

# “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:*

<b>Passage</b>	<b>Desperate Situation</b>	<b>Desperate Measure</b>	<b>God's Response</b>
<b>Deut. 9</b>	God's wrath against Israel's idolatry	Moses fasts and prays for 40 days	Spare Israel Renews covenant Gives 10 Commandments
<b>Judges 20</b>	Tribes of Israel are defeated in battle two days in a row	Tribes fast and pray	Grants victory
<b>1 Sam. 7</b>	Philistines defeat Israel, steal ark of the covenant	Samuel and all Israel fast and pray	Thunders from heaven Grants victory
<b>2 Chron. 20</b>	Enemy armies attack Judah	King Jehoshaphat and all Judah fast and pray	Destroys enemy armies by Himself
<b>Jonah 3</b>	God's wrath against Nineveh's sin	All Nineveh fasts and prays	God spares Nineveh
<b>Daniel 9</b>	God's people in exile	Daniel fasts and prays	Dispatches angel Gabriel Announces end of exile Predicts Messiah
<b>Esther 4</b>	Mass extinction of God's people	Esther and the Jews fast and pray for 3 days	God's people live to see another day
<b>Neh. 1</b>	Jerusalem's walls are broken down	Nehemiah fasts and prays	Persuades king to allow Nehemiah to rebuild walls
<b>Luke 2:37</b>	Anna's husband dies	Anna fasts and prays at the temple for decades	Allows Anna to see the Christ child
<b>Matt. 4; Mark 1; Luke 4</b>	Satan's temptations	Jesus fasts and prays for 40 days	Satan is conquered God's kingdom dawns in Jesus' ministry
<b>Acts 1</b>	Judas' betrayal	The early church prays for many days	Pours out His Holy Spirit on Pentecost
<b>Acts 13</b>	---	The church at Antioch fasts and worships	Sends out the first cross-cultural missionaries

*\*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?*