TITLE: LOCUST

TEXT: Ex. 10:13-15; Rev. 9:7-11; Joel 1:1-12,

2:12-14; Zech. 1:3; Joel 2:25-27, Job 3:11, 42:5-6 & 10-13

INTRODUCTION: I hope the message doesn’t BUG anyone this morning but this morning I want to talk about Locusts.

 Webster defines Locust as: a large insect like a grasshopper that often travels in great swarms and destroys crops.

 Locusts play a significant role in Scripture. They often represent the judgment of God or the damage inflicted by the enemy.

John, in the book of Revelation, speaks of locusts…

 **Reve 9:7 (NIV) The locusts looked like horses prepared for battle. On their heads they wore something like crowns of gold, and their faces resembled human faces.**

**8 Their hair was like women's hair, and their teeth were like lions' teeth.**

**9 They had breastplates like breastplates of iron, and the sound of their wings was like the thundering of many horses and chariots rushing into battle.**

**10 They had tails and stings like scorpions, and in their tails they had power to torment people for five months.**

**11 They had as king over them the angel of the Abyss, whose name in Hebrew is Abaddon, and in Greek, Apollyon.**

 John likens the great pestilence that comes upon the earth in the end times, to strike men with torment for 5 months, as that of a great swarm of locus. In this case, possibly demonic entities bent on destruction being led by Satan himself.

 Satan is the one behind this mystical horde of locust.

 One of the names Scripture gives Satan is destroyer.

 Scripture says that he roams the earth like a roaring lion seeking who he may devour, whom he may destroy.

 Another example of Locusts in Scriptureis found in the book of Exodus.

 God has Moses lift his rod against Egypt and a great swarm of locusts invaded the land destroying everything in sight.

**Exod 10:13 (NIV) So Moses stretched out his staff over Egypt, and the LORD made an east wind blow across the land all that day and all that night. By morning the wind had brought the locusts;**

**14 they invaded all Egypt and settled down in every area of the country in great numbers. Never before had there been such a plague of locusts, nor will there ever be again.**

**15 They covered all the ground until it was black. They devoured all that was left after the hail--everything growing in the fields and the fruit on the trees. Nothing green remained on tree or plant in all the land of Egypt.**

 How many of you here this morning have experienced, maybe are experiencing, locust in your life?

 With the current corona virus pandemic that has encircled our globe and all that is being done to strive to slow its infection rate such as home quarantine for the sick and all of us asked to stay at home except for trips to grocery store or pharmacy. With grocery shelves being empty of a lot of items we may wish to buy and many losing jobs because of mandatory store closings in some sectors it may seems as we have been invades by a might locust swarm.

 Destructive forces that have seemed to eaten up all the greenery in your life, tried to destroy all the good things in your life, leaving your life like a field that has been infested by a great swarm of locust. Left you feeling empty, barren, without fruit, possibly even without hope…

 If you have ever felt like this, if possibly you are feeling like this right now, where you feel like you are being invaded by great swarms of locusts, then take courage! I have some good news to share with you this morning..

 In the book of Joel God had allowed a great swarm of locust to invade and come against his people Israel…

 **Joel 1:1 (NIV) The word of the LORD that came to Joel son of Pethuel.**

**2 Hear this, you elders; listen, all who live in the land. Has anything like this ever happened in your days or in the days of your forefathers?**

**3 Tell it to your children, and let your children tell it to their children, and their children to the next generation.**

**4 What the locust swarm has left the great locusts have eaten; what the great locusts have left**

**the young locusts have eaten; what the young locusts have left other locusts have eaten.**

 Israel had been called to be a separated people from the world. A people who lived by a higher standard, a people who where to live a life of relationship with their God. Theirs was to be a relationship of love and obedience to their God, and they were to be an example to the rest of the world of the love and compassion and grace of God….

 What had happened in Israel in the days of Joel was that many had drifted away from God. Many of the people had become apathetic in their relationship with God. They no longer sought to obey His commands and decrees and live their lives in worship of Him.

 Because of the peoples turning away from God, no longer seeking Him with all their heart, God lifted His protective hand and allowed the enemy to infest the land like a great swarm of Locusts! Locusts that destroyed everything that they came into contact with!

