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Scripture: Joel

We are in the midst of a summer sermon series that we've called *Majoring on the Minors*. Each week, we've been immersing ourselves in one of the Minor Prophets, and I want to start today by just acknowledging that these books of the bible are not generally well known, are sometimes confusing, and often difficult to understand.

I grew up in Sudbury, Ontario, and a dear friend of mine that I've known since grade school was visiting last weekend. She was asking about my work and how things have been going here at North Park. I mentioned this sermon series that we're in – the Minor Prophets, and a look of sheer confusion washed over her face. If you know anything about Sudbury, you know that there is a landmark that we are best known for: The Big Nickel. Sudbury is a mining town. The Nickel Capital of the world, actually. And so, to my friend's Northern Ontario ears, what she heard when I said Minor Prophets, was: "miner profits". So, if you are new, or visiting with us today, let me assure you, we're not talking today about finances or mining, or the economy of the Nickel Capital of the world. What we're actually going to spend some time on today is Ancient Hebrew Prophetic Poetry, found in the Old Testament.

Now, some of you just heard that, and are now wishing that we were going to talk about mining! That might sound a little easier to take on. And I have to admit, at first I was intimidated by the idea of teaching on the prophets. But, as I've been immersed in the Minor Prophets this summer, I've found these books to be so interesting, so engaging, and so relevant. The Minor Prophets are so wonderfully weird. Their strangeness makes them challenging, but also captivating. And so, it is with this newly discovered love for the Minor Prophets that I'd like us to dive into the book of Joel today.

Last time I had the opportunity to speak here at North Park, it was a sermon on how to honour God in the way that we relate to our parents. For many of us, that was a loaded topic, and so, it got a little heavy. We all felt the weight of it. And I thought to myself afterwards, the next time I'm up, I owe you guys something a little more lighthearted. Something really fun. And I have to tell you, as I sat down to read the book of Joel, my dream of a fun, lighthearted sermon quickly flew out the window. As I read verses like this:

Joel 1:15

The day of the Lord is near, the day when destruction comes from the Almighty. How terrible that day will be!

Joel 2:1b-2a

Let everyone tremble in fear because the day of the Lord is upon us. It is a day of darkness and gloom, a day of thick clouds and deep blackness.

Joel 2:6

Fear grips all the people; every face grows pale with terror.

Joel 2:11b

The day of the Lord is an awesome, terrible thing. Who can possibly survive?

Well, so much for the hope of a lighthearted message today! Instead, we've got a complex literary work of Ancient Hebrew Prophetic Poetry, about the awesome, terrible, day of the Lord bringing terror and destruction. Sound fun? Let's get started! Here is how the book of Joel begins:

The Lord gave this message to Joel son of Pethuel.

And let me just pause here to say – this is all the introduction Joel gives us. 10 words that tell us very little about who Joel is or when the book was written. Because of this, Joel is very difficult to date, but we do know that it was written sometime after Israel split into the Northern and Southern Kingdoms, because Joel later reveals that he is addressing Judah, the southern Kingdom, and specifically, Jerusalem.

Joel 1:2-6a

*Here is what Joel has to say to the people of Judah:
Hear this, you leaders of the people.
Listen, all who live in the land.
In all your history, has anything like this happened before?
Tell your children about it in the years to come,
And let your children tell their children.
Pass the story down from generation to generation.
After The cutting locusts finished eating the crops,
The swarming locusts took what was left!
After them came the hopping locusts,
And then the stripping locusts, too!
Wake up, you drunkards, and weep!
Wail, all you wine-drinkers!
All the grapes are ruined,
And all your sweet wine is gone.
A vast army of locusts has invaded my land,
A terrible army too numerous to count.*

So, what on earth is Joel writing about? It would seem that multiple swarms of locusts have ravaged the land, and the devastation that these grasshoppers have caused is unlike anything the people have experienced before. But the truth is, no one seems to agree on what this passage is really talking about. Has the event happened already, or is it a prediction of something to come? It is a literal locust plague? Or is this army of locusts a metaphor for an enemy invasion? Further on, Joel describes the devastation in more detail:

Joel 1:10

*“The fields are ruined,
The land is stripped bare.
The grain is destroyed,
The grapes have shriveled*

Joel 11

The people are told to despair. To wail. To weep.

