

# Loving Restoration

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[ 0 : 0 0 ] Now, could I extend a warm welcome to you to this service of worship and to any who may be connecting to the service through live stream or some other means.

Before we engage in prayer, I'd like first of all to read a few verses from the Sing Psalms version of Psalm 63.

If you look in the book of Psalms, you will find that the subscription to this psalm says a psalm of David when he was in the wilderness of Judah.

Some would see this psalm as being written during the period that David was fleeing from the malice of King Saul.

However, verse 11 describes the writer as the king. And that being so, this must refer to a time when David was forced to flee during the rebellion of his son Absalom.

[ 1 : 1 8 ] A time when it seemed that he might lose everything, his kingship, his reputation, and perhaps even his life.

Yet far from complaining about the level of betrayal, he turned to God and rejoiced to know that the Lord is all he needed for life and eternity.

And that is all that you and I need too, for life and eternity. And so you have the great, meaningful opening words of the psalm, which express, I believe, the very heart of true religion.

O God, you are my God. Earnestly I seek you. My soul thirsts for you.

One of the early church fathers claimed that the spirit and soul of the whole book of Psalms is contracted into this psalm and its opening declaration.

[ 2 : 3 7 ] And I think I would like to agree with that sentiment. Let us then read some verses from the Sing Psalms version of Psalm 63.

O God, you are my God alone. I seek your face with eagerness. My soul and body thirst for you. In this dry, weary wilderness, I have seen you in your holy place. Your power and glory held my gaze.

My soul is fed with richest favor.

Upon my bed I lie awake. And in my thoughts remember you. I meditate throughout the night. And keep your constant love in view.

[ 4 : 0 0 ] Because you are my help alone. In shadow of your wings I'll sing. You hold me up with your right hand.

To you, O God, my soul will cling. Let us now engage in prayer.

Eternal God, May we too be enabled by grace this day To express the same thought As thy servant of old As he experienced the drought Of the desert in Judah But above all As he experienced Separation from the place That he associated primarily With the worship of most high God And yet despite the isolation And yet despite the isolation That he experienced In his innermost soul Yet he could say with the confidence And the boldness of faith O God, you are my God May we be enabled by grace this day

To make the same bold affirmation As we come into thy presence At this time of worship In the knowledge that Irrespective of how frail And how helpless And how inadequate We ourselves might be The knowledge that you are our God Is a knowledge that enables us To engage in the duties That are set before us And so, Lord, we come today In and through the name of Christ Jesus Thy Son Seeking that you Would indeed come Into our presence this day And favour us With that presence As we engage in the worship

Of thy great name O Most High God, we pray That you would indeed come And that you would be As thou wert to thy people of old Thy word reminds us That you will be as the Jew To Israel Bringing refreshing renewal To a nation that was spiritually Barren and arid In order to promote that

growth That is God glorifying And that encourages and uplifts Thy people in this life Grant, most gracious God That you would indeed be the Jew Here today That we might know That our souls [ 7 : 31 ] Are being refreshed and renewed As we engage in this act of worship That we might know That we are being directed To the well of living water Even as The Lord himself Sat by the well of Jacob And drew attention To what the well of Jacob Illustrated The inability Of the waters Of this world To satiate The deep needs Of the soul So that everyone Who drank Of the water Of that well Would thirst again But those that drink From the well Of living water Shall never thirst And so Lord We pray today That our souls Might be satiated in thee That we might know That thy love

Is better than life For we can't lose our life But the covenant love That is bequeathed Upon thy people Is something that is never lost Bless the congregation At this time As they await The unfolding Of thy mind In providence Grant O Lord That thou wouldst Keep them united As they wait Upon thine unfolding Providence Bless thy servant Whom they have nominated As one Whom they decide To have over them In holy things Grant him clarity Of thought And mind As he Seeks Thy will In this matter Uphold And sustain him And bless him In his home And family Bless all Present here Today Bless those

