

Sermon Outline - Sun, February 13, 2022 – Locust – Finding the Protein in the Plague
Isaiah 1:11-17; Matthew 3:1-4

Overview –

This is our last week in the series the Economy of Locust & Honey where we have explored how John the Baptist and the Essenes & Qumran community lived in jubilee in both their diet and their economic justice practices. Last week we explored the lives of honeybees – how they put the live gives are the center of power, how they live in deeply communal lives and the way that their activity for self-sustenance brings abundance to everything around them. Today we look at the locust side of the diet.

Exegesis –

- Locusts are in the same family as grasshoppers and go back at least as far as the Pharaohs.
- Constant in 30 countries mostly in Africa & Middle East but can spread to 60 nations during a swarm
- North America is only continent w/out native locust - Rocky Mountain Locust went extinct in 1902.
- Female locusts lay eggs in a hole in damp, warm soil or sand. If conditions are right the nymphs can emerge from their eggs in as soon as 10 days and be a flying adult in about 2.5 months.
- People often ignore them until they swarm. “When it rains, it swarms” = Optimal egg conditions + extra vegetation to eat → massive numbers of locusts.
- They devour all the vegetation and so the ancients found protein in the plague by eating them. In fact their grasshoppers and locusts are the only halal insects in Islam, testament to their importance
- We can no longer do that because folks use toxic chemicals to control them so they are not often not safe to eat.

Key Points

1. Before there was farm to table, there was forage to tongue. They were the original locavores surviving and thriving with what was around them rather than always striving for something elsewhere, just out of reach or requiring trade or importation.
2. A locust diet kept the numbers of the insects in check limiting their ability to grow out of control.
3. When locusts populations did grow and swarm, eating them allowed folks to move from famine into a feast. Taking what the evil one intended for harm and turning it around for their benefit.

The Essenes and Qumran communities chose to live in the desert. They chose to live under conditions that were tougher because they felt it helped them remain closer to God. This sentiment was carried by the Desert Fathers, the first community of monks living in Egypt in the 3rd century. But there are many communities that have lived in arid spaces not by choice but because the world has pushed them out of the centers of power. Nonetheless they have found ways to survive and thrive in tough situation by learning to forage for their food and to find protein in the plague.

Questions

1. To live into Jubilee and economic justice how are you learning to deeply appreciate what is around you rather than always longing for things beyond your reach? How are you tapping into local resources for sustenance?
2. Eating the locusts helps keep their population in balance. Where do you need to lean into greater balance? What things are you running from or avoiding that might be inviting a much worse situation to overwhelm you?
3. How can you/we find protein in the plague? What opportunities for change and growth are available to us in this pandemic if we stop focusing on the lost crops and see that the locusts are a source of protein? How can you lean into approach in the Lenten season? Where might your reaction be like a pesticide killing the silver lining of the plagues?