

Introduction

- Context - post-exile, fragile re-establishment of God's people in the land
 - under threat from powerful nations around
 - under threat from natural disasters, such as famine, and here locusts

Locusts

- Swarms can contain up to 10 billion locusts
 - one locust can travel 3000 miles in its lifetime!
 - a swarm can devour in one day what 40,000 people would eat in a year
 - in 1958 a swarm in Ethiopia took 167,000 metric tons of grain, enough to feed more than a million people for a year!

Why?

- Invitation to turn to God (v.13-14)
 - even before the explanation is fully there...
 - God is only source of explanation, and only source of help
- There is both the sense that only God could be behind, or have allowed such a thing... and that only he could provide any kind of release or recompense from it

We don't have locusts, but...

- There are circumstances in life that would cause us to say:
 - *surely the joy of mankind is withered away* (v.12)
- Health
 - physical, mental, emotional
- Relationships gone sour
 - and all the on-going repercussions of that
- Trouble
 - things outwith our control, that happen to those we love perhaps, or things like joblessness and so on...
- National
 - recession, terrorism, floods in Pakistan, etc

Where are we turning?

- When, for us, "*the joy of mankind is withered away*", where do we turn?
 - tarot, horoscope, ouija, spirit guides?
 - friends, support...
 - self-improvement, advice, self-help books...
 - escape, drink, drugs, adrenalin junkies...
- Or to the living God, the one who made heaven and earth, the one who entered into this world in weakness and pain, suffering alongside pained humanity, for its good?
 - there isn't an answer this week, a neat explanation to the trauma that Israel suffered as the locusts swept in, probably across the Sinai desert...
 - maybe there won't even be a complete explanation next week or the week after as we work our way through the rest of Joel!
 - *but is it towards God that we turn?*