Unable to be present Yet desirous Of being here Bless those Who may be Watching And listening Through the video link Or some other means And bless those Unable even To do that Who may be On beds Of illness At home Or in hospital Or in residential care We commit them To thy care And keeping Remember us As a nation In these strange times O Lord Grant wisdom To those In government Those who seek To direct The course And the path Of the nation May they be Prevailed upon To seek The mind Of the most High The sovereign God In whose hands Are all things Remember all Who may be Suffering at this Time We remember The student body Who may be Confused And who may

Not know What to do Or where to turn At this particular Time Oh Lord There are so many So many issues That arise Out of thee Affliction That has beset us As a nation And even beset The world Grant the wisdom That would enable All to look To the most High Help us as we Reflect upon Thy truth This day Cleanse in the blood In Jesus name We ask it With forgiveness Of sin Amen Let us now Turn to the Old Testament Scriptures To the Prophecy of Hosea In chapter 14 It's the Last chapter In the Prophecy of Hosea Return

O Israel To the Lord your God For you Have stumbled Because of Your iniquity Take With you Words And return To the Lord Say to Him Take away All Iniquity Accept Accept What is Good And we Will pay With bulls The vows Of our Lips Assyria Shall not Save us We will Not ride On horses And we Will say No more Our God To the Work of Our Hands In you The Orphan Finds Mercy I will I will Heal Their Apostasy I will Love Them Freely For my Anger Has Turned From Them I will Be like The Jew To Israel

[ 12 : 41 ] He shall Blossom Like the Lily He shall Take Root Like the Trees Of Lebanon His Shoots Shall Spread Out His Beauty Shall Be Like The Olive And His Fragrance Like Lebanon They Shall Return And Dwell Beneath My Shadow They Shall Flourish Like The Grape They Shall Blossom Like The Vine Their Fame Shall Be Like The Wine Of Lebanon O Ephraim What Am I To Do With Idols It Is I Who Answer And Look After You I Am Like An Evergreen Citrus From Me Comes Your Fruit Whoever Is Wise Let Him Understand These Things

Whoever Is Discerning Let Him Know Them For The Ways Of The Lord Are Right And The Upright Walk In Them But Transgressors Stumble In Them Amen And May God Bless To Us That Reading From His Truth And I Would Like To Address You Today From The Words Of Verse 5 Hosea Chapter 14 And Verse 5 I Will Be Like The Jew To Israel This is a passage that speaks Of divine Restoration Renewal and Restoration In the natural Sphere Can be most

Rewarding and most Satisfactory For Example Car Enthusiasts They Find Great Satisfaction In Restoring Vintage Of Classic Cars To A Pristine Condition I Have A Son Who Is I Suppose I Could Describe Him As Tractor Daft And As A Boy He Came Home One Day He Was Then Able To Drive With A Tractor Which In My View Was Just A Lump Of Rust But That Old Tractor Was Stripped Right Down Until There Was Nothing Left Standing But The Rear Axle All The Parts Were Meticulously Sanded And Cleaned

Some Parts Sent Away For Treatment But He Was Unable To Do Himself Then It Was Reassembled Which Quite Frankly I Thought In My Ignorance Was Impossible As The Parts Were In Boxes Here And There And I Know Nothing About Mechanics Once It Was Reassembled And He Was Satisfied That It Was In Proper Working Order It Was Dismantled A Second Time And

Carefully Painted Then Reassembled Once More And The Outcome Was A Vintage Tractor Looking Once More In Pristine Condition Looking Nothing Like Its First Appearance On The Doorstep Countless Hours Were Spent

On The Job It Was Rewarding And Perhaps Therapeutic Washing I Suppose You Could Say It Was A Labor Of Love It Was A Work Of Restoration And I Use That Merely As An Illustration Of The Great Work Of Spiritual Restoration Of Which This Passage Speaks Because In This Passage We Have The One Whom The Prophet Isaiah Speaks As The Creator Of Israel Undertaking A Work Of Restoration Remember How Isaiah Speaks Of Now Thus Says The Lord He Who Created You O Jacob Who Formed You O Israel And When You Read In The Bible About The The Origins The [ 17 : 43 ] History And The Development Of Israel Who Can Doubt But That God Is Indeed The Creator Of And The One Who Molded Shaped And Fashioned Israel In This Passage The Great God Of Covenant Faithfulness Is Engaged In The Work Of Restoration Which Involves A Work Of Healing In The Lives Of His Covenant People Important To Love I Believe That Restoration Is An Action Of Love Where There Is Growth From Ruin How Do We Know Well Look At Verse 4 God Says I Will Heal Their Apostasy Or I Will Heal Their Back Sliding I Will Love

