

**Matt.3:1** In those days John the Baptist came preaching in the wilderness of Judea, 2and saying, “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand!” 3For this is he who was spoken of by the prophet Isaiah, saying:

“The voice of one crying in the wilderness:

‘Prepare the way of the Lord; Make His paths straight.’ ”

**4** Now John himself was clothed in camel’s hair, with a leather belt around his waist; and his food was locusts and wild honey. 5Then Jerusalem, all Judea, and all the region around the Jordan went out to him 6and were baptized by him in the Jordan, confessing their sins.

**7**But when he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees coming to his baptism, he said to them, “Brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the wrath to come? 8Therefore bear fruits worthy of repentance, 9and do not think to say to yourselves, ‘We have Abraham as our father.’ For I say to you that God is able to raise up children to Abraham from these stones. 10And even now the ax is laid to the root of the trees.

Therefore every tree which does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. 11I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance, but He who is coming after me is mightier than I, whose sandals I am not worthy to carry. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire. 12His winnowing fan is in His hand, and He will thoroughly clean out His threshing floor, and gather His wheat into the barn; but He will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire.” NKJV

**Matt. 3:1** Now in those days John the Baptist \*came, preaching in the wilderness of Judea, saying, 2“Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.” 3For this is the one referred to by Isaiah the prophet when he said, “The voice of one crying in the wilderness,

‘Make ready the way of the Lord, Make His paths straight!’”

**4**Now John himself had a garment of camel’s hair and a leather belt around his waist; and his food was locusts and wild honey. 5Then Jerusalem was going out to him, and all Judea and all the district around the Jordan; 6and they were being baptized by him in the Jordan River, as they confessed their sins.

**7** But when he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees coming for baptism, he said to them, “You brood of vipers, who warned you to flee from the wrath to come? 8Therefore bear fruit in keeping with repentance; 9and do not suppose that you can say to yourselves, ‘We have Abraham for our father’; for I say to you that from these stones God is able to raise up children to Abraham. 10The axe is already laid at the root of the trees; therefore every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire.

**11**“As for me, I baptize you with water for repentance, but He who is coming after me is mightier than I, and I am not fit to remove His sandals; He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire. 12His winnowing fork is in His hand, and He will thoroughly clear His threshing floor; and He will gather His wheat into the barn, but He will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire.”

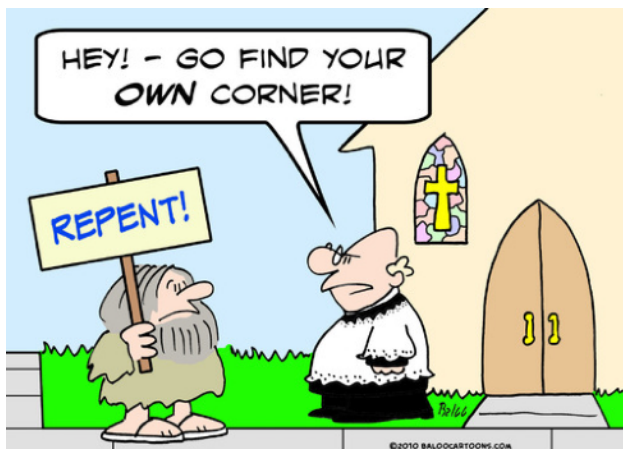
Read the NKJV which my sermon follows. Compare the NASB.Observe the

paragraphs marked off with bold face. Underline the main idea of each paragraph.

January is a time of year when we typically reflect on our aspirations for the upcoming year. What are our objectives for this year? These objectives may differ from our initial commitments, and by February, we will likely have breached most of them.

If you are in the fitness industry, this month is an opportune time to attract new memberships. The same establishments will be ideal for our existing clientele next month.

We often make resolutions, examining our habits and contemplating changing undesirable behaviors and cultivating positive ones. This concept bears a striking resemblance to our current topic. Before delving into the scripture, I would like to share some humorous anecdotes and provide some context regarding the land we will explore in this passage. I am uncertain whether I will be able to encompass all the necessary information, but that is acceptable. The subject matter is vast, and I do not intend to stress about the completeness of my coverage.



