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| Psalm 8 Joel 2:21-27 | Harvest FestivalHow am I…? | Pinelands – 9am – 30/03/2025 |

When I walk through “Food Lovers Market” and look at…

the wonderful variety of fruit and vegetables that we can grow,

I find myself saying, “Thank you God!”

A few years ago while hiking in the African bushveld,

Watching the sun rise and hearing the bush come alive,

I found myself saying, “Thank you God!”

A few weeks ago watching the sun set over the sea,

 From Sea point promenade…

I remember saying to myself, “Thank you God!”

When I look at Creation,

the mountains and the rivers and the animals and flowers,

a new born baby and the joy of it’s parents,

the different cultures and nationalities of people,

 I think…

 “God, what a wonderful imagination you have.”

Very early on in the Bible we read about the creation of the world,

the creation of all that we see and touch…

and Genesis 1:31 says…

***“God saw all that he had made,***

 ***and it was very good”***

**BUT** what a mess we humans have made of God’s beautiful world!

 Pollution, forests getting wiped out,

Extinct animal species, a dangerously thin ozone layer,

Tribal and Ethnic wars, Confusion and Alienation,

Negative manifestations of Greed and Power

What a mess we’ve made of God’s beautiful world!

In our Bible Reading from the book of Joel, we are reminded…

of God’s good intentions for his world.

Earlier in **Joel 2:12** *(we did not read)* God calls upon his people…

to change their wicked ways,

***‘To return to God with all your heart, with fasting***

***And weeping and mourning.’***

We are in that period of LENT

IS God… calling us as individuals, men, women and children,

IS God… calling us as a Church, a City, and as a NATION…

to stop our wicked ways,

to repent and to return to him. *(Last week sermon – David)*

**Joel 2:13** continues and says:

 ***“Come back to the Lord your God.***

 ***He is kind and full of Mercy,***

 ***He is patient and keeps his promise.***

 ***He is always ready to forgive and not punish.”***

**Joel’s vision** then moves to pointing towards…

God’s kingdom breaking into our world…

 *(In the passage read earlier)*

 **CELEBRATED**… in HARVEST FESTIVAL

**HARVEST** in the Biblical context…

 Is a Powerful Symbol Representing…

God's provision and His blessing,

God's Generosity… in all aspects of Life

**Harvest Festival** is a moment we mark on our Calendar…

 To Celebrate… and to Thank God…

For His Provision and Blessings.

For breaking into our World.

 For being part of us… and

 Making us part of Him.

We do that… *(not only at Harvest Festival)*

We do that … in Worship *(Whenever we Worship)*

 In Communion around the table

 In saying Grace before a meal

 As we live our Faith in everyday life

***BUT…* Harvest Festival…** As much as it is a moment of Worship

***Is Also…*** **GOD’S CALL** for us to **SHARE…**

 ***Just as God is generous,***

we are called… To **Share** our abundance with those in need,

 mirroring God’s love and compassion.

So todays produce that we have collected, and offered in Worship

 will go to **Loaves and Fishes.**

 **Loaves and Fishes…**

 Been in ministry for over 30 years

 They are a second phase shelter for homeless people

 Based in Observatory.

Their **Mission Statement** is:

*“To be a place of spiritual, psychological*

 *and material renewal for destitute men and*

*women from all walks of life”.*

Homelessness is the narrative of our time and **Loaves and Fishes**

 are doing their best to address that need.

***BUT…*** There is **MORE we can DO… MORE we need to DO**

So today I want to leave you with ***3 Questions,***

in the context of **Harvest Festival**

**Firstly…** Not only are we ***Recipients*** of the HARVEST…

 Receiving God’s… Goodness and Provision

 Blessings and Presence

 ***BUT…*** We are also ***Participants*** in the HARVEST…

 We need to **SHARE…** Goodness and Provision

 Blessings and Presence

 God, **Partners** with us in this World…

 As much as it is in a mess, we have made a mess of it

 We need to be ***BARERS of…***

 God’s Goodness and Provision,

 God’s Blessings and Presence,

 In Everyday Life.

 Do we Bring… God’s Goodness and Provision,

 God’s Blessings and Presence,

 Into every day life?

 What does that look like?

 What do we need to do to share the Harvest?

**Question 1… *How am I Partnering with God in the Harvest?***

**Secondly…** We are to ***Care*** for the Earth.

 We are Stewards, Custodians, Managers,

of ALL of God’s Resources.

 Are we Responsible… In Caring for the Land?

 In Using the Earth’s Resources?

 Do we consciously make an effort to CARE for the EARTH?

* Recycle, Save Water, use less plastic,
* Pick up litter, or just throw it out the window?

**Question 2… *How am I Caring for the Earth?***

**Thirdly…** We are to ***Care*** for others

 Do we actively strive to SERVE and Care for others?

 ***DO WE…*** Go the Extra Mile?

 Uplift those in our Sphere of influence?

 Encourage the down-trodden?

 Love the outcast?

 Welcome the outsider?

 Love our Neighbour as ourselves?

**Question 3… *How am I caring for others?***

As much as we Celebrate our **Harvest Festival…**

 ***Praising and Thanking*** God for all his…

Provision and Generosity,

Blessings and Presence,

 It means precious little if that is where it ends or stays.

 It has to move beyond this Service, This Moment…

 Into the our messed up World.

**IF** our God **IS…** the God we Proclaim him to be,

The ***God of the HARVEST***?

**ARE WE…** Pointing people to His KINGDOM?

**Three Questions… *How am I Partnering with God in the Harvest?***

***How am I Caring for the Earth?***

***How am I Caring for Others?***

**Psalm 8 God's Glory and Human Dignity**

O Lord, our Lord,

 your greatness is seen in all the world!

Your praise reaches up to the heavens;

it is sung by children and babies.

You are safe and secure from all your enemies;

 you stop anyone who opposes you.

When I look at the sky, which you have made,

 at the moon and the stars, which you set in their places—

what are human beings, that you think of them;

 mere mortals, that you care for them?

Yet you made them inferior only to yourself;

 you crowned them with glory and honour.

You appointed them rulers over everything you made;

 you placed them over all creation:

sheep and cattle, and the wild animals too;

the birds and the fish

 and the creatures in the seas.

O Lord, our Lord,

 your greatness is seen in all the world!

**Joel 2:21-27**

“Fields, don't be afraid,

 but be joyful and glad

 because of all the Lord has done for you.

Animals, don't be afraid.

 The pastures are green;

 the trees bear their fruit,

 and there are plenty of figs and grapes.”

“Be glad, people of Zion,

 rejoice at what the Lord your God has done for you.

 He has given you the right amount of autumn rain;

 he has poured down the winter rain for you

 and the spring rain as before.

The threshing places will be full of grain;

 the pits beside the presses will overflow with wine and olive oil.

I will give you back what you lost

 in the years when swarms of locusts ate your crops.

 It was I who sent this army against you.

Now you will have plenty to eat, and be satisfied.

 You will praise the Lord your God,

 who has done wonderful things for you.

 My people will never be despised again.

Then, Israel, you will know that I am among you

 and that I, the Lord, am your God

 and there is no other.

 My people will never be despised again.”