

THE RESTORER OF OUR LOSSES

TITLE:

KEY TEXT

Joel 2:25 (KJV) – 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.

RSV- I will restore to you the years which the swarming locust has eaten, the hopper, the destroyer and the cutter, my great army which I sent among you.

Have you ever felt like something kept coming back again and again — stripping strength, erasing fruit, cutting hope, draining joy?

Joel describes this **PAIN** in the language of **LOCUSTS**: not one kind, but four — each a different level, a different strategy, a different agony.

Joel 1-2 tells us that God's people drifted into complacency and unrepentant sin, so the **Day of the Lord** comes as **JUDGMENT** through **devastating calamity**, which is the attack by the **swarming locust**.

Joel 2 promises that after the leaders and the people returned to God with all their heart, with fasting, with weeping and with mourning, and rend their hearts and not their garments, He would restore what was lost to the devastation [by the locusts], remove shame, renew joy and provision, dwell again among His people and pour out His Spirit — bringing salvation to all who call on His name.

The gospel hidden in Joel is this:

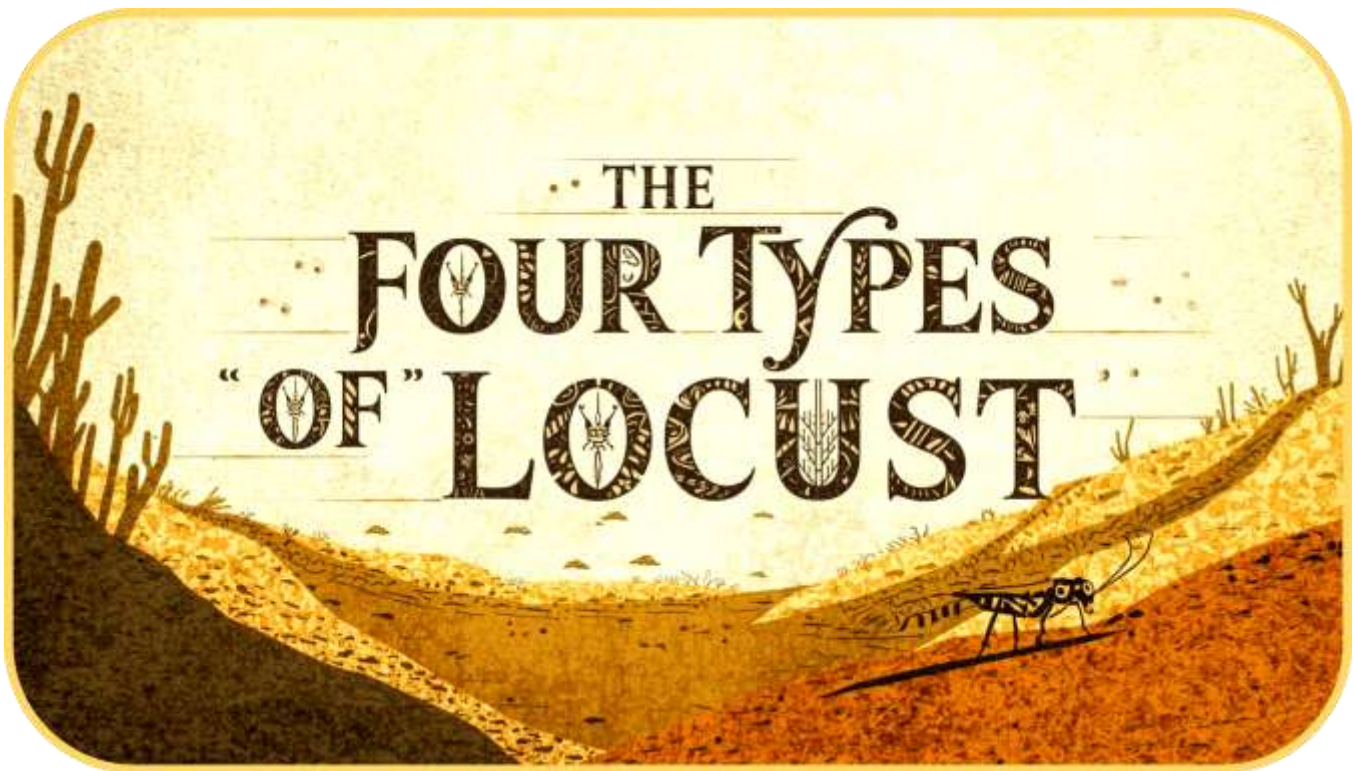
THE STORY OF THE LOCUST IS NOT THE FINAL CHAPTER, THE RESTORER IS.

