

Sermon for Oct 11, 2020, Joel 1:1-3, “Pass the story down from generation to generation”

Introduction: Unprecedented Events Caused by COVID-19

Last October 1st was the Chuseok holiday in Korea. Chuseok is a major harvest festival and a three-day holiday in both North- and South Korea celebrated on the 15th day of the 8th month of the lunar calendar on the full moon.

As a celebration of the good harvest, Koreans visit their ancestral hometowns and share a feast of Korean traditional food and wine. There are two major traditions related to Chuseok; one is ancestor memorial services at home, another is family visits to ancestral graves.

However, this year, the number of people visiting their hometown sharply decreased due to Covid-19. In addition, an unprecedented occurrence of online ancestor memorial services took place. All are the result of Covid-19.

However, a similar unprecedented incident took place 2700 years ago. **The book of Joel says, “Hear this, O elders, give ear, all inhabitants of the land! Has such a thing happened in your days, or in the days of your ancestors?” (Joel 1:2)**

The meaning of the name Joel is **“the Lord is God.”** When the Prophet Joel was active, northern Israel was already destroyed, and 20 years later, southern Judah also experienced an Assyrian invasion in 701 BC. So, the book of Joel mentions God's judgment. But the book of Joel doesn't just talk about disaster, it also talks about recovery and blessings that result. So, the book of Joel talks about disaster and judgment in the first half, and salvation and restoration in the second half.

The book of Joel emphasizes that these experiences of judgment and blessing should continue to be passed on to future generations. **Joel 1:3 says, “Tell your children of it, and let your children tell their children, and their children another generation.”**

Today we will look at the stories that must be conveyed from generation to generation that Joel emphasizes. And I hope we can tell this story from generation to generation.

Body: The story we must tell future generations

1. God's discipline for disobedience and what we should do

First, what we will share in future generations is punishment of God for Judah's disobedience and what he should do at that time.

Joel 1:4 speaks of the plague that locusts bring, **“What the cutting locust left, the swarming locust has eaten. What the swarming locust left, the hopping locust has eaten, and what the hopping locust left, the destroying locust has eaten.”**

The repeated appearance of locusts here means a disaster continues until all is destroyed. When Covid-19 was in full swing in February. What was even more terrifying Covid-19 was the catastrophe brought on by the swarm of locusts at the same time. Finger-sized locusts attacked Kenya, Somalia, and Ethiopia. The swarm of locusts in eastern Kenya last February was three times the size of New York City. The catastrophe caused by the swarm of locusts was devastating.

Today in the book of Joel, the attack of a swarm of locusts was seen as God's judgment against Judah, South. **So Joel 1:15 confesses, "Alas for the day! For the day of the LORD is near, and as destruction from the Almighty it comes."**

So what are we going to do in this situation? This is very important. God left us to do something even in the judgment. God asks us to repent and renew.

So Joel 2:12-13 says as follows. "Return to me with all your heart, with fasting, with weeping, and with mourning."(v.12)

"Return to the LORD, your God, for he is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love, and repents of evil."(v.13)

What we have to tell to future generations is how terrifying the judgment of God is. And in such a situation, we must tell to future generations that we must repent and come to God's love again. **Then, what is the second thing to tell to future generations?**

2. God's mercy and amazing recovery

It is God's mercy and amazing recovery. **Book of Joel 2:18 say, "Then the LORD became jealous for his land, and had pity on his people."**

Here, **"then"** refers to the time to repent. In other words, it refers to the time when you sincerely repent and return to God. At this time, the book of Joel mentions the heart of God for His people. God accepts our prayers and repentance. And in response to it, God blesses us.

So Joel 2:25 say, "I will restore to you the years which the swarming locust has eaten, the hopper, the destroyer, and the cutter, my great army, which I sent among you."

At the time of God's judgment, everything was ruined by the swarm of locusts. And now He promises to reward and enrich His people. In addition, God promises to give spiritual authority to His people.

"And it shall come to pass afterward, that I will pour out my spirit on all flesh; your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, and your young men shall see visions." (Joel 2:28)

This promise is so amazing for us because in the past the Spirit of God was selectively poured out only on special people. But now, the Holy Spirit comes upon everyone who calls on the name of the Lord.

This verse refers to the Holy Spirit that Jesus poured out onto each of us when He ascended to heaven. We all received the same Spirit, the same faith, and the same Lord. Wonderful blessings are given to those who repent and return to God. **So, what is the last thing to tell to future generations?**

3. God is the one who judges the nations and dwells among us

God is the one who judges the nations and dwells among us. This is the story in Joel chapter 3. Joel chapter 1 talks about Judah's judgment, and Chapter 2 refers to Judah's restoration. But Chapter 3 says that God will judge all nations and glorify God's people, Zion.

Let's look at Joel 3:2, "I will gather all the nations and bring them down to the valley of Jehosh'aphat, and I will enter into judgment with them there, on account of my people and my heritage Israel, because they have scattered them among the nations, and have divided up my land"

Here, "**the valley of Jehosh'aphat**" means not a specific place, but a valley that the Lord judges about nations. This place is doomsday. All nations are judged here by God. They come here with a heart against God.

Joel 3:12 mentions this, "Let the nations bestir themselves, and come up to the valley of Jehosh'aphat; for there I will sit to judge all the nations round about."

And the judgment begins from God. **Let's look at Joel 3:16, "And the LORD roars from Zion, and utters his voice from Jerusalem, and the heavens and the earth shake. But the LORD is a refuge to his people, a stronghold to the people of Israel."**

God's terrifying judgment against the nations proceeds. But among them, **God rules the world in Zion (Jerusalem). Here, Zion is a spiritual church where God's people worship God.**

This is a special place with true life. "And in that day the mountains shall drip sweet wine, and the hills shall flow with milk, and all the stream beds of Judah shall flow with water; and a fountain shall come forth from the house of the LORD and water the valley of Shittim."(Joel 3:18)

This is also an eternal place. "But Judah shall be inhabited for ever, and Jerusalem to all generations."(Joel 3:20)

And here we learn to live by faith. "I will avenge their blood, and I will not clear the guilty, for the LORD dwells in Zion."(Joel 3:21)

God is our Father, but at the same time He is the Creator and Ruler of all mankind. But he lives right in Zion. That is why we must do our best to exalt Him here and learn and get to know Him here. This is what we will tell to future generations.

Conclusion: Remember and Act!

Now, let's summarize today's sermon. We are experiencing unprecedented events associated with COVID-19. In the midst of these, what we will tell to future generations is God's judgment and compassion, the rule of the world, and cherish the heart of God to church. By knowing this and telling it to future generations, I hope that we will have the opportunity to repent even if we sin, enjoy the fullness that He pours out, and become one of those who do well in church life until the Lord comes.