Joel 1:20

*All the fruit trees – have dried up.
the streams have dried up,
And fire has consumed the wilderness pastures.*

Now things are really confusing, because Locusts can ruin a crop, but they don't cause fires and they don't cause streams to dry up. So what's really happening here? Is it a locust plague, a drought, and a massive forest fire happening all at once? Or perhaps an enemy army has set fire to their land, and blocked the flow of water into the city? To add to the confusion, Joel continues on, warning the people of a coming disaster, an enemy invasion greater than the one he has already depicted.

Suddenly, like dawn spreading across the mountains, A great and mighty army appears. Nothing like it has been seen before Or will ever be seen again....

With dramatic and vivid imagery, Joel describes the invasion as it unfolds. He talks about the enemy marching and attacking like warriors, but also describes them as swarming the city. Is it an army of locusts? Or an army of people? A description of what has happened, a warning of what could happen? Or a prediction of what will happen? We don't quite know.

One of the most challenging things about this book is that Joel expects so much of his readers. He expects they would have a deep understanding of the Hebrew Scriptures, of Covenant Law, Temple worship, and the history of Israel. Without that knowledge, we're likely to be a little lost.

When I was in high school, I was given an assignment for English class, to write a book report on George Orwell's famous novel, Animal Farm. I was a strong student. Loved English. Loved reading. So this should have been easy. But there was a problem. A fundamental flaw. And that was, that I had no idea that the book was an allegory, meant to reflect events leading up to the Russian Revolution of 1917 and then on into the Stalinist era of the Soviet Union. Virtually every detail in the

book had political significance, and it was all completely lost on me. At the time, I had a very uninspiring History teacher, and I mistakenly believed that it was a waste of time to learn about things that were done and over with. Memorizing historical details felt irrelevant because I could always look them up if needed. And so, my knowledge of the Russian revolution, and Stalin, and the Soviet Union, was pretty much zero. And to me, Animal Farm was nothing more than a very strange, disconcerting little book about a bunch of barnyard animals behaving very poorly, with an entirely weird, confusing, and unsatisfying ending. Naturally, I gave it a scathing review, and my teacher responded in turn, with one of the lowest marks I had ever received in my high school career. To have done well, I would have needed to understand the genre of the writing, which is allegory, and the history that was underlying the text; The Russian Revolution. Had I known all of this, it likely would have been a much more compelling read.

So as we approach the book of Joel, it's important to be aware of the genre that we are reading, and the history behind the text. The genre is prophetic poetry. This means that we can expect figurative language, vivid imagery, and metaphor to be used to convey a deeper truth. And the fact that this writing falls into the category of what biblical scholars would call prophetic writing is also important, so let's take a moment to understand what that means.

Often people think that being a prophet is like being a fortune teller. Someone who predicts the future. The bible has a word for this: divination. Divination is the practice of seeking knowledge of the future or the unknown by supernatural means. And the bible is very clear, many times over, that God's people are not to engage in divination. It is included in lists of terrible things that the people are not supposed to do, things like adultery, witchcraft, oppression, and worshipping false idols. Why would trying to know the future be included in a list like that?

I don't know about you, but often, I find myself wishing that I could just know what's ahead. Have you ever thought to yourself: "I know God has a plan, but it sure would be nice to know what that plan is"? But so often, God doesn't give us the full picture of what's ahead. He just shows us the very next step that we are called to take, and then we

have to walk in obedience and trust. To seek knowledge of the future that the Lord has not chosen to reveal is to try to overthrow God's place in our lives. To try to BE God. To seek control. To know what we are not meant to know. And to reject our calling to trust in God.

And so "the old testament" prophets didn't exist so that the people could magically know the future. Prophets existed so that the people could hear from God. They were divine spokespersons, who spoke on God's behalf, saying to the people the things that God desired to communicate. Sometimes, the message was about the future, something God chose to be made known for a purpose. But it's also worth noting that sometimes the future the prophets told about was not set in stone. A great example of this is found in the book of Jonah. He reluctantly prophesied to the city of Ninevah that God was going to destroy them, but the people repented, and they were spared. And so, because the prophesy saved them, the prophesy did not come true.

