

SUNDAY, October 13, 2024 Weep and Dance with Me

Joel 2: 21-27 | Timothy 2:1-7 Matthew 6:25-33

Thanksgiving and everyone is happy, blessed, content and overjoyed with life! There are smiles on everyone's faces and no one is need. People are content with their lives and all are happy as they gather with family in these next few days to share in a feast, enjoy the fall weather and taking part in just being.

Maybe this is a scenario we would like to see and from a distance all is great. Isn't this what we are striving for-an ideal perfect world? But it is not and why not? Because people are filled with anxieties, worries, stresses, uncertainties and tiredness from overexerting oneself and mostly a lack of hope. Is this your experience in this moment as we gather to worship God who is the source of all? We have gathered to express our hope for this is where our faith in Jesus Christ enables us to move from the reality of world of indifference to new experiences!

We know that the world is filled with problems - as a result of storms, political uneasiness and disagreements in what should and ought to be done. People face all kinds of situations in these last months- fires, floods, storm damages of different types, but what has enabled us to support them? Our faith in God and His Son Christ Jesus!

The OT prophet Joel, lamented or mourned and wrote about what occurred in Judah many years ago. All was lost in the land God gave them for what had happened was that there were invaders of the land, plagues which caused fear and terror and the animals left or died because there was no food. This was a time of weeping and crying and mourning. But Joel expresses how God reversed what had occurred and how fortunes were restored. Joel writes specifically about the fields, the wild animals and the people which will receive God's mercies and be blessed. Specifically to the land, he states, "Do not fear, O land rejoice and be glad." This was because the land would soon replace its fear with rejoicing and gladness because God had done great things.

Joel then addressed the animals who live on the land; for they suffered with no pasture or water. But with the pastures turning green there was new life and so too would there be food for people as trees would bear fruit. And third, Joel wrote to the people and urged them to rejoice and be glad in God. God would send rain to His people and His land, and the land would become fruitful, and be once again in harmony with the beasts and with His people. God would show mercy to them because He is "gracious and compassionate, slow to anger, and abounding in lovingkindness. And in this interim time- the people were to lament/

mourn/weep/cry for what was lost and then repent. For they had not been following the teachings of God and to begin again praying with hope. In that interim time, God would begin putting into place what is needed for restoration of the land, animals and vegetation. God then calls the people to rejoice and be glad for they shall not be put to shame and they will know God and God will provide.

In our world right now we wonder how will provide for the many in need? There seems to be so much lost we might even question where was God when these situations occurred? Couldn't this have been stopped/ prevented? Yet there are natural laws which exist that God created yes, but the world still turns and there is sunlight and moonlight. But God gave us the knowledge and ability to reason and figure things out. We just don't always follow. Yet God will call people to help with clean up, restoration of power lines, and get medical help for those in need. But God does not do this alone. He needs us- the faithful followers to act.

And those who do act do so yes with apprehension, anxieties and worry. But we need not be. For as we read in Matthew 6 we need not worry about anything! Life is more than food and clothing. Birds are cared for by God's hand; and so are we. We worry so much about things we cannot control- so if we take the effort and energy we put into worrying and instead put it to use as powerful prayer, our faith will grow stronger. Just think about what you worry about- whether the turkey will be cooked properly, whether a guest will say something inappropriate, whether someone is hurt by words or physical injuries, or even whether one will see Christmas due to illnesses. We worry because it is what is exemplified as being important on earth. Yet Jesus states, "strive first for the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you." Then the words "as well" are added.--not only will you be blessed by what is needed to live here on earth, so too will the kingdom of God be yours. Jesus says don't worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will bring worries of its own. Today's trouble is enough for today.

So what might we do in those moments of worry, anxiety and fear? In her book, *Be Anxious for Nothing*, Joyce Meyer teaches how to draw on the peace of God in the midst of negative circumstances instead of responding with restlessness, fear, and apprehension. It is in those moments where fears/ worries and anxieties arise that we are to dispel them with peace in our hearts. John 14:27 states Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled, and do not let them be afraid."

Meyer states, that we may find peace by: 1) Trading our anxiety and worry for peace and joy; 2) Developing a childlike attitude of faith; and 3) Resting in the arms of the Lord.

As we consider these worries, anxieties and laments which seem to never stop how we might find this peace is simply put in Paul's letter to Timothy! Pray: supplications, intercessions, thanksgivings be made for everyone but state them out loud in order to gain peace within. This will enable you to lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and dignity. And the reason for this? Is so that we can come to the knowledge of the truth. And what is the truth? There is one God: one mediator between God and humankind, Christ Jesus himself human who gave himself a ransom for all.

So what are we thankful for today? Yes God's blessings in the harvest season of autumn and all that we see and feel and experience. But more so than this, that peace within is made possible through Jesus- the mediator between the Father and all people. Our task to alleviate all these worries, stresses and such, is to pray-- lift up situations you hear in the news; natural disasters. Political problems, crimes done from one person to another; wars, destruction and ask God to hear your prayers so that the weight of all of these is put on Him. God can handle it all!

Then when you feel the weight of these problems lifted away- offer to God your praise and thanksgiving your joy and sing with a peaceful grateful heart what God has done in your life and what He makes possible in the lives of others.

God's world is amazing- and we are continuing to discover it even more each day. And in order to more about His creation, we need to draw closer to the Creator. In order to understand truth we need to look to Christ and listen to his teachings to not worry but seek peace. And when the Spirit calls us to weep and mourn and lament we need to do so, because the Spirit will also calm our hearts and enable us to dance with joy and love and peace all because we may offer our thanks with hope. This is why we give thanks for there is hope beyond the weeping; and there is hope in Jesus Christ.

PRAYER

God of grace and love hear our prayers we offer to you- lament, joy, peace, and we offer them with thanks-- knowing that you will hear our prayers and in your love will answer with yes, no or not yet. Hear now the prayers of our hearts. SILENCE> Amen.