

Pondering Christ in Joel

TRANSCRIPT (AUTO-GENERATED)

Well, hello, and welcome to Ponder by NorthernLife. We're having a conversation about the Word of the Lord as it was preached to us on Sundays and as we encounter it in our everyday lives. My name is Jack.

I'm here with Jono, Tristan, and Ben, and we are discussing Ben's sermon, Christ in Joel. Now, for this Christ in Scripture series, because we're doing two per Sunday, we're just going to try and do these little shorter segments.

We'll be releasing two episodes per week, but they'll be a little bit shorter, hopefully. But to start it off, Ben, do you want to just recount your sermon on Joel? Or really it was a sermon on the Holy Spirit, wasn't it?

Yeah, that's right.

We are back in the Christ in Scripture project after two weeks off, and starting a new series in The Minor Prophets. The Minor Prophets are kind of telling the story of what God was saying to his people during the period of the exile.

So Joel is a kind of hard book. There's a lot of tricky kind of judgment stuff about the day of the Lord.

But then there's a great promise at the end of Joel, what I think is the most important Scripture in the Book of Joel, the promise of the Holy Spirit in Joel chapter 2, verse 28 to 32, the promise that God would pour out His Spirit on all flesh.

And so I kind of took that passage as the sort of basis of the sermon and did Numatology 101, that is the study of the Holy Spirit, looking at the person, power, and presence of the Spirit.

And there's a lot of stuff that we could talk about within those points. But really landing the sermon in Pentecost as the moment which Joel 2 was looking forward to is the pouring out of the Spirit at Pentecost.

And so we ended the sermon with prayer to receive the Holy Spirit in a fresh way, which I thought was quite cool.

Tristan, Jono, any reflections from you guys coming out from that sermon?

Just a great opportunity to spend time in that epic passage. It's really the sum of the story of what God is doing on the planet, really.

It's the glory of His Son, but made manifest through His Spirit, the third member of the Trinity, poured out on all flesh, particularly those that respond in faith to Him.

It was a really powerful ending, praying for lots of people who stood, and it was quite fitting, I think, for an amazing passage.

Yeah, I must confess, I only listened to half of the sermon because I was downstairs with the kids during the morning. Yeah, what can you do?

But from the sounds of the overview that Ben just gave, and everyone else that I've heard, it was a good message. So it was Spirit-filled, which is good.

Ben, one of the things you talked about with the Holy Spirit that I thought was interesting is you looked at the first couple of times when the Holy Spirit comes on people in the Bible, and it's not necessarily in worship, but it's giving Joseph

administrative skills, or the craftsman in Exodus, the ability to craft the tabernacle. So I guess, sort of as an opening question, how can we, obviously the Spirit chooses what sort of work he empowers, but how can we engage with the Spirit through

our skills and work and sort of be intentional about treating our work as a way to work with the Spirit?

Yeah, in the Old Testament period, that question would have been quite hard, because I made the point in the sermon that the Spirit only came on people for temporary purposes and then the Spirit left.

And so in the Old Testament, you could say, gosh, how could I possibly hope to be filled with the Spirit to empower me to do this task?

But the great promise of Joel 2, fulfilled in Pentecost, is that God breathed His Spirit on all flesh, sons and daughters, old and young, to empower our work.

So I think anytime you are acting in dependence on God by His Spirit, serving Him in work, both like Christian work and even non-Christian work, in dependence on His Spirit, you can expect that God is doing something through you in that way.

And if you don't understand that question, then that answer, I think we need to be developing the muscles of faith, which is one of the first points I made, that the Spirit is Spirit, meaning the Spirit is not matter, which makes it hard living in a

naturalistic world that is so focused on the here and now, the temporary. It's hard for us to even engage with the God who is Spirit and to see Him at work.

And yet that's kind of the calling, to live by faith, not in what we can see, but in what we can't see, or in who we can't see, rather.

I remember when I was in Sunday school, we did the passage on Joel and looking at the Holy Spirit and looking at Pentecost, actually. So it was quite cool that you did that.

In terms of trying to make kids understand what it is and what the Spirit is, what the Holy Spirit is, is making it seem like it's a tour guide for, in your mind. This Holy Spirit is a tour guide in your mind, just navigating through your day.

Like, so, it's about engaging with the Spirit in all that you do. In with, like, give me discernment to make the right decision. Give me, like, make my path straight in today.

