

## WEDNESDAY 01 June 2022 “Joel or Drunk?” (Acts 2:14-18)

Good morning my "Walking with Jesus" friends all around the world,

As we begin a new month and the summer of 2022 lays out before us, I wonder how do you see the world today? No matter where you live in the world, how is the economy of *your* country right now? What about the availability of food, water, fuel, and other essentials for living in *your* city? How about the availability and cost of housing where *you* live? And what about safety and security in the streets or shops or even neighborhoods where *you* live?

*I ask these questions because you and I live in a rapidly changing world and no matter where we live, life is getting more and more precarious for all of us, isn't that true? That's not a political referendum, it's a factual statement on the declining state of our world.*

Yesterday I left you in a confused crowd of people in the city of Jerusalem, about 2000 years ago. It was the Pentecost Festival and thus Jews from all over the world had gathered for this week-long celebration. As they came, they brought news of what life was like in their remote parts of the Roman Empire. The state of our world then was amazingly similar to what it is now! It's not difficult for us to imagine markets and streets filled with people jostling one another as they walk, and the constant buzz of conversation as thousands of people are sharing news, much of it troubling.

*But on this particular day it's not a buzz of conversation, it's a near panic of shouts and screams and people frantically scurrying about, for a phenomenon is happening in Jerusalem!* A great wind rushed through one part of the city and a large crowd has gathered in that part of Jerusalem. A group of people, all friends and followers of Jesus, had just experienced something almost unexplainable as with the wind came fire, tongues of fire as Dr Luke describes it, and the fire tongues settled on the heads of those friends of Jesus, without burning them! They were having a multi-sensory encounter with Almighty, Holy God!

As Jesus had promised, before He ascended back to heaven, **this was the anticipated arrival of the Holy Spirit of God!** We don't know how long those fire tongues were visible, but what happened next shocked the thousands of visitors in Jerusalem, who came from around the world. These anointed friends of Jesus began speaking in languages they did not know, but languages quickly recognized by the visitors to Jerusalem as the languages spoken in the far away regions of the Empire. Luke records their response this way: **"Amazed and perplexed, they asked one another, 'what does this mean?'"** (Acts 2:5-12)

As always, when there are unexplainable phenomena, some people leap to crazy conclusions. Such was the case here as some people accused these anointed friends of Jesus as being drunk! But our friend... bold, brash Peter waved his arms to quiet the crowd and he began to shout... **"Fellow Jews and all of you who live in Jerusalem, let me explain this to you, listen carefully to what I say..."** (Acts 2:14)

I admit that I love Peter's enthusiasm, his spontaneity, his impulsiveness. Like everyone else, Peter was shocked by what was happening, and I see no evidence Jesus had prepared him for this moment with instructions on what to do. *The Holy Spirit led Peter to step up, to calm the crowd, and take full advantage of this moment by providing the truthful explanation to the phenomenon. God was at work here, in Jerusalem!!*

The crowd quieted, everyone turning to look at the bold fisherman waving his arms, do you see him over there? **"These men are not drunk as you suppose. It's only 9 in the morning! No, this is what was spoken by the prophet Joel:**

**'In the last days', God says, 'I will pour out My Spirit on all people. Your sons and daughters will prophesy, your young men will see visions, your old men will dream dreams. Even on My servants, both men and women, I will pour out My Spirit...'** (Acts 2:16-18)

Peter paused. Eyes were wide open, some mouths even dropped open. Heads were whipping back and forth as people looked at Peter, then at those friends of Jesus speaking languages they didn't know, then back to Peter again! Now friends, the truth is *what we are experiencing in this moment in Jerusalem is dramatically different from what could happen in your town or mine if this same Holy Spirit experience happened today.* Do you see WHY the difference? Peter quoted an Old Testament, minor prophet Joel, to explain the phenomenon happening in Jerusalem. It amazes me that Peter, a fisherman, knew the Old Testament so well he could stand up and impulsively quote and explain Joel's statement! **It's even more shocking that most, if not all the people in the crowd, knew exactly what Peter was talking about!!**

*Oh, the huge difference it makes in any family, any city, any society when the people turn away from God, reject God's Word out of their homes, their schools, and every segment of life in their society.* That's the darkness in which we live today! I would guess a huge percentage of the world's population today, maybe even a large percentage of the people in your church have no idea who the prophet Joel is or what he wrote? Do you?

Joel is a little 3-chapter prophetic book in the Old Testament of the Bible. We know very little about the author, a man named Joel, the son of Pethuel. (Joel 1:1) Many scholars place the time of Joel's writing around 835bc during the reign of one of the boy kings in Jerusalem. Joash became king when he was only 7 years old, in a most unusual set of circumstances. His father was Ahaziah and only reigned as king one year before he was assassinated. His grandmother, the mother of his father, was named Athaliah, and other than the famous queen Jezebel, Athalia may be one of the most wicked women named in the Bible. This one statement recorded in 2 Chronicles 22:3 says it all: **"...she**

***encouraged her son in doing wrong.***" Can you imagine a mother teaching her son, mentoring her son, to behave wickedly?

*So little Joash was born into that dysfunctional, wicked, violent family!* When his father was assassinated, his grandmother, Athalia, set about to kill all the living princes in the royal family, and she claimed the throne for herself! Of course, little Joash was a prince, and thus destined to be slaughtered by his grandmother. Seeing what was happening a courageous priest in Jerusalem was able to get into the palace and take little prince Joash and brought him to the Temple. He and his wife then kept little Joash in their home and raised him in a loving, safe home, teaching him God's Word and the God blessed history of Israel. When that little boy Joash was 7 years old that priest led a rebellion to forcibly remove wicked Athalia from the throne. She was killed and little prince Joash was crowned king... at age 7!! Almost sounds like a Hollywood movie, doesn't it? But it's factual, true history!

Boy king Joash reigned in Jerusalem 40 years and that priest who had rescued him was one of his most trusted, wise, God honoring advisors until he died of old age. During those years God blessed king Joash as he led the kingdom of Judah wisely, honorably and God was glorified. Sadly, after that priest died, other advisors came to king Joash and turned his heart away from God. It was in those years God raised up Joel to speak God's warnings to the wayward king and the people of Jerusalem...about 800 years before the Holy Spirit came to Jerusalem and Peter stood to quiet the crowd and explain that Joel's prophetic words were happening right in front of their eyes.

Let's pause right here... may I urge you to take a few moments to look at your life, your city, your extended family in a much wider picture of the past 200 years or so? *Are some troubling things, terrifying things happening in our world today that God was warning us about many years ago? Do you see the spiritual drift, in fact the outright rejection of God over the past decades where you live?* Could it be God is responding with judgement? Tomorrow we'll look very closely both at what Joel warned, and Peter identified as God's fulfillment of Joel's prophecy. For today... just look closely at your city and spend some time talking with God, asking Him what HE sees and what He wants YOU to see.

**Today's Scripture is Acts 2:14-18.**