

How God Restores Wasted Years

End of Year Sermon

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Bible Text: Joel 2:12-26

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Therefore also now, saith the LORD, turn ye even to me with all your heart, and with fasting, and with weeping, and with mourning: And rend your heart, and not your garments, and turn unto the LORD your God: for he is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness, and repenteth him of the evil. Who knoweth if he will return and repent, and leave a blessing behind him; even a meat offering and a drink offering unto the LORD your God? Blow the trumpet in Zion, sanctify a fast, call a solemn assembly: Gather the people, sanctify the congregation, assemble the elders, gather the children, and those that suck the breasts: let the bridegroom go forth of his chamber, and the bride out of her closet. Let the priests, the ministers of the LORD, weep between the porch and the altar, and let them say, Spare thy people, O LORD, and give not thine heritage to reproach, that the heathen should rule over them: wherefore should they say among the people, Where is their God?

Then will the LORD be jealous for his land, and pity his people. Yea, the LORD will answer and say unto his people, Behold, I will send you corn, and wine, and oil, and ye shall be satisfied therewith: and I will no more make you a reproach among the heathen: But I will remove far off from you the northern army, and will drive him into a land barren and desolate, with his face toward the east sea, and his hinder part toward the utmost sea, and his stink shall come up, and his ill savour shall come up, because he hath done great things. Fear not, O land; be glad and rejoice: for the LORD will do great things. Be not afraid, ye beasts of the field: for the pastures of the wilderness do spring, for the tree beareth her fruit, the fig tree and the vine do yield their strength. Be glad then, ye children of Zion, and rejoice in the LORD your God: for he hath given you the former rain moderately, and he will cause to come down for you the rain, the former rain, and the latter rain in the first month. And the floors shall be full of wheat, and the fats shall overflow with wine and oil. And I will restore to you the years that the locust hath eaten, the cankerworm, and the caterpillar, and the palmerworm, my great army which I sent among you. And ye shall eat in plenty, and be satisfied, and praise the name of the

LORD your God, that hath dealt wondrously with you: and my people shall never be ashamed.¹

Amen.

Well, this morning, once again, we can say this is the last Lord's Day of an old year. And I have been reminded again of an old saying that time waits for no man. And you could say for no woman either.

Once more this incoming week, just in a couple of days, we are going to witness, God willing, the death of an old year and the birth of a new. We are never going to see the year 2001 again.

Now, you and I cannot arrest the march of time. I am sure you know that by now. We are powerless to bring back the years that have fled away. We know that there are some people, chiefly in the movie industry, who attempt to conceal the marks of time. We have heard about all these that get their nips and tucks and get a nose job and face lift and all the rest of it. There are people who try to conceal the furrows that time has plowed upon their countenance. It is wonderful what some paint and powder, cream and color rinses will do for a person. But, you know, it doesn't stop the relentless march of time.

And the years that have once been passed are never going to return. Time that is spent cannot literally be restored. But yet I want you to listen to the words of a text. It is in the portion that we read earlier, Joel chapter two verse 25. And the one who is speaking is the Lord. And this is what he says.

“And I will restore to you the years that the locust hath eaten, the cankerworm, and the caterpillar, and the palmerworm, my great army which I sent among you.”²

We should note that what God did not say was that time itself, once passed into eternity, could return. That is not what he said. But what he did say was that the harvest and the lost labors of the years that are passed, could be made up for by the abundance of the fruit that is brought forth in the future.

In other words, what God is saying is that the blessings of coming years can be a complete recompense for lost labor in the past. I don't know about you, but for me that is good news. When the Lord says to me or to you, “And I will restore to you the years that the locust hath eaten,”³ that is good news.

And I know today on this last Lord's Day of 2001, I could be speaking to some who have wasted many years of time either as an unsaved person in the days of profligacy and sin and wickedness or even as a believer frittering away precious time that the Lord has given to you. The fruit that should have and could have been brought forth unto God, but

¹ Joel 2:12-26.

² Joel 2:25.

³ Ibid.

listen. Here is a word for you from the Lord, a word of encouragement, a word of great strength.

“I will restore to you the years that the locust hath eaten, the cankerworm, and the caterpillar, and the palmerworm.”⁴

I want us to notice three things that are found in this text that I trust will be a blessing to you, will speak to your heart, will be an encouragement to you, will be a challenge to you.

