

# Harvest Time Neglected

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[ 0 : 00 ] And we'll fix our thoughts around verses 20 to 22, particularly the words, the harvest is passed, the summer has ended, and we are not saved.

But taking in the other two verses as well, and I want us to think about harvest time neglected. Obviously, we've just been observing the two-minute silence, this is Remembrance Sunday, and in that there is a reminder to us that there is a season for everything under the sun.

So says the word of God in Ecclesiastes 3. There is a season for everything under the sun. And it's perhaps not so common nowadays in many of the churches where we observe harvest time, Thanksgiving.

It used to be very much an in thing, and usually, because of Scottish weather, it tended to be in November that you were sure that most of the harvest was in.

But this passage, although the reference in our text, the harvest is passed, the summer has ended, is not about harvest time as such.

[ 1 : 29 ] It's just using harvest time to remind us that another year has passed. And the prophet is saying, effectively, that what he's addressing here in these verses 20 to 22, has not to do with harvest time in the natural world, so much as harvest time in the human soul.

It is the harvest season of the soul that he's referring to. And in particular, in particular, in particular, in the human soul.

The sentiment of the words is everywhere present in this passage. Two little words that we ourselves often use to express regret over missed opportunities, over lost opportunities.

And these words, I'm sure when I say them, if you haven't clicked on already, I'm sure when I say them you will agree that these words sometimes haunt us because we look back and we say these words to ourselves, may not deter them to others, but they are if only.

If only. And if only. With reference to our spiritual opportunities. Our two little words that were very much in focus in the prophet's mind as regards the people and how they were there in captivity.

[ 3 : 28 ] They were carried out of their own land, the land God gave them in promise to the fathers, to Abraham and Isaac and Jacob and so on.

And they were in a situation of their own making because they had not made good use of the harvest season of the soul.

They had not made the most of their spiritual opportunities and they had been carried away captive. And of course, we ourselves here in this world, we know when we think about the opportunities we've wasted, even in relationships, Two little words, if only, often make us feel uncomfortable because of perhaps the neglect or the hurt or the simple sheer waste of time that we've been guilty of.

If only. If only.

If only. If only. If only. If only. And so, Jeremiah is looking at people who have gone into captivity, he's still in the land himself.

[ 5 : 18 ] And he's looking at people who there in the land, as the reports came back, were full of regrets. Sadly, there wasn't much evidence of godly sorrow for many a year That's not to say it wasn't pleasant in some But in the majority it wasn't there They were regretting that they had gone But they weren't repentant They weren't filled with godly sorrow They weren't lamenting that they themselves Had brought all this calamity on themselves And that's so typical of life When people have life suddenly take a downturn A serious downturn Suddenly God is in the picture And God is getting the blame And God is being spoken against No concern that this one or that one Has actually brought some calamity

Because of godlessness and rebellion And so the prophet is looking at people And he had his reports Come from the far country That the people were in If only mode If only we had listened If only we had Continued to worship the lord And not gone after the gods of the nations We thought that this was a better option It wasn't If only we had listened If only we had not relied on Egypt Historically They turned their reliance towards Egypt And not the lord How can the lord do this and that Against the Assyrians The Chaldeans How can the lord do anything And they turned their attention to Egypt And the prophet calls Egypt The splintered reed Which if a man leans on it He'll seriously injure himself

By doing so But they relied on Egypt And now they're carried away Through the fifth only And you see here in the text What the prophet is saying Is the harvest is past Another year has gone The summer has ended And we are still not saved Well let's turn to the context And look at it And learn from it under God's hand First of all we're told That harvest was past And you can see in a way That although they were full of Of the if only mentality They were full of skepticism too Was the lord really in Zion Verse 19 Is helpful here From a far country From captivity They were saying Is not the lord in Zion And what that really means is Was he really in Zion at all Was he really king in her And the logic of that you see is Well if he was really in Zion We wouldn't be here If he was really king in Zion We wouldn't be here in captivity So how can we say He was really in Zion And he was really king You see that there was skepticism There still They had not recognized That being in captivity Was not about the powerlessness of God It wasn't that the lord wasn't in Among his people He based himself in Jerusalem And Mount Zion That was where the temple was and so on It wasn't that he wasn't there Is that they weren't behaving themselves

As the people Who professed the lord They weren't obeying the voice Of his servants And the problem was They were still whinging in captivity That if he had been in Zion If he was really king They wouldn't be in captivity So although there was a ripple Of if only we had There was still that sense of Well it's the lord's fault And I think if we search our own hearts We will find something of that in us That needs to go Blaming God For being where we are In our spiritual experience For a lack of it For a backsliding in it Or some other defect