**Joel 1:6 (NIV) A nation has invaded my land,**

**powerful and without number; it has the teeth of a lion, the fangs of a lioness.**

**7 It has laid waste my vines and ruined my fig trees. It has stripped off their bark and thrown it away, leaving their branches white.**

**8 Mourn like a virgin in sackcloth grieving for the husband of her youth.**

**9 Grain offerings and drink offerings are cut off from the house of the LORD. The priests are in mourning, those who minister before the LORD.**

**10 The fields are ruined, the ground is dried up; the grain is destroyed, the new wine is dried up, the oil fails.**

**11 Despair, you farmers, wail, you vine growers;**

**grieve for the wheat and the barley, because the harvest of the field is destroyed.**

**12 The vine is dried up and the fig tree is withered; the pomegranate, the palm and the apple tree-- all the trees of the field--are dried up. Surely the joy of mankind is withered away.**

 Actually, this wasn’t so much God lifting His protective hand as much as the people stepped outside of His protective covering …By choosing not to obey God and wander away from Him, they removed themselves from Gods protective care and they brought the locust upon themselves.

Had God abandoned them? No! They had abandoned God!

 God was where He has always been. His arms where still outstretched to them. They just needed to come back into His embrace…

Listen to what God says to them….

**Joel 2:12 (NIV) `Even now,` declares the LORD, `return to me with all your heart, with fasting and weeping and mourning.`**

**13 Rend your heart and not your garments.**

**Return to the LORD your God, for he is gracious and compassionate, slow to anger and abounding in love, and he relents from sending calamity.**

**14 Who knows? He may turn and have pity and leave behind a blessing—**

This is a tremendous promise of Scripture.

 Even if we have messed up in our relationship with God, Even if we have failed Him miserably. Even if the locusts have come and wreaked havoc and destruction in our life, God still has His arms of grace and mercy extended to us..

 **2:12 (NIV) `Even now,` declares the LORD,** (even in your messed up condition! Even in your state of despair, even now!)`**return to me with all your heart, with fasting and weeping and mourning.`**

**13 …. Return to the LORD your God, for he is gracious and compassionate, slow to anger and abounding in love, and he relents from sending calamity.**

**14 Who knows? He may turn and have pity and leave behind a blessing—**

 What a promise of restoration. What a promise of provision. What a statement of God’s Grace and Love..

 **Even now,` declares the LORD, `return to me with all your heart …Return to the LORD your God, for he is gracious and compassionate, slow to anger and abounding in love, and he relents from sending calamity.**

 **Who knows? He may turn and have pity and leave behind a blessing—**

 What a tremendous promise! Yet a promise, like all the promises of Scripture, it is a conditional one…

 The promise of this “reaction” of God is dependent upon an action on our part.

 The action that is necessary for Gods reacting with the promise of His mercy, compassion and grace, bringing restoration to our life is….

**Return to me with all your heart**

**Rend your heart and not your garments.**

**Zech 1:3 (NIV) … This is what the LORD Almighty says: `Return to me,' declares the LORD Almighty, `and I will return to you,'.**

When the locusts invade our life, leaving behind them a path of despair and destruction, and we want to see restoration in our life, we need to turn, or return, to God.

 We return to Him by taking heed of Him. Taking His word and hiding it in our hearts.

We do that by, not just being a hearer of the Word, but by taking its truth and applying it to our lives and becoming a doer of His Word.

 The Lord tells us how and where this must start!

 **We need to rend our hearts and not merely our garments**!

 What does it mean to rend ones heart?

 In Hebrew culture the rending, the tearing of one’s garment, showed ones grief about something.

 When David and his men heard that King Saul and his sons had all died in battle with the Philistines, Scripture says that they all rent their garments and wept bitterly.

 When Jesus told the Pharisee’s that He and God where one and the same person they thought that Jesus was speaking blaspheme and scripture says that they rent their garments in outrage.

Rend==

 **07167 qara` {kaw-rah'}**

**1) to tear, tear in pieces, rend asunder**

**1a3a) to make wide or large, to rend open**

 We need to rend our hearts and not merely our garments!

 We need to feel genuinely sorry for our sin, for our disobedience against God. We need to come to the place of seeing our sin as God does. Our sin needs to break our heart. Cause us to grieve for doing it.

 God, I’m so sorry! Please forgive me! My sin, my disobedience is now wretched in my sight! Lord I repent! I turn from my disobedience back to You!

Forgive me! Restore me to the fullness of Your salvation!

Tear my heart oh God! Open my heart wide; make it large to receive all that You have for me!

When we come to this place of rending our hearts before God, it is the action on our part that invokes reaction on Gods part..

The Pharisee’s often merely rent their garments but not their hearts.

