

Sermon notes for Ash Wednesday 2017

Deadly Sins - Godly Graces

Seven Wednesday Themes:

1. Lust and Chastity
2. Greed and Charity
3. Gluttony and Temperance
4. Envy and Kindness
5. Sloth and Diligence
6. Wrath and Patience
7. Pride and Humility

Mortal Sins:

“Faith... a work of the Holy Spirit... cannot exist with mortal sin, but whenever it appears it brings forth good fruits...”

(Ap AC Art IV, Justification. Tappert, et al 1959, 116).

“Faith does not remain in those who obey their lusts, nor does it exist together with mortal sin.”

(Tappert, et al. Ap AC Art IV, Justification. 1959, 127).

“When holy people... fall into open sin (as David fell into adultery, murder, and blasphemy), faith and the Spirit have departed from them. That is so because the Holy Spirit does not permit sin to rule and gain the upper hand in such a way that sin is committed, but the Holy Spirit presses and restrains it so that it does not do what it wishes. If sin does what it wishes, the Holy Spirit and faith are not present...”

(Tappert, et al. SA, III, Art III, Penitence, 1959, 310).

Context of Joel text:

There is still time to repent and avert the Judgement

Preceding: A locust plague has already occurred (also in Tucson in A.D. 1959)

Following: The Day of the Lord comes

Next Sunday's Reading: Jesus fasts for His people after having received their sins on His sinless Person.

Ash Wednesday: Fasting – an Old Covenant vehicle for self – renunciation and submission to God’s Word and will, which New Covenant believers are free to emulate.

Order of the Joel text:

It is now and not yet...

It shows that God gives, His people respond –
first with thanksgiving,
then with forgetfulness,
then with lusting after other desires,
then turning to other gods...

God rebukes His people – through His Word and actions

In the text, sending locust plagues,

In those who would be faithful, God’s discipline works
repentant hearts, contrition over sins, and the will to return to His
Word,

God forgives, His people respond with thanksgiving...

The cycle continues on account of the sin which clings even to
believers.

Teaching points from the text:

God promised His people, in the second recorded iteration of the Old Covenant Torah (Deut 4), that they would have such times of falling away, receive just punishment, turn from their sins in repentance, be forgiven, and walk in new life.

v. 12

The text calls upon the faithful on the basis of their covenantal relationship with God.

v. 13

There is what appears to be a creedal statement in the early part of the text. This is a declaration of grace (Joel 2:13b):

“For gracious and merciful is He, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love (Hesed) and relenting upon the evil.”

Before this, God had called for contrition. Now His revealed nature illumines the reality that He has sorrow that moves Him to pity or change on account of the hard lessons His people learn.

v. 14

The hope expressed is in YHWH's merciful nature

Those who had suffered punishment – locust plague – had lost all their food. Now they hope that YHWH will behold their true turning of heart and leave behind enough for grain and drink offerings – the expressions of thankfulness for His blessings

V. 15

The faithful whose nation had continued to lust after other gods, who were now repentant, were called to physical signs of their preparation to receive His mercy, that which was worked in them by the Word which called them to repentance. They were to do no work, have no food, and abstain from sexual intercourse (remember – these actions are how the false gods were worshipped – show the god what you want and he/she is to deliver).

Four groups are called – everybody: elders, children, nursing infants, bride/bridegroom (exempted normally from all civic duties for one year).

v. 16

Priests are to present the people's repentance in crying out before the Holy Place in the Temple. This is intercessory prayer – still offered by the New Covenant priesthood whenever we sing the Kyrie. (Where are the Table attendants normally positioned at that point in the Service?)

Collect Prayer reminder for us: God is called to remember He hates nothing He has made; forgives the sins of the repentant ones; creates new and contrite hearts in us. We asked for: perfect remission and forgiveness.

v. 17

God turns, uses the words, "His land," and, "His people."

v. 18 – 19

God's gracious promises to the repentant: fruits of the earth – grain, wine, and oil, and take away their reproach...

This He did in Christ Jesus!

Ash Wednesday, March 1, 2017
Joel 2: 12-19, 2 Peter 1: 2-11, Matthew 6: 16-21
Paster Michael Mercheuse