In the first place I want you to notice what the Lord identifies as a serious threat, a serious threat. He mentions a number of creatures, but chiefly the locust. He talks about the locust, the cankerworm, the caterpillar and the palmerworm. If you look at the beginning of the book of Joel you will find that these were metaphors for the Lord’s judgment upon the people.

For he says in chapter one verse four of Joel, “That which the palmerworm hath left hath the locust eaten; and that which the locust hath left hath the cankerworm eaten; and that which the cankerworm hath left hath the caterpillar eaten.”⁵

He is referring to his judgment upon the land.

But notice how he identifies a serious threat in terms of the locust. Now you all know what a locust is, don’t you? Not like the woman who said to a rather large preacher or concerning a rather large preacher. She says, “We are having the locust preacher to come for dinner.”

And her friend said, “No, no, you mean the local preacher, because a locust is a big fat creature that eats everything in front of it.”

She says, “No, I mean the locust preacher.”

So he had an appetite that was voracious.

But here the locust that is being referred to is an insect. And there is a parallel, you know, that could be drawn between this insect, this locust and sin, because if you had lived in the East, in fact, if you still lived in the Middle East, you would know that that insect, not just one of them, but thousands of them, millions of them, pose a great threat to the livelihood of the people.

And in that same sense, spiritually speaking, sin poses a great threat to all of us.

I think of how sin, like the locust of Palestine is that which brings destruction.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Joel 1:4.

Farmers in that part of the world would tell you that locusts are a great scourge, that they act as a destroyer.

Now, I am not an expert on these things, but apparently when a locust is in its early stage it is less mobile. It can't get around terribly well and so locusts in that early state are much easier to deal with and to wipe out. But as they develop and as they grow and as they start to band together in swarms and fly all around the place, they have an awesome capacity to destroy.

And I think that there is a good parallel to be drawn there with sin because when you are dealing with particular sins, for example, sometimes they appear relatively harmless at first. And you know how it goes, how you feel that you have this particular thing under control. But yet sin is a powerful destroyer.

Think of the sin of drunkenness. And the Bible identifies that in the Scripture. Think of the drunkard, how that that person seems to be in charge of his habit at first, until the drink takes a firm hold of his life and then it masters him. And he can't get free of it and he is a slave of sin. And eventually it destroys him.

Think about those who are taken with the sin of gambling or unclean living or drug abuse, drug taking and how that those things, all of them start sometimes very small. But then they take control of a life. And in many cases you will find a man whose home, whose health, whose character is broken and destroyed. But it started in a very small way and, of course, ultimately his soul will be lost in hell forever. Sin is a destroyer.

Now, you don't have to be hooked on some of the major vices, so called, of this world to be troubled with sin. The sins of the heart we are all familiar with and the sins of the life, indeed. And those things will destroy you unless God steps in to your life.

You know, there are many today who walk the clean side of the street, but they are being destroyed by the locusts of pride and self righteousness, powerful weapons in the armory of the devil for the destruction and the damnation of men. Many who are like the Pharisee in the temple of whom the Lord said that—in relation to the parable—that he spoke that parable unto them who “trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and despised others.”⁶

The Lord gave the example of the Pharisee. They trusted in themselves that they were righteous and despised others.

My Bible tells me that we are all born in sin and shapen in iniquity and that sin is a destroyer.

“Sin, when it is finished bringeth forth death.”⁷

⁶ Luke 18:9.

⁷ James 1:15.

But I want you to know that sin can be a destroyer, too, in the life of the believer. Now, I know that once you are saved you cannot be lost. You cannot go to hell if you are a child of God. But, nonetheless, sin can wreak havoc in your life if you let it. And I see examples in the Scripture of those who were truly born of God, but yet because of sin there was great havoc wrought in their home, in their family, in their own life.

I think of Lot who made the wrong choice of going to the gate of Sodom and then ending up in Sodom and being one of the elders of that city.

The Bible tells us in the New Testament in 2 Peter that he “vexed his righteous soul from day to day with their unlawful deeds.”⁸

For in seeing and hearing what they were doing the Bible says he vexed his righteous soul. He shouldn’t have been there. But he was a believer. He was a believer. He was a just man and God delivered him and proved him to be a just man. But even after he was delivered, we find him in a cave being made drunk by his two daughters and fathering their children.

