

Some churches follow a liturgical calendar in their preaching. They preach based on a rotating series of texts that follow the church calendar. I like the church calendar, but I don't want it to affect our preaching too much. Others follow the American calendar. So, on special holidays, like Mother's Day today, they may preach a special Mother's Day sermon.

At Tanglewood Bible Fellowship, it is my regular habit to preach methodically through books of the Bible. So, our Mother's Day sermon will be in Revelation 9. And this morning we will speak about demonic beings that bring unimaginable pain for months, that make you want to die, and then you are overwhelmed by a monstrous horde. So, maybe it is kind of a Mother's Day sermon, I don't know.

Turn in your Bibles to Revelation 9

I. Many would rather die than repent (v. 1-19)

This is an unfortunate reality.

Right now, there are plenty of people who do not want to repent of their sins and place their trust in Jesus.

I remember talking with a friend who knew that she would become a Christian, but she wanted to wait until she had sinned a little more.

But the truth is.

Some are not just willing to wait until their fun is over before they repent. There are many in this world who will continue to put it off no matter what. Even as they face torture and torment, they would rather die than give their lives to Christ.

This is what these two trumpets and woes tell us.

This is what they reveal.

We will actually start again in verse 13 of chapter 8.

"Then I looked, and I heard an eagle crying with a loud voice as it flew directly overhead, 'Woe, woe, woe to those who dwell on the earth, at the blasts of the other trumpets that the three angels are about to blow.'"

This woe is for unbelievers.

And as we will see, it is especially for those who will not repent.
Who would rather die than come to Christ.
They will experience much suffering and pain.

Verse 1, **"And the fifth angel blew his trumpet, and I saw a star fallen from heaven to earth, and he was given the key to the shaft of the bottomless pit."**

We have had stars fall from heaven in previous trumpets.

Here, that happens again.

I think this star is actually an angel.

And this angel is given the key to a bottomless pit where something is locked away.

This appears to me to be the same bottomless pit that Satan will be locked in for a thousand years.

And it is the same place where fallen angels, or demons, have been locked away like we read in Jude 6.

God uses His key, and decides to let some of these out.

Take a moment to let your imagination think about this pit.

What it could look like.

What it would smell like.

What being around it would feel like.

And wonder what horrible creatures could be locked away in there.

Verse 2, **"He opened the shaft of the bottomless pit, and from the shaft rose smoke like the smoke of a great furnace, and the sun and the air were darkness with the smoke from the shaft."**

The darkness and smoke is overwhelming.

So much so that it threatens the light nearby.

The smoke pours so much that you can only guess at the fire raging underneath.

And this is where the monsters appear.

Verse 3, **"Then from the smoke came locusts on the earth, and they were given power like the power of scorpions of the earth."**

Something emerges that is called a locust.

But we know from having already read the passage this is not a creature.

This is something much more than what we see.

I believe these locusts are demons.

It may be fallen angels.

Or it may be a twisted version of the heavenly creatures.

But it is certainly demonic.

Because it is locked in a place only demons and Satan are placed.

But the power of these demonic creatures is limited.

Their power is given to them by God.

It is described as being like scorpions, but more importantly they do not have the power themselves.

Because Revelation is not really about evil and Satan rising up to try and defeat God.

It is not an even match, where we are not sure who will win.

God is the one with all of the power.

And their power is further limited in verse 4, **"They were told not to harm the grass of the earth or any green plant or any tree, but only those people who do not have the seal of God on their foreheads."**

Again, their power is limited.

They are only able to affect those who are not sealed.

Some interpret this to mean they can harm everyone other than the 144,000.

I believe they cannot harm any who have been sealed by God.

Which is any believer and follower of Christ currently experiencing this tribulation.

Whether they are part of the Jewish 144,000 or the great multitude.

Verse 5, **"They were allowed to torment them for five months, but not to kill them, and their torment was like the torment of a scorpion when it stings someone."**

Because God is protecting His people

This torment is specifically designed to harm those who are far from God
And it is not just something that God is actively doing.

It is something that God is allowing.

God stops some of these demonic beings from being able to influence the world.

Some wonder why God allows evil if He is good.

Why doesn't He stop all these bad things from happening?

Well, one of the bad things God is stopping right now from happening is
all of those creatures of demonic beings locked up in the bottomless pit.

