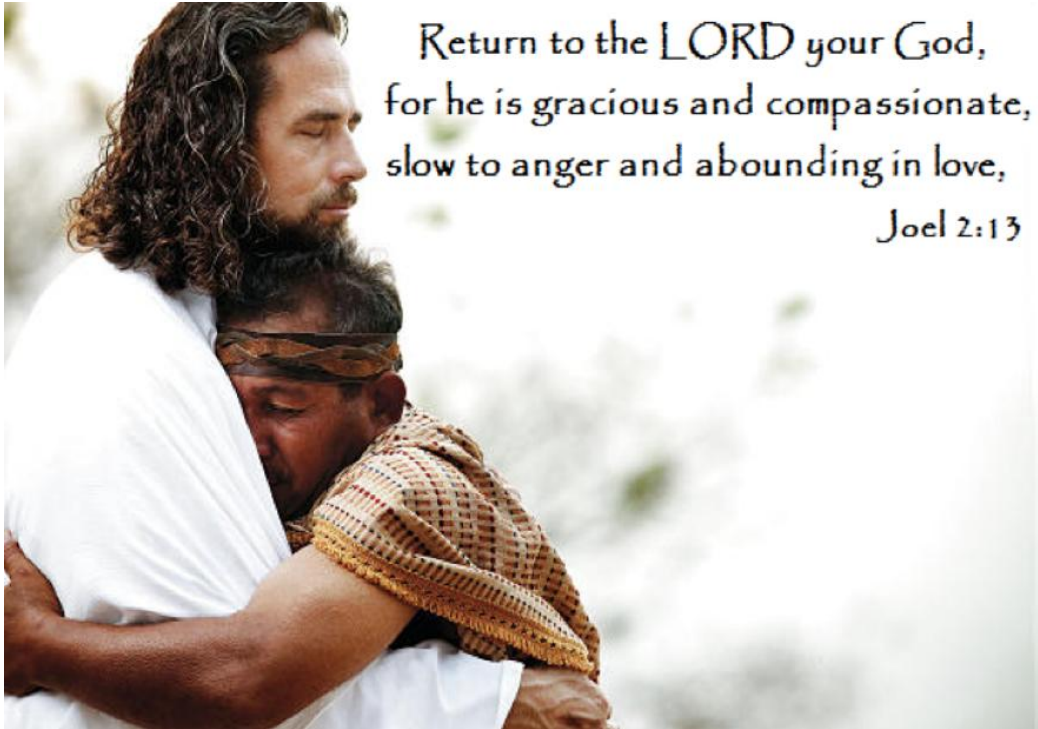


Twelfth Sunday After Pentecost

August 16, 2026 10:30 AM



Return to the LORD your God,
for he is gracious and compassionate,
slow to anger and abounding in love,
Joel 2:13

Grace Evangelical Lutheran Church



NORTH AMERICAN
LUTHERAN
CHURCH

4536 Hickory Lincolnton Highway, Newton, North Carolina 28658

Church Office: (704) 462-1035 email: gracenalcnewton@aol.com

www.gracelutheran-newton.org

Rev. Doug Hefner cell: (980) 234-8848 email: pastorhefner@aol.com

Sandi Tallant – Organist Todd Childers – Administrative Assistant

Office Hours: Monday - Thursday 8am to 12pm

WELCOME TO ALL WHO WORSHIP at Grace Church this morning as we gather to worship the Father, + Son and Holy Spirit in truth. As you entered the sanctuary today, you received this bulletin containing the order for worship and announcements. Please also notice the Prayer List where you will find a listing of all the known prayer concerns. You are invited to use this as a guide for your personal prayers throughout the coming week. If you need information about our congregation or if you'd like to update your information, make sure to fill out the yellow Worship Today Form and place it in the offering plate at the time of the offering. If you have a prayer concern, indicate that on your Worship Today Form at the bottom or on the reverse side. If you are seeking a Church Home or would like more information about Grace, please contact Pastor Doug (980) 234-8848.

**Stand Hymnals in Pew Rack: LBW = Green WOV = Blue TCH = Burgundy*

PRELUDE *Please observe silence for meditation and prayer.*

WELCOME AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

*** BRIEF ORDER OF CONFESSION AND FORGIVENESS**

The sign of the cross may be made by all in remembrance of their Baptism.

