

God's Time

by Erlo Stegen

The sermon emphasizes the urgent need for believers to recognize God's judgment, embrace humility, and turn from sin to heal their land.

Duration: 1:16:40

Scripture: Isaiah 59:1

Topics: "Time"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker emphasizes the importance of bringing souls to Jesus and repenting. They urge the audience to reflect on whether they have been successful in leading others to the Lord and if not, to seek guidance from God. The speaker warns that failure to recognize the time of visitation from God can lead to difficult times and being handed over to enemies. They also share a story about two co-workers in the Bible who were urged to reconcile and be united in the Lord. The sermon concludes with a personal anecdote about a girl observed by the speaker and their curiosity about her needs.

Transcript

Our text we find in Luke although let's start rather in 1st Peter and we'll get back to Luke later on. Chapter 4, verse 17, although let's rather start in verse 15, 1 Peter chapter 4 from verse 15. But let none of you suffer as a murderer or a thief or an evildoer or as a meddler.

Yet if anyone suffers as a Christian, let him not be ashamed but let him glorify God in that name. For it is time for judgment to begin at the household of God, and if it begins with us, what will be the outcome for those who do not obey the gospel of God? And if the righteous is scarcely saved, what will become of the ungodly and the sinner? The central point of this message is found in verse 17. For it is time for judgment to start in the household of God.

So God says, it is now time for judgment to begin in his house. People often think, as I thought a while back, a long time ago, that it would be the judgment will begin with those who are outside. Yet the word of God says it begins inside.

We want the unsaved to repent. But the matter begins with us, we who are believers. It says it starts in the household of God.

Some assume that the household of God means the church building made with bricks or blocks. But no. The New Testament teaches us clearly that God does not dwell in a house of bricks and mortar.

Instead, he dwells where there are living stones, Christians, the children of God. Isaiah the prophet said, Do you want to build a household for God? Isaiah 66 The Lord said to Jehovah, If you want to build a house for God, You will have to build a house of course. God says, you assume that you can build a house for me.

If you want to build a house for God, You will have to build a house of bricks. Since heaven is my throne and the earth is my footstool. He says, I made the heavens and the earth anyway.

I made the heavens as my throne. How great must God be If it needs the whole universe for his throne. And the earth is so small, It is like a little bump for him to rest his feet.

And all of this is made by God, not by us. We haven't made anything. But then he continues to say, But this is the one to whom I will look.

God says he dwells and is with the lowly, The humble. He resists and hates the proud, The arrogant, The haughty. He fights them.

He only is with those who are humble. If you see a proud person, one who lifts himself up, You need to recognize that that person is nothing. And does not have the spirit of God.

Instead, he has the spirit of Lucifer, of Satan. The Lord says, This is the one to whom I will look. The one who is of a lowly, contrite spirit and who trembles at his word.

So let me ask you, do you tremble at God's word? Some tremble when there is thunder in the sky. Or if they see a terrible accident approaching. But God ignores all that.

He says, I want a person who trembles at my word. Today, the word of God is despised. And it is often not the word that is being used in the place of preaching.

Or among people who come together to listen to the sermon. He wants people who tremble at his word. Do you know that? If God speaks to you, do you tremble at his word? That is what God seeks.

Those are the ones God wants. The ones who tremble at his word. God sees them and he dwells among them.

But if we despise God's word, and it just goes in one ear and goes out the other, then we are not trembling at his word. God says judgment begins in his household. That is among the living stones.

God sees the lowly, the ones who drink in his word, who allow God's word to change their lives. And God says it is now time. We need to understand it.

It is God's time to begin judgment. God cannot dwell with evil. He cannot dwell where sin abides.

He wants to dwell among the righteous. So I ask all of you, do you recognize this time? What time it is? This is a very special time. When Jesus was approaching Jerusalem and he beheld it, he wept.

He cried as he approached Jerusalem and saw it. What caused him to weep? It was because they did not recognize their time. If you do not know, Luke 19.41 where he said, if only you would recognize the time of

your visitation.

If only you would recognize that the Lord approaches, it is the time of your visitation. And he continues to say, but now it is hidden from your eyes. The natural man does not listen to God's word.

He does not tremble at God's word. He ignores it. He will even get up and walk outside while the word is being preached.

It is extremely dangerous to ignore the word of God. Even little children need to take note of God's word, be focused. Nobody should be counting how many planks there are in the ceiling and being distracted by his thoughts.