Them Freely For My Anger Has Turned From Them It's Equally Important I Believe To Note That These Words Are A Compassionate Response To Repentant Prayer In The Life Of A Returning Penitent People A People Who Had Experience Of The Painful Effect Of Divine Chastisement I Will Be Like The Jew To Israel In Other Words This Action Of Love Is Exclusively Conformed To The People Of Covenant Promise I Will Be As The Jew Like The Jew To Israel Israel Are The People Of The Covenant Promise In Chapter 5 Of This Book We

Read How God Speaks Through The Prophet I Am Like A Moth To Ephraim Like Dry Rot In The House Of Judah When Ephraim Saw His Sickness And Judah His Wound Then Ephraim Went To Assyria And Sent To The Great King But He Is Not Able To To Cure You Or Heal Your Wound For I Will Be Like A Lion To Ephraim Like A Young Lion To The House Of Judah Like A Young Lion To The House Of Judah I Even I Will Tear And Go Away I Will Carry Off And No One Will Rescue In In Chapter Chapter Chapter Thirteen I Am To Them Like A Lion Like A Leopard I Will Lark Beside The Way I Will Fall Upon Them Like A Bear Robbed Of Their Cubs I Will Tear Open Their Breast And There I Will Devour Them Like A Lion As A Wild Beast Would Rip Them Open A

Wounded People As A Consequence Of Divine Chastisement And Any Hope That The Wounded Half Of Healing Is Based Upon The Healing Love Of Almighty God And So Restoration Is Presented To Us In This Passage As A Healing Process I Will Heal The Psalmist Speaks Experimentally Of His Own Life Has Been Healed You Have Healed Me He Says Not Just You Have Forgiven Me But You Have Healed Me Healing Involves Not Merely Restoring The Dead Unprofitable Lost Years Which The Locusts Had Devoured Years Yes In The Physical Sense But More Especially In The Spiritual Sense So That Healing Involves Addressing The Fundamental Spiritual

Problem Which Had Led To Their Chastisement Which It That Is Their Apostasy Or Backsliding Apostasy Which Led To The Situation Where God States In This Book I Will Love Them No More Now It Would It Would Be a Mistake To Think That God Sets Aside His Love And Revokes It He Cannot Do That Being Who He Is Psalm 89 If His Children Forsake My Law And Do Not Walk According To My Rules If They Violate My Statutes And Do Not Keep My Commandments Then I Will Punish Their Transgression With The Rod Their Iniquity With Stripes But I Will Not Remove From Him My Steadfast Or Covenant Love

[ 22 : 45 ] Or Be False To My Faithful Men I Will Not Violate My Covenant Or Alter The Word That Went Forth From My Mouth I Will Not Remove From Him My Steadfast Love Even In The Face Of Such Severe Provocation By The Covenant People Divine Love Remains Consistent Although The Manifestation Of Divine Love May Think The Recipient Offer To Think Differently But Aren't You Glad Today If You Look Upon Yourself As A Member Of The Covenant People Of God God That That His Love Is Always Always Consistent Although Your Own Reading Of The Manifestation Of That Love

May Not Think Your Look Upon It As Been The Demonstration Of Love Death And I Suppose The Nearest Illustration I Can Use For That From The Natural Realm Is This When A Parent Perhaps Rebukes A Child I Was Going To Say When A Parent Smacks A Child But I Am Not Sure That Parents Are Allowed To Smack Children Anymore So When A Parent Rebukes A Child The Child May Not Always Understand That That Rebuke Is Administered At Least When There Is A Proper

Relationship Between The Parent And The Child That It Is Issued In Love And That It Flows From The Love That The