Oh, I want to tell you. There is not a sin. There is not a sin that you or I as a Christian are above committing. We need to learn that. We need to realize that, that we are not—because we have been redeemed by the blood of Christ—all of a sudden immune to the sins of other men. The devil is on your trail if you are a believer. The locusts, if I could put it that way, are out to devastate your testimony and to destroy your peace of mind and conscience and to wreck your joy as a believer, even as it happened with the psalmist David.

David was a man after God’s own heart. And yet by one act of foolishness on one occasion, on one night when he should have been at the battlefield, but it was in an evening tide. He was resting and he was watching a woman washing herself.

And, incidentally, I don’t believe that Bathsheba is without blame either.

But David committed adultery with that woman and as a result of that, his family was devastated. The kingdom of Israel was devastated. He paid for that in his believing life for the rest of his days.

Oh, yeah. God forgives the sin, but I want to tell you. If somebody takes a bottle and smashes it into your cheek. That can be sewed up and it can be fixed up, but it will leave a scar. And sin leaves scars.

I think of the destruction that sin brings. But I also think of the darkness that sin brings.

That reminds us of the locusts.

You say, “How do locusts remind you of darkness?”

⁸ 2 Peter 2:8.

Well, you go back in your Bible to Exodus chapter 10 and those children that have been listening in the past in Sunday school when the plagues in Egypt had been dealt with will know that the eighth plague in Egypt was a swarm of locusts. And not only did they destroy everything, they blocked out the light of the sun. That is a remarkable thing. I mean, that is a lot of locusts that could do that.

Exodus chapter 10 verse 15. Let's read verse 14.

And the locusts went up over all the land of Egypt, and rested in all the coasts of Egypt: very grievous were they; before them there were no such locusts as they, neither after them shall be such. For they covered the face of the whole earth, so that the land was darkened; and they did eat every herb of the land, and all the fruit of the trees which the hail had left: and there remained not any green thing in the trees, or in the herbs of the field, through all the land of Egypt.⁹

Look at that. It tells you in the first part of verse 15, "They covered the face of the whole earth so that the land was darkened."¹⁰

Oh, the locusts brought darkness. And God's Word is compared to light, is it not?

"Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path."¹¹

And sin blocks out the light. It blocks out the light of gospel truth just like these locusts in Egypt acted like a cloud against [?] to block out the daylight. So sin keeps men in pitch darkness and stops them from receiving the truth.

The Lord Jesus said in John three verse 19 that "men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil."¹²

Oh, sin brings darkness into the life. And for those who die outside of Christ, the locusts of sin will lead them to the blackness or darkness forever. This is a serious threat. And we need to be aware of the locusts of sin and wickedness.

But not only is there a serious threat that the Lord identifies in this text, he goes on to speak of a severe tragedy when he talks about the years that the locusts have eaten.

Just to go back to chapter one verse four, it is clear from that text that the locusts and the palmerworm and the cankerworm had eaten and consumed away the harvest of years. That is what they had done.

⁹ Exodus 10:14-15.

¹⁰ Exodus 10:15.

¹¹ Psalm 119:105.

¹² John 3:19.

“That which the palmerworm hath left hath the locust eaten; and that which the locust hath left hath the cankerworm eaten; and that which the cankerworm hath left hath the caterpillar eaten.”¹³

These creatures had eaten until there was nothing left, a great tragedy.

It is a fact that a swarm of locusts, for instance, can reduce the crops of a country to nothing. And we learn that from the locusts in Egypt there in Exodus chapter 10. There wasn't one green thing that was left. They ate it all.

And the Lord is saying here that this is something that has taken place year after year in Israel. That which has been left has been eaten by another creature until there is nothing, nothing left. That is a severe tragedy.

Perhaps this morning I am speaking to somebody who has experienced this kind of thing in their life, the tragedy of locust eaten years.

You can think of years of your life that have been totally wasted. Years of your life that add up to zero as far as spiritual benefit is concerned.

The work of the locusts of sin has been all too evident in your life. And, oh, the tragedy of a life that has seen the attacks of the locusts.

I want you to think with me about the extent of the devastation caused.