And His name is Jesus Christ — the true answer to every ruined year.

Therefore, this morning, I want to show you what kind of restoration Jesus would give you after you finish this 21-day fast. The title of my sermon will be – ‘THE RESTORER OF OUR LOSSES’.

The outline of my sermon will be as follows:

- **The four types of Locust and its symbolism**
- **The God of Restored Years**
- **Why God allows losses**



(I) THE FOUR TYPES OF LOCUST

Only KJV gives specific names to each of the locust.

1. *THE SWARMING LOCUST*



The Hebrew word for locust is “*arbeh*” which means “**the multitudinous grasshopper**”. Multitudinous means “**countless, innumerable, infinite and without numbers.**” In other words, the locusts here in Joel are not the single locust you see normally. Rather they are the swarming locusts whose job is to **OVERWHELM.**

This is the invasion you **see coming** but **cannot stop.**

Too many, too fast, too loud, too powerful.

Spiritually, it looks like:

- Problems multiplying at once
 - Ministry pressure exceeding capacity
 - Family conflict, financial panic, emotional storms colliding
 - Feeling outnumbered, overtaken, overrun
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The swarming locusts represent **the severe CRISIS AND CALAMITY** that come like **merciless swarms.** Isaiah calls it the “**FLOOD**”.

There are times in our life where God allows our enemy to come against us like a flood. Like the swarming locust that consumes 80,000 tons of vegetation per days, there are **calamities and crisis** that hit us so hard as to consume our very lives away. This kind of trial is not a trickle but it comes in a **forceful, devastating magnitude**. It will **OVERWHELM** you and drown you. It knocks the daylight out of you and blocks the sunshine of God's love upon you. It leaves nothing good behind for you except **CHAOS**.

But Christ says:



“Come to Me, all who are weary and heavy-laden...”

**Because Jesus is not just Lord over heaven —
He is Lord over every swarm on earth.**

At the cross, He became **PEACE for the
overwhelmed heart. Where life overruns you,
Jesus **REIGNS** over it.**

Application:

- **You don't defeat the swarm by shouting louder —**
- **You defeat the swarm by kneeling lower.**
- **Not *trying harder*, but *coming to Christ*.**

Illustration: In a small farming town, a family watched dark clouds roll in. At first, they thought it was rain — until the sky buzzed. Thousands of locusts dropped at once, louder than the wind, thicker than smoke. The father said, *“There are too many, we can't fight this.”* So, they ran to the storehouse, shut the doors, and protected what they treasured inside.

Spiritual Lesson: When life overwhelms, don't fight the swarm alone — run to the One who **PROTECTS WHAT MATTERS.**

In short, the swarming locust points to **A TIME WHEN LIFE OVERWHELMS US.**

Questions: What overwhelm you today? What crisis did you face in the recent past? Has your life been chaotic?

2. THE CANKERWORM



Many other versions call it **THE HOPPER**

The Hebrew word for cankerworm is “yeleq”.
“Yeleq” is **the licker**, whose job is **“to lick or lick off.”**

These are the difficult times that depasture us by **licking**. In simpler words, these refer to those times when we are feeling **DRAINED**. It refers to **LONG EXHAUSTION**.



It doesn't destroy instantly.