All of this is important to understand, because if we get too tied up in trying to discern predictions for the future in the writings of the prophets, we will miss the theological richness that these books have to offer. They reveal so much about God's character; how He responds to the world, and how He wants us to respond to Him. And the themes that are woven throughout these books are still so relevant to us today. But, just like I needed to know about Russian history in order to fully appreciate and understand Orwell's Animal Farm, we need to know the rich history of God's people if we're going to understand Joel.

There are many ideas and images found within this book that would have resonated with the people of Judah; that would have connected them to their history. Just think about the locusts for a moment: Until today, if I had asked you for an example of where to find a story about locusts in the bible, you may not have said the book of Joel, but I'll bet many of you would have made a connection to Exodus. To the 10 plagues, one of them being locusts that the Lord inflicted on the Egyptians when he freed the Israelites from slavery.

Exodus 10:3-6

Moses and Aaron went to Pharaoh and said, "This is what the LORD, the God of the Hebrews, says: How long will you refuse to submit to me? Let my people go, so they can worship me. 4 If you refuse, watch out! For tomorrow I will bring a swarm of locusts on your country. 5 They will cover the land so that you won't be able to see the ground. They will devour what little is left of your crops after the hailstorm, including all the trees growing in the fields. 6 They will overrun your palaces and the homes of your officials and all the houses in Egypt. Never in the history of Egypt have your ancestors seen a plague like this one!"

Can you hear the parallels to Joel? The locust plague coming and devouring every tree. Overrunning their homes. Even Joel's opening question takes on new meaning in light of this:

*In all your history,
has anything like this happened before?*

Yes, actually. It's like God is saying to the people, remember Egypt? Remember the locust plague? Remember when I fulfilled my covenant promise to you that I would guide you and protect you and bring you into the Promised Land? Remember that great and fearsome Day of the Lord when I rescued you from slavery and struck down your oppressors? The people were far from that day now, because they had turned so far from him. That they were now deserving of the same punishment that God gave to their oppressors in Egypt. Joel writes, in his description of this new invasion that:

*The Lord is at the head of the column. He leads them with a shout.
This is his mighty army, and they follow his orders
The day of the Lord is an awesome, terrible thing.
Who can possibly survive?*

This is more than just an event of nature, or an enemy invasion, this is a movement of God. Joel seems to be saying that the Lord has sent this calamity their way. A fearsome army has descended

upon the people, and God is leading the charge. So, I think, theologically, we now find ourselves wading into some very deep waters. How do we make sense of this? And what does it mean for us today? When suffering comes along, is that the movement of God in our lives, reigning down punishment for our sins? This kind of thinking...that God punishes people for their sins, often does take hold of our thinking.

Have you ever said the phrase "What did I do to deserve this?" We sometimes say it when something beyond our control happens; when an illness, or an accident, a layoff at work or a stream of bad luck comes our way. The question flows out of us so naturally in those kinds of moments, but underlying it, is the mistaken idea that some form of cosmic karma exists. That when we suffer, it's because we deserve it, and so God must be punishing us.

When I was in grade school, one of my mom's best friends, Louise, became very sick with cancer. Louise had moved to Canada from Holland, and when I was young, she and my mom were neighbours and friends. It was such a difficult time when Louise got sick. But one of things that made it most painful, was that leaders from Louise's church had come to pray for her, to pray for healing. And when healing didn't come, they told her that she must have some unconfessed sin that was keeping her from experiencing the blessing of God's healing. What a heavy burden to place on her, as she prepared to make her journey to heaven. Thankfully, the Lord spoke to her in a very clear and beautiful way in that final season of her life. She and my mom took a trip together when she knew she was terminal, but still had strength to travel. At the airport, on their way home, they kept getting lost trying to find their gate. If you've ever tried to find your way around an airport, this probably doesn't sound like a remarkable event, but trust me, it was! As they continued to get turned around, multiple times, they found themselves at the gate for an airline called KLM. And if you are a world traveler, maybe you know, that KLM is an acronym that stands for "Royal Dutch Airlines" (Koninklijke Luchtvaart Maatschappij). If you're from Holland, maybe you can let me know how to pronounce these Dutch words after the service, I'm not going to try as I'm sure I'd make a mess of it!

After several times of getting turned around, and finding themselves back at the KLM airlines gate by mistake, Louise realized, that in that moment, God was getting her attention. He was impressing a message on her heart: “you’re going home”. Not to Holland, but to Heaven. There is a time for everything, and a purpose for every activity under the heavens... a time to be born and a time to die. God clearly, and lovingly communicated to Louise that this was her time, and that His grace was with her. Louise’s cancer was not, as her church leaders had suggested, a judgement from God for her sins.