In Joel two verse three it says, “A fire devoureth before them; and behind them a flame burneth: the land is as the garden of Eden before them, and behind them a desolate wilderness; yea, and nothing shall escape them.”¹⁴

Oh, the extent of the devastation caused when a swarm of locusts invaded the land. They would strip that land of every bit of greenery and devour the entire harvest. And all that would be left behind was a barren wilderness, just a desert. No part of it escaping the devastation.

And I want you to know that sin will do the same thing in your life. Sin will devastate your entire spiritual life. We know that this has already happened where man's nature is concerned. There is no part of man's nature that has been unaffected by sin. His will, his understanding, his affections all destroyed, devastated by sin.

We read in Jeremiah 17 verse nine about the extent of this devastation. Jeremiah 17 verse nine.

“The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it?”¹⁵

¹³ Joel 1:4.

¹⁴ Joel 2:3.

¹⁵ Jeremiah 17:9.

It means literally in the Hebrew, “incurably wicked.”

The desires of the human heart are all sinful. The Bible tells us that in Genesis six verse five that the whole imagination of the thoughts of man’s heart are only evil continually. It says much the same thing in Isaiah chapter one and verses five and six.

Let me read it to you very quickly. Listen to this description.

The whole head is sick, and the whole heart faint. From the sole of the foot even unto the head there is no soundness in it; but wounds, and bruises, and putrifying sores: they have not been closed, neither bound up, neither mollified with ointment.¹⁶

There has been a devastating effect brought upon man’s heart and life and nature as well as depraved, completely, incurably depraved by sin. His whole nature is bent towards evil. All the extent of the devastation. It couldn’t be any worse for man is dead in trespasses and sins.

Well, maybe I am talking to a Christian and there has been times of backsliding that you can think of when you have got away from God and the locusts of sin have done their deadly work in certain areas of your life. You are not reading your Bible the way you did before. You don’t pray to the Lord and pray that as you once did. Your devotional life has been suffering.

You know, the Bible shows us that there are those who have suffered because of the effects of sin in their Christian life. I think of Simon Peter. Peter was a believer. Peter loved the Lord Jesus Christ. And yet we find him when the Lord Jesus was betrayed that Peter denied his Lord with oaths and curses.

Of course, the Lord brought him to repentance. But the fact of the matter is he did what he did. He denied the Lord.

You hear some preachers preach, you would think that a Christian was not capable of that, that if a person was to do that that they are not saved. That is not true. Peter was a believer.

You are saying that believers can be taken with sin.

Yes, I am saying believers can be taken with sin.

The locusts of sin can devastate a Christian’s life.

Perhaps you are not as faithful as you once were to the work of God. You don’t have a desire for the prayer meeting maybe as you once did. It is possible for the locusts of sin to

¹⁶ Isaiah 1:5-6.

eat away and to eat into your church life. Maybe you don't witness for the Lord the way you once did.

You think of the days when you first were converted and you were full of zeal and energy and you wanted to really be a witness for the Lord and all of that is gone now. What has happened?

Maybe people look at you in your place of work and they used to be impacted by your testimony, but any more they don't really see a great deal of difference. The locusts of sin have devastated your testimony.

And perhaps your family has been affected by this backsliding where they home life has known some of the devastation of the locusts.

Oh, there are many areas in which years of our lives can be eaten up by the locusts of sin. The extent of the devastation is widespread.

But also think about the endurance of this devastation. For the Lord didn't say, "I will restore to you the months," or, "I will restore to you the weeks that the locusts have eaten," or "the days."

He says, "I will restore to you the years," not one year. He didn't say, "I will restore to you that one year that the locusts have eaten, but the years." Years.

There is a hymn which says:

I have wasted many precious years.
Now I am coming home.

Oh, it is possible to waste years, to waste decades as a sinner.

Maybe I am talking to somebody today and you have been resisting God's commandments all your life. But what a tragedy to grow old and have to reflect upon a wasted life in sin.

We all know that in God's sovereignty, the Lord has a time when he saves a soul. But I have spoken to numerous Christians who came to trust Christ later on in life. And every single one of them have said to me they wished that they were saved when they were younger. They wished that they had come to know Christ when they were younger because they realized that those years that were spent in sin were completely wasted. And it wasn't God's fault. It was our own fault.

