

"God is Good All the Time." — November 19, 2017
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Joel 2:21-27

The German philosopher Nietzsche once said, "Out of chaos comes order." It is possible that when things fall apart, new and beautiful things can begin.

In the early 1950's, three young teens living in Manchester, England, had part-time jobs at a movie theatre. During intermission, they would entertain the crowds with what today we would call karaoke, lip-syncing to the music. One day on their way to the theatre, they dropped the LP record, and it smashed in pieces. What were they to do now?

In agonizing fear, they sang Qigé for the first time. The crowds loved it! And the music group the "Bee-Jees" began their career. If the Bee-Jees are not your kind of music, you may wish they had not dropped that record! But, it is an example of how something broken may lead to a new and marvelous future.

Most of us entered adulthood differently than today's young adults. After our Honeymoon, Sylvia and I moved into an apartment, and we both were gainfully employed. In contrast, a growing number of young adults continue to depend upon their parents for some type of assistance. Being independent is a two-edged sword, however: you are empowered, but sometimes you are overwhelmed.

As dependents, we are regularly unaware of the requirements and responsibilities that are inherent in being a loving, caring adult and/or parent or grandparent. When adulthood comes, it is sometimes simpler to slip into a yearning for more carefree times, when life seemed stress-free.

In some ways our faith can be like this; when times become rough, when it appears as if God's loving care has disappeared. When the "*Heavens are as Brass*,"

and our prayers look like they are not reaching God. Or, when the wind blows, and the lightning cracks, and the rains come, and even the birds aren't flying; it is frequently difficult to trust in God.

The prophet Joel tells this far better than I. As we listen to the glorious promises of God, we see the prophet is speaking following the destruction of Judah's lands caused by locusts, after the Israelites return from the Persian captivity.

While what I think I need is one thing; to face a real need is quite another. We who live in structurally sound homes, find it problematical to envision our homes, farms, even our lives destroyed by insects. Again, it would be so simple to slide into a comfortable agnosticism than to confront such devastation.

The prophet Joel is saying that the plans of God for God's people are not for obliteration, but for goodness and life. God confirms that he is invested in the welfare of his people, and God will not let this present suffering be the final word.

This is one reason Thanksgiving Day is significant day, because it reminds us that, although God does not promise a leisurely life, God does promise to be present in our midst and to provide for our need. As children of God we are heirs of the promises God makes. We are a continuation of God's caring action in the world. So, we have many reasons to be thankful beyond all that we have been given.

We sometimes have misplaced expectations of God, which can then be translated into thinking God is ambivalent. Which is an excellent way of saying this is how our sin is made visible. But, gratitude is a form of confession, and we know about confession: it is good for the soul. It frees us.

Gratitude helps us get our position as God's children back in order. It liberates us from the responsibility for everything all of the time. Thankfulness frees us from desiring those things we have been told we need: comfort, power, or

authority. And this liberty is what God longs for us to have because, living in agape love, we discover completion, fullness and joy. The acts of God are not meant to be building blocks for more consumption. instead, they are opportunities to love and care for one another. Thankfully, God does not give us what we want; instead, God gives us what is right. And for this we are grateful. Alleluia. Amen.