

SERVICE THEME: *Micah 6:9; Micah 7:18-20; Micah 7:7-12*

- 9 Listen! The LORD is calling to the city—and to fear your name is wisdom—“Heed the rod and the One who appointed it.
- 18 Who is a God like you, who pardons sin and forgives the transgression of the remnant of his inheritance? You do not stay angry forever but delight to show mercy.
- 19 You will again have compassion on us; you will tread our sins underfoot and hurl all our iniquities into the depths of the sea.
- 20 You will be true to Jacob, and show mercy to Abraham, as you pledged on oath to our fathers in days long ago.
- 7 But as for me, I watch in hope for the LORD, I wait for God my Savior; my God will hear me.
- 8 Do not gloat over me, my enemy! Though I have fallen, I will rise. Though I sit in darkness, the LORD will be my light.
- 9 Because I have sinned against him, I will bear the Lord’s wrath, until he pleads my case and establishes my right. He will bring me out into the light; I will see his righteousness.
- 10 Then my enemy will see it and will be covered with shame, she who said to me, “Where is the LORD your God?” My eyes will see her downfall; even now she will be trampled underfoot like mire in the streets.
- 11 The day for building your walls will come, the day for extending your boundaries.
- 12 In that day people will come to you from Assyria and the cities of Egypt, even from Egypt to the Euphrates and from sea to sea and from mountain to mountain.

OLD TESTAMENT: *Ezekiel 33:7-11*

- 7 Son of man, I have made you a watchman for the house of Israel; so hear the word I speak and give them warning from me.
- 8 When I say to the wicked, ‘O wicked man, you will surely die,’ and you do not speak out to dissuade him from his ways, that wicked man will die for his sin, and I will hold you accountable for his blood.
- 9 But if you do warn the wicked man to turn from his ways and he does not do so, he will die for his sin, but you will have saved yourself.
- 10 “Son of man, say to the house of Israel, ‘This is what you are saying: “Our offenses and sins weigh us down, and we are wasting away because of them. How then can we live?”’
- 11 Say to them, ‘As surely as I live, declares the Sovereign LORD, I take no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but rather that they turn from their ways and live. Turn! Turn from your evil ways! Why will you die, O house of Israel?’

EPISTLE: *Revelation 21*

- 1** Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and there was no longer any sea.
- 2** I saw the Holy City, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband.
- 3** And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, “Now the dwelling of God is with men, and he will live with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God.
- 4** He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away.”
- 5** He who was seated on the throne said, “I am making everything new!” Then he said, “Write this down, for these words are trustworthy and true.”
- 6** He said to me: “It is done. I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End. To him who is thirsty I will give to drink without cost from the spring of the water of life.
- 7** He who overcomes will inherit all this, and I will be his God and he will be my son.
- 8** But the cowardly, the unbelieving, the vile, the murderers, the sexually immoral, those who practice magic arts, the idolaters and all liars—their place will be in the fiery lake of burning sulfur. This is the second death.”
- 9** One of the seven angels who had the seven bowls full of the seven last plagues came and said to me, “Come, I will show you the bride, the wife of the Lamb.”
- 10** And he carried me away in the Spirit to a mountain great and high, and showed me the Holy City, Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God.
- 11** It shone with the glory of God, and its brilliance was like that of a very precious jewel, like a jasper, clear as crystal.
- 12** It had a great, high wall with twelve gates, and with twelve angels at the gates. On the gates were written the names of the twelve tribes of Israel.
- 13** There were three gates on the east, three on the north, three on the south and three on the west.
- 14** The wall of the city had twelve foundations, and on them were the names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb.
- 15** The angel who talked with me had a measuring rod of gold to measure the city, its gates and its walls.
- 16** The city was laid out like a square, as long as it was wide. He measured the city with the rod and found it to be 12,000 stadia in length, and as wide and high as it is long.
- 17** He measured its wall and it was 144 cubits thick, by man’s measurement, which the angel was using.
- 18** The wall was made of jasper, and the city of pure gold, as pure as glass.
- 19** The foundations of the city walls were decorated with every kind of precious stone. The first foundation was jasper, the second sapphire, the third chalcedony, the fourth emerald,
- 20** the fifth sardonyx, the sixth carnelian, the seventh chrysolite, the eighth beryl, the ninth topaz, the tenth chrysoprase, the eleventh jacinth, and the twelfth amethyst.
- 21** The twelve gates were twelve pearls, each gate made of a single pearl. The great street of the city was of pure gold, like transparent glass.
- 22** I did not see a temple in the city, because the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are its temple.
- 23** The city does not need the sun or the moon to shine on it, for the glory of God gives it light, and the Lamb is its lamp.
- 24** The nations will walk by its light, and the kings of the earth will bring their splendor into it.
- 25** On no day will its gates ever be shut, for there will be no night there.
- 26** The glory and honor of the nations will be brought into it.