Parent Has For The Child So Likewise In The Spiritual Realm It Is Not Always Easy For Us To Understand That God's Mysterious Dealings With Us When We Experience Soreness And Trial And Tribulation And Grief That We Never Anticipated That That Emanates From The Love The Depth Of Love That Is In God And I Think That Is So Well Illustrated For Us In In This In This Book Of Hosea And Especially In The Third Chapter Where The Prophet Hosea Is Instructed To Purchase His Straying Wife Who Has Prostituted Herself And Become Enslaved And It Is Surely A Graphic Illustration Of

God's Marvelous Gracious Loving Dealings With Other People Who Have Gone Away From God And Allowed Themselves To Become Enslaved By The Power Of Sin Just As Gomer Belonged To Hosea So The People Of God Belong To Him Nothing Cold Or Aloof About This Restored Relationship They Are To Enjoy Once More Unrestricted Unfettered Access To God And Have Experience Of The Blessing That He Alone Bestows And Note As I Said Already How This Restoration Is Rooted Grounded In Love Uncoerced Love It's Not Something That's Aroused Or Stimulated

By Anything In Them Or In Us If We Today Belong To These Covenant Group As One Commentator Eloquently Expresses It Its Origin Is As It Had Always Been In The Unfathomable Determination Of God And You May Remember How How That Is Expressed In The Book Of Deuteronomy Where The Lord Speaks Of The Relationship That Exists Between Himself And Ancient Israel The Lord Your God Has Chosen You To Be A People For His Treasured Possession Out Of All The Peoples Who Are On The Face Of The Earth Not Because You Were More A Number Than Any Other People That The Lord Set His Love On You And Chose You For You Are The Fewest Of All Peoples But It Is Because The Lord Loves You And Is Keeping The Oath That He Swore To Your

[ 27 : 46 ] Fathers That The Lord Has Brought You Out With A Mighty Hand And Redeemed You From The House Of Slavery From The Hand Of Pharaoh King Of Egypt It Is Because The Lord Loves And There Is Such Mystery Attached To That Statement Such Profundity Attached To That Statement That The Great Holy God Could Love The Unlovable The Unattractive Those Who Were Stained By The Ugliness Of Sin And So The God Who Cares Who Cares Deeply So Deeply That He Loves Unlovable People Tells My Anger Has Turned From Them And You

Note The Emphasis That There Is Here On The Repetition Of The Words I Will I Will I Will Heal I Will Love I Will Be What A God Is The God Of Israel And Can You And I Say Today That He Is Your God Too The Action Of Restoring Spontaneous Love And Then You Might Ask How Does The Process Of Loving Restoration Take Place And You Have This Marvelous Poetic Prose Passage And There Are Three Thoughts In It That I Want To Highlight First Of All It Speaks Of Refreshing Renewal And Secondly Of The Resulting Effect And Thirdly Of A Revitalized People Firstly Refreshing Renewal And The Prophet Uses Or The Lord Through The Prophet Uses The Image Of Jew Earlier In This Book Jews Used As A Negative Example To Describe The Fleeting Transient Nature Of The People's Love To God Chapter Six Verse Four Your Love Is Like A Morning Cloud Like The Jew That Goes Early Away And Then In Chapter Thirteen To Describe The Removal Of Idolaters Therefore They Shall Be Like The Morning Myster Like The Jew That Goes Early Away In Other Words Fickle Love Leads To Fickle Fortunes But In This Context The Lord Through The Prophet Is Using Jew In A Positive Sense In Israel's Dry Climate They Were Dependent On On The Jew For Growth In Vegetation In The Heat Of Summer It Was The Dew That Prevented The Shriveling Of Vegetation So you See The Illustration Used Here Is Is The Is The Usage In Earlier Chapters When God Uses The Imagery Of Himself He Is Not Speaking Of Something That Vanishes Something Fleeting But What Is Regular Copious Gentle And Tender The Imagery Used Here Is That Of Copious Gentleness And Tenderness That Sustains Life That Would Otherwise Shivel Out It Is Illustrated Of The Way In Which Fellowship With God Maintains Spiritual Life If That Life Were Not Nourished By God Himself Then You Would Not Survive Spiritually And This Comes Through The Use Of The Means That God Has Provided You See Before Now God Through The Prophet Speaks Of Himself As Being Like A Lion In The Prime Of Strength Or A Leopard Or Angry Bear And In All Of These Illustrations The Thrust Is Of Destruction But Now To A Returning Penitent People Deeply Loved The Great I Am Stays I The Doe I Will Be The Means Of Bringing It On Of Prospering And Maturing Such Growth So

