

The prophet Joel sounds a warning to the people of Israel. He calls them to repent and to return to the Lord in order to receive mercy.

A reading from the Book of the Prophet Joel: (5:20b—6:10)

Blow the trumpet in Zion; sound the alarm on my holy mountain! Let all the inhabitants of the land tremble, for the day of the Lord is coming, it is near—a day of darkness and gloom, a day of clouds and thick darkness! Like blackness spread upon the mountains a great and powerful army comes; their like has never been from of old, nor will be again after them in ages to come. Yet even now, says the Lord, return to me with all your heart, with fasting, with weeping, and with mourning; rend your hearts and not your clothing. Return to the Lord, your God, for he is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love, and relents from punishing. Who knows whether he will not turn and relent, and leave a blessing behind him, a grain offering and a drink offering for the Lord, your God? Blow the trumpet in Zion; sanctify a fast; call a solemn assembly; gather the people. Sanctify the congregation; assemble the aged; gather the children, even infants at the breast. Let the bridegroom leave his room, and the bride her canopy. Between the vestibule and the altar let the priests, the

ministers of the Lord, weep. Let them say, "Spare your people, O Lord, and do not make your heritage a mockery, a byword among the nations. Why should it be said among the peoples, 'Where is their God?'"

Reader: The Word of the Lord.

Paul tells the faithful that he has overcome many hardships for the sake of Jesus. He rejoices that all believers are being restored to union with God.

A reading from the Second Letter of Paul to the Corinthians:

(5:20b—6:10)

We entreat you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God. For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God. As we work together with him, we urge you also not to accept the grace of God in vain. For he says, "At an acceptable time I have listened to you, and on a day of salvation I have helped you." See, now is the acceptable time; see, now is the day of salvation! We are putting no obstacle in anyone's way, so that no fault may be found with our ministry, but as servants of God we have commended ourselves in every way: through great endurance, in afflictions, hardships, calamities, beatings, imprisonments, riots, labors, sleepless nights, hunger; by purity, knowledge, patience, kindness, holiness of spirit, genuine love, truthful speech, and the power of God; with the weapons of righteousness for the right hand and for the left; in honor and dishonor, in ill repute and good repute. We are treated as impostors, and yet are true; as unknown, and yet are well known; as dying, and

see—we are alive; as punished, and yet not killed; as sorrowful, yet always rejoicing; as poor, yet making many rich; as having nothing, and yet possessing everything.

Reader: The Word of the Lord.

Psalm 51 *(said in unison)*

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- ¹ Have mercy on me, O God, according to your
loving-kindness; *
in your great compassion blot out my offenses.
- ² Wash me through and through from my wickedness *
and cleanse me from my sin.
- ³ For I know my transgressions, *
and my sin is ever before me.
- ⁴ Against you only have I sinned *
and done what is evil in your sight.
- ⁵ And so you are justified when you speak *
and upright in your judgment.
- ⁶ Indeed, I have been wicked from my birth, *
a sinner from my mother's womb.
- ⁷ For behold, you look for truth deep within me, *
and will make me understand wisdom secretly.
- ⁸ Purge me from my sin, and I shall be pure; *
wash me, and I shall be clean indeed.
- ⁹ Make me hear of joy and gladness, *
that the body you have broken may rejoice.

- ¹⁰ Hide your face from my sins *
and blot out all my iniquities.
- ¹¹ Create in me a clean heart, O God, *
and renew a right spirit within me.
- ¹² Cast me not away from your presence *
and take not your holy Spirit from me.
- ¹³ Give me the joy of your saving help again *
and sustain me with your bountiful Spirit.
- ¹⁴ I shall teach your ways to the wicked, *
and sinners shall return to you.
- ¹⁵ Deliver me from death, O God, *
and my tongue shall sing of your righteousness,
O God of my salvation.
- ¹⁶ Open my lips, O Lord, *
and my mouth shall proclaim your praise.
- ¹⁷ Had you desired it, I would have offered sacrifice, *
but you take no delight in burnt-offerings.
- ¹⁸ The sacrifice of God is a troubled spirit; *
a broken and contrite heart, O God,
you will not despise.