



Table Talk

By Rev. Timothy J. Swenson • ILT Dean of Chapel

Ash Wednesday

February 22, 2023

JOEL 2:12-19

.....
"Where is their God?" Vs. 17



Your God has a reputation to uphold. As we begin this Lenten season, a season associated with repentance, we have two calls for repentance here. First, the call for the people to repent. The Lord calls for the people to return (vs. 12)—that is, they should repent of their pursuit of other gods. Then an anonymous voice speaks to the people calling them to a sincere, heartfelt repentance rather than mere ritual action (vs. 13). The conclusion of vs. 13 names the qualities of the people's God... the qualities that establish his reputation: gracious... merciful... slow to anger... abounding in steadfast love... relenting over disaster... The people are confident that their Lord will uphold this reputation. Because of this reputation, there is hope that the people will repent and return to worship their true Lord (vs. 14).

When this takes place, celebration and rejoicing bursts forth in Zion (vs. 15-16). The "ministers of the Lord" call upon the Lord to remember his reputation... to remember his name (Ex. 34:6) ... and out of his grace and mercy to "spare your people." (vs. 17). The Lord's forgiveness and forbearance with the idolatry... with the sin of his people... the Lord's mercy will bear witness to the nations and to their peoples that the Lord's people have a God, a great God.

As the Lord spares his people, the nations will be precluded from asking, "Where is their God?"

This God... This God with a reputation to uphold... This God is your God! You need never wonder, "Where is your God?" Your God makes himself readily available wherever there is a pulpit where his Word is preached... wherever there is a font holding the water of baptism... wherever there is an altar serving as a table for the Lord's Supper... wherever there is an ear to hear your confession... to hear you rending your heart... there, there will be lips to pronounce the forgiveness of your sins. At those places your God will have found you for he is "gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love" (vs. 13).

Table Talk: Discuss this reputation that your Lord will uphold.

Pray: Heavenly Father, grant me to return to your grace and mercy and enjoy your forbearance and forgiveness. Amen



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JOEL 2:12-19 ESV

“Yet even now,” declares the Lord, “return to me with all your heart, with fasting, with weeping, and with mourning; ¹³ and rend your hearts and not your garments.” Return to the Lord your God, for he is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love; and he relents over disaster. ¹⁴ Who knows whether he will not turn and relent, and leave a blessing behind him, a grain offering and a drink offering for the Lord your God?

¹⁵ Blow the trumpet in Zion; consecrate a fast; call a solemn assembly; ¹⁶ gather the people. Consecrate the congregation; assemble the elders; gather the children, even nursing infants. Let the bridegroom leave his room, and the bride her chamber.

¹⁷ Between the vestibule and the altar let the priests, the ministers of the Lord, weep and say, “Spare your people, O Lord, and make not your heritage a reproach, a byword among the nations. Why should they say among the peoples, ‘Where is their God?’”

¹⁸ Then the Lord became jealous for his land and had pity on his people. ¹⁹ The Lord answered and said to his people, “Behold, I am sending to you grain, wine, and oil, and you will be satisfied; and I will no more make you a reproach among the nations.



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