Repentance is a recurring theme in our discussions. When I contemplate repentance, I frequently envision an individual on the street, proclaiming, “The end is imminent.” This perspective offers a humorous contrast. Therefore, this individual must repent. However, it is not immediately apparent. Can you comprehend? It may have ceased to be effective.

Let's begin with a humorous take on the concept of repentance. It is possible that the individual holding up the repent sign may not be entirely truthful. They could be exhibiting signs of mental instability and misrepresenting the church. While we may not dress the same way they do, it is still a humorous observation. If it does not elicit laughter, I will refrain from further elaboration.

For instance, one street vendor might proclaim, “Repent, the end is near.” The beard adds



to the comedic effect. This vendor is from Congress, although the cartoon did not explicitly state this, so I have clarified it for your understanding.



If you are unfamiliar with politicians and the potential for corruption, this statement may resonate with you. This is my personal favorite. The humorous pages are never better than Calvin and Hobbes. Calvin and Hobbes has achieved the pinnacle of humor, with its cartoons, drawings, and text all contributing to its comedic success.

As spring approaches, Randy expresses a desire for summer, but spring has arrived. The days are lengthening, and the snowmen are melting away, marking their final days. Repent, sinners, for the end is near. Spring is upon us.

The snowmen, now prophets of doom, stand before the mother, who remarks, “You certainly take pleasure in waiting for the daffodils.” Calvin possesses a unique sense of humor.



Returning to an older comic strip featuring Dennis the Menace, I am curious about his direct gaze at me when he spoke of repentance. Calvin appears ready to repent, but Dennis seems to be in a state of repentance himself.

I am aware of only one individual in the room who would attempt to drive on this treacherous road. However, it is evident that the road has undergone substantial modifications, likely involving machinery to create a stable surface. While the journey would undoubtedly be uncomfortable, it serves as a visual representation of the challenges John the Baptist faced.

John the Baptist's mission was to pave the way for the Lord's arrival. This is illustrated by the image of Jesus being led into the wilderness. To facilitate this, turn to Psalm 63 in your Bible. If the text is not visible on the screen, you can consult your Bible for reference.

It is uncertain whether this experience was directly related to David's time in the wilderness of Judah. However, given the text's divine nature and the Lord's awareness of these truths, it is plausible that Jesus's 40-day, 40-night journey into the wilderness was not solely focused on temptation. It is also possible that he engaged in fellowship with his father during this period.

In the wilderness, Jesus expressed his deep devotion to God, declaring his intention to seek Him early and expressing his soul's thirst and flesh's longing for Him. He described the arid, parched landscape as a place devoid of water, underscoring the need for divine intervention.

Interestingly, the Lord's visit to the sanctuary revealed the extent of the moral decay that had occurred. People were exploiting the poor by selling to them, amassing wealth, and corrupting the sacred worship process. Consequently, the Lord felt compelled to cleanse the sanctuary and restore its integrity.<sup>1</sup>

PSALMS 63:1-5  
Joy in the Fellowship of God  
A Psalm of David

when he was in the wilderness of Judah.  
1 O God, You are my God;  
Early will I seek You;  
My soul thirsts for You;  
My flesh longs for You  
In a dry and thirsty land  
Where there is no water.  
2 So I have looked for You in the sanctuary,  
To see Your power and Your glory.  
3 Because Your lovingkindness is better than life,  
My lips shall praise You.  
4 Thus I will bless You while I live;  
I will lift up my hands in Your name.

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<sup>1</sup> Matt. 21:12; Mk. 11:15; Lk. 19:45; Jn. 2:13-15 observe Jesus cleansed the temple at the beginning and end of His ministry.

5 My soul shall be satisfied as with marrow and fatness,  
And my mouth shall praise You with joyful lips. NKJV

In light of your unwavering kindness, I find myself in a state of profound gratitude. Your compassion surpasses all earthly pleasures. I am acutely aware of the importance of living by the Lord's words, as exemplified in Matthew 4. This principle should be applied to all aspects of life.

Our Lord embarks on a journey into the wilderness. The Lord enters the wilderness. I find it beneficial to visualize this scene, this psalm, as a representation of the Lord's departure. Now, let us consider the destination of this journey. Upon encountering the wilderness, I was initially taken aback by my preconceived notions of what it would look like. I envisioned it as resembling the Appalachian Mountains or a dense forest, akin to the wilderness Daniel Boone and Davy Crockett inhabited.<sup>2</sup> However, upon visiting Israel and witnessing its desolate, arid landscape, I was astounded.