P: In the name of the Father, and of the + Son, and of the Holy Spirit. **C: Amen.**

P: God of all mercy and consolation, come to the aid of your people, turning us from our sin to live for you alone. Give us the power of your Holy Spirit that, attentive to your Word, we may confess our sins, receive your forgiveness, and grow into the fullness of your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord. **C: Amen.**

P: Let us return to the Lord with all your heart and rend your hearts and not your garments. Return to the Lord your God, for He is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love. *(Joel 2)*

Silence is kept for reflection and confession of our sins before God and one another.

P: Gracious God,

C: have mercy upon us. In your compassion forgive us our sins, known and unknown, things done and left undone. Uphold us by your Spirit so that we may live and serve you in newness of life, to the honor and glory of your holy name; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

The minister stands and addresses the congregation.

P: In the mercy of almighty God, Jesus Christ was given to die for us, and for his sake God forgives us all our sins. As a called and ordained minister of the Church of Christ, and by his authority, I therefore declare to you the entire forgiveness of all our sins, in the name of the Father, and of the + Son, and of the Holy Spirit. **C: Amen.**

* **GREETING**

P: The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all. **C: And also with you.**

PRAYER OF THE DAY

P: Gracious God, you welcome all who cry out to you, and no one is beyond the reach of your mercy. Through our gathering around word and meal, strengthen us to be living signs of your healing and mercy so that all may know your glory and grace; through your Son, Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

C: Amen.

The congregation may be seated.

FIRST READING: Joel 2: 12-32

¹² "Yet even now," declares the Lord, "return to me with all your heart, with fasting, with weeping, and with mourning; ¹³ and rend your hearts and not your garments." Return to the Lord your God, for he is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love; and he relents over disaster. ¹⁴ 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? ¹⁵ Blow the trumpet in Zion; consecrate a fast; call a solemn assembly; ¹⁶ gather the people. Consecrate the congregation; assemble the elders; gather the children, even nursing infants. Let the bridegroom leave his room, and the bride her chamber. ¹⁷ Between the vestibule and the altar let the priests, the ministers of the Lord, weep and say, "Spare your people, O Lord, and make not your heritage a reproach, a byword among the nations. Why should they say among the peoples, 'Where is their God?'"

¹⁸ Then the Lord became jealous for his land and had pity on his people. ¹⁹ The Lord answered and said to his people, "Behold, I am sending to you grain, wine, and oil, and you will be satisfied; and I will no more make you a reproach among the nations. ²⁰ "I will remove the northerner far from you, and drive him into a parched and desolate land, his vanguard into the eastern sea, and his rear guard into the western sea; the stench and foul smell of him will rise, for he has done great things. ²¹ "Fear not, O land; be glad and rejoice, for the Lord has done great things! ²² Fear not, you beasts of the field, for the pastures of the wilderness are green; the tree bears its fruit; the fig tree and vine give their full yield. ²³ "Be glad, O children of Zion, and rejoice in the Lord your God, for he has given the early rain for your vindication; he has poured down for you abundant rain, the early and the latter rain, as before. ²⁴ "The threshing floors shall be full of grain; the vats shall overflow with wine and oil. ²⁵ I will restore to you the years that the swarming locust has eaten, the hopper, the destroyer, and the cutter, my great army, which I sent among you. ²⁶ "You shall eat in

plenty and be satisfied, and praise the name of the Lord your God, who has dealt wondrously with you. And my people shall never again be put to shame. ²⁷ You shall know that I am in the midst of Israel, and that I am the Lord your God and there is none else. And my people shall never again be put to shame.

²⁸ "And it shall come to pass afterward, that I will pour out my Spirit on all flesh; your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, and your young men shall see visions. ²⁹ Even on the male and female servants in those days I will pour out my Spirit. ³⁰ "And I will show wonders in the heavens and on the earth, blood and fire and columns of smoke. ³¹ The sun shall be turned to darkness, and the moon to blood, before the great and awesome day of the Lord comes. ³² And it shall come to pass that everyone who calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved. For in Mount Zion and in Jerusalem there shall be those who escape, as the Lord has said, and among the survivors shall be those whom the Lord calls.