So what do we do with all these Old Testament prophets who write about God’s judgement and the punishment that the people will surely be given if they continue their sinful ways? What do we do with Joel and all his locusts, and fires, and armies? One thing we need to remember is that God is not confined to only one way of interacting with humanity. Sometimes there’s a clear connection between our suffering and our sin. But that doesn’t necessarily mean the suffering is a punishment from God. Sometimes we’re simply experiencing the natural consequences of our actions, or we’re suffering because of the sinful choices of other people. And sometimes, sin has nothing to do with our suffering at all.

Consider Job. He was blameless and upright, and yet, God allowed him to endure unimaginable suffering that was entirely undeserved. And then there’s C.S. Lewis, who described suffering as “God’s megaphone to a deaf world”. Many of us would agree that God gets our attention during painful seasons of our lives. Some believe God sends the suffering our way for that purpose. Others believe He is simply making the best of a bad situation, using our painful circumstances to draw us back to Him. Either way, we know that God can use our suffering, and many of you have shared with me about the incredible ways that the Lord has used times of suffering in your lives to strengthen your faith, develop your character, give you a course correct, and to deepen your relationship with Him.

We won’t understand it all this side of heaven, but one thing is certain--suffering comes our way for many different reasons. And although Joel seems to be describing an event where suffering has come upon the people as a punishment from God I think

it’s very rare that our suffering is actually divine punishment. I believe this because time and again throughout scripture, we see God delaying the punishment that the people are supposed to be given, constantly seeking ways to bring them back to Him, to extend His grace over and over and over again. Joel is set within the context of the very unique covenant relationship between God and the Israelites, and that is important to keep in mind as we seek to understand Joel. Since before the ink was dry on the Ten Commandments, the Israelites had been unfaithful to the covenant. And God was gracious to them again and again. But He had also made clear that the consequences for disobeying the law were severe: Leviticus, chapter 26 records God’s description of what would happen if the people didn’t live up to their end of the deal. It was a long list, which included these two verses:

Leviticus 26:20

Your strength will be spent in vain, because your soil will not yield its crops, nor will the trees of your land yield their fruit.

Leviticus 26:25

And I will bring the sword on you to avenge the breaking of the covenant. When you withdraw into your cities, I will send a plague among you, and you will be given into enemy hands.

The parallels between Joel and Leviticus are clear. Plague, war, famine, agricultural disaster. The people of Judah would have quickly recognized these themes, echoing back to Exodus, to Mount Sinai, to the Covenant. And so, the scene depicted by Joel is not simply a case of God punishing bad behavior. There’s a deeper layer here that we need to understand. Joel is using this powerful imagery to show the people that their covenant relationship with God is in trouble. And it sounds like things are about as bad as they could get. And so, Joel tells the people they need to “wake up...and weep”.

Based on the terrible circumstances that Joel has described, you would expect that the people would already be grief-stricken and despairing. And yet, they need to be told to weep, mourn, and despair about the state of things. It’s as if they aren’t even aware of the mess they are in. Interestingly, Joel doesn’t give them a list of their transgressions, and tell them everything they need to change; he starts

by telling the people they need to lament. Lament is a passionate expression of grief or sorrow, and often, we're not very good at it. Most of us don't like to cry in front of others. We generally run in the opposite direction of pain. We feel the pressure of believing we should be happy all the time. And when sadness creeps in, often we're not quite sure what to do with it. But something profound happens when we lean into our pain.

In biblical times, they knew how to lament. It involved fasting, weeping, and wailing. People would literally tear their clothes as an expression of the intensity of their grief. But even this, is not enough, according to Joel. Outwardly, you can fake it. But God is concerned with our inward state. And so, after Joel paints this picture of how terribly wrong everything is, and how severe the consequences of rebellion will be for the people, there's this amazing turning point. It's my favourite part of the book:

Joel 2:12

*Even now," declares the Lord,
"return to me with all your heart,
with fasting and weeping and mourning."
Rend your heart
and not your garments.*

The word REND literally means to split or tear.