[ 32 : 49 ] In This Poetic Description The Christian Is Likened To A Plant Which Can Only Be Supported By Dew From Heaven Even If All The Waters Of The World Were Gathered To Gathered Poured On The Roots Of The Christian There Would Be No True Growth You Require The Jew That Comes From Above Oh You Are My God As We Read In Psalm 63■

It cannot be obtained from any other source. I will be as the dew unto thee.

It is a beautiful picture of the way God refreshes and renews his children along life's path.

And you see, in keeping with this imagery, there is implied the element of harmony where the dew falls.

A picture of people living in harmony. Behold how good and pleasant it is, says the psalmist, when brothers dwell in unity. And, says the psalmist, it is among other things like the dew of Hermon which falls on the mountains of Zion.

[ 35 : 10 ] In other words, implied in the fact that the Lord is the dew unto Israel is the element of harmony in the lives of those who are the objects of this dew.

The prophet Isaiah sets before us another picture where the dew is emblematic of the Lord's vigil over his people.

For thus says the Lord, thus said the Lord to me, I will quietly look from my dwelling like clear heat and sunshine, like a cloud of dew in the heat of harvest.

The dew also implies the teaching of God. May my teaching drop as the rain, my speech distill as the dew, like gentle rain upon the tender grass, like showers upon the earth.

It is significant too that it implies the favor of God. A king's loss in the book of Proverbs is like the growling of a lion, and his favor is like a dew on the grass.

[ 36 : 26 ] So, this refreshing renewal is the work of grace, often unseen, producing harmony, giving teaching, and an indication of divine favor.

And that brings me to the second point, the resulting effect. And there are four things that I want to highlight briefly.

We notice where it is written, I will be like the dew to Israel. He shall blossom like the lily. He shall take root like the trees of Lebanon.

His shoots shall spread out. His beauty shall be like the olive. And his fragrance like Lebanon. He shall pass upon the isenenza Sunday.

But, you know, I guess what is the effect of the dew falling? Although grace is imperceptible in its coming, it is discernible enough in its fruits.

[ 37 : 40 ] You cannot see it coming into the life of a person. How often have you been unaware of the power of grace at work in the heart of a man or a woman, in your locality, in your neighborhood, even in the congregation, perhaps even in the same pew?

And God at work in the life of that person, just as the dew falls imperceptibly. You cannot see it coming down, but you can discern his fruit.

And that is what we are directed to in the resulting effect of the refreshing renewal. And the first thing that is highlighted for us here, he shall blossom like the lily.

The first effect of grace in the heart is that it makes us grow upward. Whenever grace comes in, it makes us grow up.

I think it's Spurgeon who made the observation at one time that it is a remarkable fact that Christians grow upward faster than any other Christians.

[ 39 : 05 ] They grow upward in their blazing love and their mighty seal and their ardent hopes and longing expectations. It reminds me of a comment I heard once by an old Christian.

And this person who was a young Christian, and this goes back a long way, and he was full of the joys and exuberant.

And the old Christian said to him, and the expression he used was this, Oh, you're on the grass just now, but wait until you start on the heather.

And you see, as the dew falls and the grace begins to work in the life of the Christian, and there is that exuberance, the exuberance of the new life.

But then wait for the frost to come. And the frost bringing its own dangers, to use the illustration that is here.

[ 40 : 24 ] But you see, in the illustration that is used, I will be like the dew to Israel, he shall blossom like the lily. It's not just that there is upward growth, but there is the element implied of beauty from ruin.