If you do not recognize your time, the time of your visitation, evil days, difficult days will come upon you. And God will hand you over to your enemies. And Jesus says in Luke, in that chapter in verse 43, for the days will come upon you when your enemies will set up a barricade around you and surround you and hem you in from every side.

And the Lord says, if you do not recognize the time of your visitation, then he will allow your enemies to hem you in, you and your children. And every stone will be cast down. He will throw you down.

You and the children within you, it says, shouldn't just these words make you to tremble, that the Lord predicts this will happen, God tearing you down and your offspring. Never despise God's word. Let God tear you down, you and the children within you, and not one stone remains upon the other.

Why? It is because you did not recognize the time of your visitation. And God says in 2 Chronicles 7, 13-15, that if I close the heavens, that it does not rain, nor do I command the locusts to devour the land or send pestilence among my people, nor do I command the locusts to devour the land or send pestilence among my people, nor do I command the locusts to devour the land or send pestilence among my people, nor do I command the locusts to devour the land or send pestilence among my people, nor do I command the locusts to devour the land or send pestilence among my people. God sees that you are not preoccupied with Him and what He says.

Instead, your focus is on other things, the world, your money, your job, whatever it is. And God says, I can dry up the heavens. He can close it and lock it, that it does not rain.

And He says, and I can command the locusts to devour the land. I remember as a child observing a swarm of locusts coming upon the whole farm and devouring everything. God says that He can send the pestilence, spiritual pestilence, and the locusts, spiritual locusts.

The locusts are devouring our land. Just see what these spiritual locusts are doing. Look at how drugs are destroying people.

That's the locusts. You hear, young man? These locusts of your drugs devour you so that nothing is left. God says, and if I send disease, and just look at the diseases that there are in this world.

Look at how people are suffering. How people are being consumed by their sins. When you try to stop it, you are addicted, you can't stop.

Just observe in the world what it is like. It is indeed evil, even among believers. Look at homosexuality.

Look at how churches take Sodom and Gomorrah into their church. Lesbian relationships happening in the church, and their union is even blessed with the laying on of hands. Men getting married to each other in the church, being prayed for, being blessed, right inside the church where Sodom and Gomorrah now dwells.

Do you see why it is the time of God's judgment, when you take accursed, abominable things into your own life, though you say you are a Christian? But God continues. And he says, but if my people humble themselves. People who are called by my name humble themselves, in other words, Christians.

And pray. And seek my face. And turn from their wicked ways.

Then I will hear from heaven. And will forgive their sin. And heal their land.

You see, the world is in the hands of believers. If they repent and turn from sin. And the wicked ways.

Then God will heal our land. You see, if it is believers who repent, then it is that, and if they turn from their abominable ways, God heals. And God says, I will turn from the abominable ways, and I will open my eyes.

God's eyes will be opened. And I will hear the prayer made in this place. I remember when the Lord began to work.

We visited my brother, who now lives at Mtunzini. At that time, it was my brother's birthday. He was in Dalton.

We were just a few, a handful, and we left from Mapumulu to go there. It was a very hot day. I don't remember how many we were, but we went in the Kombi.

Now, near their house were lovely trees with beautiful shade. We decided that we'd rather meet outside, under the trees, on this lovely grass. So we sat there in a circle, and we were discussing the things of the Lord.

I noticed as I was looking in the direction of the gate where there was a tall, rather thin but very tall tree, I noticed a girl who was leaning against the wall. After some time, I said to the others, do you see that girl over there, I wonder what she wants. I beckoned her to come.

I asked what her need was, what was it that she wanted. She said, yes, I have a need. My brother had told me before this that there was a girl in the fire direction who the Lord was using as a soul winner daily, and that every week there were those who came to the Lord through her.

She said, this girl then, as she related, I am more trouble than any other human being. She said, it's now almost three weeks and I haven't brought one person to the Lord Jesus. She said, I don't know what it is, but in three weeks almost, I haven't led one person to the Lord.

She said, I can't even sleep at night now. So troubled am I. She said, she didn't know what the cause was, that people didn't want to repent anymore. She said how she had been crying to the Lord, asking what the reason was that she had led no more souls to him.

She said, then I had a dream last night, and I've come to you here because of the dream. She asked, she said, tell me all of you, is there a book called Isaiah in the Bible? And we said yes. She was, she was new,

she was illiterate.

She did not know the Bible. She couldn't read it. She said, is there a chapter 59 in that book? We said, indeed.