It consumes **SLOWLY**.

Spiritually, this is:

- Saying yes out of duty but not from delight
-
- Passion fading without dying fully
-
- Strength leaking drop by drop
-
- Prayer life irregular, worship mechanical, service tired
-
- Not quitting God, but running on empty
-

But **1 John 4:19** says: ***We love because He first loved us.***

Meaning:

- If duty brought you here today, good.
- But only His love can refill you tomorrow.

- Jesus is not offended that your heart is tired – He is inviting it to be refilled, not replaced.
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Application:

- Don't let the slow drain make you think God is gone.
- The fact that you feel the drain means your heart still cares.
- Now bring it to Jesus, the fountain of affection.

Illustration: A church volunteer once had passion like fire. But years of endless serving without rest became like a small insect jumping quietly... again and again. No loud damage, no single breaking point, just slow exhaustion. One day she whispered, *"I'm tired, Lord... but I'm still here."* In that surrender, God met her not in the noise of ministry, but in the honesty of her weariness.

Spiritual Lesson: The quiet drain is not the end — it's where genuine hearts finally speak to God again.

In short, cankerworm points to **A TIME WHEN LOSS LINGERS AND DRAINS.**

Questions: What and who drains you today? Are you serving God today out of a drained heart?

3. *CATERPILLAR*



Other versions call it **THE DESTROYER.**

The Hebrew word for caterpillar is “*chasil*”. “*Chasil* means “**devourer**” whose job is **to cut off**.

Like Satan who is known as the roaring lion seeking for someone to **devour**, these casualties and calamities will seek to **devour** Christians from their vital faith in Christ, **cutting off the purpose and destiny of God for their lives**.

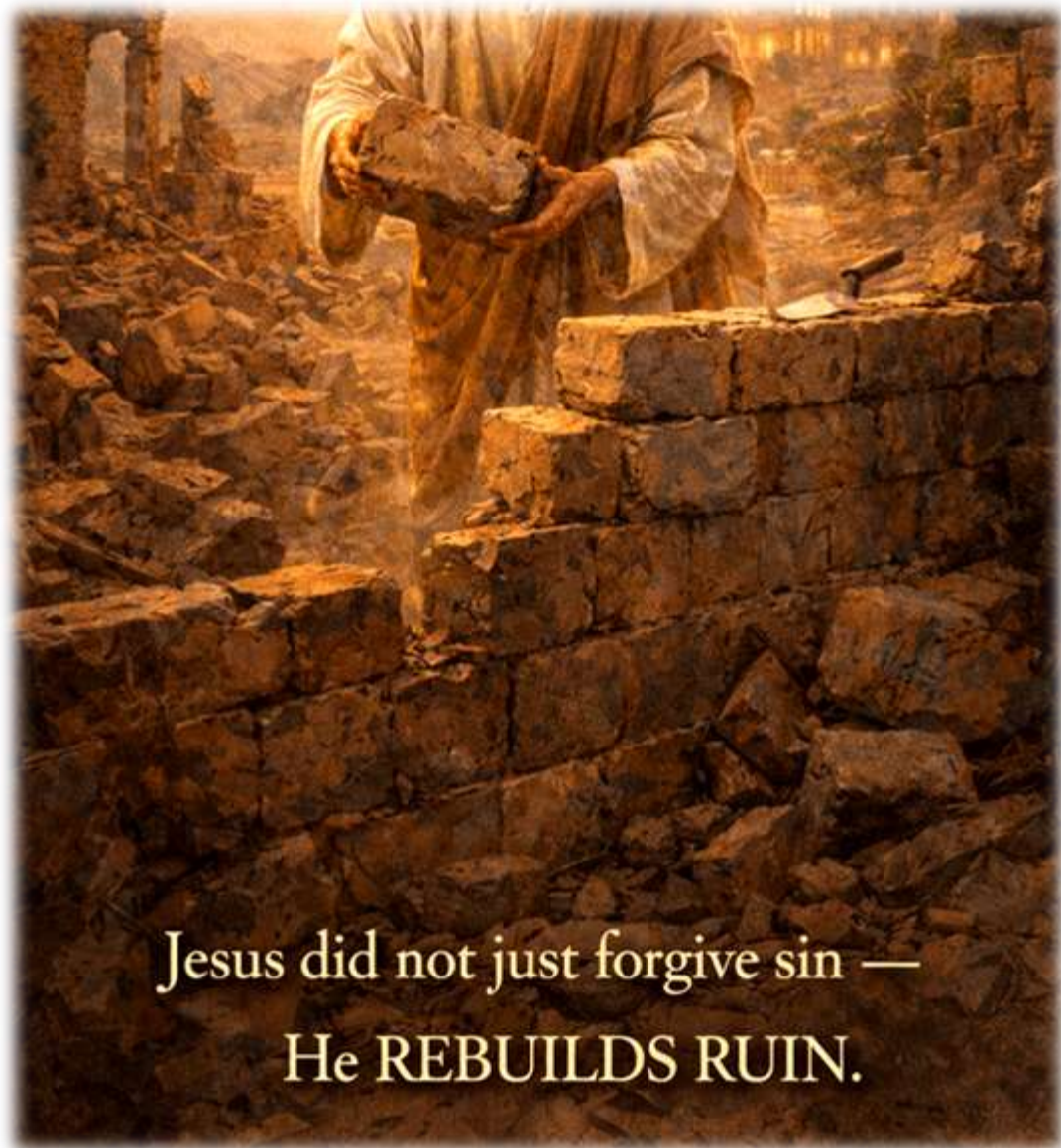
This is not surface loss — this is **SUBSTANCE LOSS; DEEP RUINS, CORE RUINS**.