And here He lets them out,

But he still keeps them from doing everything that they want.

They are not allowed to destroy the Earth and they are only allowed to
afflict some individuals.

Part of this that reminds me of the book of Job

Satan is allowed to punish Job, but only so much.

And they have to ask for permission to attack Job

Because God has sealed and protected him.

And the suffering these demons bring is in their sting

It is something that they bring upon people that hurts for five months.

It is a pain that hurts so bad it seems as if it will never end.

I have only been stung by a wasp once.

I avoided their stings for a long time and was always super nervous about
them because I did not want to get stung.

I feared the pain.

One day one flew on the back of my neck and I swatted it and it stung me
and I pulled my hand back and was surprised to find a wasp.

It hurt, but it didn't hurt as bad as I thought.

It really only hurt for a little while and then it went away.
And after that experience, I haven't been as afraid.
Because I know the hurt will go away.
But the sting from these demons will hurt.
It actually hurts so much that people beg for death.

Verse 6, **"And in those days people will seek death and will not find it. They will long to die, but death will flee from them."**

The people want to just die rather than experience the suffering that they are facing now.

It is so bad that they long for death

It even says they will seek out death, but cannot find it.

They are going to be looking for their lives to be cut short, but somehow supernaturally, God will keep them from being able to do so.

They will have to face the fullness of this sting for the full five months.

There is not an easy way out.

A lot of this is meant to show us the severity of the suffering in the judgment

It helps and understand why the eagle and the church and we must go and proclaim to the Earth because this is what's coming.

But it also is this recognition of what they would rather do than repent.

Because we do not see them repenting.

We do not see those who are stung, calling out to God for deliverance.

They don't cry out asking for God to show mercy.

They don't cry out asking for God's salvation

They just beg for death.

Because with this reveals is that they would rather die than give their lives to Jesus.

Even the suffering that they are facing and the pain that they are facing is not enough to change their hearts.

They are just like Pharaoh, who, even though all of the plagues of Egypt came on him, and even though he lost his firstborn son, he still refused to repent, and he only ever hardened his heart.

There is the same kind of hardening that is going on over and over and over.

And so the main idea that we are supposed to get really from all of these punishments.

The primary thing is that there is a need for repentance.

And if they do not repent, the suffering will continue.

Because there is an escape.

It is to turn to Jesus and ask for forgiveness, grace, and salvation.

But instead, they would rather die.

Verse 7, **"In appearance, the locusts were like horses prepared for battle: on their heads were what looked like crowns of gold; their faces were like human faces,"**

We have what these look like.

I think it's helpful to notice that it says all throughout this that these are an appearance and that this is like.

Which is God's Word telling us this is something you can picture but you're not gonna understand the whole thing.

Some may try to paint this or create art of it.

Others might try to identify a future thing.

But I think the important thing that we are supposed to take from the description of the appearance is that it's pretty scary-looking.

And it is important for us to remember that these are demonic monsters.

They don't look glorious, they look awful.

They're like locusts, but they kinda look like horses.

Their heads seemed to have seems like human faces.

But we know it's not a human face.

Or that these are not truly human.

And their crowns are certainly not like the crowns of life that Jesus promises the righteous.

Verse 8, **"Their hair like women's hair, and their teeth like lion's teeth;"**

They have long flowing hair like a woman's,

but they are hideous and a distortion of beauty.

Their teeth are sharp like a lion or something that looks like it will bite you and devour you.

Verse 9, **"They had breastplates of iron, and the noise of their wings was like the noise of many chariots with horses rushing into battle."**

They are wearing armor and have wings that is so loud.

You can usually hear a chopper or a plane as it flies nearby, even if you look up and you can't see it, yet you know it's coming.

You can hear one of these coming from a long way off.

It is so loud it sounds like millions of them are coming for you.

Verse 10, **"They have tails and stings like scorpions, and their power to hurt people for five months is in their tails."**

And this is the part people really fear

The tail is their stinger like a scorpion, and when that gets you, you will hurt for five months.

It's not just that these are like a small thing and it stings you and then you are in unbelievable suffering.

It was also just seeing one of these things would fill your nightmares.

Hearing one of these coming on the horizon would send people scattering for safety.

Their very appearance is part of the judgment that comes.