L: The Word of the Lord. C: Thanks be to God

SECOND READING: 2 Peter 3: 8-18

⁸ But do not overlook this one fact, beloved, that with the Lord one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day. ⁹ ***The Lord is not slow to fulfill his promise as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing that any should perish, but that all should reach repentance.*** ¹⁰ But the day of the Lord will come like a thief, and then the heavens will pass away with a roar, and the heavenly bodies^[b] will be burned up and dissolved, and the earth and the works that are done on it will be exposed. ¹¹ Since all these things are thus to be dissolved, what sort of people ought you to be in lives of holiness and godliness, ¹² waiting for and hastening the coming of the day of God, because of which the heavens will be set on fire and dissolved, and the heavenly bodies will melt as they burn! ¹³ But according to his promise we are waiting for new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells.

¹⁴ Therefore, beloved, since you are waiting for these, be diligent to be found by him without spot or blemish, and at peace. ¹⁵ And count the patience of our Lord as salvation, just as our beloved brother Paul also wrote to you according to the wisdom given him, ¹⁶ as he does in all his letters when he speaks in them of these matters. There are some things in them that are hard to understand, which the ignorant and unstable twist to their own destruction, as they do the other Scriptures. ¹⁷ You therefore, beloved, knowing this beforehand, take care that you are not carried away with the error of lawless people and lose your own stability. ¹⁸ ***But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To him be the glory both now and to the day of eternity. Amen.***

L: The Word of the Lord. **C: Thanks be to God**

The congregation is invited to stand.

*** GOSPEL ACCLAMATION**

“Alleluia, Lord to Whom Shall We Go”



***GOSPEL: Luke 5: 27-32**

P: The holy gospel according to St. Luke. **C: Glory to you, O Lord.**

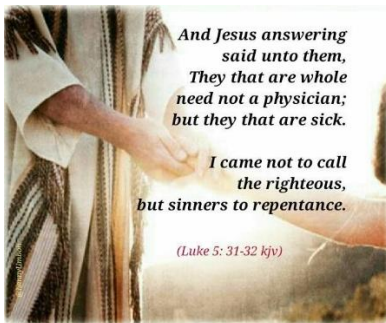
²⁷ After this he went out and saw a tax collector named Levi (Matthew), sitting at the tax booth. And he said to him, “Follow me.” ²⁸ And leaving everything, he rose and followed him. ²⁹ And Levi made him a great feast in his house, and there was a large company of tax collectors and others reclining at table with them. ³⁰ And the Pharisees and their scribes grumbled at his disciples, saying, “Why do you eat and drink with tax collectors and sinners?” ³¹ And Jesus answered them, “Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick. ³² I have not come to call the righteous but sinners to repentance.”

L: The Gospel of the Lord. **C: Praise to You O Christ!**

The congregation may be seated.

CHILDREN’S MESSAGE

SERMON



***“Return, Repent, and Be Revived in the Lord our God,
for God is Gracious and Merciful, Slow to Anger, and
Abounding in Steadfast Love!”***

Pastor Doug

***HYMN OF THE DAY**

“Spirit, Spirit of Gentleness”

WOV 684

***THE APOSTLES’ CREED**

I believe in God, the Father almighty, creator of heaven and earth.

I believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord. He was conceived by the power of the Holy Spirit and born of the Virgin Mary. He suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died, and was buried. He descended into hell. On the third day he rose again. He ascended into heaven and is seated at the right hand of the Father. He will come again to judge the living and the dead.

I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy catholic Church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting. Amen.

***PRAYERS OF INTERCESSION**

Response at the end of each petition. P: Lord in your mercy, **C: Hear our prayer.**

***SHARING THE PEACE OF CHRIST**

P: The peace of Christ be with you always. **C: And also with you.**

Worshipers may greet one another with “the Peace of Christ.”

The assembly may be seated.

*** OFFERING In response to God’s blessings, we offer our tithes to the Lord**
HOLY COMMUNION – MEAL OF GRACE

*** OFFERTORY Let the Vineyards**

Let the vine - yards be fruit - ful, Lord, and fill to the brim our
cup of bless - ing. Gath - er a har - vest from the seeds that were
sown, that we may be fed with the bread of life. Gath - er the
hopes and the dreams of all; u - nite them with the prayers we
of - fer now. Grace our ta - ble with your pres - ence, and
give us a fore - taste of the feast to come.