Sin had ruined Israel like it has ruined my heart and your heart. And only God can bring beauty out of ruin. He brings beauty to lives that seemed impossible ever to be restored.

Doesn't he? If you are in Christ today, you may not be aware of much, much beauty in your life. But the grace of God, that's what it does. It brings beauty into a life that was without beauty. A life that was dead.

A life that was ruined. God in his grace creates. If you like a work of art.

[ 41 : 41 ] A work of divine grace. So that they blossom like the lily. You know, you may be at a loss to explain the effect of grace.

But it is regular and copious as it falls. And you notice the sequence.

I will be like the dew to his hill. He shall blossom like the lily. Without the moisture. There is no growth.

There is no lily. There is no beauty. Without the moisture. The importance of the nourishing influence. Of the work of God.

In the work of restoration. What a marvelous transformation. From the vileness. Of their departure from God.

[ 42 : 45 ] And the beauty that is conferred on them. On returning. And such will you and I. And it's not just the reflected beauty of Christ in them.

There is a fragrance. The fragrance. The fragrance that comes. From communion and fellowship. With the Lord. As those who are nourished by him.

And who are dependent on him. You remember. In the New Testament. In the book of Acts. We find written. When they saw the boldness.

Of Peter and John. The Sanhedrin. And perceived they were uneducated. Common men. They were astonished. And then the Bible goes on to record this.

They recognized. That they had been with Jesus. That's what brought about the transformation. I am told.

[ 43 : 51 ] Although I've never been there. That there is a rose garden in Paris. And if you go in there. When the roses are in bloom. Should you meet. Someone on coming out.

You don't need to explain. Where you have been. The fragrance that surrounds you. Will betray you. And there are times like that.

In the lives of believers. They have been with Jesus. And it is evident. From their walk and conversation. Sin makes us ugly.

And only God can change. The ugly sinner. The restored sinner. So different. To what they once were. Blossom like the lily.

The ugly. But then there is a second image. That is set before this. As the effect of this refreshing renewal. I said there was a growing upwards.

[ 44 : 53 ] But there is also a growing downwards. He shall take root. Like the trees of Lebanon. The lily might be looked on. As a fragile flower.

But you notice here. That the beauty that is associated with the lily. Is united to strength.

He shall take root. Or literally it could be read. He will strike his roots. And that is an unusual phrase.

You might say there is almost a touch of violence implied. It is a phrase that conveys forceful growth.

And the comparison being made is to the trees of Lebanon. Which are noted for their deep root penetration. Into the soil. Now the word Lebanon doesn't mean a nation state.

[ 46 : 01 ] Certainly not in biblical times. It is just the geographical term for the mountainous zone. Which stretched northwards from Galilee Paddle.

To the Mediterranean coast for about a hundred miles. And it was divided by a deep valley. Noted for its fertility. And especially for its forest.

And the quality of timber produced. Remember the psalmist speaks of it. In Psalm 72. May there be abundance of grain in the land. And then you pause when you reflect.

And you reflect on where the psalmist says. The abundance of grain is to be in there. On the tops of the mountains made with. In the most unexpected place.

On the tops of the. That's not where you would expect grain to flourish in abundance. And then he goes on to say. May its fruit be like Lebanon. Psalm 92.

[ 47 : 03 ] The righteous flourish like the palm tree. Grow like a cedar in Lebanon. Isaiah 35. The wilderness and the dry land shall be glad. Desert shall rejoice and blossom.

Like the crocus. Or blossom like the rose. It shall blossom abundantly. And rejoice with joy. I am singing the glory of Lebanon. And the glory of Lebanon shall be given to it. The lily then. Emblematic of quickness of growth. And beauty. The trees of Lebanon. A picture of stability and permanence.

And that is surely illustrative of the life of the believer. In the language of Paul. Because the life of the believer is hid with Christ in God.

The soul is united to the almightiness of the eternal God. And you see the root of faith.

[ 48 : 04 ] Makes a believer courageous and bold. Look at the difference in Peter. When he is restored.

And how bold he is. When his faith. He is no longer subjected. To.