Spiritually:

- Confidence in calling shaken
 - Joy in salvation bruised
 - Faith footing destabilized
 - Trust wounded by long oppression, unanswered seasons, or injustice endured too long
 - Life feeling more like rubble than testimony
-

But remember this:

Jesus did not just forgive sin — He **REBUILDS RUIN.**



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In **Colossians**, He disarmed powers.



In **Isaiah**, He binds broken hearts.



In **John**, His blood becomes redemption we drink from the vine He embodies.

Jesus is the God who doesn't just clean wounds — He turns **RUINS INTO REVIVAL ALTARS**.

Application:

- The destroyer thought it owned your story.
- Jesus says, “I own redemption over it.”
- The ruin is real, but the Redeemer is greater.

Illustration: A city was hit by a flood, just like what happened to Cebu recently. When the water receded, houses were still standing, but everything inside was destroyed. Furniture, memories, certificates, photos — ruined at the core, not just the exterior. There was **substance loss**. The damage is **visible, heavy and undeniable**.

A man wept, *“The walls survived, but my life is rubble.”*

Neighbors rebuilt the homes piece by piece, but they built the man first — restoring his hope before restoring his house.

Spiritual Lesson: Restoration must go deeper than what’s visible — God rebuilds the heart before the harvest.

In short, caterpillar refers to a **TIME WHEN THE DAMAGE (RUIN) GOES DEEP.**

Questions: What has damaged your life so deeply?

4. PALMERWORM



Other versions call it **THE CUTTER.**

The Hebrew word for palmerworm is “gazam”. “Gazam” is “the gnawer or biter whose job is “to gnaw, bite or cut off.”

To gnaw is “to bite steadily, wear away by biting, to corrode”.

Not random — targeted. It is **PRECISE AND PERSONAL CUTTING** leading to the **DESTRUCTION OF PURPOSE.**

Spiritually, this is:

- A specific dream delayed
 - A calling questioned by circumstances
 - A relationship pressured, controlled, or negotiated away
 - Opportunities severed in detail
 - Serving God in fragments because life kept cutting you short
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But Christ says:

“No one takes My life from Me, I lay it down...”