You can't blame God for the fact that you are not saved. I mean, that is a very perverse type of reasoning. Because God has not called me, therefore I am not responsible for the way I have lived all of these years.

You are responsible and I am responsible. We are all responsible creatures before a holy God. And God says to all of us, “Repent and believe the gospel.”

And if you refuse to repent and believe the gospel, that is not the fault of God. That is your fault. You are responsible for those wasted years.

Let me show you a Scripture that bears that out.

In Romans chapter six Paul refers to the past, to the days before we were converted, Romans six verse 20. He says, “For when ye were the servants of sin...”¹⁷ Or slaves. That is the word. “...ye were free from righteousness. What fruit had ye then in those things whereof ye are now ashamed? for the end of those things is death.”¹⁸

Think about that. Those things whereof we are now ashamed, those days of waste.

Paul talked about it in Titus chapter three verse three. Listen to this.

“For we ourselves also were sometimes foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving divers lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful, and hating one another.”¹⁹

He is talking about those pre converted days.

He speaks of it again in Ephesians chapter two. For he says we

...in time past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience. Among whom also we all had our conversation in times past in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind; and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others.²⁰

We were responsible for those years of sin, those years of barrenness and fruitlessness, the years that the locusts have eaten.

And there is a great source of bitterness to our souls to think about those days.

You know, it is possible for the believer to fritter away time and to do very little for God over many years. It is a sad fact that the fruit that should have been borne to God’s glory in the past was gobbled up by the locusts of time wasting and sin.

There are times when we have gotten off into bypath meadow. John Bunyan refers to that. Bypath meadow, it is a very dangerous place to go where we get off the track and

¹⁷ Romans 6:20.

¹⁸ Romans 6:20-21.

¹⁹ Titus 3:3.

²⁰ Ephesians 2:2-3.

for a time we stray from the Lord and we are not in communion with God. That is a tragedy to waste time like that in sin.

“And I will restore to you the years that the locust hath eaten.”²¹

Maybe I am talking to somebody this morning and you think over this past year and you have produced no fruit whatsoever. Tell me, is that going to be the story of the incoming year as well? Maybe you have sat under the Word of God. You have never come to Christ. Are you going to keep on doing that on into next year as well?

The Bible says, “It is time to seek the LORD, till he come and rain righteousness upon you.”²² Hosea chapter 10 verse 12.

Oh, the sad tragedy of the locusts and the devastation that they work.

But not only here is there a serious threat of the locust and a severe tragedy, the years that they have eaten. But I want us to think about a sure testimony. Look at this sure testimony. Here is a promise.

Oh, I wouldn't want to be left at point number two. I am glad that there is point number three.

“I will restore to you the years that the locust hath eaten.”²³

This is a sure testimony because it is the Word of the Lord.

Now, you might say to me, “Well, I thought you started off by saying you can't bring back the past, that the years that are gone, that you can't bring those back.”

That is right. But while you can't bring back the past, the Lord can make up for the wasted years by giving you equivalent harvest in years to come.

See, this is what the Lord is saying to the people here in Joel chapter two. He is saying, “Look. There has been all of this waste, all those years of harvest eaten up by these insects and these caterpillars and so on.” But he says, “I can give you one harvest that is so bountiful that it is going to be worth 20 harvests that were eaten by the locusts in the past.”

Now, I don't know about you, but that encourages me. That greatly encourages my heart because I can't bring time back.

But, you see, there is still the future in the will of the Lord. And all that fruit that could have been borne unto God's glory in the past that I frittered away in unsaved days or in

²¹ Joel 2:25.

²² Hosea 10:12.

²³ Joel 2:25.

days of departure and wandering and backsliding, the Lord can make me to produce in the future.

Let me bear this out from a verse in Amos, the next book, chapter nine and verse 13.

Again, the agricultural analogy is used. He says, the Lord says, “ Behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that the plowman shall overtake the reaper, and the treader of grapes him that soweth seed; and the mountains shall drop sweet wine, and all the hills shall melt.”²⁴

Now what does this mean, “The plowman shall overtake the reaper”²⁵?

What it means is there is such a bumper harvest the man is out there still reaping it and the plowman is waiting to plow up the soil to sow the seeds for next year. That is what he is saying.

