

In the face of a crisis

In our sermon on Sunday we will be looking at a family in crisis. We'll see how different members of the family looked back on their experiences and how they responded. Alongside thoughts of a family in crisis there was a bigger picture of Egypt and Israel in crisis.



The book of Joel seems to resonate with the world around us as we reflect on life under Covid – another crisis.



Not much is known about Joel, nor where or when his message was brought but it speaks powerfully to a nation facing a devastating national crisis. Joel used the symbolism of a devastating plague which would leave lives ruined. Replace 'plague' with 'virus' and we can see many parallels around the world.

When a crisis comes, history shows the tendency to apportion blame. I know that the government will be launching their own review into Covid19 in the Spring, but I wonder how long that will take. Where will the finger of blame point? Do we want blame, or to learn lessons?

Could it be that God uses disruptions to our routine to invite us to re-orientate our lives towards Him? If you can, take time to read Joel's book, but let me focus on



the first 12 verses and verses 28-32 of chapter 2. Joel is describing a disaster of massive proportions. It would hit everyone hard with the basic needs of life taken away. Basic food would be in short supply, their equivalent of the pubs closed, 'posh' food having disappeared and celebrations impossible. Even the offerings to God were in jeopardy. He sums up the situation 'surely the joy of mankind is withered away'.

Sound familiar? Joel's analysis could resonate with many as they look back over the last 18 months – perhaps it does with you. Life has been tough; it still is for many around the world. Many people's physical and mental health have suffered.

Joel calls on people to 'listen', 'wake up', 'mourn', 'despair' and 'wail' – in other words to 'stop doing what you normally do and do something completely different'. What has God been saying to you in these last months – what has he been saying to the UK – to the world?

Maybe it's the same as God was saying through Joel – for the nation to 'cry out to the Lord', led by the clergy.^a Joel sees that God is the answer. It's easy in a time of crisis to turn to other solutions – perhaps to open a bottle of wine, bend someone's ear, moan to your family, turn to eBay. But turning to God^b is the answer.

God will judge at what he calls the Day of the Lord. What does God look for? Joel points to sincere repentance at a personal and national level.^c It's a common theme in scripture and the only way to a fulfilling relationship with God.

The promise for those who turn to God is that he will extravagantly pour out His Spirit and save all who turn to Him.^d

I am aware of at least one country which came to God in repentance^e and suffered relatively mild problems from the pandemic – is this a coincidence or is it a sign of God's hand on them?

I'm not to know, but this I do know – God loves us, knows us and accepts us as we come to Him in repentance and with faith, whatever crisis we may be, or not.

- May God walk before you and prepare the way
May God walk beside you and keep you company
May God walk behind you and protect you always
May God always surround you on all sides with his love

^a Joel 1:13-14

^b Joel 2:1,11

^c Joel 2:12

^d Joel 2:28-32.

^e [Ghanaians Anchor National Prayer and Fasting Day on Thanksgiving and Repentance \(aciafrica.org\)](https://www.aciafrica.org/)