Like, making it a daily conversation, rather than, like, let your will be done and just, I'll follow, type of thing. So, yep.

I love that, that image of the Holy Spirit as a tour guide through your day. That's a really cool way to think of it.

But the main point of that is engagement. Is to actively bring it into the conversation in your mind that you're having every day.

Not just, like what I think Ben was saying earlier but making it a thing, making it a force, making it something that we can't communicate with. Like, engage with it.

I would, you didn't hear the full sermon, so I'll give you a pass. But one of the massive points is the Spirit is a he, not an it.

Engage with him.

Him, thank you.

But it is important because he is not a, this is the point that you're making, that I made. He is not an impersonal force that just does whatever we want him, we want it to do. He is a person, God, the third person of the Triune God working in us.

And he has a will, and spiritual life is learning what his will is and getting in line with that.

One of the more important passages, I think, about the Spirit is Romans 8, 1-8. It's a little bit confusing, but in general, it's just saying that life in the Spirit is life, and life in the flesh is the opposite of that.

So to your question, I think the Bible talks about, in the New Testament, I think it's more general that there's a sense of zoe life, the life of God in the soul of a human being, doing good, empowered to do good through a whole vast complex range of

personality and history in a person's life, and opportunity, and education. It's all, I think, it's quite complex, rather than sort of Bezalel or, you know, was the gift of craftsmanship.

In our day, the fruit and gifting of the Spirit, I don't know, I feel like it's, there's more of a sense of a general empowerment towards life, if that makes sense. And the flesh is the opposite.

Almost like a long-term shaping of someone towards a purpose. Yes, exactly.

I want to move now to maybe a little bit of a sticky question. So, Ben, you kind of contrasted perhaps a stereotypical Baptist approach to the Spirit with our brothers and sisters in Pentecostal churches.

And I want to ask what role do you think, you know, supernatural giftings or expressions of the Spirit play in our understanding or manifestation of the Spirit?

So, you know, you go to a Pentecostal church, you're speaking in tongues, healing, you know. And I have heard stories of some people who go to those where, if you're not speaking in tongues, maybe you don't have the Spirit.

I don't think we would go that far. But what role does that play? How should we understand sort of the Holy Spirit expressing itself, especially in worship?

Himself.

Himself.

I would do it every single time. Yeah, no, you should.

Yeah, that's a very complex question. I think going back to what dad just said, one way of thinking about what the Holy Spirit does is all the supernatural stuff that he does, signs and wonders.

And as you said, a wing of the church focuses heavily on the really crazy kind of stuff. But I want to say that the work of the Spirit is primarily super natural, meaning there's a space between those two words.

And that's your point before, that he pours the love of God into our hearts. He is the one who makes real to us the salvation and the life that we have in Christ.

So rather than these crazy, mind blowing stories of healing and stuff that happen sometimes, that kind of, if your primary conception of the power of the Spirit is that stuff, you will fail to see the way that he is at work in the super mundane

everyday life of following Jesus and waking up and preaching the Gospel to yourself. And so I want to say that the Spirit does supernatural things and more importantly, he does super natural things of helping us follow Jesus and wake up this morning

and find grace to live this life that he has given us. And so in saying that, I'm trying to hold the tension between the super charismatic brothers on that side and then the super cessationist brothers on the other side who maybe don't appreciate the

work of the Spirit. But every time, I mean, I quoted Tyler Staten in the sermon, the Spirit is the experiential agent of the Trinitarian God.

So if God is doing something in you as a person, he's doing it by his Spirit, because the Spirit is Christ in us, the hope of glory.

I think sometimes, well, very often, it's completely forgotten what happens in the story of the Trinity expressing himself. So Jesus says, it's better that I go back so that you will get the Spirit.

So people don't realize that when Jesus, when Philippians 2 happened and Jesus became incarnate, he was self-limited in time and space. Like, he's a human being. He's a resurrected human being.

Now, we were talking about Dallas Willard. I said this to Dallas, is Jesus a human being just like us in heaven? And he said, I think he's bigger than that.

He just, he got a bit like hyper spiritual. What's that word? Yeah, so he just said, I think there's something bigger than just being human.

For me, I don't believe the Bible says that. I think the Bible says Stephen was about to be martyred. He looked up and said, behold, I see the son of man at the right hand of the father.