“The plowman shall overtake the reaper.”²⁶

What a harvest that is, that the man is still in the spring time trying to bring in the fruits of the harvest.

“And the treader of grapes him that soweth seed.”²⁷

Do you see? There has been such a tremendous harvest. There has been such produce that they can’t hardly handle it.

This is the promise of restoration.

“I will restore to you the years that the locust hath eaten.”²⁸

Maybe you are saying this morning, “I have wasted many precious years.”

But you can also say, “Lord, I am coming home.”

Restoration was to be complete. The Lord says all the wasted harvests are going to be made up for.

Look with me at verse 24, because this goes along with the following words.

He says, “And the floors shall be full of wheat, and the fats shall overflow with wine and oil. And I will restore to you the years that the locust hath eaten.”²⁹

²⁴ Amos 9:13.

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ Joel 2:25.

Oh, there is going to be a tremendous harvest. Every one of those wasted harvests is going to be given back to Israel. That is what the Lord says. The Lord can do that for the sinner and also for the backsliding believer.

You know, I am very encouraged at times when I read certain biographies and life stories because while it is true that there are some people who can do very little in a lot of time, there are a lot who can do a lot in a short time. And I read one day of one of the great preachers in the past. I can't remember which one it was, but his biographer said of him, "He lived fast."

Because he died very young, this man, but he said, "He lived fast," because he packed a lot of service into a short time.

You know, it all depends on how the years are spent. And you can't bring back the past, but in the will of God as the Lord gives you life and health and strength, you still have the future and you can look ahead and God can make you a mighty blessing even if you have only got a short time left.

You know, Robert Murray McCheyne was a great preacher. He was only an ordained preacher for something like seven and a half, eight years, something like that. He died before his 30th birthday and that is young. And it becomes younger the older I get.

But Robert Murray McCheyne lived a great life. He left a great legacy even though he only had a few years in which to serve.

"I will restore to you the years that locusts have eaten."³⁰

I can hear the doubts in your own mind as I say that, because I hear them in my own heart. And I feel it in my own heart.

How can that be? How can I have restored to me all that wasted time, all that time that was frittered away, those years when you weren't saved and you were living a life of ungodliness? How can that ever be made up for?

Well, God says it. I don't say it. God says it.

"And I will restore to you the years that the locusts have eaten."³¹

If you look at chapter two verses 12 and 13, however, you are going to see that not only was restoration to be complete, but repentance was to be a condition. The Lord is not going to make up to you the years that the locusts have eaten unless you repent. That is what Joel two verses 12 and 13 have to say.

²⁹ Joel 2:24-25.

³⁰ Joel 2:25.

³¹ Ibid.

Therefore also now, saith the LORD, turn ye even to me with all your heart, and with fasting, and with weeping, and with mourning: And rend your heart, and not your garments.³²

See, the Lord is referring there to a practice that you find in the Scripture of people rending their garments when they were upset about something. Remember, the king of Israel when he thought he was being asked to heal Naaman the Syrian of his illness. It says he rent his garments.

There are places throughout the Scripture where you find that happening, where men tore their garments because they were upset about something. But the Lord says here, “I don’t want you just to have this outward show of rending your garments. I want you to rend your heart.”

Far better to have a torn heart than torn garments.

“And turn unto the LORD your God: for he is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness, and repenteth him of the evil.”³³

And what a merciful God we have. God testifies he will restore the equivalent of the harvests that have been lost in those years only if we repent.

And I tell you this morning, as a sinner, God can make up for those lost years of your life spent in ungodliness and wickedness and rebellion. When you come in repentance to Christ and trust in the merit of his blood, he will cleanse away sin completely, totally.

Oh, it is a wonderful thought, is it not, as a believer that when you stand before God you will not be answering for those sins. For Christ has answered for every one of them. And God can make your life even if it is a short life from now on, a great life, a powerful life, a life of fruitfulness, a life of great blessing and benefit to others as well as to the kingdom of God.

God can do that for you. He promises that he will do it.

“I will restore to you the years that the locust hath eaten.”³⁴

You might say, “Well, now, you don’t know about all the years and the time that I have wasted.”

