

Grace and peace to you from God our Father and from the Lord of the Harvest, amen.

I complain about Daylight Savings Time a lot. I mean I used to, but I'll try not to complain about that again. At least not until next spring when we "spring ahead" and I lose an hour of precious sleep once again. I don't like losing that hour, but what if you went to sleep on Saturday, March 13th and when you woke up to the smell of a fresh pot of coffee and it was March 22nd? Something like that actually happened back in the year 1582 when Pope Gregory VIII decided to reform the Julian Calendar. His goal was to make the calendar correspond to the lunar cycle and adjust for the gap that accumulated over the many years since back then they didn't add one extra day every four years as we do now to adjust for "Leap Year." Nobody actually lost any days from their lifespan, but that would have been an incredible adjustment to make. It sort of makes me feel guilty for complaining about the loss of a single hour of sleep that they give me back in the fall each year... Pope Gregory is remembered to this day as we call our modern calendar the Gregorian Calendar. Initially Gregory's calendar only applied to the Catholic Church, but eventually it was adopted universally and is the calendar we use today.

The 10-day gap in 1582 was a paper loss only, but periodically, we feel that we've actually lost time. I personally feel that we've lost valuable time because of

the Pandemic. When we were restricted to our homes and couldn't even visit our loved ones no matter how sick they were, that time was lost forever. Then there was that time when I wasn't paying close attention to where I was driving on I 675 coming home after dropping Melanie off at her house in Fairborn. Instead of turning onto I 70 West, I jumped the gun and turned onto I 70 East. That little mistake cost me almost an hour as I had to go all the way to Springfield before I could get turned around. In all of these cases we might feel like we've either lost time or that time was taken from us.

The prophet Joel and his fellow citizens of Judah knew the experience of lost time too. They had seen a massive swarm of locusts sweep across their fields, devouring not only the crops they counted on for their own nourishment, but every shred of grain that might have fed their flocks. While we don't have details of the infestation, we do know that during a similar locust invasion in Palestine in 1915, the insatiable insects plowed across the ground at a rate of 400-600 feet per day, devouring every scrap of vegetation in their path. What's more, the locust infestation had long lasting effects because they even ate the seed crops as well. Joel and his compatriots viewed the plague as divine judgment, and it caused them to turn toward God. Their repentance resulted in the ending of the infestation, along with God's promise to restore the land. Thus, in our text, God says abundant rain will fall and their threshing floors will be full of grain again. Then God says,

“I will repay you for the years that the swarming locust has eaten, the hopper, the destroyer, and the cutter, my great army, which I sent against you.” How can God repay us for our lost time? That’s a pretty hefty promise. Of course, God wasn't saying he would actually give them back the time the locust took; God was not giving them a do-over like in the old Groundhog Day movie where a quirky weatherman is able to relive the same day until he gets the girl. No, the sense of what God is saying is, “I will give you back what you lost in crops and vegetation, in your sense of well-being, and in your relationship with me.” The actual time lost, however, was gone for good.

Is lost time actually lost? Can we actually say time has been taken from us when, in fact, we did live those days, even if it was in circumstances we didn't like or that halted or changed the momentum of our lives? John Lennon famously said, “Life is what happens while you're busy making other plans,” but it's also what happens when you're enduring forced downtime, as we’ve all experienced over these past 2 years or when we’re stuck in that traffic jam that delays your homecoming or when it’s you lying in the bed sick, or when you’re contemplating about what the “locusts” have eaten out of your life.

The truth is I don’t like down time, but I’ve learned to use that downtime to learn and to redirect my life so that the “locusts” don’t get the last word. During the pandemic I learned how to edit and produce videos for Sunday morning

worship and to produce videos for skits and monologs to use during Advent and Lent. These videos have been seen and enjoyed by folks from our local area all the way to Virginia and Florida. Our small church had a great outreach all because of how the Pandemic forced us into a period of downtime, which otherwise might have just been frittered away.

As I approached the writing of this Homily for Thanksgiving Eve the Holy Spirit guided me to be positive and bring you Good News. It's not really "Good News" to stand up here and tell you, "You should be thankful, or more thankful..." that just gives you something more to do and to worry about. "Am I being thankful enough?" How much thanks do I need to show? If I just say, "thanks be to God," and then move on to cooking the turkey and stuffing, is that enough? With all this work to do is my thanks even genuine? No, telling you or reminding you to be thankful is just another law. It's not the Gospel.

So, here's your good news for this Thanksgiving. Be not afraid. The longtime of suffering is coming to an end. You have been chosen by God as his beloved child and God will restore you in His good time. Christ is your Savior, and you are included as one of His very own. Jesus will never abandon you nor leave you alone. When you are experiencing periods of being lost or loosing time, God is always right by your side, just a prayer away.

This Thanksgiving, I pray you can savor every delicious moment. May you find the time to just be a child of God and soak up every last second. Joel noticed that the soil, the animals, and the trees all rejoice in the Glory of God. That's what Thanksgiving looks like. Every part of creation rejoices at God's love and mercy. This thanksgiving Holiday I'm going to try to be thankful, not just for all the goodies and blessings God sends my way, but to be thankful for God Himself. Why do I deserve a God who takes notice of this poor excuse for a child? The plain truth is I don't deserve such a great and merciful God and neither do you, but the tremendous good news is that we don't have to be worthy of God or God's love. God loves us because that's who God is and what God does.

God's grace to you this Thanksgiving Day! As the prophet Joel says, "You shall eat in plenty and be satisfied!" For that and for so much more I am truly thankful. Amen.