We, Hebrew says we have a mediator in heaven. So, Jesus is the firstborn from among the dead. He is human being 101, or the version, you know, the resurrected version, A.

There is no other way to connect with God and Jesus than through the Spirit. And people forget that the Spirit of God is the Spirit of Jesus. The Holy Spirit is the Spirit of Jesus.

He is the exact, Jesus was the exact representation of the father, and the Spirit is the exact representation of the son. So I hope that's making sense.

Like, I actually think the Bible teaches Jesus is somewhere, because he's got flesh and blood, spiritual resurrected version of that. But he's a human being, like us. That's so important in this understanding of what does the Spirit do.

It's like, the Spirit does everything, because Jesus is not in your heart. His Spirit is in your heart. So when you get that, it's like that reframes everything.

That's why Joel is so epic, because it's like, one day, everything is going to change. Like, and there must be something very different to the Spirit coming on David.

Anyone in the Old Testament with power and all that, compared to what happened after Pentecost. And especially after the ascension. We don't talk about this, but I reckon the ascension is a huge theological idea.

Jesus leaves planet Earth but goes to the heavens, but he's still us. So then, that would allow that to reframe.

It's like, well, the Spirit is essential for everything, because if I don't have the Spirit, Jesus is a long way away, and God's everywhere. But the idea is, I meant to know Jesus. I can only know him through the Spirit.

And for me, one of the really practical parts of that understanding is, how do you talk to the Holy Spirit in prayer? Just when you come, when you're speaking, praying by yourself out loud, how do you talk to him?

And what I found was I call him Lord Holy Spirit. What about you guys? What do you ever, when you pray, do you talk to Jesus only or father?

But what about, because it always sounds like it's a very formal Holy Spirit, whereas Jesus is more friendly, intimate.

I say Lord Holy Spirit because you taught me how to.

Yeah, right.

And that's what the Nicene Creed says, the Lord, the giver of life, about the Holy Spirit.

Yeah.

Yeah, I confess, I just say Holy Spirit. But I honestly, like, I gets tricky when you're praying to the Trinity and naming specific persons. So sometimes I just try to say God and not get myself too muddled.

Sure.

It's a way of reframing your mind and heart. That's why you think about it, I think. Because we are meant to pray to Father, like Lord's Prayer.

We pray to the Mediator, Timothy, Jesus. But he's in heaven and his spirit, him, Jesus, that I know in my heart, is my Lord Holy Spirit. The one that I'm carrying as the temple is the same essence of God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

But it is the Holy Spirit. Slightly trippy to get your head around, but I think it's something very powerful. Yeah.

So, Ben, you described the Holy Spirit.

You used that, what was the phrase? He's the experiential aspect of God. Is it?

The experiential agent of the Trinitarian God.

The experiential agent of the Trinitarian God.

And one of the things as we kind of been talking about is that there is an element of experiencing the Holy Spirit, as well as sort of there's a mundane background work. That is also doing.

I wondered, because I've been in this place at certain points in my life, I know others have.

What we could say to people who haven't, don't feel like they've had an experience of the Holy Spirit, who haven't had that strange warmth of the heart, as John Wesley put it, or haven't experienced great spiritual giftings.

And, you know, I remember as a teenager thinking, I hadn't really experienced this. And I was like, is something wrong with me? Am I not saved?

Am I not a Christian? What we say to people who, yeah, haven't necessarily had that, an intense experience of the Spirit.

It's a well-documented journey throughout history, the seeking of the filling of the Spirit. So the Bible says, be being filled with the Spirit. So it's something that's regular.

But Martin Lloyd-Jones, if anyone wants to read a very good book, Martin Lloyd-Jones' book, Joy Unspeakable, is worth a read. And he talks about so many people that were powerfully used by the Lord who had an experience of a second blessing.

And I call it, just God took hold of me. So I feel like it's good to allow that tension where you said to him, am I a second-rank Christian? No, you're not.

No, you're fully saved, and you have the Holy Spirit. You can't be saved without the Holy Spirit. But is there potentially an empowering that can happen, sometimes called the baptism of the Holy Spirit?

And where it comes from in the teaching of it is in John, where Jesus breathes on them the Holy Spirit. So he says, I breathe on you, the Spirit. And then the argument is, the baptism of the Spirit comes at Pentecost, and it's a second filling.