*** OFFERTORY PRAYER**

P: Heavenly Father, as we bring our offerings today, we remember the call to return to You with all our hearts. May our gifts reflect our gratitude for Your mercy and grace. Use these offerings to restore and bless those in need, just as You promise to restore your people through your grace, mercy, and love in Christ Jesus our Lord in the gracious and reviving outpouring of Your Holy Spirit; in the name of Jesus. **C: Amen.**

*** DIALOGUE**

P: The Lord be with you. **C: And also with you.**

P: Lift up your hearts. **C: We lift them to the Lord.**

P: Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

C: It is right to give him thanks and praise.

*** WORDS OF INSTITUTION**

*** LORD'S PRAYER**

*** INVITATION TO COMMUNION**

P: The Gifts of God for the People of God. **C: Thanks be to God!**

The assembly may be seated.

All are invited to receive Holy Communion

COMMUNION SONG

Lamb of God

The image displays four staves of musical notation for the Communion Song 'Lamb of God'. The music is written in a single melodic line on a treble clef staff with a key signature of one flat (B-flat). The lyrics are written below the notes. The first staff begins with a square symbol, likely indicating a repeat sign. The lyrics are: 'Lamb of God, you take a - way the sin of the world; have'. The second staff continues: 'mer-cy on us. Lamb of God, you take a - way the sin of the'. The third staff continues: 'world; have mer-cy on us. Lamb of God, you take a - way the'. The fourth staff concludes: 'sin of the world; grant us peace.' The word 'grant' is underlined with a curved line, and 'us' and 'peace.' are on the same line.

Lamb of God, you take a - way the sin of the world; have

mer-cy on us. Lamb of God, you take a - way the sin of the

world; have mer-cy on us. Lamb of God, you take a - way the

sin of the world; grant us peace.

The congregation is invited to stand.

*** COMMUNION BLESSING AND PRAYER**

P: Gracious Lord, at this table of grace, we have experienced in the Bread of Life, Jesus, Your grace, mercy, and steadfast love. We thank You for the gift of Your Son, who restores our relationship with You and one another. In sharing in the bread and cup, Your covenant love revives us in Your Spirit, giving us vision and renewed faith to share Your love with all the world, in Jesus' name. **C: Amen.**

*** BLESSING**

The Lord bless you and keep you. The Lord's face shine upon you and be gracious to you. The Lord look upon you with favor and + give you peace. **C: Amen.**

***SENDING HYMN "Go My Children, with My Blessing" WOV 721**
(verses 1-3)

***DISMISSAL**

P: Revived and Restored in Christ and in the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, let us go in peace, love and joy to love the Lord and our neighbor!

C: Thanks be to God!

POSTLUDE

ALTAR FLOWERS are given to the Glory of God and in loving memory of Harold and Jo Ann Crouse by Gene and Frankie Crouse.



In the Grace Church Family:

Jeffrey Bivens, Rick & Cindy Bivens, Pat Dietz, Allen and Kay Hatchett, Lorene Heavner, Larry & Brenda Jarrett, Martha Johnson, Faye Lane, Harvey Leatherman, Phil & Malinda Leatherman, Betty

Matheson, Joe Momier, Jane Moss, Christine Norman, Michael Norman, Tricia and Dan Panek, Mike, Debi & Stephen Pisko, Alice Parris, Todd Setzer, Helen Smith, Ethan Starnes, Sandi Tallant, Libby Travis, Shirley Warlick, Ken Welch, Scott & Carolyn Whisnant, and Nancy Willis.

Nursing Home: Juanita Haas (Trinity Village), Ted Whisnant (Trinity Village)

Friends and Relatives in our Prayers: Pray for Peace in Israel and the World, New Covenant Lutheran Mission Church, Ashlee Bumgardner, Clinton Childers, Evelyn Childers, Marilyn Childers, family of Robin Doyle, Alan Fulbright, Randy & Rita Neill, Anita Sabino, Scott Speagle, and Dale Smith. Prayers for world peace and for our church, the United States of America, and especially the families of those who have given their lives in the service of our country and those who continue to protect our freedoms and for all members of our Armed Forces.

HAPPY AUGUST BIRTHDAY TO:

August 1 Gary Leatherman	August 1 James Hall	August 7 Martha Johnson
August 12 Jane Moss	August 23 Betty Wilfong	August 30 Pat Dietz

COMING UP AT GRACE THIS WEEK:

Today: Twelfth Sunday After Pentecost

9:30am – **Visioneering** meeting in Sanctuary. What is God's vision for Grace Church?