קָרַע

qara`

kä·rah'

Imagine...don't just tear your clothes in grief, tear your hearts in two. If you've ever lost a loved one, you know that the pain of that separation can feel like your heart has been split apart. For Judah, The broken covenant means a broken, distant connection with God, and so, Joel is calling them to lament, not just because of a locust plague, or the threat of invasion, but to lament the state of their relationship with God, reflected in the covenant curses that are unfolding.

What's the state of Your relationship with God these days? Are you ever stirred to grieve and lament the ways that sin creates distance between you and God? It can be a powerful thing to do, because when we lament it helps our hearts find

their way to true repentance. A genuine turning of our hearts back to God.

Joel's words paint a striking picture of true repentance.

*"Even now," declares the Lord,
"return to me with all your heart,"*

But often, repentance, this turning back to God, doesn't come easily to us. To begin with, we have a very strange relationship to the words "I'm sorry". Of course, we're Canadians, so we say "sorry" all the time. Especially for things that aren't our fault at all. I once heard an American comedian joke that if you bump into a Canadian on the street, you weren't watching where you were going and it's clearly your fault, they'll still say "sorry". And if someone points out to us that we've apologized for something that really isn't our fault, we'll say sorry about that too.

But when it really counts. When we've hurt someone we care about. When it's really called for, the words "I'm sorry" don't come out of us so easily, do they?

If you have kids, especially if you have more than one kid you have probably experienced the challenge of teaching them how to apologize. We have two girls, aged 8 and 10. And when everything is going well, they are the best of friends, but within seconds, things can go from laughing and playing, to screaming and crying and the slamming of doors. I'm sure this is normal sibling stuff. But these are the moments that generally require a little intervention. Both sides always feel deeply wronged, and their strong sense of justice looks to us for vindication. We assess the situation, we hear both sides of the story, and we make our decree. We try to help them understand their part in the problem. And then comes their least favourite sentence: It's time to make it right. You need to go apologize to your sister.

Sometimes we get an unenthusiastic 'sorry' - no eye contact of course. Or perhaps a more angered approach... "sorry, ok", often accompanied by an eye roll. Classic. In those moments, we can't force our kids to feel truly sorry for the harm that they've caused. But until they do, there's no restoration of the relationship. They retreat to their rooms. The rift

remains. But we have found that when we give them time to sit with it, to realize that they are discontent with the state of things, they get to a place where they truly desire to set things right. Their hearts turn back. And soon enough, anger melts away, pride and the need to be right softens, and a genuine apology unfolds. Not the forced 'sorry' that we tried to get out of them earlier, a real apology that actually heals and restores their connection.

You know, this week I was considering cutting this example out, because I was second guessing if it really captured an accurate picture of the dynamic that typically unfolds. But then I watched it all happen in real time this past Wednesday. I won't get into all the details, except to say that the fight between the girls erupted right at bedtime. We were already late getting them to bed, so there's wasn't time to bring it all to a nice resolution. We had to put the kids to bed, telling them we'd sort it out in the morning. Morning came, and my youngest, Kayla, came into our room in the morning with a sweet little smile on her face and said to me: Mom, Aaliyah and I woke up in the middle of the night, and Aaliyah said sorry to me. Like, you didn't even tell her she had to do it, but she did! I felt very loved. My sister is the best!" When they get past that moment of anger and frustration and hurt, kids know how to make it right. How to apologize and genuinely put the whole thing behind them. So why do we adults often have such a hard time with this?

Sometimes, I think it is because we want to skip over the part where we have to sit with the sadness of what's gone wrong. To protect against experiencing the pain of our imperfection. We blame, we get defensive, we hold onto anger, or we sweep it under the rug and pretend it didn't happen. Maybe we even offer a token 'I'm sorry', but it's empty. And it doesn't really repair what's been broken. Often the heart change that is needed can only happen when we stop, and humbly take time to notice and feel the pain of the situation; to set aside our pride and acknowledge our part in it; to survey the damage, to understand the hurt that we've caused, and the hurt that we're feeling.

We need to lament. But we are not meant to stay there forever. God is not calling us to remain in a perpetual state of grief and shame over our sins and mistakes. But I know for some of you, that is

exactly your reality. You live your life with a heavy burden of guilt. And you find it difficult to believe it possible that God has forgiven you. It's not that you haven't learned about God's forgiveness. You've listened to sermons, read it in scripture, you've even sang about it in church, but you can't seem to believe it in your heart that you are forgiven. Forgiveness is one of those things that we can know well in our heads, without it taking root in our hearts.

