# Joel — Locusts

"What the locust swarm has left, the great locusts have eaten; what the great locusts have left, the young locusts have eaten; what the young locusts have eaten, other locusts have eaten." –Joel 1:4

Other translations of this verse use words such as gnawing and swarming, creeping and stripping as descriptors of the locusts. These images make us shift uncomfortably, cringe in disgust, or want to skip this small prophetic book entirely. Yet, there's something about this book of the Scripture that stands out to us, and it probably wouldn't do so without the image of the destructive locusts. What kind of destruction, or evil, does it remind you of?

The image of these locusts makes me think of creatures in *The Lord of the Rings*. The goblins or orcs swarming the pillars of the great hall of Khazad-dûm or all the servants of Mordor flooding to The Black Gate. There's something in the images of literature, from the Text to our classic fantasy favorites, that teach us lessons not just about the world, but about ourselves.

Not all too different from how we're inspired by the great stories of Moses, Rahab, or David, so many of the themes we read in the Text have come to influence new stories, helping us remember where we came from, what it means to be human, or how to hold onto hope in the darkest of times.

***… lessons not just about the world, but about ourselves.***

It's become too normal for me to dread reading the news of the day. School shootings. Terrorism. Genocide. Racism. Wars. This is the world every citizen wakes up to each morning. More and more tragedies occur every day, and as much as adults would like to protect their children and future generations from the horrors of this reality, they cannot always do so. It tears, it breaks, it rends my heart. I bet it does yours too.

Some of these words are part of the introduction to a paper I wrote in grad school discussing the use of more speculative literature (fantasy, dystopian, sci-fi, etc.) with young adults. My argument was that such stories bring hope, showing us perseverance and courage in the face of great evil (skills we ALL need to get better at) in a safer space than the news they find on their phones. I also find it interesting that they are often from the viewpoint of a forgotten or marginalized remnant. The prophets often seem to feel a bit like speculative literature. We're so far removed from the time, the culture, the context that we can carry on with our day without taking any lesson from it.

***We can't help but be confronted by the uncomfortable realities of our real world.***

If we truly seek to remember where we came from and learn from what we study or read, we can't help but be confronted with the uncomfortable realities of our real world.

What we do with these realizations, these discoveries, these newfound truths matters. What we choose to do when we learn our history or our story matters. What we choose to do with our power, or lack of it, matters. What we choose to do with God's warnings, in the swarm of locusts, or when we are brought home out of exile, matters.

In Job, we don't just see near destruction, we see hope. We find hope after repentance. We may tear our clothes and rend our hearts, asking God to break our hearts for what breaks His, but what do we do now? We see a remnant, who, in spite of the creeping, swarming, gnawing locusts, look to the heavens to find where their help comes from. Similar to this quote near the end of the third book in *The Lord of the Rings* trilogy:

***"There, peeping among the cloud-wrack above a dark tor high up in the mountains, Sam saw a white star twinkle for a while. The beauty of it smote his heart, as he looked up out of the forsaken land, and hope returned to him. For like a shaft, clear and cold, the thought pierced him that in the end the Shadow was only a small and passing thing: there was a light and high beauty for ever beyond its reach."***

From warning and woe to hope. From repentance and rending to resiliency and perseverance. We have so many reasons to believe in God's faithfulness. To trust in His Story. To face the darkness head-on and look for the light. And we can do so together. The young and the old, the man and the woman, the weak and the strong, all part of a story grander than any we could write, because it has proven to be good and true time and again.

# PRAYER

*Lord, dwell in me,*

*As the storm rages and the locusts swarm,*
*may I recognize the error of my ways,*
*repent, and seek to persevere.*
*Gathering the young and the old, the brother and the sister,*
*the lost and the found,*
*for You make things far from hopeless.*
*In the midst of the turmoil in my world and my heart,*
*You are still at work.*
*Surely, You have done great things, and will do so again.*

*As we remember who we were, where we came from,*
*and who You are, dwell in all of us.*

*Amen*

**EPISODE 60 (SESSION 2)**

# THE FOUR PILLARS



BEMA Discipleship is built on four pillars; a **Four-Pillared Perspective** to help us remember **to elevate the words of God** (not ours) and help us identify the principles that we see recurring in the story of God's people.

Here are some applications for this episode echoing the ideas of the four pillars:

## I

### TEXT

*What stands out from the Text that you want to carry with you as you read the prophets? Try meditating over and memorizing parts of Joel.*

## II

### COMMUNITY

*What is your community drawn to in this Text? Words of woe or words of hope and calls to perseverance? Why is this? What in our world breaks your heart?*

## III

### DISCIPLESHIP

*Who has come alongside you for you to show the dream of men and women, young and old, speaking prophecies? How can you live out perseverance for young people to model?*

## IV

### WRESTLING

*What are your thoughts on this shift from woe and repentance to repentance and hope? Why do you, and we, deserve this hope too? Where are you struggling?*

Spotify

**Are you a music listener?**

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Song suggestions? Send them to bemabesorah@gmail.com.

BEMA SESSION 2

MEDITATION & PRAYER

# REFLECTION, APPLICATION & IMPACT

There are three emphases that we are always thinking about in terms of application at BEMA. These may be stated explicitly at times, but often we will want you to do the work of finding ways to connect the dots to the things we are learning. Much of this is what makes the work of BEMA distinct as a ministry of Impact Campus Ministries.

**CREATING A SPACE**
*SPIRITUAL FORMATION*

*True success is developing intimacy with God. In Session 1, we encountered the idea of "Creating Space for God" in our lives. We believe that* ***if we do our part of creating that space, God will fill it*** *as He desires. You're already doing this as you dive into the Text and jump into a place to discuss. God will meet you in these places! Look for places the Holy Spirit can do work in and through you as you go about your everyday life.*

**CONSIDERING CAMPUS**
*YOUNG PEOPLE FOCUS*

***We believe that young adults are shaping the future of this world.*** *Jesus modeled a ministry of discipling young adults, and that approach has and will work. If you are a college student who is listening, we want this material to be directly helpful to your pursuits. If you are not a college student, we want to challenge you to come alongside one and work together.*

**SACRED STATION**
*THEOLOGY OF WORK*

*This isn't only for church or Bible study; this is about what we do every day. How we do our job and how it may take advantage of or bring life to others is something God says is central to our presence in the world. Justice is very much something God cares about. Does our physical work (our 9–5 job) bring shalom or chaos? Does it exploit creation? The way we manage our employees, interact with customers or coworkers, care for our children, or create products can provide relief to others.* ***The work we do every day is sacred and matters!***

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