Verse 11, **"They have as king over them the angel of the bottomless pit. His name in Hebrew is Abaddon, and in Greek he is called Apollyon."**

This king is either another name of Satan.

Or this is simply another chief demon.

Like we know of Archangels like Gabriel.
Perhaps this could be something similar.
Either way, this is further evidence these creatures are demonic.
Because the king here is referred to as an angel.
Which would mean a fallen angel.
I don't think they are attack helicopters or anything.

Verse 12, **"the first woe has passed; behold, two woes are still to come."**

This is just the beginning!
There is more to come.
It is only the beginning and there is more to come.
But the people will not listen or repent.

Verse 13, **"Then the sixth angel blew his trumpet, and I heard a voice from the four horns of the golden altar before God, 14 saying to the sixth angel who had the trumpet, 'Release the four angels who are bound at the great river Euphrates.'"**

This river is mentioned because it is the boundary of the promised land.
This is the place where judgment and invasion always comes from.
But they will not be held back anymore.
And they will come.

Verse 15, **"So the four angels, who had been prepared for the hour, the day, the month, and the year, were released to kill a third of mankind."**

This judgment, like everything, is all in the power of God.
It cannot come until the exact moment God has decreed.

Verse 16, **"The number of mounted troops was twice ten thousand times ten thousand; I heard their number"**

In case you haven't pulled out the calculator.
This is 200 million.
This actually uses one of my favorite words, myriad.
We use this word to just mean a countless or extremely large number.

It also literally means 10,000.

And so God's word says that there is twice a myriad of myriads.

It is far larger than the biggest human army you can imagine.

So yes, this could mean it's exactly 200,000,000 or it could be countless multitude.

Either way, the point is that this is a massive amount to fear.

Verse 17, **"And this is how I saw the horses in my vision and those who rode them: They wore breastplates the color of fire and of sapphire and of sulphur, and the heads of the horses were like lion's heads, and fire and smoke and sulphur came out of their mouths."**

He begins to describe with this army that is getting ready to ride and cannot be resisted, and cannot be fought against looks like.

They are just as terrifying as the demonic locusts.

I have heard some try to take these and say wow this is really just describing Abraham tanks or helicopters and John didn't know what he was seeing.

I'll admit, maybe I could be wrong.

But when I read these descriptions, it sure does not sound like a literal human armies.

These sound like judgments from God that are demonic.

Or in this case of the army that are angelic and spiritual.

I think these are creatures that defy our imagination because we know they are not from this world.

Not just that they are from the future.

But they are from the spiritual realm.

Verse 18, **"By these three plagues a third of mankind was killed, by the fire and smoke and sulfur coming out of their mouths."**

Humanity has been begging for death and now it comes in a third dies

The third of humanity is killed from the fire and the smoke and the sulfur.

And fire, smoke, and sulfur often accompany God's judgment.

It is what comes on Sodom and Gomorrah.

Verse 19, **"For the power of the horses is in their mouths and in their tails, for their tails are like serpents with heads, and by means of them they wound."**

And they also have their own bite in their tails

And the smoke that pours out of their mouth.

All throughout revelation, we have a lot of things that devour from the mouth.

The beast and his prophet have power in their mouth

Jesus Christ, as the two edge sword is from his mouth that he defeats the enemy at the end of the book.

And here these horses have power in their mouth and it kills.

Verse 20, **"The rest of mankind, who were not killed by these plagues, did not repent"**

Again this is what we need to see.

There is so much imagery here.

So much apocalyptic language.

The demonic realm is active.

This captures our imaginations and we can wonder what this all will look like.

But the main idea I want you to see here, is that some people will just not repent.

They will flat out refuse.

Even in the face of the greatest kinds of horror that you can imagine.

They will not let go of their sin.

There are people who will never come to faith in Jesus.

And it isn't because God wasn't gracious enough or He didn't work miracles and wonders or didn't reveal enough or didn't give enough evidence

There were just people who loved their sin too much.

There are people that no matter what they would never confess that Jesus is Lord.

They will never give up their sin.

You can debate free will in God sovereignty all you want, but God's word is very clear that there are people who will not come to Jesus even at the end because their hearts are too hard and they love their sin too much.

Now we would be mistaken if we read this, and we only thought about other people.

If we did not examine our own hearts, honestly, and ask ourselves hard questions.