Billy Graham had it. Billy Graham was struggling in his crusades, and he met up with a Baptist pastor in London when he was there, and he went to him, and he asked to be prayed for, and he was prayed by this guy.

I can't remember his name, Baptist pastor. But Billy Graham, the great evangelist, his story is, he gets prayed for, and he says, I'm filled, I'm filled, I'm filled, which is joy unspeakable, which is 1 Peter.

You're filled with the joy unspeakable because you are looking forward to the salvation of your souls. He goes out, and that's the biggest, most powerful crusade that he'd ever had.

And the argument is, there's something real about the filling of the Holy Spirit for purpose. John Wesley, I mean, there was, George Whitfield was at that prayer meeting as well. The Aldous Gate prayer meeting.

That's just a huge point in time where they all start, I don't know if we're speaking in tongues, they don't make a big thing about that, but they were just like, something happened. It was like a Pentecost experience, the fire coming down on them.

I would really encourage people to keep seeking God's best. And it's not to say, I'm second rate, it's not that.

Doesn't matter if you're speaking in tongues or not, but you certainly want to, Martin Lloyd Jones says, the main thing that happens when you're baptized with the Holy Spirit is other people say, you're different.

You have an insatiable desire to read the word of God, and you are empowered in a way that others say, I don't know what's happened to you, but you seem different. That's just what Martin Lloyd Jones says. And that was my story.

I just, I couldn't put the Bible down. I think something happened to you like that, Ben, when you were just couldn't stop reading the Bible. And so it's the word of God that stirs the heart, that fills with the joy unspeakable.

And holiness, breaking up fellow ground is part of that process, I think. Sorry, I'm talking a lot, you just trimmed me back. No, no, it's good.

I think if I was sitting down with somebody talking about that question, I would help them to ask some more questions to get to the bottom of their experience.

Something I didn't say in the sermon that I had prepared to say, but I felt like the sermon was going too long, so I cut it in the moment, is from Scripture, we talk about what the Holy Spirit does in and through and to us.

But Scripture also talks about what we can do to the Holy Spirit. And three things from the New Testament. I think we've spoken about this before in Ponder.

Blaspheme, grieve, and quench the Spirit. And if you're doing any or all of those three things, that could be part of what is happening for a person who's not experiencing the power of the Holy Spirit.

Quickly, to blaspheme the Spirit is to misattribute the work of the Spirit to the evil one. To grieve the Spirit is to continue to live in willful sin while having the Holy Spirit living in you.

And to quench the Spirit is to stifle what he would seek to do in and through you.

So if I'm like sitting across the table having a coffee with somebody and they ask me the question that you asked, Jack, I'm helping them ask questions to get to the bottom of if there's kind of stuff in their life that is quenching what the Spirit

is aiming to do in and through them with the purpose of seeing them filled with the Spirit in a fresh way.

I would say to that person, try not to focus on the word experience, because often when people speak about a spiritual experience in this context, they think of something movie like or miraculous.

And yes, those things happen. But if you seeking the experience over what he this spirit has to offer, then you really focusing on the wrong thing and you seeking out the wrong thing.

So we have two responses when we get to that point of saying, I'm seeking the spirit. You either seek his face like we've been saying through the word through life and engaging with the spirit.

But the other response is seeking the experience and that's actually sitting in a land of apathy of I'm a second rate Christian or you seeking the wrong things rather than engaging with the spirit. So, yeah.

I feel like intimate encounters with God, you have to understand that they take time. So that idea of seeking the Lord. Often, people don't, you know, in our busy world, we don't take the time.

So if you can take just time to stop, to worship, to, you know, enter his courts with praise and then allow the truth of the Gospel to really overflow in your heart and mind, that I'm saved, I'm a saint because of what Christ has done.

And then to stop again and just be in his presence and then allow the Spirit to convict of sin and then to confess sin. This might take an hour, an hour and a half.

People listening to this might say, I'd like to ask you, have you ever done that in your life? Being a Christian for 40 years. If you ever spend an hour and a half.

A lot of people just go, I would just never have done that. But why would you? Like, there's a devotion through, Selwyn Hughes' devotion is what I do, three-minute devotion.

But the intimacy that God wants with us typically takes a bit more time. Of course, there's Jesus out all night, praying and all that sort of stuff.