Meaning:

- Jesus allowed His own life to be **cut**, willingly,
- So, our purpose could be connected again permanently.

What was cut in **precision**, Jesus restores in **intention**.

Application:

- If something in your life was specifically severed,
- Jesus is specifically restoring it.
- Not generically. Not vaguely. But **personally**.

Illustration: A young artist worked on her dream tapestry for years — her calling woven in detail. Then one night, mice chewed only the patterned center, not the edges. Not random, targeted.

She cried, *“Why the most important part?”*

A master weaver later repaired only the damaged pattern — **intentionally, carefully** — and made it even more beautiful than before.

Spiritual Lesson: What the enemy cuts with intention, God restores with **GREATER** purpose.

In short, palmerworm refers to **THE TIME WHEN LOSS FEELS PRECISE AND PERSONAL.**

Questions: Has your dream been cut? Has your purpose in life been cut? Have you cut yourself off from the calling of God? Has someone cut you off?

In **summary....**

The locust = When life overwhelms you

The cankerworm = When loss lingers and drains

The caterpillar = When the damage (substance) goes deep

The palmerworm = When loss feels precise and personal

Which of these losses have come into your life?



(II) THE GOD OF RESTORED YEARS

Joel 2:25 doesn't promise explanation of every loss.

It promises restoration **GREATER** than the damage.

What does “**restored years**” mean spiritually?

It means Jesus turns:

- **Overwhelm → into His peace**

Jesus takes seasons of **OVERWHELMING LOSS, PRESSURE AND DEVASTATION** and replaces them with **RESTORTION AND PEACE**, because He Himself bore the **judgment and chaos** meant for us. What once drained our strength becomes a place where His presence restores our soul, proving that **PEACE IS NOT THE ABSENCE OF LOSS, BUT THE PRESENCE OF CHRIST WHO RESTORES WHAT WAS TAKEN.**

- **Slow drain → into His love**

Jesus turns the cankerworm's slow drain into His love by restoring what time, sin and weariness have quietly taken, assuring us that we are **NOT DEFINED BY LOSS BY HIS FAITHFUL LOVE.**

- **Core ruin → into His redemption**

Jesus turns core ruin (substance damage) caused by the caterpillar into redemption by restoring what was fundamentally destroyed and **REBUILDING OUR LIVES FROM THE INSIDE OUT THROUGH HIS SAVING WORK.**

- **Precise cutting → into His renewed purpose**

Jesus turns the Palmerworm's precise, personal loss into renewed purpose, transforming every targeted cut into a step of **RESTORATION AND INTENTIONAL BLESSING IN OUR LIVES.**

In short, Jesus turns **STOLEN SEASONS**—times of delay, loss, or unfulfilled expectation — into **Spirit-empowered service**, using what seemed **WASTED/LOST** to equip, strengthen and expand us for His kingdom work.



**WHY THE
LOSSES?**

(III) WHY THE LOSSES?

Joel 2:25 (KJV) – 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.



Here it shows us that it was God who sent these four “**great army among them**”.

Why?

Because of the **HEART ISSUE** of the children of Israel.

Two general causes – **SPIRITUAL COMPLACENCY AND OUTWARD RELIGION WITHOUT INWARD REPENTANCE.**

Heart Root Causes

1. Divided Hearts

They still worshipped but without wholehearted devotion. God addressed the heart and not the ritual.

Problem: External obedience without internal surrender.

2. Spiritual Complacency

Prosperity and routine dulled urgency. They no longer trembled at the Day of the Lord.

Problem: Comfort replaced reverence.

3. Self-Reliance instead of Dependence

The land's productivity had become their security rather than God.

Problem: Trust shifted from the Giver to the gifts.

4. Delayed Repentance

They responded only after devastation – not at the first warning.

Problem: Hardness grows when conviction is postponed.

The locusts were not about punishment alone – they were a **LOVING INTERRUPTION** meant to bring hearts back to God.

