

## Even Now

Joel 2:11-13

Thinking about a new year brings thoughts of new beginnings. At the dawn of a new year, we wonder if this new year will be better or worse than the last. We wonder if we will be happier and healthier. The answer lies in us and where God is in our life.

### Scripture

*“<sup>11</sup>The day of the LORD is great; it is dreadful. Who can endure it? <sup>12</sup>Even now, declares the LORD, return to me with all your heart, with fasting and weeping and mourning. <sup>13</sup>Rend your heart and not your garments. Return to the LORD your God, for he is gracious and compassionate, slow to anger and abounding in love, and he relents from sending calamity.” Joel 2:11-13 NIV*

### Introduction

The first two words of this verse may be the sweetest words in the Bible - “Even Now.” Those two words “Even Now” are refreshing and exhilarating. They can be the words that set us free from the bondage of our own ways.

With these two words “Even now”, God tells us volumes about what He offers us.

#### 1. “Even Now” means that God accepts procrastinators

The motto of a procrastinator is “Why do today what you can put off until tomorrow?”

Illus: In school, I was a procrastinator pretty often, especially when there was a big book report due. Then I would be up all night cramming to get it done. The end result was never as good as it could have been. I can remember saying to myself, “I am never waiting ‘til the last minute to do this; never again!”

I want you to know that because those words “even now” are in our text it means that God loves and accepts procrastinators.

Many people procrastinate in coming to God. If I were to poll everyone in this congregation, and ask, who wishes they would have waited longer before giving their life to the Lord, no one would raise their hand. But if I were to ask who wishes they

would have given their heart to the Lord earlier, many people would raise their hand.

When we procrastinate on spiritual matters we do so to our own detriment and regret.

Still God receives procrastinators with love. Does that mean that we can procrastinate forever? No. We can put things off until it is too late. And the longer we wait the more difficult it becomes.

Some people are spiritual procrastinators. These are those people who intend to get in a right relationship with God, but just keep putting it off. This is where we get the old saying, “The road to hell is paved with good intentions.”

In the Day of the Lord (judgment) you will ever hear of someone being condemned to hell who fully intended to go there. I do believe you will hear many say, “I thought I had more time!”

The good news is that God still loves procrastinators and “even now” tells us so. Maybe you are a spiritual procrastinator but God loves you and is eager to be Lord of your life.

Joel 2:11 (NIV) ... *The day of the LORD is great; it is dreadful. Who can endure it? <sup>12</sup>Even now, declares the LORD, return to me with all your heart, with fasting and weeping and mourning.*

The Day of the Lord is the final culmination of judgment for all of history. From the time that Adam and Eve sinned in the garden until this era of history is over the final event will be the “Day of the Lord.”

The Day of the Lord will end this era of history. On the Day of the Lord, everyone will finally understand that God is creator and ruler of the universe. There will be no atheist in heaven or hell.

The Bible says, just as in the days of Noah for the day Noah entered the ark the floods came and took them all away, and just like the days of Lot for the day Lot left Sodom, fire and brimstone rained down from heaven and destroyed them all. The gospel of Luke says, “It will be just like this on the day the Son of Man is revealed.”

At the Day of the Lord, God will rescue His people and pour out His wrath on a world that has rejected Him.

But notice the mercy of a loving God. Verse 12 says, “*Even now, declares the LORD, return to me with all your heart, with fasting and weeping and mourning.*”

Even for the worst procrastinators, God says “Even now, return to me with all your heart.”

Even in the face of God’s final judgment, His purpose is to bring us to a place of repentance and redemption. What a merciful God we serve!

Will you answer to God’s call even now?

## 2. “Even Now” means God has a plan for you.

God’s plan is for you to know and serve Him. Even now.

Illus: I often ask high school and college graduates about their plans for the future. Sometimes I get specific answers and at other times they have no idea. Either way, most us rarely do exactly what we planned to do. In my case my plans out of high school were God’s plans. I just made some detours along the way and wasted a lot of time in the middle.

The problem is that we all start out following our own plans. But, our own plans rarely work out the way we expected.

I can remember talking to a young person who was having a tough time. I asked him about giving his life to the Lord, and he talked about all the plans HE had for his life. I asked, “How is that working out for you?” And he hung his head.

Until we realize that only God’s plan will bring satisfaction, we are never going to find what we are looking for.

The sad truth is that many people will spend an entire life trying to make their plan work and go into eternity never having considered that God had something better.

If anyone dies and goes to hell, they will do so in spite of a heavenly Father who has spent a human lifetime continually reaching out and telling them how much He wants to be a part of their life.

I remember reading the book Seven Habits of Highly Effective People. There was one quote in that book that has stuck with me. He said “Many people spend their lives climbing the ladder of success and work and strive and finally make it to the top, only to find out that the ladder was leaning against the wrong wall.”

“Even now” means that God has a plan for you and He is eager to have you own the path to real fulfillment.

## 3. “Even Now” means God accepts you even when you have nothing to offer Him.

The greatest example of God’s mercy is the thief on the cross. He wasted his entire life and now he is dying on a cross. The other thief said to Jesus, “If you are the Son of God, save yourself and us too.” But this thief said, “Don’t you fear God? We deserve what we have gotten but this man has done nothing wrong. Then he turned to Jesus and said, “Lord, remember me when you come into your kingdom.”

He didn’t say “Lord save me.” He just said “remember me.” This was a man who after a wasted life had nothing to offer Jesus that he should go to heaven, but “even now” he asked Jesus to remember him and Jesus replied that today he would be with Him in paradise.

I have heard so many people say that one day they are going to get their life straightened out and get right with God. But I want you to know that God accepts us even when we have nothing to offer. Today is the day, now is the appointed time to give your life to Christ.

And what we don’t realize is that we are all like the thief on the cross. We come to Jesus with nothing to offer. “Even Now” means that how worthy you are to come to Jesus does not even matter. It has no relevance. All that DOES matter is that we come.

## 4. “Even Now” means you have a choice.

It is totally up to you whether you live your life in God’s plan or whether you live without His plan.

“Even Now” means God is not going to make you do anything.

You can ignore that still small voice that is constantly calling you to something better. You can make your own plans and live the way you want to.

You can choose to ignore God’s word and live your own way but that doesn’t make your way right or God’s way wrong. Believing the earth was flat never made the earth flat. Believe things are ok when God’s word says they are not, doesn’t make them ok.

Your theme song can be “I did it my way.” And God will allow you to do it your way. “Even now” means he gives you a choice.

“Even Now” means you can leave this place this morning and never think another thought about God.

But I told you at the beginning that “Even Now” are some of the sweetest words in the Bible...

They are wonderful words because “Even Now” also means that you can choose to follow God’s plan for your life and have the most fulfilling, exciting life that anyone could hope for.

“Even Now” means that God loves you and is calling you. “Even Now” means that you can choose to experience God’s best he has to offer for your life.

You can find His mate, live a life for Him and live with fulfillment and peace. God wants to be the most important thing in your life and He wants the best for you.

“Even Now” means that this morning, even now, you can decide to surrender your life to follow God’s plan.

Even now you have a choice.

## **Conclusion**

Any parent who loves their children, wants the best for them. There are times with my own children that to them I seem unreasonable. Often they don’t understand that I love them so much and want nothing more than for them to miss the mistakes I made and have the best life imaginable.

Our heavenly Father wants the same thing for us.

Even now, what will you do with what God offers you?