The way in which it was. Prior to his restoration. He was so impetuous. But then his faith becomes courageous and bold.

And he stands out fearlessly. To proclaim. The message of the gospel. The root of hope is an untoward. Enabling the believer to ride the storm.

The root of love. Strong as death. Sin has a weakening power. It drains of spiritual strength. But the dew from heaven.

[ 49 : 10 ] Reinvigorates. But as Isaiah expresses it. Even youth shall faint and be weary. And young men shall fall exhausted. But they who wait for the Lord.

Shall renew their strength. They shall mount up with wings like eagles. They shall run and not be weary. They shall walk. And not faint. And you see in that passage.

The Lord is demonstrating. That ultimately they become like the Lord himself. Because you remember. What is written earlier on. In that very same passage.

The Lord is the everlasting God. The creator of the ends of the earth. And what is true of the Lord. Who is the everlasting God. He does not faint.

Or grow weary. And that is what becomes true of those. Who renew their strength. So. There is upward growth and beauty.

[ 50 : 11 ] There is stability. But there is a third effect. To which our attention is drawn. In this wonderful piece of poetic prose. His shoot shall spread out. His beauty shall be like the olive.

The lily has beauty. The cedar has strength. But neither bears fruit. But the olive is a fruitful tree. The psalmist in Psalm 52. Compares himself at one time. To a green olive tree. I am like a green olive tree. In the house of God. Can you find Jeremiah in chapter 11.

The Lord once called you a green olive tree. Beautiful with good fruit. And the picture is of a flourishing olive tree. That has a crop of excellent fruit.

It is descriptive of the way. In which the nation once lived. And sets before us. The obedient action. That now characterizes their lives.

[ 51 : 14 ] And I think also implied in that. Not just that they are fruitful. But there is the implication of value. See the olive tree.

That is where you get olive oil. Which was highly valuable in biblical times. Sin degrades. It robs you of value. Makes you feel worthless.

But in the process of loving restoration. The aim is to bring you as a good faithful servant. To be put in charge of many things. To share in the happiness of you.

Lord and master. Beauty. Stability. Fruitful. Or in the language of the apostle Paul. Training us to renounce ungodliness.

And worldly passions. And to live self-controlled. Upright and godly lives in the present age. Waiting for the blessed hope. The appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior.

[ 52 : 14 ] Jesus Christ. Who gave himself for us. But there is one other picture. In this resulting effect.

His fragrance like Lebanon. In the book of the Son of Solomon. You find this description of the bride of Christ. The church.

The fragrance of your garments. Is like the fragrance of Lebanon. Lebanon was renowned apparently for fragrance.

Whether it was that of the great cedars. The wood which was used for furniture. Or of other trees. Some of which were the source of frankincense.

What is this fragrance? Surely. Surely it must be the fragrance.

[ 53 : 11 ] That emanates from the lives of those. In whom. The fruit of the spirit. Superabounds. Lives that are characterized.

By love. Joy. Peace. Patience. Kindness. Goodness. Faithfulness. Gentleness.

Self-control. And Paul could write. We are the aroma of Christ to God. Among those who have been saved. And among those who are perishing.

Can we today say that? Of our own lives. Nor are we here today bewailing. Our leanness. Our lack of fruit.

And more than ever conscious. Of the order of death. Rather than the fragrance of our life. Lived in communion with Christ.

[ 54 : 11 ] The resulting effect. Beauty. Stability. Fruit bearing. Fragrant. Refreshing renewal. And finally.

Revitalized people. They shall return. And dwell beneath my shadow. Now this could be understood as referring to a people lovingly restored.

Who wants more value. The security afforded. By the protective sheltering power of the Almighty. I said that it could be understood in this way.

But my former teacher. In Old Testament studies. The late Professor J.L. Mackay. Understands it to refer. To a group of individuals.

Who have in faith. Aligned themselves. With God's covenant people. And he states. It would be feasible to argue.

[ 55 : 19 ] From these words. That this looks forward. To the incorporation of the Gentiles. Into the new. Israelite community.

And if that interpretation. Is correct. That would include the likes. Of every non Jew. In the world today.

