Renews covenant Gives 10 Commandments</td>
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<td>Judges 20</td>
<td>Tribes of Israel are defeated in battle two days in a row</td>
<td>Tribes fast and pray</td>
<td>Grants victory</td>
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<tr>
<td>1 Sam. 7</td>
<td>Philistines defeat Israel, steal ark of the covenant</td>
<td>Samuel and all Israel fast and pray</td>
<td>Thunders from heaven Grants victory</td>
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<td>2 Chron. 20</td>
<td>Enemy armies attack Judah</td>
<td>King Jehoshaphat and all Judah fast and pray</td>
<td>Destroys enemy armies by Himself</td>
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<td>Jonah 3</td>
<td>God’s wrath against Nineveh’s sin</td>
<td>All Nineveh fasts and prays</td>
<td>God spares Nineveh</td>
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<td>Daniel 9</td>
<td>God’s people in exile</td>
<td>Daniel fasts and prays</td>
<td>Dispatches angel Gabriel Announces end of exile Predicts Messiah</td>
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<td>Esther 4</td>
<td>Mass extinction of God’s people</td>
<td>Esther and the Jews fast and pray for 3 days</td>
<td>God’s people live to see another day</td>
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<td>Neh. 1</td>
<td>Jerusalem’s walls are broken down</td>
<td>Nehemiah fasts and prays</td>
<td>Persuades king to allow Nehemiah to rebuild walls</td>
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<td>Luke 2:37</td>
<td>Anna’s husband dies</td>
<td>Anna fasts and prays at the temple for decades</td>
<td>Allows Anna to see the Christ child</td>
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<td>Matt. 4; Mark 1; Luke 4</td>
<td>Satan’s temptations</td>
<td>Jesus fasts and prays for 40 days</td>
<td>Satan is conquered God’s kingdom dawns in Jesus’ ministry</td>
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<td>Acts 1</td>
<td>Judas’ betrayal</td>
<td>The early church prays for many days</td>
<td>Pours out His Holy Spirit on Pentecost</td>
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<td>Acts 13</td>
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<td>The church at Antioch fasts and worships</td>
<td>Sends out the first cross-cultural missionaries</td>
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*Note: Not all of these examples were mentioned in the sermon*

5. Conclusion

6. Invitation to Participate in the Joel Fast (Friday, April 24) – for details, consult the Joel Fast Flyer and Prayer Guide, e-mailed to the congregation and mailed to shut-ins
Discussion Questions for Groups/Families

1. What part of this morning’s message struck you? How did God speak to you through it?

2. Before you heard this message, what did you think about fasting? What did you learn about fasting today?

3. In what ways is the coronavirus crisis similar to the locust crisis of Joel’s day? Can you think of any ways it is different?

4. What best motivates you to desperately seek God?

5. Who is one person or family you know in a desperate situation right now? How might you pray for them or serve them today?

6. If your family is participating in the Joel Fast, what activities might you do together as a family to seek God together?