If this is you— If the mistakes you've made, and the faults and flaws that you have made keep you believing that you're too far gone. That God couldn't possibly redeem it all. Perhaps Joel's words to Judah that we're going to look at in a moment are words that you need to hear. Before we get to them, let me just say: we've really just scratched the surface of the book of Joel today, and if we had more time, we'd talk about the blessings that God desires to lavish on His people; we'd talk about Joel's prophetic words speaking of the day that God would pour out His spirit on all people; and We'd talk about how God's grace and love intersect with God's justice. But for today, we have just this one final verse. And it is a verse that, once again, echoes across Israel's history.

At Mount Sinai, after the Lord delivered Israel out of Slavery in Egypt, Moses came down the mountain with final instructions from the Lord regarding the renewed covenant, only to find that the people had already broken God's law. They were worshipping false idols, which was a serious violation of the covenant laws. Moses was so angry, he threw the stone tablets that the Ten Commandments were written on to the ground, breaking them to pieces.

If the Covenant was based strictly on justice alone, the people would be done for. But Moses prayed to God on their behalf. And the Lord responded with these words that captured the grace that was underlying the entire covenant.

Exodus 34:6-7a

The LORD, the LORD, the compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger, abounding in love and faithfulness, maintaining love to thousands, and forgiving wickedness, rebellion and sin.

Now fast forward to Joel. After he paints this fearsome picture of the awesome, terrible, day of the Lord that is coming, where God responds to the people's rebellion with the consequences promised in the covenant, he then quotes these words:

Joel 2:12-13

*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.*

These words would have been so well known by the people. Words spoken by God himself, and repeated over and over again throughout scripture. in Exodus, in the Psalms, and in Numbers. God, through Joel, was reminding the people of the underlying grace of the covenant, reminding them of God's mercy and love for them, demonstrated time and again throughout their history. And that is the heart of God's message for the people, spoken through Joel. Not a message of desolation and destruction and darkness, but a message of hope and redemption. A message that reminded them that there is nothing they could do, no sin so great that could set them beyond the grace of God. No faults or mistakes or failures that could remove God's deep desire to have them return to him with all their hearts. They had wandered far from God, so far that their behaviour was on par with their greatest oppressors, but they were still His. They were not rejected, or abandoned, or forgotten.

That's a message that is as true for us as it was for the people of Judah that Joel was writing to. And I think it's a message we still need to hear today. As I close, I just want to speak these words over you, and after I do, we're going to say a simple prayer together; it's just one word, and the word is "Amen". When we say Amen, we are saying "Yes, God! I believe!" so we'll say this one word prayer to God, affirming we believe these words to be true: That there is nothing you can do, no sin so great, that can set you beyond the grace of God. No faults or mistakes or sin that could remove God's deep desire to have you return to Him with all your heart. You are not rejected, or abandoned, or forgotten. And all God's people said....AMEN!

Psalm 103:8-12

*8 The LORD is compassionate and gracious,
slow to anger, abounding in love.
9 He will not always accuse,
nor will he harbor his anger forever;
10 he does not treat us as our sins deserve
or repay us according to our iniquities.
11 For as high as the heavens are above the
earth, so great is his love for those who fear
him;
12 as far as the east is from the west,
so far has he removed our transgressions
from us.*

As you leave this place, would you leave with a heart turned towards God, confident of His grace, and love, and forgiveness abundantly given to you.

Points to Ponder

Majoring on the Minors ~ Joel

With a friend, your family or in your small group, discuss the following questions.

1. In the face of a painful or difficult season of life, have you ever found yourself asking the question "What did I do to deserve this?" What do you really believe about the connection between sin and judgement? Do bad things happen to us because God is punishing us? What other reasons could there be for the suffering in our lives?
2. When you look back on painful seasons that you've been through, can you see ways that God used those seasons to bring about something good?
3. What value is there in taking time to grieve and lament when sin has caused damage to our relationships with one another and our relationship with God?
4. Are you good at apologizing? What do you find difficult about saying you're sorry? Do you ever take time for confession, to intentionally say, "I am sorry" to God?
5. Are there areas of sin and brokenness in your life that are creating a relational rift between you and God? What will it take to turn your heart back to Him?