Wikipedia

The month of August had arrived, and the Judean Wilderness seemed devoid of any life. I could not fathom anyone venturing into such an environment. In fact, there have been instances of individuals venturing into the desert and never returning. When traversing a desert, it is crucial to adhere to the principle of carrying your water supply and when half was gone retrace steps to return from arid area. Once you have consumed half of your water, it is imperative to return to your starting point. This rule is not merely a suggestion; it is a fundamental principle that must be

followed. Therefore, it is advisable to bring a substantial amount of water, approximately half a gallon, and a compass would be immensely helpful. Additionally, it would be prudent to carry a few other items that can be easily transported from one location to another, such as any tools or supplies that may be necessary for exploration. For instance, if you were to bring a collection of

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<sup>2</sup> When I visited the Holy Land in 1976 now 50 years ago, I had a lot to learn. By that time I traveled to both Appalachian and Rocky Mountains. I also saw death Valley and Badlands and many other things between locations. Going to the holy land, started a lifetime study with me to connect the land of the Bible to the reading of the Bible. Lot of fun..

sticks and bury them in the ground, you would later search for them and retrieve them. It is easy to become disoriented in this environment.



Courtesy of Wayne Stiles

However, I wanted to present this image to illustrate that this wilderness area is not devoid of life. In the winter the green patches visible here indicate the presence of accumulated water, providing a suitable habitat for green plants. Remarkably, this is the same area that I observed in August, but from the perspective of a sheep or goat. From their vantage point, they perceive the landscape differently. Instead of admiring the expansive blue sky or the intricate

details of the mountains, they focus on the grass and express their admiration for its beauty. This grass, growing in the wilderness, serves as a vital resource for these animals.

In August I witnessed a stark contrast to the wintertime. If I only use my observations from my trip, I may not understand this area in a different time of the year. It is a different time of the year that I believe Jesus went into the wilderness. I think while he was there, he found a water source. If you notice in the Matthew account, he was hungry that sparked the temptation. He was not thirsty. You could not live in this barren land without some sort of water. I think the Lord provided that for Jesus in the wilderness. The landscape that I saw was devoid of any vegetation, leaving only a sea of white. Life had ceased to exist in this area. However, during the winter months, grass does indeed grow here. In this wilderness, small pockets of water develop, providing a crucial source of sustenance. While these areas may not be ideal for human habitation, they are essential to wildlife survival.

It is important to note that my observations do not represent the entire wilderness. The terrain is characterized by numerous hills that can easily lead to disorientation. Therefore, it is crucial to have sufficient water supplies and a reliable compass to navigate this area safely.

In the time of year when grass is abundant in the wilderness, shepherds lead their animals to these areas to graze on the sparse vegetation. Simultaneously, farmers are preparing their fields, underscoring the region's importance. While the landscape may not resemble a bustling steakhouse, it

serves as a vital food source for these animals, enabling them to discover and utilize a variety of foods.



Courtesy of Wayne Stiles

Furthermore, the trails that the animals traverse are likely the same paths that their ancestors, goats and sheep, used to wander as young creatures. Over time, these paths have contributed to the formation of ridges in the landscape. Indeed, that is precisely what is transpiring. We are planning to investigate the location where the pinnacle stood, potentially the site where the Lord was taken by the devil. Unfortunately, we do not have a precise location for where he

took Jesus. Numerous individuals believe there is a specific place.

Herod's temple was situated above this one, reaching a height of 15 stories—a truly impressive feat. In contrast, the Florida buildings, constructed to be six stories tall, serve as a striking mock structure, albeit smaller than the original. Some have measured it at approximately 164 feet tall, though this measurement refers to the foundation of the wall. You will discover stones from the Lord's era, the