27 Nothing impure will ever enter it, nor will anyone who does what is shameful or deceitful, but only those whose names are written in the Lamb's book of life.

GOSPEL: *John 3:16, 17*

- 16** “For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.
- 17** For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him.

SERMON TEXT: *Joel 2:28-32*

- 28** ‘And afterward, I will pour out my Spirit on all people. Your sons and daughters will prophesy, your old men will dream dreams, your young men will see visions.
- 29** Even on my servants, both men and women, I will pour out my Spirit in those days.
- 30** I will show wonders in the heavens and on the earth, blood and fire and billows of smoke.
- 31** The sun will be turned to darkness and the moon to blood before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the LORD.
- 32** And everyone who calls on the name of the LORD will be saved; for on Mount Zion and in Jerusalem there will be deliverance, as the LORD has said, among the survivors whom the LORD calls.

PENTECOST 16

JOEL 2:28-32

12 SEPTEMBER 1999

SALEM'S 110TH ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION

SALEM EV. LUTHERAN CHURCH, MILWAUKEE, WI

REV. JON HARTMANN

Did anything in today's bulletin surprise you? Was there any word or phrase that jumped out and caught your attention? If you took a look at today's sermon theme for Salem's 110th anniversary celebration, you maybe took special notice of the word promiscuity. And considering I was using a word like promiscuous to describe God, I wouldn't be surprised if you were shocked at the theme for today's sermon.

But what is it that gives a word its meaning? It's the context in which the word is used, isn't it? And when you use the word promiscuity in the right context, it is describing something pretty wonderful. In fact, if God wasn't promiscuous, none of us would be here right now. We would have no hope in this life, no hope in death, and we would be headed for eternal separation from God. So this morning on this 110th anniversary celebration I encourage all of you to **CELEBRATE THE PROMISCUITY OF GOD**. *I. Being thankful for his gift of the Spirit. II. By sharing this gift of the Spirit with others.*

Now what does it mean to be promiscuous? Remember picking teams in grade school? Remember getting stuck to be the captain and having to pick a team to play basketball or kickball? Who did you pick? You picked the kids who were the fastest, strongest, and tallest, the players you thought were the best.

Now even though my word processor says that a promiscuous person is someone who is "sexually unrestrained", Webster gives us another definition. Webster says that to be promiscuous means "to lack standards of selection", to be "indiscriminate". In other words, when you are picking teams for kickball you don't care who is on your team. You will pick anyone and everyone. You just don't care. This is the kind of promiscuity of our God that we want to celebrate today.

But don't just take my word for it. Look at the words of our text. In Joel 2:28-29, the Lord speaks through his prophet saying: **"And afterward, I will pour out my Spirit on all people. Your sons and daughters will prophesy, your old men will dream dreams, your young men will see visions. Even on my servants, both men and women, I will pour out my Spirit in those days."** God tells us very simply that he is going to pour out his Holy Spirit on all people and three things are going to happen.

1. *Sons and daughters will prophesy.*
2. *Old men will dream dreams.*
3. *Young men will see visions.*

Now this prophecy would have hit the Jews of Joel's time right between the eyes. This is the Old Testament. Not everyone could be a prophet and receive special revelations from God. God wanted to make sure that his people received HIS WORD. So God only chose specific people to be his prophets to declare his Word. And only specific people were able to receive dreams and visions from the Lord to convey his will. Those individuals would then in turn share their revelations with others.

But God's chosen people had gone astray. His people turned to idolatry and became corrupt as did their spiritual leaders. So the Lord sent his prophet, Joel to preach a message of repentance because judgment was fast approaching, first in the form of a terrible plague of locusts which would destroy the land, and ultimately on the final day, the day of the Lord. It is the middle of all this rebellion and sin that the Lord says, "I am no longer going to give my Spirit just to the people of Judah and Israel, I am no longer going to give my Spirit just to the priests and the Levites. I am going to pour out my Spirit on all people. I am going to be promiscuous with my Spirit. I want everyone no matter what their gender, their age, or the ethnic background to have a taste of my plan of salvation, and my Spirit through the gospel message."

And if you know Acts 2, you know that the Lord kept his promise. On that first Pentecost the Holy Spirit came upon all of the apostles that were gathered together in one place. They began speaking in languages that they never learned before. But notice what they did? They didn't just sit there. They went out and began declaring the wonders of God to others. They, too, were promiscuous with the gospel. They spoke not just to the Jews, but to the Parthians, Medes, Elamites, residents of Mesopotamia, Judah, Cappadocia, and the list goes on and on. The Day of Pentecost is proof that God is promiscuous with his Spirit and his love.