[10 : 23] Blaming the lord for it But you see The truth is As regards Israel It wasn't a case of them Never having known About the works of the lord Or never having seen The works of the lord The wonders he did It wasn't a case of They didn't have the opportunity To believe And to follow And to be faithful to the lord It's not that they didn't have preachers Expounding the word of god The problem lay in themselves The neglect of the benefits God bestowed on them They grieved his holy spirit They provoked him That's why we're singing in Psalm 95 They provoked the lord They knew what it was to believe They knew what it was to forsake their own way To count all things but loss for the lord

But they didn't do it They slid along in their own way And friend We need to take that to heart Lest we're of the same ilk as them They had let harvest time after harvest time Pass In the calendar And also in their soul They didn't capitalize on their opportunity Their harvest was passed yet again And there's a very moving passage there In Isaiah chapter 5 it is About the vineyard of the lord of hosts And in chapter 5 of Isaiah verses 3 to 4 The lord actually says in mysterious words What more could I have done for you my vineyard

And clearly Israel is a vineyard The vineyard that god had bestowed so much blessing and privilege on And yet there was so little warm believing response There was no good fruit Harvest after harvest came upon the land And upon their souls through the preaching of the word Because God was merciful to them And yet they were no better for it The preachers of the word The prophets of God Spoke the word Line upon line Here a little There a little And they were no better for it Because they were self-absorbed They idolized their own desires And that's why they turned You see They really thought The way to get a good harvest Was to opt for the fertility gods

Of the nations And to go after their methods Of manipulating the gods of nature That's so crass We wouldn't do that, would we?

Or would we? Would we have the same principle working in our own hearts? Not about getting a good harvest But about getting on This way or that way Relying on here and now things To advance us But not in the ways of God They neglected The preaching of the word They neglected The study of the word And they were the poorer for it Their harvests were passing by And harvest time In the soul Was neglected And if you think about the church today You can think about the country Of course You can think about Scotland The land of the book As it was known How little the

book is used How little the book is used By people in the church

[ 14 : 44 ] There was a day And I'm old enough now to remember it That Folk knew Genesis through to Revelation Revelation by rote They could rattle their way through it They knew exactly They were to find Nehemiah Or Ecclesiastes Or Obadiah They knew they were to find it They made sure Because they were studying the Bible And there was a neglect of that today Not only out in the world around us But in the church too And The attentiveness That ought to be there Is not there Harvest Was neglected The Savior who is proclaimed In the word And in the preaching of the word Is not seen As he should be How many Have let Harvests Go by Unimproved See The Bible says Now is the acceptable time Now is the day of salvation That means It's harvest time For you and me It's time to be To be gleaning It's time to be benefiting From the word You see We were singing In the opening psalm What was really the problem With these people They hardened their hearts They became hardened To the gospel The good news That the prophets Were preaching And that's important For us to consider Lest we've We've become hardened That the very things we know Are into salvation in Christ We keep at a distance

We keep out from Our heart And our hearts Become hardened You've heard I'm sure More than once The imagery That as the As the sin Can harden Clay It can melt wax And there's a danger That when we are exposed To the sin The S-O-N I mean In the preaching Of the word We can be like The clay We can become hardened We can put up A protective shield Lest the word Gets in And we benefit From it So my dear friends Let's not let Harvest Pass Without improving Upon it I mean The literal Cycle This is the harvest time Let us not

Leave it And improve Let's use it For spiritual blessing For our soul But you see Their misery For neglecting it Was intense Although the Lord Had not utterly Forsaken the people Even in captivity Many of the captives Concluded he had Would notice that The Lord is not Really among us In belief Had taken them To Babylon And in belief Was still At work In them He's not With us And the truth is They themselves Had brought upon Themselves What happened Because of what They did In neglecting Their soul And neglecting The word of God And seeking To benefit From the ministry Of the spirit There they were

In captivity Carried as far Away as can be From home Because they Trifled With the things Of God They didn't Regard The importance Of true faith And of living For the Lord In their day They didn't Think enough About the importance Of the now Of salvation And making the Best use of The opportunity Things eternal Were distant To many of them To most of them And they were Slothful About making The best use Of harvest And they were Miserable Because of it They hadn't Acted On the light They had They hadn't Yielded to the Strivings of the Spirit of God If they Recognized them And if they Did recognize Them They resisted

[ 19 : 48 ] Them Now we know At one level Where God Does a saving Work We are Persuaded Unabled By the Spirit That's true But we mustn't Neglect To recognize That we are Culpable When we resist The promptings Of the Spirit Of God When he Touches our Heart With the Word We might Say here He goes Again About the Preacher But the Important thing Is here The Lord Goes again Is what we Need to say The preacher Has no Idea What's Happening In your Heart Today I don't Know I don't Need to Know It's not Important That I Know what's Happening What the Lord is Bringing Home to You It's Important That you Know what He's Bringing Home to You I Remember A chap At home He was