No, I don’t, but the Lord knows. That is all that matters. The Lord knows. And the same Lord who knows all about that waste is the one who says, “I will restore to you the years that he locusts have eaten, I will do that. I will make up for that time.”

³² Joel 2:12-13.

³³ Joel 2:13.

³⁴ Joel 2:25.

He says in verse 26, “And ye shall eat in plenty, and be satisfied, and praise the name of the LORD your God, that hath dealt wondrously with you: and my people shall never be ashamed.”³⁵

Oh, that you would come to Christ today and would not waste any more time, that you would not fritter away any more time, but you would come to him.

And, believer, we all know the waywardness of our hearts. God can give to us in the future all that we have lost by our backslidings and our waywardness.

Oh, the mercy of God. But we, too, must repent. And the Christian life is a life of repentance. The Scripture makes that abundantly clear. We must repent. We must confess our sins.

1 John one verse nine is written to believers. “If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.”³⁶

You see, the devil loves to torment a believer and he will say, “Well, now, I know that when you came and you got saved and you were born of the Spirit that the Lord forgave all of your sins. But how about all of the waywardness since that time? You have got to give answer for that.”

No. Because all of my sins were future when the Savior died and he paid for every one of them. But, yes, in my every day life I have to confess those sins. And while the guilt of my sin is gone, the pollution of sin must be confessed. But the Lord promises he is faithful and just to forgive us and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

Listen to this wonderful text, Isaiah 55 verse seven.

“Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the LORD, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon.”³⁷

We are talking today about making up for lost time. Whenever you spill water on the ground or milk, you can’t gather it up again. That is why the old saying is you shouldn’t cry over spilled milk because you can’t gather it up again.

But, oh, in the mercy of God the Lord can make you to have far more water and milk than you ever spilled. That is what he is saying here.

“I will restore to you the years that the locusts have eaten.”³⁸

³⁵ Joel 2:26.

³⁶ 1 John 1:9.

³⁷ Isaiah 55:7.

³⁸ Joel 2:25.

In my home congregation there was a man who attended faithfully our church for 30 years. His name was Andy McAllister. His wife was a believer, but he was not a Christian. I tell you he sat through some powerful preaching. And it was thought by many that that man would never be saved. But he was up in years when one day after Church he remained behind to seek the Lord and it was a tremendous blessing to everybody in our congregation who knew of it.

But within two years Andy McAllister was gone. He had a heart condition and he had a heart attack or whatever and passed away. But at his funeral the testimony was that though he had sat under the gospel for many, many years without Christ and for 30 years sat hearing the cream of gospel preachers and preaching, yet for the last two years of his life he had left a tremendous ringing testimony for the Lord Jesus.

And there wasn't a person at his funeral who didn't know the change that God had wrought in that man's life, who didn't know that two years prior God had done a work in his life and in his heart.

And really I think in that sense the year made up to him the years that the locusts had eaten. God can do that today. I don't care who you are, what you have done, what your thoughts are on these matters. I am telling you what God says in his Word.

“And I will restore to you the years that the locusts have eaten.”³⁹

Oh, that God would do that today, that God would make up for lost time in all of our hearts and all of our lives, especially if you are not a Christian, that today you would cease from your wanderings and going astray, that you will come and welcome to Jesus.

Let's all pray.

Lord, thou hast given us thy Word today. Thy Word is truth. Oh, God, all of us today—if we are being honest with ourselves and with thee—we have to say in the words of that hymn, “I have wasted many precious years.”

Oh, Lord, how we bless thee for thy mercy, how we thank thee, Lord, that we don't have to sit around groaning and moaning and wallowing in the failures of the past. But, Lord, we can make a fresh start today. Lord, may it be so for some sinner. And may it be so for all of us as the people of God. Lord, forgive our wanderings. Forgive our wasted time and wasted energy. Lord, how often we have given our energies to those things that are transient which do not last. Oh, Lord, may we be reminded again this morning that we have only one life. It will soon be passed. It is only what is done for Jesus that will last.

Oh, God, even in our recreation time I pray that it will be to thy glory. I pray that every moment will be redeemed for thy kingdom. For you have said in your Word that we are to be redeeming the time, buying back the time because the days are evil.

³⁹ Ibid.

Lord, I pray for every person who hears this message. Please restore to them the years that the locusts have eaten. We ask in Jesus' name. Amen.