But I think sometimes we miss the fact that it's a joyful thing, joy unspeakable, not a, I'm earning, that's a burden, I've just got to sort of earn my way, but to spend time with him and find joy in being in his presence, with all the psalm stuff.

And then that just sort of happens naturally. It's like there's something empowering about that.

Because the, you know, the powerful individual who is what we would call truly spirit-filled, he's not the one speaking in tongues, they're the one who acts in humility regularly. They're the one who says words and they just strike the heart.

It's like there's discernment, there's wisdom, there's encouragement. They're just able to speak a word in season because they are in the spirit. How does that person get there?

Well, it's behind the scenes, behind the curtain. It's David turning up and saying, who is this uncircumcised Philistine challenging the living God?

And he takes his sling out because he's been on the backstage walking with the Lord, this intimate psalm writer.

Yeah, I just feel like there's, out of this podcast, I think if there's a challenge for us to spend time with the Lord and seek his face, that's what should happen.

Because on the other side of that is all this interesting stuff, experiential, filling with the spirit, all this stuff that people might want to chase is like, no, don't chase that, chase the God who gives that. Yeah. And yeah.

Well, we have a question coming out of last week's podcast, and this is probably going to extend this podcast into a normal Ponder-sized episode.

So, so much for shorter versions, but that's okay. I've decided I'm going to try and answer questions a week later, so that if you have a question that comes out of a Ponder podcast, feel free to send that in, and then we'll answer it the next week.

So, I realized that the Sunday to Monday turnaround time for questions is pretty short. So, feel free to send them in even after we've done a Ponder episode on it.

But this one comes from Patrick Ross, friend of ours, and he says, If it is spiritually unhelpful to see a demon under every rock, how does this work in reverse? Is it also unhelpful to see a blessing under every rock?

Is God behind an easy parking space? If we are not to assign every minor inconvenience to demons, are we also not to assign every minor convenience to God? And if this is the case, does it take away from our capacity to worship and glorify Him?

If it is not the case, how can we do this without being selectively spiritual? This is of course coming off last week's topic on healing and deliverance and blessing.

Good question, Pat.

I think the first thing to say is that the world, the balance between blessing and evil is not equal. That when demons or evil occurs or when they don't occur, this is a disruption of the will of God, often. But the status quo of God is to bless.

And so, it is more likely that your random inconveniences are going to be a blessing from God, or even just a general blessing of the way He has designed creation to be good. What we would call, provenient grace.

That there's a certain level of goodness that God pours out, irregardless. So, that's an important point to make, that the general bent of creation is towards good and towards blessing.

So, it's a little bit different than how we might interpret hardship.

Yeah, and building on that, we're not... The Bible does not make the case that Satan and God are equal and opposite forces. It's not kind of yang-yang, 50-50.

The devil does bad stuff, and God does good stuff, and it's half-half. Your point, Jack, is to say that the devil is like a tiny little speck in the corner of this universe, and we have a great big God.

James 1 verse 16 says, Don't be deceived, my dear brothers and sisters. Every good and perfect gift is from above.

And so I would say, if you prayed for a parking spot and you got it, give thanks to God, because it's from him, every good gift is from him, and it gives you a reason and an excuse to praise the God who is worthy of praise.

That said, I think it's also important.

I think there's a valid point that not every pleasurable experience or not everything that is convenient is necessarily a blessing, because sometimes these things work against our faith, or de-inform us, or I mean, there are plenty of good

experiences or convenient experiences that are training me to be lazy or training me to seek a pleasure. So, there is a validity in seeing that actually, okay, just because I'm enjoying this doesn't necessarily mean it's from God for the edification

of my faith as well. So there's that also needs to sort of counterbalance the fact that, yeah, the general direction of God is to bless, and so we should have a more maximal view of his blessings, but at the same time, not everything we experience as

good is necessarily from him.

Yeah, that's helpful.

Everything that is truly good is from God, but the devil also counterfeits good and twists things. And sometimes it looks good to us, but it's actually a rotten fruit.

Putting it together, not every bad thing is the evil one, but every truly good capital G thing is from God.

All right, well, with that, I think that's a good place to wrap up. Thank you all for listening. We will be releasing our podcast on Christ in Hosea alongside this episode.

But otherwise, we'll see you in the next one. Feel free to send us any questions that arise out of this podcast. Bye bye.