

September 5, 2004
A.M. Service
Patchogue Church of the Nazarene

“There Is Still Time”

Joel 2:11b-13 and 28b-32a NLT

The day of the LORD is an awesome, terrible thing. Who can endure it?
12 That is why the LORD says, "Turn to me now, while there is time! Give me your hearts. Come with fasting, weeping, and mourning. 13 Don't tear your clothing in your grief; instead, tear your hearts." Return to the LORD your God, for he is gracious and merciful. He is not easily angered. He is filled with kindness and is eager not to punish you.

(The LORD says) I will pour out my Spirit upon all people. Your sons and daughters will prophesy. Your old men will dream dreams. Your young men will see visions. 29 In those days, I will pour out my Spirit even on servants, men and women alike.

30 "I will cause wonders in the heavens and on the earth--blood and fire and pillars of smoke. 31 The sun will be turned into darkness, and the moon will turn bloodred before that great and terrible day of the LORD arrives. 32 And anyone who calls on the name of the LORD will be saved.

Are you a procrastinator? Have you ever waited and waited to make a decision to do something and then it was too late, you missed your chance to your regret? My youngest sister is late for everything. When she has to be someplace, she starts getting ready at the time she is suppose to be there. She has lost jobs; she couldn't have certain pictures taken at her wedding because she was so late...for her own wedding (she got married in the reception hall. She was supposed to arrive early to allow for certain pictures to be taken before the ceremony started. She was so late there was no time to take those pictures). But mostly she has lost out on some once in a lifetime experiences (especially with family) because of her tardiness and procrastinating.

I knew someone who put off going to a doctor until he was so sick he had to be taken to the doctor. When he finally was seen the doctor said, "If he had only come to me sooner I could have helped him, he could have been cured. Now, it's too late."

A man goes to the doctor after feeling ill. The doctor says, "You know, you should have come to see me sooner. Unfortunately you have waited too long and you are going to die this evening." The man is distraught and wonders how he is going to tell his wife. Well, he tells her and she takes it pretty well. "Honey, tonight is yours, I am going to do whatever will make you happy," she says. "I am going to treat you like a king." She prepares a scrumptious gourmet dinner, his favorite with, candles-the works. Afterward she tells him to sit in his easy chair, gives him the remote and tells him to watch whatever he wants. And she does whatever he asks and gets him whatever he asks for.

The wife goes to sleep that night knowing she kept her promise to make her husband

happy. She is exhausted and soon falls asleep. Well, the husband is wide-awake watching the clock. He knows that he is doomed. Wondering when it will happen he just can't sleep. So, he taps her..."Honey?" he whispers. "I can't sleep would you turn our bedroom TV on and get me the remote that is on top of the TV?" She gets up turns on the TV gives him the remote, rolls over and goes back to sleep. He taps her again. "Honey," he says, Could you get me a little something to snack on?" She is getting cranky, but under the circumstances she grants her dying husband's wishes. Finally the wife rolls over and begins to snore. Well, the man decides to tap her again. "Honey?" he whispers. She rolls over and yells, "Oh sure! You don't have to get up in the morning!!!"

Though not as sure as the man in my joke, not of us can be sure we will be getting "up in the morning."

In our text Joel talks of the end that is coming to all at the end of the world; An awesome and terrible day. Peter described that day like this:

(2 Peter 3:10-12 NLT) But the day of the Lord will come as unexpectedly as a thief. Then the heavens will pass away with a terrible noise, and everything in them [on earth and in the atmosphere around the earth] will disappear in fire, and the earth and everything on it will be exposed to judgment... everything around us is going to melt away...God will set the heavens on fire and the elements will melt away in the flames.

Matt 24:3-14, 26-33, 35-39 & 44 NLT

(Jesus') disciples came to him privately and asked, "When will all this take place? And will there be any sign ahead of time to signal your return and the end of the world?"

4 Jesus told them, "Don't let anyone mislead you. 5 For many will come in my name, saying, 'I am the Messiah.' They will lead many astray. 6 And wars will break out near and far, but don't panic. Yes, these things must come, but the end won't follow immediately. 7 The nations and kingdoms will proclaim war against each other, and there will be famines and earthquakes in many parts of the world. 8 But all this will be only the beginning of the horrors to come.

9 "Then you will be arrested, persecuted, and killed. You will be hated all over the world because of your allegiance to me. 10 And many will turn away from me and betray and hate each other. 11 And many false prophets will appear and will lead many people astray. 12 Sin will be rampant everywhere, and the love of many will grow cold. 13 But those who endure to the end will be saved. 14 And the Good News about the Kingdom will be preached throughout the whole world, so that all nations will hear it; and then, finally, the end will come.