 They often made a public display of disgust about sin, usually someone else’s… They liked to look religious! They cared more about how they looked to other people, what other people thought about them, than they did simply obeying and pleasing God in their own lives…

 They, like us at times, played Church rather than allowing God to use them to display the Church…

 God doesn’t want us to merely rend our garments so we will appear to look good to others, He wants us to rend our hearts, open them wide so He can fill the space with Jesus! So He can change and transform our lives into the image and nature of His Son. Rend our hearts so we may become good with Christ’s goodness.

 When we do this there is even more good news….

 Listen to this next promise?

God says….

**Joel 2:25 (NIV) `I will repay you for the years the locusts have eaten-- the great locust and the young locust, the other locusts and the locust swarm--**

This is not merely a promise of redemption it is a promise of restoration. Getting back what we have lost. What the enemy may have destroyed.

God says….**I will repay you for the years the locusts have eaten--**

**Joel 2:26 (NIV) You will have plenty to eat, until you are full, and you will praise the name of the LORD your God, who has worked wonders for you; never again will my people be shamed.**

**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.**

Gods promise is not just that He will deliver us from the swarm of locust that may have invaded our life and brought desolation and destruction and robbed us our peace and joy, but that He will repay us for the years that the locust have eaten!

 God wants to repay, replenish, and restore even what the locusts may have destroyed in our life!

 We have a neat picture of this in the book of Job…

 Job experienced an invasion of locust in his life; maybe more than any man ever has…

The enemy came against Job like a swarm of locusts and devoured his crops, his livestock and camels! Came and devoured his sons and daughters! Came and took his health, attacked his very body! The locust devoured all that Job had; leaving him sitting in a heap of ashes scraping his painful boils questioning God as to why he had ever been born….

**Job 3:11 (NIV) "Why did I not perish at birth,**

**and die as I came from the womb?**

Yet Job comes to a place of rending his heart before God…

**Job 42:5 (NIV) My ears had heard of you but now my eyes have seen you.**

**6 Therefore I despise myself and repent in dust and ashes."**

This was the action of Job that brought this next reaction from God..

**Job 42:10 (NIV) After Job had prayed for his friends, the LORD made him prosperous again and gave him twice as much as he had before.**

**12 The LORD blessed the latter part of Job's life more than the first. He had fourteen thousand sheep, six thousand camels, a thousand yoke of oxen and a thousand donkeys.**

**13 And he also had seven sons and three daughters.**

Job put his faith into action! Even though Job was a good man he still recognized that he was a sinner and that any righteousness that he may have within himself, it was as filthy rags when held up to the righteousness of God! Job recognizes his true state and it causes him to rend his heart before God..

God responded to Jobs action of rending his heart, coming to a Godly sorrow for his sin, with a reaction…

**12 The LORD blessed the latter part of Job's life more than the first.**

 God fulfilled His promise!

**Joel 2:25 (NIV) `I will repay you for the years the locusts have eaten-- the great locust and the young locust, the other locusts and the locust swarm—**

The good news is that this promise is just as true for you and me today as it was for Job.

 God has said that even though we may forsake Him, He will never leave or forsake us! He is always there to embrace us as we turn or return to Him.

 Regardless of the damage that the locusts may have done in our life, our God is a gracious God whose mercies never fail, and are in fact, made new every morning!

As we rend our heart before Him, come to Him sorry for our sin, sorry for falling into areas of disobedience, sorry for our playing Church rather than being, then becoming the Church and displaying the Church, we can be assured of His promise of restoration….

 We can hear Him say to us…

**I will repay you for the years the locusts have eaten—**

What have the locust eaten, what have the locusts destroyed in your life this morning?

 Maybe they have eaten away the greenery of your marriage, your relationship with your husband, your wife or your children, eaten away at the relationship with your parents, your family or your friends?

 Maybe the locusts have devoured your joy and peace in the Lord?

 If you have suffered the destruction of the swarms of locust in any area of your life this morning then take heart! Be encouraged!

 God can repay for the years that the locusts have eaten!

 God can restore! God can make the rest of your life the best part! Whether we are 9 or 109!

 As we rend our hearts before Him, God has promised to react to that action!

 He has promised to repay, replenish what the enemy may have destroyed in our life!

 God has assured us that what lies ahead can be better then what is behind as we rend our hearts before Him and obey and serve and worship Him with our lives!

 Have the Locust reaped destruction in your life leaving you feeling barren and empty? If so, then are you ready for the Lord to do some restoration in your life this morning?

 Have you come to the place where it’s time to rend your heart before the Lord and receive His promise of restoration?

The promise that He--- **will repay for the years the locusts have eaten-- I will make the next part of your life better than the first!**