10:30am - Worship Celebration

1:00pm - Leonard Family Reunion in Fellowship Hall

Monday:

6:00pm - Leadership Ministry Board Meeting

GIVING AND ATTENDANCE FOR LAST SUNDAY

Date	Offering		Attendance	
	Total Receipts	General Fund	Worship	Sunday School
8/9/2026	\$3,173	\$2,944	43	21

UPCOMING DATES:

+Sun., Aug. 23: Back to School Service 10:30am, Birthday Luncheon for Betty Wilfong's 80th! The Congregation is invited! Bring a dish to share!

+ Sun., Sept. 13: Grandparents Sunday, 10:30am – Gift/Prayers/Blessing for Grandparents Jarrett Family Reunion - Fellowship Hall - 1:00pm

+Wed., Sept. 16: Grace Senior Luncheon – 12:00pm

+ Sun, Sept 20: Homecoming Worship Service followed by Covered Dish Luncheon in Shelter

+ Sat., Oct. 3: Blessing of the Animals Service at Grace Outdoor Shelter 5:00pm

+Sun., Oct. 4: Food for the Poor Sunday 10:30am; Catawba Co. Walk for Hunger 3:00pm

+Wed., Oct. 21: Grace Senior Luncheon – 12:00pm

+ Sun, Oct. 25: Reformation Sunday Service at 10:30am

+ Sat., Oct. 31: Grace Fall Festival and Trunk or Treat 5pm:7pm

+ Sunday, Nov. 1: 10:30am All Saints' Day Service, Worshippers light a candle in remembrance of a loved one in heaven.

+Sun, Nov. 15: Whisnant Family Reunion – Fellowship Hall – 1:00pm

+Wed., Nov. 18: Grace Senior Luncheon – 12:00pm

+ Nov. 22: Christ the King Sunday 10:30am, Last Sunday in Church Year

+Wed, Nov. 25: Community Thanksgiving Service 6pm Dinner, 7pm Worship

CONGREGATIONAL DISCUSSION

Starting on Sunday, August 9, at 9:30am in the Sanctuary, all of Grace Church is invited to an experience of **Visioneering**: Prayerfully Seeking God's Vision for Grace Through His Word and Conversation Together. Pastor Doug will lead this time together and will be providing surveys and other tools for us to discover God's glorious vision for His Church here at Grace! Let us pray that in these gatherings God will renew us and bring revival for the proclamation of the Gospel, the Good news of God's love for us in Christ!

KNOW YOUR CHURCH SURVEY

As a part of discovering God's vision for His Church here at Grace, you are invited to participate in a "Know Your Church" survey that will help us to see our areas of strength and also our growing edges. Please click the link below, answer questions to the best of your ability, and then submit. Your responses will be tabulated with everyone else who responds.

Know Your Church Survey Link <https://churchhealthreport.com/survey/?s=YQ3U7AB>

Up to 60 people can respond to the survey. If you want to do the survey but do not have a computer, smart phone, or internet, please see Pastor Doug or Todd and we can get you set up on one of the computers here at the church.

PICTORIAL DIRECTORY

We would like to create a new updated pictorial directory for our congregation. Please email to us a digital photo of your choosing of you and your family members who worship at Grace. It does not have to be a formal portrait but should clearly show everyone's faces. If you do not have one we can help you take one. If you would like someone to take a picture for you please see Todd Childers immediately after worship.

SAFETY UPDATE

In order to maintain a safe environment for all who worship at Grace, the Board has decided that beginning on Sunday, August 2nd, the ushers will lock the front doors at 10:45am. Please share any other ideas you have that might enhance the safety and security of our Congregation by jotting them down and placing them in the suggestion box found in the Narthex.

Ministers of Grace – All the People of Grace

Pastor – Reverend Doug Hefner Board President – Tim Eckard

Lector – Todd Childers Youth Leader – Stormy Shull

Altar Preparation – Frankie Crouse

Communion Assistants – Nicky Jarrett & Shelly Scronce

Ushers – Jacob Jarrett & Tim Leatherman

Offering Counters – Todd Childers & Gary Leatherman

CATAWBA COUNTY HUNGER WALK

Ashure Ministry, Hickory Soup Kitchen, and The Corner Table are proud to come together to host the 2026 Catawba County Hunger Walk! We invite you to join us for this meaningful community event dedicated to fighting hunger right here in Catawba County. Proceeds from this year's walk will support all three organizations as we work together to provide food, hope, and dignity to our neighbors facing food insecurity.