26 "So if someone tells you, 'Look, the Messiah is out in the desert,' don't bother to go and look. Or, 'Look, he is hiding here,' don't believe it! 27 For as the lightning lights up the entire sky, so it will be when the Son of Man comes. 28 Just as the gathering of vultures shows there is a carcass nearby, so these signs indicate that the end is near. 29 "Immediately after those horrible days end, the sun will be darkened, the moon will not give light, the stars will fall from the sky, and the powers of heaven will be shaken.

30 And then at last, the sign of the coming of the Son of Man will appear in the heavens, and there will be deep mourning among all the nations of the earth. And they will see the Son of Man arrive on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. 31 And he will send forth his angels with the sound of a mighty trumpet blast, and they will gather together his chosen ones from the farthest ends of the earth and heaven.

32 "Now learn a lesson from the fig tree. When its buds become tender and its leaves begin to sprout, you know without being told that summer is near. 33 Just so, when you see the events I've described beginning to happen, you can know his return is very near, right at the door.

35 Heaven and earth will disappear, but my words will remain forever.

36 "However, no one knows the day or the hour when these things will happen, not even the angels in heaven or the Son himself. Only the Father knows.

37 "When the Son of Man returns, it will be like it was in Noah's day. 38 In those days before the Flood, the people were enjoying banquets and parties and weddings right up to the time Noah entered his boat. 39 People didn't realize what was going to happen until the Flood came and swept them all away. That is the way it will be when the Son of Man comes.

44 You also must be ready all the time. For the Son of Man will come when least expected.

A local priest and pastor were fishing on the side of the road.

They thoughtfully made a sign saying, "The End is Near! Turn yourself around now before it's too late!" and planned to show it to each passing car.

Well, the very first driver that drove by didn't appreciate the sign and shouted at them: "Leave us alone you religious nuts!"

All of a sudden they heard a big splash, looked at each other, and the priest said to the pastor ... "You think we should just put up a sign that says 'bridge out' instead?"

I hope you don't think I'm just a "religious nut" for telling you, "The End *is* Near!" Jesus predicted the warning signs, signs we are seeing fulfilled today. The sign the priest and pastor made is true: "The End *is* Near! (and you should) Turn yourself around now before it's too late!"

After Peter described the last day, the Day of the Lord he tells us: (2 Peter 3:11-14 NLT)

11 Since everything around us is going to melt away (what kind of people ought you to be? How should we be?), what holy, godly lives you should be living! 12 You should look forward to that day and hurry it along--the day when God will set the heavens on fire and the elements will melt away in the flames. 13 But we are looking forward to the new heavens and new earth he has promised, a world where everyone is right with God.

14 And so, dear friends, while you are waiting for these things to happen, make every effort to live a pure and blameless life. And be at peace with God.

Joel says, "The day of the LORD is an awesome, terrible thing. Who can endure it?" That is why the LORD says (through Joel), "Turn to me now, while there is time! Give me your hearts [all of your heart not just part of it. Saturday it will be 3 years since that terrible day and horrible events of 9-11-01. For a few weeks, maybe 2 our churches were filled. People were afraid and were turning to God. But the fear wore off and we went back to a more casual relationship with God, back to worldly living where at best God has only a minimal amount of our attention, affection and obedience]. Come [to Him, stop going away from Him turn back to Him] with fasting, weeping, and mourning. [ie. With sorrow for having offended Him, with broken hearts]. Don't tear your clothing in your grief [as was the custom in Joel's day – to actually tear one's clothing as a sign of their grief]; instead, tear your hearts." Return to the LORD your God, for He is gracious and merciful [forgiving and loving]. He is not easily angered. He is filled with kindness and is eager not to punish you.

(The LORD says) "I will pour out my Spirit upon all people. [that includes you] and I will speak to you in many ways."

[Yes] "I will cause wonders in the heavens and on the earth--blood and fire and pillars of smoke. [Yes] The sun will be turned into darkness, and the moon will turn bloodred before that great and terrible day of the LORD arrives. {But] *anyone* who calls on the name of the LORD will be saved."

Paul writes in Rom 3:22-26 (NLT) We are made right in God's sight when we trust in Jesus Christ to take away our sins. And we all can be saved in this same way, no matter who we are or what we have done.

For all have sinned; all fall short of God's glorious standard. Yet now God in his gracious kindness declares us not guilty. He has done this through Christ Jesus, who has freed us by taking away our sins. For God sent Jesus to take the punishment for our sins and to satisfy God's anger against us. We are made right with God when we believe that Jesus shed his blood, sacrificing his life for us...He declares sinners to be right in His sight because they believe in Jesus.

Don't wait until it is too late. Today is the day of salvation. Today is the day to turn to God with your whole heart. Today is the day to believe in Jesus. Today is the day to ask God to pour out His Spirit on you, so that you will live according to the leading of His Spirit in you. Today is the day to choose to give God your life. Return to the LORD your God, for he is gracious and merciful. He is not easily angered. He is filled with kindness and is eager not to punish you but to save you from punishment. He is ready to pour out His Spirit on you if you will only repent and believe. "There Is Still Time"