Who has been brought to faith. In Christ. I don't know if there are any Jews here today. Or are we all Gentiles.

But if we are all Gentiles. And we are in Christ. Then. You are dwelling. Beneath his shadow. And you remember. How the psalmist. Expresses it. He who dwells. In the shelter. Of the most high. Will abide. In the shadow.

[ 56 : 18 ] Of the almighty. I will say. To the Lord. My refuge. And my fortress. My God. In whom I trust. Now there are. Four different.

Hebrew words. Or Hebrew names. For God. In that verse. Elyon. Shaddai. Yahweh.

And Elohim. And. They give us sufficient hope. To everyone. Who knows the Lord.

As the most high. And almighty. He is sovereign. In authority. And infinite. In power. As the Lord. He has. He has. He has.

He has. He has pledged. His covenant. Care to his people. As God. Who made. Heaven and earth. He can help. When every earthly. Solace fails. And believe me.

[ 57 : 14 ] It will. You may not have. Come up against it. Yet. You may not have. Discovered that. For yourself. But believe me. Every earthly.

Solace will fail. But God. Will never fail. And I would like to think. That incorporated.

In this picture. Of a revitalized people. Is the element. Of delighting. In God. Remember the picture. In the song of Solomon.

Of the church. As an apple tree. Among the trees. Of the forest. So is my beloved. Among the young men. With great delight. I sat in his shadow. And his fruit. Was sweet to my taste.

Delighting. In the company. And the fellowship. Of God. So. There is sheltering. From the fury.

[ 58 : 10 ] Of divine wrath. And only in Christ. Alone. Cannot be found. There is rest. For the weary. In Christ. In Christ.

Well. Have you come to the conclusion. That Jesus. Is your only source of defense. Against all the forces.

That are arrayed against you. A revitalized people. No place for idols. And I'm going to. Read to you in conclusion.

These words. That I picked up. Along life's journey. Idols once. They won thee. Charmed thee.

Lovely things. Of time and sense. Gilded thus. Does sin. Disarmed thee. Honeyed. Lest thou turn. The fence.

[ 59 : 12 ] What has stripped. The seeming beauty. From the idols. Of the earth. Not a sense of right. Or duty. But the sight.

Of pure less worth. Not the crushing. Of those idols. With its bitter vibe. And smile. But the beaming. Of his beauty.

The unveiling. Of his heart. Who extinguishes. Their taper. Till they hail. The rising sun. Who discards. The garb of winter.

Till the summer. Has began. Tis that look. That melted Peter. Tis that face. That Stephen saw. Tis that heart.

That wept. With Mary. Can alone. From idols. Draw. Draw. And win. And fill.

[ 60 : 08 ] Completely. Till the cap. Or flows. The brim. What are we. To do. With idols. Who have. Who have. Companied. With him.

Now I didn't read. The first verse. Because. I want to put it in now. Hast thou heard. Seen him. Known. him. He. ten thousand own joyful choose the better part hast thou heard seen him known him how do you answer these very pertinent questions you see all of this that is spoken of here is possible to those even to those who have stumbled because of their iniquities even those who have grieved the heart of God and damaged their own souls surely this is a message of encouragement this is what the loving restoration of God can do through his being the source of revitalization through his refreshing and renewing power

I will be like the Jew to Israel refreshing renewing a result in effect a result in effect a stable fruitful fragrant a revitalized people a people who delight in the fellowship of God to shelter under his protective power love is that you and me today let us pray O eternal God we thank thee for thine own truth and we bless thee that it is thy truth that it has been brought to us in thine own marvelous providence and disclose to us help us to understand it more clearly that we may come to serve thee more lovingly and more faithfully in our walk and conversation and the glory shall be thine amen amen now

I've been asked to remind you that you retain the two meters distance as you leave the building I'll not be going to the door because I can't shake hands with you it is forbidden to me so I'll just remain here after I pronounce the benediction and you may advocate the building in an orderly fashion now may the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ the love of God the Father fellowship and communion of the Holy Spirit rest on and abide with you all now and forever amen