Judgment was the **alarm**.

Repentance was the **door**.

Christ is the fulfillment.

How?

Joel 2:25 finds its deepest fulfillment at the Cross of Christ. Every form of loss the locusts represent – **sudden overwhelm** (swarming locust), **slow draining** (cankerworm), **deep ruin** (the caterpillar) and **precise cutting** (palmerworm) – was gathered onto Jesus as He hung on the Cross. There, He carried our **CHAOS** (caused by the swarming locust) and released His **PEACE**, absorbed our **LONG EXHAUSTION** (caused by cankerworm) and poured out **UNFAILING LOVE**, entered the very **CORE OF OUR BROKENNESS** (caused by the caterpillar) to **REDEEM** it and allowed what looked like the **DESTRUCTION OF PURPOSE** (caused by the palmerworm) to become the **DOORWAY TO RESURRECTION**. The Cross proves that God does not simply **RETURN** what was lost; He **TRANSFORMS LOSS INTO RESTORATION, WOUNDS INTO HEALING AND DEATH INTO RENEWED PURPOSES**. In Christ, the years the locusts consumed are not merely recovered – they are **REDEEMED**.

In Joel, Locusts devour the land because hearts drifted.

In Christ, Jesus is “devoured” so hearts can be restored.

When hearts drift, God allows disruption; when hearts return, God releases restoration – and in Christ, restoration wins regardless of the 4 types of losses that hit your life.

All God asks is “Return to me with all your heart, with fasting, with weeping and with mourning; and rend your hearts and not your garments. Return to the Lord your God for he is gracious, and merciful, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love and repents of evil. Who knows whether he will not turn and repent and leave a blessing behind him, a cereal offering and a drink offering for the LORD, your God? (Joel 2:12-14).

Easy Version- The LORD says, ‘Even now it is not too late! Show that you are sorry and return to me. Fast, weep and cry to show that you are sad. Show me that you are really upset. Do not tear your clothes. That is not

enough.’ Return to the LORD your God. He is kind and he forgives people. He does not quickly become angry, and his faithful love is very great. He does not like to punish you. No one knows what the LORD your God will do. Perhaps he will change his mind. Perhaps he will not punish you as he said he will. After that he may bless you. He may give you grain and wine, so that you can offer them to him.

“The swarm comes **too loud**, the hopper **too slow**, the destroyer **too deep**, the cutter **too personal** — but Jesus restores too fully for any loss to win.”

MY TESTIMONY

Today, after arriving at the fortieth year mark of my service to God, I want to say I wasn’t spared of the four losses that came upon my life. The shake of the church by enemies **OVERWHELMED** not only Pastors Toh Nee and me but the whole church. For years, the loss of salaries and pension funds, security, favor, a

sending church and reputation **LINGERED AND DRAINED** me. We lost 343 churches – a **SUBSTANTIAL LOSS**, the damage of our dismissal went **DEEP** into those church planter's lives as well as the church planting organization. For many years, we lived as if we are the **"CUT OFF"** people – no more roots. Perhaps that was the reason why the church after 2018 dipped because we had been bearing all these losses without anyone being able to understand or empathize with us. I felt the only interest of the people for us is to always keep serving, not knowing our hearts were not totally healed yet after that big shake in 2012. And with that I apologize to the whole church today. I know the root cause of the locust devastation in 2012 was my **spiritual complacency** leading to my arrogance and self-reliance. Thus, I joined this 21-day full fast even though I am old, even though I am exiting in 4 months' time – because I need to repent and return to God. And I trust that His restoration will be greater than all the losses I

have experienced in my life and the losses I have caused the church through my drained posture of heart -my long exhaustion.

“The swarm comes too loud, the hopper too slow, the destroyer too deep, the cutter too personal — but Jesus restores too fully for any loss to win.”

The locusts show how loss comes in waves, but Jesus restores in wonders.

End