She smiled. And she asked, is there a verse two? From verse one, she said, when we said, yes, there is. She said, indeed, please read it to me.

I want to know what it says. Remember she had been crying to the Lord, asking for an answer. What is the reason for her lack of winning souls? And she said, in my dream I was told you'll find the answer in Isaiah 59 from verse one.

She said, please read it to me. I opened the Bible. Chapter 59 of Isaiah from verse one.

Behold, the Lord's hand is not shortened that it cannot save. Or his ear dull that it cannot hear. But your iniquities have made a separation between you and your God.

And your sins have hidden his face from you so that he does not hear. For your hands are defiled with blood and your fingers with iniquity. Your lips have spoken lies.

Your tongue mutters wickedness. She said, oh, thank you. I had been confused as to the reason why I had led a soul to the Lord in the past three weeks.

But now I found the answer. She then asked my brother that she speaks to him privately. So then they went and she then confessed and cleansed her life.

When she got home, God began to work. People came to her. People began to repent.

Like in the beginning. It was amazing. My friends.

How many weeks have gone by and you haven't brought a single soul to Jesus? Or are there some who have repented in the last three weeks because of the Lord working through you? If nobody has been brought to the Lord through you, shouldn't you be troubled? Shouldn't it cause you to be sleepless at night to inquire of the Lord why it should be so? Now, this girl who had been a new convert herself, when she then repented of her sins, people began to come to the Lord through her immediately. And every day the Lord was at work through her. Do you see? If my people call by my name, humble themselves, call upon my name, and pray, seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways, I will hear in heaven, forgive their sins, and heal their land.

God visited her. God revealed himself to her. And God's word made her to tremble.

She had become critical of other people, why they seemed to be so hardened and not want to come to the Lord, and yet she was the obstacle. Jesus wept, crying over Jerusalem, saying, you do not recognize the time of your visitation. When God speaks to you and declares that you must part from your sins, saying, your hands are not innocent, they have blood, and your lips are not righteous.

Jesus said, if you come to the altar, in other words, if you come to the Lord in prayer, and you remember that your brother has ought against you, leave the altar, the Lord does not want your gift and your prayers, go and make right. If you do not, Jesus weeps over you, because he says of you, you have not recognized the time of your visitation. Woe to us.

Should we not recognize the time, that this is the time to repent and turn from sin. Maybe you've got your drinking pals that you were drinking with, have you ever gone and apologized? Maybe you had an argument with your wife and you got upset with each other. Some even hit each other.

Have you gone to your wife or perhaps your children and said, I need to make right with you? You say, Lord bless me, Lord give me the strength I need to win other people. In the meantime, you're sitting on wicked things. A house needs to be swept always.

The dust needs to be cleaned and removed. The dishes need to be washed. But your house, your spiritual house, when was the last spring clean? When were your hands and lips last washed before the Lord? And you marvel, when your prayers are not answered and ignored.

And it seems like God does not hear. But the Lord says, behold, my hand is not shortened that I cannot say. And my ear dull that I cannot hear.

But your sins have caused me to close my eyes, to close my ears when you pray. Do you now recognize what time it is in your life? It is time to get right with God. So that when you pray, God's ear is attentive and his arm can be stretched out.

I wonder whether this is understandable. Do you understand? Or are your ears deaf? What has caused your deafness? Have sins come in to cause you to be deaf? Or things of the world crept in, perhaps the music of the world? What is it? Or is there still arrogance in you, pride? Where you seek your own will and not God's? And then you get irritated, have grudges? There is a word. That causes me to tremble whenever I hear it.

And I wonder whether we really fathom what it says. John the Apostle says, in his epistle, he who is born of God does not sin. Indeed, he cannot sin.

For he is born of God. Do you hear that word? But you continue with your sinful life and you excuse it by saying, well, we are in this world after all, there is no such thing as parting from sin. But John says, he who is born of God does not sin.

If you are busy with sin, then you should cry out to God, you should tremble before him and say, Lord, this is what your word tells me. Do you see how serious the matter is? It never helps to say, well, I am in this condition because of that person and that person and that other person too. Forget pointing your finger at other people.

Do you see my hand? Here is the finger, pointing at a person. These other three, who are they pointing at? Me. And your thumb is pointing up at God, who witnesses to the truth of the fact that you are pointing to someone else, but you are three times worse.