You and I are proof that God is promiscuous as well. We are the Gentiles. We were not God's chosen people. We were considered Godless heathens by the Jews. And the fact is, by nature we were all godless heathens. You see there was nothing in us that made God want to pick us to be his child. By nature we were sick with sin and lost with nothing appealing about us whatsoever. And many times we are unrestrained with our sinful thoughts and actions. Our sins of discrimination are detestable to the Lord—when we consider ourselves better than someone else. When we look at society today and have the attitude of the Pharisee praying in the temple saying, "Boy I'm glad I'm not like those losers." When we consider ourselves better than that unwed mother who can't be even 19 years old and yet she has three children. When we see that person begging for money at the gas station and we think to ourselves, "Get a life!" But the fact is we are no better than anyone else. We are all sinners. All have sinned and have fallen short of the perfection that God demands. Every single day we sin against our Lord and indeed deserve his punishment.

But now things are different, aren't they? Our great and merciful God saw our lost condition and then his mercy took over. God couldn't just stand there. He had to do something. And that is what we call his grace. And we are the people that Joel is talking about in our text for today. He doesn't care who you are or what you have done. God wanted you to be his child. That is why God sent his Son Jesus, to restore what sin and Satan destroyed: a right relationship with God. With his death on the cross he did what was impossible for us: He paid the full price for every single one of our sins. And through his Word God has poured out his Spirit upon us, making the righteousness of Jesus ours personally through faith in him. We are now his people. We belong to him. We are no longer foreigners and aliens. We are heirs of God and co-heirs of Christ. Rejoice in the promiscuity of God because it is the cause of your salvation.

But the question is: Are we going to be as promiscuous with the Word as God is with his Spirit. Now things are different, aren't they? WE are His prophets. WE are His priests. And WE are the ones who are to go out and pour out his Spirit on others through his Word. Look at the verses 30-31 of our text: **"I will show wonders in the heavens and on the earth, blood and fire and billows of smoke. The sun will be turned to darkness and the moon to blood before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the LORD."** The beginning of the New Testament church was the day of Pentecost. The end is, of course, Judgment Day. Significance? The end is coming. And there are hundreds of thousands of people right now in the great cities of our country who are not ready.

You know, we have come to an exciting time in history as a synod. Because the situation that we are in as a church body is very similar to that of the New Testament church described in Acts 2, a church that was predominately Jewish but was opening its doors to give the gospel to the Gentiles from around the world. For many years the WELS has been predominately a white, European church with many members having German ancestry. But things have changed in our country since the foundation of the Wisconsin Synod. It is predicted that by the year 2000, 80% of the nation's population will live in urban centers of more than 20,000. And in these cities you find a beautiful variety of all kinds of people, races, and cultures, different from our own. Take Milwaukee for example. No longer is Milwaukee divided into its German, Italian, and Polish communities like it once was in the 50's, 60's, and 70's. Now the city of Milwaukee is a mix of white, African-American, Asian and Hispanic communities, people really from all different backgrounds. And very soon our entire country is going to be a huge mix of all of these different peoples, races, and cultures.

What are we going to do about this change? Look at the last verse of our text. **"And everyone who calls on the name of the LORD will be saved; for on Mount Zion and in Jerusalem there will be deliverance, as the LORD has said, among the survivors whom the LORD calls."** How can these people of different backgrounds, races and cultures call on the name of the Lord if they don't believe in him? How can they believe in Jesus as their Savior if they have never heard about him? And how can they hear if no one shares the Gospel of Jesus Christ with them? You see, this is where we come in. We have salvation. We have the Word. But let's not be stingy with it. Let's be promiscuous with the Word of God. Let's pour out God's Spirit on all people through that Word. Yes, there are going to be some struggles as we try reaching peoples of other ethnic backgrounds. But let's not be like Jonah who didn't want to go to Nineveh because he was afraid of success. But let us put our fears and anxieties aside, get the Word to all people, and let the Holy Spirit take over. It's his Word. And he was promiscuous with us. Let's not be afraid to do the same.

One time when I was a young boy, I was up north at my parents cottage. That weekend my brother brought a wrist-rocket or sling shot along that belonged to a friend of his. Well we were chasing this defenseless little chipmunk around my uncle's cottage that was across the road, trying to hit it with a little stone in the wrist-rocket. I took aim, at the chipmunk as it stood motionless on a tree, fired, and missed. But I didn't miss the tree and the little rock ricocheted off the tree and right into my uncle's large picture window on the back of his house. I was terrified. Not of my uncle. But what my dad would do when he found out. He was still in Milwaukee and hadn't come up yet. I ran like the wind and took a long walk by myself. I was so upset because of what I had done. But my mom told me to call my dad and tell him. So I picked up the phone, called dad, and told him what happened. And what did he say? "That's alright, I'll take care of it." That's mercy. And if my mom wouldn't have told me to call him I would have never known that mercy, I would have been filled with despair all day and night.

You know about God's mercy. You've been shown mercy. But there are people out there who are filled with despair and are not going to know about God's mercy unless you tell them. Be promiscuous with the Gospel—in your families and neighborhoods. And through your prayers and your offerings, you can be promiscuous across our country and the world. We've got nothing to lose. And they have everything, heaven, to gain. Amen.