To examine our hearts and ask ourselves, if there are something that we know we are supposed to repent of, and we have not.

And we can see this even in our own lives as Christians.

There are things we love too much we can never let go.

Anyone who has ever tried a diet knows how hard it is to let go of what you love even when you know it is bad for you.

Even if you know it is killing you.

Because this is the marker.

This is one of the things that separates those who love Jesus and those who do not: they repent.

It is not that we never sin and those people over there do.

It is that when we sin we fall on our faces and we repent and we beg for forgiveness.

II. Repent before you die (v. 20-21).

We do need to repent.

There may be people who don't repent or maybe people who want nothing to do with God that shouldn't be us.

We should repent of our works.

Verse 20, **“The rest of mankind, who were not killed by these plagues, did not repent of the works of their hands nor give up worshipping demons and idols of gold and silver and bronze and stone and wood, which cannot see or hear or walk,”**

Among all of these survivors who have seen miracle after miracle.
Who have seen God’s word come true and seal after seal and trumpet after trumpet.
They do not let go of their sin.

Like Egypt, the rest of mankind has seen that God’s people have been protected from the trials and suffering.

And they ask those people how come you were not stung when everyone else was?

They say “I’ve been sealed by God because I’ve repented of my sins.
I put my faith in Jesus Christ as my only hope for salvation.

They hear it all

They see it all.

They know without a doubt this was the work of God.

Yet, they refuse to repent.

There is a lot they refuse to let go of.

First, there are the works of their hands.

The things they are doing with their hands that are sinful.

That is basically everything.

It is a general way the Bible speaks of the sins we actually do.

Not just the sins we think or in our hearts.

But the actions we take that are sinful.

Secondly, they are not giving up their idolatry.

They continue to worship empty gods that they make.

They worship things of wood and stone.

Which, we would never do today.

We would never constantly give our time, attention, and worship to a small thing made of metal just because it had shiny lights.

John Calvin, and old Reformer, said, "the heart is an idol making factory."

We constantly make new idols to worship.

New things to hold our attention and our devotion.

Politics, entertainment, money, power, sex.

There are plenty of idols people worship today.

They just look different than back then.

And just like the people in this day, many refuse to let go.

They hold onto their idols instead of coming to Jesus.

Verse 21, **"Nor did they repent of their murders or their sorceries or their sexual immorality or their thefts."**

We need to repent of murder.

We live in a murderous society.

Because we do not see the humanity or the image of God in each other.

Whether in the unborn or in the illegal immigrant.

But our most common murders are when we hate.

Because Jesus tells us that hatred is as guilty as murder.

And even in this room, we have plenty of people we hate and curse.

We need to repent of the murder in our hearts.

They need to repent of their sorcery.

And it's heart sorcery is an attempt to manipulate the world.

To try and force the universe or God to behave how we want Him to.

We might not do that while wearing witches' hats, but we certainly try to control God.

We can think if we do certain things, or go all natural, or pray the perfect words, then our lives will be blessed and everything will work out.

The prosperity gospel is really another form of sorcery.

The world and we need to repent of our sexual immorality.

Our world is overwhelmed with sexual sin.

The culture is guided by the idea we can do whatever we want sexually with whoever we want.

We turn our backs on God's Word and what He says.

We need to repent of our thefts.

Repent of when we steal from others.

Repent of when we fail to pay all the taxes we owe, as Christ commands.

Repent of when we steal from the poor by refusing to give.

Repent of when we steal from God, when we treat our money like ours instead of His.

All this and more we must repent of.

We need to repent of our sins before we die and before it is too late.

The reason we repent is because there is forgiveness and grace.

Jesus came to die for us so that we could be forgiven.

So that no matter how much we have done.

No matter how horrible our sins are.

There is always grace.

There is grace even at the end of a lifetime of sin.

Not because our sins do not matter.

But because God's grace is so much.

And the blood of Jesus can cover all of our sins.

Come and repent, knowing that you will find forgiveness and love.

Repent, knowing that you will be forgiven.

Repent, knowing that you can come back into fellowship with God.

Come and repent.

The mercies of Jesus are new every morning.

Do not be stubborn.

Do not stay stuck in your sins when you could be with Christ.

Where have we been this morning?

Some would rather die than repent. Don't let that be you.