

Read: Joel 3:12-16

The Lord Gives Us Strength to Live Differently Until Judgment Day

Joel 3:14-16

Multitudes, multitudes in the valley of decision! For the day of the Lord is near in the valley of decision. The sun and moon will be darkened, and the stars no longer shine. The Lord will roar from Zion and thunder from Jerusalem; the earth and the heavens will tremble. But the Lord will be a refuge for his people, a stronghold for the people of Israel.

In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Have you been to a big sports game in a big stadium before? If you haven't been to one yet, you have probably seen some on TV. Can you picture what it's like?

Thousands and thousands of people are gathered together—almost more people than you could ever count on your own. But all the people are divided. Some are cheering for one team; the rest are cheering for the other team. Everyone is so excited to see who will win the big game!

Could you imagine an event like that with not thousands of people, not even millions of people, but billions and billions of people? Could you imagine an event where every single person ever in the world is all gathered together at the same time?

In the Bible reading for today, the prophet Joel is describing this kind of event. But it's not the Super Bowl. Even bigger than that! It's judgment day, the Last Day, when Jesus our victorious King will return. What Joel sees is a picture of all the people in the world gathered before him. Joel sees the sun and moon turning dark and the earth shaking because Jesus the mighty King is about to be Jesus the mighty Judge. Jesus will be sending people either to hell or heaven forever.

But don't be afraid of this picture and don't be afraid of that great Last Day! Listen to God's promise today again: "The Lord will be a refuge for his people, a stronghold for the people of Israel."

Imagine being at a big basketball game at a big stadium and God was playing for one team. The other team wouldn't even have a chance! The team with God *always* wins—there is nothing to worry about!

This is actually true for us. You know who is on our team—Jesus! Jesus is the one who gives us strength every day. And think about how strong he is! Just look at the cross where every sin of every person—where *your* sin—was washed away forever and Satan was crushed in defeat.

Look at the empty tomb of Jesus where death was swallowed up in the victory of Jesus who rose to life.

For now, while we are still playing the game—while we are still in this world—we are totally safe and secure with our Savior who is like a mighty castle or fortress for us. Don't be afraid! And one day soon Jesus will come back. But again, don't be afraid! Jesus is on our team and we've already won! On that day we will join him in the biggest victory celebration of all time!

The questions below are to help families discuss this devotion. The questions are divided by age group as suggestions, but anyone could reflect on any of the questions as they desire.

Questions for Younger Children

- Why is Jesus so strong and mighty?
- How did Jesus win a victory over Satan?

Questions for Elementary Age Children

- What is Jesus going to do on judgment day?
- Why don't you have to be afraid of where you are going to go on judgment day?

Questions for Middle School and Above

- Explain this statement: Judgment day will be a day of both great mourning and great joy.
- Identify times in life when God's strength is most important and necessary to believers.

Closing Prayer:

Dear Savior, thank you for your victory on Easter morning. Keep me safe in your strength until judgment day, when we can celebrate the victory together. Amen.

Hymn: CW 221:1,3 – Blessed Jesus, at Your Word

Blessed Jesus, at your Word We are gathered all to hear you.
Let our hearts and souls be stirred Now to seek and love and fear you,
By your teachings, sweet and holy, Drawn from earth to love you solely.

Gracious Savior, good and kind, Light from Light, from God proceeding,
Open now our heart and mind; Help us by your Spirit's pleading.
Hear the cry your people raises; Hear and bless our prayers and praises.