In Jerusalem

Herodian stones on top, and Muslim additions over the years, along with various stones that have been restored. This particular mosque was selected by a Southern Baptist to be demolished. However, they made an erroneous choice, and it remains a remarkable representation of New Testament Jerusalem. It is a pleasure to visit, and here you can observe the model and the potential location where the devil took the Lord. This information is available in the back of your bulletin, and we will discuss it further. These are merely a few hints

about what lies ahead, and I wanted to let you know. Let us now delve into the



scriptures. Can you follow along? Thank you. John the Baptist. Turn to Matthew chapter 3. In those days, Matthew used this expression as he transitioned from one scene to another. He will also use the word “then.” Therefore, let us be vigilant in identifying it as we read. However, in those days, John the Baptist came preaching in the wilderness of Judea. Now you have a clearer understanding of the nature of that wilderness. Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand. That was his message. It was not as much preaching as he would simply state it, “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand,” and it would be emphasized. For this was spoken by the prophet Isaiah, a voice of one crying in the wilderness, “ Prepare the way of the Lord, make his ways straight. Therefore, he was there straightening the way so that people could be led to the Messiah. You can indeed make a sincere effort to explain the gospel clearly and concisely, which could be beneficial. You are directly addressing someone to hear your message. However, it is important to recognize that this does not guarantee a positive response. Simply presenting the gospel clearly does not guarantee belief. There is a spiritual battle at play, and John was engaged in the work he was called to do.

John himself was dressed in camel hair and wore a leather belt. His sustenance consisted of locusts and wild honey. When comparing John to Elijah, it is notable that Elijah was a hairy man with hair covering his entire body. John, however, was entering the ministry of Elijah, assuming the role of a prophet. John deliberately dressed himself in camel hair and a leather belt to

make his identity and purpose known. This attire would have been quite uncomfortable.

Wool is a material that many people are familiar with. It is a fabric that can be itchy or scratchy if not properly prepared, despite its ability to retain heat. The fibers of camel hair would have been particularly noticeable.

Have you ever seen camel hair? Camels are intriguing creatures. While they may not be considered particularly pleasant animals, they are highly effective at transporting goods. John's diet consisted of locusts and wild game. To better understand the cost of locusts as a food source, imagine a restaurant specializing in Holy Land cuisine. We ordered a plate of fried locusts, which we eagerly anticipated tasting. We are not accustomed to consuming insects in this manner. However, locusts are packed with protein, comparable to meat. They can provide all the necessary protein for an individual's nutritional needs. Wild honey can provide essential minerals, vitamins, and energy. Additionally, honey contains numerous insect parts, meaning that consuming honey also involves ingesting insect matter. To observe these components, one can utilize a microscope equipped with a high-quality lens. It is possible to identify insect parts, such as bee or ant parts.

Interestingly, ketchup is permitted to contain up to 19 insect parts per bottle. Therefore, individuals have been consuming insects throughout their lives. Furthermore, every breath taken involves inhaling insects. If this information were presented in a classroom setting, it is likely to cause discomfort and distress among students. Consequently, I have decided to refrain from consuming that particular food item.

Indeed, insects can be beneficial to human health. Some insects, such as locusts, are even mentioned in the Bible, specifically in Leviticus, chapter 11. This passage outlines which insects are permissible for consumption and explains how God will bless those who consume them. While certain insects are acceptable, others are not. For instance, God prohibits the consumption of flies. There are likely valid reasons for this prohibition, but we should not dwell on them.

Locusts, on the other hand, are beneficial. They provide a significant source of energy and other essential nutrients. In John's case, he required only vitamin C in the long run, but he obtained ample other nutrients from his diet.

Subsequently, observe the individuals who approach him: Jerusalem, the entirety of Judea, and the vicinity of the Jordan River. Although relatively few Galileans are present, they are flocking to him and being baptized in the Jordan

River. They are openly confessing their sins. This is the essence of his ministry: repentance, a transformation of one's mindset, and a shift in one's attitude. John emphasizes repentance that not only alters one's attitude but also leads to corresponding actions. All elements are essential in this repentance. People sought reconciliation with God to encounter the Messiah, openly confessing their sins. However, when the Pharisees and Sadducees arrived at his baptism, he responded, "It is wonderful to see you! I am delighted that you have come. It is truly remarkable, and I am finally accepted by the esteemed individuals!" However, John's words differ from this statement. He addressed them as "brood of vipers, children of vipers! They are vipers, but their parents were vipers. Are you not aware of this?"