I remember once when I was preaching overseas, and the audience was full of university students. And I spoke on the word where Jesus says, oh, you hypocrites and Pharisees. You easily see the sin of somebody else, but not your own.

You easily see the speck in your brother's eye, but the log in your own, you do not recognize. And I stopped. And I then said, I want to ask you in the audience.

A log. A big log. Approximately how many splinters would be contained in a log? One young man indicated that he had an answer, and I said he could stand up.

He said a million. I said nothing. I said, what? I hadn't even considered so many that this young German student had said that if you had to take all the splinters of a log and count them up, you'll get to over a million.

If my mind is still clear, I don't think I can ever forget that experience. You get that straight. You child of God.

If you criticize and find fault with others, see the sin and the fault in the lives of your neighbours. Remember this, that Jesus says, you've got a million of those things and more things in your own life. If you understand, you'll start to shudder and to shake.

But if you don't, if you're blind and deaf, you'll carry on with your life as you live it. And you won't change. No wife, no child, no worker will see the difference.

I read a story, and I thought, well, let me have it written down. I want to read it to you. Chapter 4, verse 2. I entreat you, O dear, and I entreat Sintek, to agree in the Lord.

Two of Paul's co-workers, lady co-workers, had some arguments. They didn't agree. They weren't one.

And then Paul wrote to that church, and he says, those two women, charge, and I command them to be one. And then he continues in the third verse. Yes, I ask you also, true companion, help these women who have labored side by side with me in the gospel.

His co-workers, his lady's co-workers, there was friction and disunity among them. Now I'd like to ask you women, you know that the Chinese, so they say, in their alphabet, if they use the word for friction or argument, you know what they use for friction? How they express the word? They have a picture of a house, and inside, just two women. That is their depiction of friction.

Well, when we read Philippians 4 verse 2, one thinks they are right. He says, I command you, O dear, and I command Sintek to agree in the Lord. And so he writes, Paul writes in this fourth chapter of Philippians, and he's writing to the saints, those in Christ Jesus, in Philippi, and the deacons, and those who are elders, saying, help these women.

Are there some women here amongst us that need help? You can't get along with another woman. And those were his co-workers, can you imagine that? Co-workers of Paul. These co-workers of Paul.

So he's saying, help these women. He said, help them. Help these women, that the friction would be gone, and that they'd be returned to harmony again.

Are you perhaps one of these? That you can't get along with a fellow co-worker. Remember, if you continue like that, without repenting, you will be brought down and destroy you and the children in you. Don't give permission to sin to enter your life.

Jesus said, if your hand stumbles you, rather cut it off and go into heaven with one, or pluck your eye out if it stumbles you, than to go into hell with both. That's why. It says, watch and pray.

Prayer is wonderful, but if you don't watch as well, it doesn't help. Be discerning. Be discerning.

Ask the Lord whether your life is in accordance with his word. Before we pray, we need to be one together in harmony. Should we not? Should you not be restored to your brother, you will be brought down, you and your children, and not a stone will be left upon the other.

If you serve Christ, you need to do it wholeheartedly, not with half a heart. Not with a divided heart. God says, if you repent, turn from your wicked ways, he will hear from heaven and bring blessings upon you.

But if you permit sin to enter you, to control you, you will lose blessings. People won't repent through you, like that girl that I told you about. Well then, I don't know whether you fathom this and understand it.

There's the proverb that says, it doesn't help that you feed a hungry person by giving him a fish. Rather take him, teach him, how to catch that fish. You'll do.

You'll do him a much bigger favor. Otherwise, he'll go hungry after he has eaten that fish that you give him. Much better that you teach him.

Now can I leave this? Isn't it sufficient? It's half past twelve now. No. And recognize the time and that judgment begins in the house of God.

Repent from your sins. And I'm not saying that to pagans, to heathens. I'm saying it to you who are believers.

So I say, I'm not saying that to pagans, to heathens. I'm saying it to you who are believers. Repent from your sins.

And I'm not saying it to pagans, to heathens. I'm saying it to you who are believers. Nevertheless, the word continues to say regarding the pagan, the heathen, that if judgment is so serious in the house of God, where will you stand if you're not a believer? If you're not ill or with weak knees, let's stand up as we pray.

If only we would be people hearing a word and doing it, we would be able to shout hallelujahs. However, should we not? There will be no hallelujahs, only woes in this world and in the world to come. I ask you, Lord, that your grace would abound to us.

That grace that teaches us to say no to sin and to part from evil. Amen.

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