The Hunger Walk is more than just a fundraiser—it's a powerful way to bring our community together while raising awareness about the ongoing challenge of hunger in our area. We humbly ask for your support. Every dollar raised will be divided equally among Ashure Ministry, Hickory Soup Kitchen, and The Corner Table, and every dollar goes directly toward helping feed those who need it most.

Thank you for standing with us in this shared mission of compassion and care. Together, we can take meaningful steps toward ending hunger in Catawba County. All walkers who register and raise a minimum of \$25 before August 30th will receive a walk t-shirt. David and Belinda Wilfong are our church team captains. Please reach out to David and Belinda if you have any questions. Paper registration forms are available in the Narthex and should be returned to David or Belinda Wilfong. If you choose to register online, please visit cchungerwalk.com and register under our team name which is ***Grace Lutheran NALC Newton***. The password is ***hungerwalk2026\$\$*** and is required for online registration. The forms required are also included in this newsletter.

DEVOTION

In the book of Joel, the Lord addresses His people amidst a severe crisis. The nation of Israel faces calamity — a devastating plague of locusts that strips away their livelihood, serving as a metaphor for spiritual desolation. In Joel 2:12, the Lord proclaims, *"Therefore also now, saith the LORD, turn ye even to me with all your heart, and with fasting, and with weeping, and with mourning."* This verse, rich in its call to return, offers insights into the heart of God and our response to Him in times of desperation.

To turn back to God means to change direction, to repent. It is an invitation not just to make superficial amends but to genuinely seek His face and restore a broken relationship. The plea begins with the word "turn," which emphasizes action — a turning away from sin, disobedience, and complacency, and a turning towards God. This reversal is not a mere

physical act; rather, it requires an inward transformation that reflects a sincere desire to return home to the Father.

The phrase "with all your heart" underscores the intensity of this turning. The heart, in biblical terms, is the seat of emotions, will, and intellect. It signifies the entirety of our being. God is not looking for half-hearted attempts; He desires complete devotion. When we come before Him, He asks for our all—not just in words, but in actions and attitudes. It invites us to strip away superficiality and to engage deeply with our faith. Fasting, weeping, and mourning become expressions of this heartfelt return. They are manifestations of grief over our sin and an earnest longing for restoration.

Fasting is a profound spiritual discipline that willfully places aside physical nourishment to focus on spiritual needs. The act of fasting points to our need for God in our dire circumstances and signifies a deep yearning for spiritual renewal.

Weeping conveys the emotional gravity of our transgressions. It reflects the sorrow and regret present in our lives when we recognize the damage sin has caused both to ourselves and to our relationships with God and others. Mourning takes this further, revealing a deeper anguish over the separation caused by sin. It signals a desire to be reconciled, to experience transformation, and to genuinely feel the weight of our actions.

This verse serves as both an alarm and a soothing balm. It awakens us to our need for repentance while simultaneously inviting us to the sacred space of God's presence. The Lord's call to turn is not merely reactionary; it is restorative. He desires to heal, to forgive, and to restore what is broken. When we approach Him with sincere hearts, He welcomes us back with open arms, ready to cleanse us and renew our spirits.

In modern times, we often find ourselves facing our own crises — personal loss, societal pressures, and spiritual dryness. Joel reminds us that the path of renewal begins with a heartfelt response to God's call. It beckons us to examine our hearts, recognize where we have strayed, and earnestly seek His forgiveness. The promise embedded in this verse is clear: God draws near to those who draw near to Him. As we engage in fasting, weeping, and mourning, we step into a space where grace awaits — grace that promises to restore the years the locusts have eaten (Joel 2:25).

Reflecting on Joel's words, let us commit to turning back to God fully. May we embrace this call to seek Him with everything we have, seeking not just relief from our circumstances but a deeper relationship with our Lord. May our lives be marked by genuine repentance, heartfelt earnestness, and unwavering faith in the power of God to restore our hearts and lives. We can return to God and repent because of who God is and God's promise: *"Return to the Lord your God, for He is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love!" Joel 2:13*