Snakes are fascinating creatures, and there are various types, such as boa constrictors, which are constricting snakes that can be extremely venomous. Snakes are known for their ability to target specific rodents and other animals, and they are highly effective in capturing them. The viper is a unique type of snake, and not all snakes are created equal. During my time in Africa, if a snake had a bullet-shaped head, I did not perceive it as a significant threat, as it would simply slither away. However, if a snake had a large, diamond-shaped jaw, I became somewhat concerned. I encountered one of these snakes in the jungle and chose not to approach it. In the jungle, it is crucial to make a loud noise to alert a snake to your presence, rather than sneaking up on it. By doing so, you can allow the snake to move out of your way. However, if you surprise a snake, it can be incredibly dangerous. I encountered several deadly snakes, including cobras and green mambas. While I am uncertain whether I saw a black mamba,



I did encounter green mambas. Additionally, there was another snake, approximately the same length as a gaboon snake, that we referred to as a gaboon snake. It was quite thick, not particularly fast, but incredibly venomous. These individuals were venomous snakes, and if they bit you, as I told the people there, "you will go see Jesus." Death is eminent. You should understand that your life is

short. If they entered our living area, I would take action to eliminate them.

I was not Steve Irwin, nor was I attempting to capture the snake and admire its beauty. No, I killed it. I have never regretted that action because these snakes were extremely dangerous. I never killed them in their habitat. I only did so when they came into the area of house, school and clinic.

Therefore, it is crucial to identify snakes, but I must admit that many people do not take the time to do so. Instead, they simply kill them without

understanding the snake's nature. I can relate to this because in Africa, there was a green snake the same size as a mamba but with a bullet-shaped head. Sometimes, we overlook what we need to see, leading to accidental harm, such as killing both snakes because we are not close enough to observe them.

However, he calls them a brood of vipers, a clear indication of their poisonous nature. Their actions and words are poisoning those around them. He is not providing them with any positive guidance. Who warned you of the impending wrath? Consequently, a result of all this, you should bear fruit that is worthy of repentance. This is what he was emphasizing. Repent for the kingdom of heaven and prepare to meet your Messiah. These individuals were not fulfilling this responsibility. They consistently sought to maintain their position of power rather than seeking the Messiah. They lacked any spiritual fruit and were not contributing positively to their community. He further asserts that God is capable of raising children for Abraham from even the most unlikely of sources. Even now, the consequences of their actions are evident, “as the axe lies at the roots of the trees. Therefore, every tree that does not bear good fruit will be cut down and thrown into the fire. I indeed baptize you with water for repentance. However, the one who is coming is mightier than I, whose sandals I am not worthy to carry. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire. His winnowing fan is in his hand, and he will thoroughly clean out the threshing floor. He will gather his wheat into the barn, but he will burn up the shaft with unquenchable fire.” Therefore, it is at the harvest.

The Lord will expand this. He will teach more about this, but it is at the harvest that the wheat and the tares, the darnel, and the other kinds of grains that we cannot use are separated. The Lord did not want to lose any of the wheat, the genuine stuff. He let it grow together, but at the harvest, it is separated. Well, here, the wheat is separated from the shaft.

Now that got me thinking. I have been around for 73 years, and I have never asked this question: What is the shaft? And did the shaft have any creative purpose of God? Let's take corn as an example. You have the corn husk. Did that husk have any purpose in the corn's life? Absolutely! It protected it while it grew. But we are not going to eat it, right? Does anyone actually eat it? I know we cook a lot with the husk, but I cannot think we eat it. But anyway, if you want to go ahead, go ahead. I do not know, but I am not going to do it. But we take the shaft away, and then we have the corn. Well, that is just big. Everybody can see that. But that is what happens with wheat. When they throw this up in the air, the shaft breaks away, and it blows away, and the seed comes back down because it is heavier. And it gets rid of it because we are not going to eat it. But at one time, that shaft had a purpose.

There are things in this life that have a purpose, but we are not going to take them to heaven. They will be left behind, and eventually the Lord will burn up the whole place. Everything that we have used, he will destroy this planet and recreate another one. This place now has a purpose for you and me. I love breathing air. I love having water. I love having food. I love living here. As we eagerly anticipate the arrival of summer or the lengthening days of spring, it is important to remember that these fleeting moments will eventually pass. What will endure beyond these seasons? Those who have placed their trust in Christ are destined for heaven. All other material possessions will be consumed by fire. Wood, hay, and stubble will not be part of the heavenly realm. There is a purpose for wood, as it can be used for fire and construction. However, it cannot be taken to heaven, as God will recreate our homes using different materials.

