

Bible Study on Lessons for October 23-24

Greetings! So here we go again. The Theme for this week is *Feeling lousy is good for the soul.*

Please read the first lesson – Joel 2:27-29 there is little know about the prophet Joel. Why it's not even clear just when he lived. It is thought he lived during the fifth or fourth century B.C. This was a time of great tragedy for the Israelites. Joel describes a terrible invasion of locusts and a devastating drought that stalked the land. Following an account of these tragedies Joel goes on to convey to the people God's call for their repentance and the promise of God to restore and bless his people. Verses 27-29 we hear the voice of God assuring his people that he is among them, and they will never be despised again. Then God gives his people an even greater gift. He will pour out his spirit on all the people, and the young in turn will proclaim God to all while the old men will dream again and the young men will see visions. What a powerful message. We are told that even in the midst of overwhelming natural disasters God will still be with his people and his presence will help them to hope and dream again.

Questions: Have you ever been the victim of a flood, a tornado or suffered through a long drought? If so how did you feel? Were you afraid? Did you think about just giving up? Was there something that somebody said to you that gave you hope? How about the words from the prophet Joel? We need to remember that even in the midst of terrible disasters that God has not deserted us. His spirit is still with us. Now what we see in Joel's letter is that it's after our repentance that we can see God's good and gracious actions.

Now read Psalm 65:1-8 This Psalm is described as a song of praise and thanksgiving. Notice the reason the psalmist gives for he and his people's praise of God. There are two parts to the answer... First, it's because God answers prayer.

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Second the psalmist wants his people to believe that even though they are defeated by their own sin God forgives them.

The psalmist goes on to tell how the people are filled with joy and gratitude for all that God does for them. He ends this passage by describing how people all over the world trust in this all powerful and all creating God.

Questions: What motivates you to praise God? Is it because he answers your prayers? Is it because you know that He forgives you? Do you see God's handiwork in all of creation? Has your own repentance brought you to a greater understanding of the love and mercy of God?

Now read 2 Timothy 1:1-7 as you already know Paul is writing to his companion and young assistant. Paul begins this letter by warning Timothy to be on guard against false teaching in the church.

Question: You have heard it said that it doesn't matter what you believe just as long as you believe. Do you agree with this statement? Paul certainly did not! The false teaching that Paul is warning Timothy about was the belief that all in the physical world was evil and that the only good to be found was in the spiritual world. The way you came to this understanding was by a special secret knowledge and by practices designed to protect you from this evil physical world. This teaching created a division in the church between the spiritual elite who had this secret knowledge and those who did not.

Question: Do you believe there is some truth in this? Now read Genesis Chapter 1. Note how at the end of every day of creation God was pleased with what he had created. Other translations use the word good. So it's very clear God said this physical world that He created is good.

Question: Why do you think that people living in Paul's time would come to believe that all in the physical world is evil? Now read the Key Text which is Luke 18:9-14

This is the story of the Pharisee and the Tax Collector.

Sometimes it not immediately apparent as to why Jesus told one of his stories, but not so with this one! Verse 9 reads: "He also told this parable to some who trusted in themselves that they were righteous and regarded others with contempt." There it is. Our Lord is warning us to be on guard lest our own pride and arrogance take us far from God. A great story, but in today's world it's all about feeling good about ourselves, improving our self esteem and having a positive attitude. In the text the Pharisee certainly has high self esteem. But Jesus makes it very clear that this attitude takes him away from God. On the other hand the Tax Collector is brutally honest about his shortcomings. You see it's only when we can see who we really are; warts and all that we can also need that we need a savior.

Questions: So do you find it easy to look at your own faults? What happens when you do? Do you see this as a process that leads to the cleansing of your heart and soul?

So see you on Saturday or Sunday.

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