A big Bruiser Of a Guy He was Great At the Heavy Competitions In the Highland Games And He was From a Free church Family And he Had gone Away from It all Together He was A real Meaty Junk Strong As an Ox And He Was no Friend Of mine And He used To come To funerals And Unbeknown To me The Lord Was speaking To him From I used To always Do a Wee Piece At a Funeral That had Some Connection With the Person That I Knew The Person Somewhere Or Another And Then Quite Unbeknown To me The Lord Was speaking To him Every Time Taking Him Further And Further On Or Shall I Say Closer And Closer To Christ Except I Didn't Know It At All And Eventually He

Came Into The Faith And Eventually He Testified With You Could Hear The Astonishment In His Voice When He Said I Almost Laughed At The Funerals When I Heard The Next Message Because He Knew The Minister Didn't Know What Was Going On He Knew It And He Just It Was A Laugh Of Incredulity This Is Amazing God's at work here you see is what he was saying well sorry that's a long way around to tell you the minister doesn't know what's going on just now doesn't need to know maybe one day he will know and he'll praise the Lord but the point is when the God is dealing

with us by his spirit under the word oh let us be sensitive to him and let us yield ourselves to him in the word of grace you see there are so many who were once professing Christ that have gone back from following him or have it in their hearts to go back from following him perhaps they've had enough they feel life's been too hard it's almost as if the Lord's against them at every turn friend that's not the way to think

Job was the most tried man in the Bible but the Lord blessed him at the end beyond anything we could ever imagine and faith sees that and will trust him still though he slay me said Job I'll still trust him that's the spirit not faintly and faithlessly turning back there are some folk in the church who are on the brink of professing Christ and they've gone back and they've gone back from that and they're miserable because of it I'll tell you without a hesitation they're miserable because of it because their conscience is nagging them it's aggravating and perhaps they don't want you to help them they don't want you to speak to them and because they're miserable they've done the wrong thing they're miserable you remember the point we're making here their harvest was neglected it was passed and they were miserable because of that neglect and surely the Lord is saying to us don't be like that use the harvest season of the soul wisely and well

I was at home as you know up in Sunderland doing a communion there recently and I was sore I enjoyed it I enjoyed it very much I enjoyed the opportunity meeting the folk and all that but I was sore in my heart for folk who are now in old age and so far as I can see are where they were when I left they're not in the faith and I was sore at heart because of that harvest time neglected lovely people but still were they were that's not the whole story of course but it was a story about too many as far as I could see and you see the problem there is the problem that Jeremiah highlights here and then we must finish their remedy was neglected they were unrestrained in sin in that they they refused the remedy the Lord provided and they took the wrong road on every turn the harvests are not good the bales will do the trick the military forces are coming

[ 26 : 22 ] Egypt will do the trick on every hand they had a worldly solution to the problem and they never looked to the Lord and you see they were the poorer for it they loved the wrong things they didn't love the things of God they didn't trust in him nor his salvation he's not among us was the mentality we've looked at it and you see Jeremiah and just briefly as we finish Jeremiah moves from the harvest theme to the health theme and that shows us the point I made at the start he's talking about harvest season of the soul he turns to hell he says verse 21 for the heart of my daughter of the daughter of my people and my heart I am mourning

I'm in good company astonishment has taken hold of me and then he asks his question is there no balm in Gilead is there no physician there is the Lord not able to heal the people why then is there no recovery he says for the health of the daughter of my people and the answer is because they sought not healing for their soul from the Lord that's the simple answer now you may say to me oh what is is there no balm in Gilead mean well it means that Gilead was famous for for for for substances that had healing properties something as as apparently far removed as turpentine which which itself was good pistachio resin was good as well it benefited when applied by the physicians it had healing properties so too had turpentine and so on and Gilead was famous for these things you see herbal medicines we would call them nowadays but they were they were efficient and so the picture he takes from the world they knew and he says look just as there was balm in Gilead for healing physical ailments there's there's there's a great physician who can heal all our spiritual diseases and maladies the Lord himself in Exodus 15 at the end of Exodus 15 when the people got to Marah and the water was bitter the Lord healed the water so that the people could drink and you know what it was called

Jehovah Rophe I am the Lord who heals and that's Jesus we call him the great physician because that's what he is he heals our spiritual wounds and our maladies even when we inflict them upon ourselves and their problem you see is that they didn't seek healing for their souls from him and we are encouraged by this to look away to him to remind ourselves that he is the source of spiritual healing for those of us who have never yet believed and for those of us who have believed because we inflict upon ourselves wounds because of our sin sometimes we say what we shouldn't say and we cause wounds to others sometimes we do what we shouldn't do and that hurts too and there's one way forward for our spiritual maladies he sends forth his word and he heals them

Psalms 107 verse 20 and so we are to ponder especially us who are in the church and we're brought up in it all the days of our lives we're to ponder the reality that's here and capitalize on this harvest so that we may be able to say though this harvest is past and the summer has ended praise the

Lord I am saved saved saved by the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ I have healing through his shed blood through his atoning death and I'll not linger a moment longer in the ways of the world nor the healing that the world has to offer in terms of the psychological improvements it proposes Amen