While I could elaborate further, I have never considered the shack before. It once served a purpose, but its significance has diminished. Initially, the seed within it held potential for growth. Similarly, we grow on Earth, but when we place our trust in the Lord, that becomes our most important focus. This transformation is what is taken up into heaven.

The teachings of the Bible lead us to a profound truth that God builds upon. This is why I felt compelled to share this with you.

As Christians, we must cultivate a habit of continual repentance. Repentance is not a one-time event; it is a recurring process. We strive for change and growth, seeking the Lord's influence in our lives. However, there are times when we may falter, like a New Year's resolution that we abandon after a few weeks.

God desires to transform us, and these transformations should be worthy and integral to His work. When we repent of a sin and adopt a new habit that becomes a part of our way of life, we are no longer controlled by that sin. Instead, we embrace a new way of living.

Immediately after such a transformation, God responds with praise and guidance, pointing us to other areas where we can grow and develop. In addition to the previous discussion, I would like to draw your attention to another aspect that requires repentance and change. Once you have made the necessary adjustments, you will discover that you are now at the appropriate age to engage in this endeavor. At 73 years old, you possess the necessary experience and maturity to take on this new challenge.

The Christian journey often involves periods of repentance and self-reflection. It is a testament to our faith that we have come to the realization that

Jesus Christ is the Messiah and have accepted His teachings. John the Baptist played a crucial role in preparing the people for this revelation.

In the back of your bulletin, I have highlighted a key concept that I believe is essential for understanding our current situation. This concept is based on the teachings of John the Baptist and is supported by the Bible passages in 1 John 2, Matthew, and Genesis 3:6. These passages outline three ways we are tempted to sin.

<b>Gives Insight Into Recognition Of Temptation</b>		
<b>1 John 2:15</b>	<b>Matt. 4:3-9</b>	<b>Gen. 3:6</b>
<b>Principles</b>	<b>Illustrated N. T.</b>	<b>Illustrated O. T.</b>
<b>The lust of the flesh</b>	<b>Bread - physical needs and desires</b>	<b>Good for food - flesh</b>
<b>The lust of the eyes</b>	<b>Kingdoms - possessions, power</b>	<b>Pleasant to eyes - things,</b>
<b>Pride of life</b>	<b>Pride - put God <u>under your control</u></b>	<b>Desirable to <u>make one wise</u> - (pride)</b>

I encourage you to take the time to study these passages and reflect on the implications they hold for your life. If you have any questions or concerns, please feel free to discuss them with me after the service.

As we enter the new year, I want to express my gratitude for the blessings bestowed upon us. I am particularly thankful for the opportunity to recover from injuries and illnesses, including knee problems and other ailments.

With renewed vigor, I am ready to embrace the challenges and opportunities that await us in the coming year. If this is indeed my last year, I am determined to make it the most fulfilling and meaningful of my life. I will dedicate myself to living for Christ and making this year the pinnacle of my existence.

If God grants me more years, I will continue to express my gratitude for His blessings. However, I am deeply grateful for the opportunity to be here today and to witness the progress made over the past century.

As we embark on this new year, I encourage each of you to reflect on the past and to look forward with hope and anticipation. May we all find joy and

fulfillment in our lives, guided by the teachings of Jesus Christ. Although we may face physical challenges and circumstances, I firmly believe that spiritually, this year can be the most transformative of our lives. I express my gratitude for the profound truth that repentance is an ongoing process, not a singular event. It is a daily practice that I consistently follow, and I am reminded that you,

Lord, are guiding me on this path of growth. Your assistance enables me to cultivate fruit that is worthy of your divine nature. I extend my sincere thanks for your unwavering presence and the positive impact you have had on my life. These principles, shared with us, have brought immense benefit. I am deeply appreciative of your guidance and support. In Jesus' name, I pray for your continued blessings.

May you have a fulfilling day. If you are interested in participating in the locust event, the pastor will provide you with the necessary information.