



ISSUE

24.32

August 7, 2022

Faithful Sayings

BULLETIN OF
THE OL-
SEN PARK
CHURCH OF
CHRIST

Services

Sunday: 9:00 AM

9:30 AM

10:30 AM

Wednesday: 7:00 PM

Elders:

Patrick Ledbetter

Brady McAlister

Jeff Nunn

Deacons:

Ben Hight

Blake McAlister

Walker McNear

Sam Nunn

Lance Purcell

Justin Smiley

Trevor Yontz

Evangelist:

Kyle Pope

Black Sunday

By Kyle Pope

For many of us, the times in which we live look pretty dark. Troubles of all sorts seem to surround us at every turn. It's easy to look at some point in the past and say, **"Why were the former days better than these?"** These words are from Ecclesiastes 7:10 but they are prefaced with the command, **"Do not say"** and followed by the instruction from the Preacher, **"For you do not inquire wisely concerning this"** (NKJV).

Black Sunday in Amarillo

Eighty-seven years ago, things in Amarillo, Texas seemed pretty dark to the residents of this city. Following World War I, the wheat production that had begun in response to blockades on Russian wheat during the war began to explode. In the Great Plains region, spanning from Montana to Texas, the federal government had encouraged farmers to plow up the native Buffalo Grass and plant wheat crops. For a decade this flourished. Small farmers made good profits and new landowners imagined good times ahead for their crops and families.

Then two things happened that changed everything. On October 24, 1929, which came to be called "Black Thursday," Wall Street experienced the largest sell-off of stocks in US history. Five days later, on "Black Tuesday," 16 million shares were sold on the New York Stock Exchange in a single day. This "Great Crash" of Wall Street began a

economic depression in this country that spanned a decade. Initially, it didn't have much impact on wheat farmers in the plains, but eventually it caused wheat prices to collapse. Just as that was beginning to affect the Great Plains, a second event added to the problem. Three intense waves of drought hit the region in 1934, 1936, and 1939-40. Over the decade as a whole, rainfall in some areas fell to half the yearly average, with 50-60 inches of rain that normally would have been expected never coming to water the crops.

This triggered an unexpected consequence of plowing up the wild native grasses. Buffalo Grass has a deep root system that is well suited for wet and dry cy-

cles. Wheat has a shallow root system. When it couldn't grow, the topsoil had nothing to hold it in place. Beginning in 1931, winds randomly began to generate massive walls of dirt, dust, and sand that swept through the plains displacing tons of farmland as they passed. By 1934, 35 million acres of farmland could no longer be cultivated. Eventually, an area three quarters the size of Texas became unsuitable for farming. The heart of this devastation was in an area of the Texas and Oklahoma panhandles, including portions of New Mexico, Colorado, and Kansas that came to be known as the "Dust Bowl."

In 1935, these walls of dust called "Black Blizzards" hit Amarillo seven times, turning daylight into darkness. One was especially severe. It would come to be called "Black Sunday." It hit Amarillo on Sunday, April 14, 1935 around 7:20 p.m., just as some were leaving church. A storm moving at 50-60 mph stretched from Oklahoma City to the Arizona border and traveled in different intensity from the Dakotas to the Rio Grande. The next day, the Amarillo paper reported that it had been 8,000 feet high. Flocks of birds had fled from it as it moved, and small birds lay dead after it had passed. It was so dark that people were unable to see their hands in front of their own faces. To the west, as it passed, the sun shining through the dust made it look like fire in the clouds of dust. Many thought the end of the world had come.

When everything was over, it wasn't the end of the world, but over a quarter of an inch of dust filled closed houses and stores. Outside, there were drifts of dust and sand as high as 15 feet in



Olsen Park Church of Christ

some areas. Over the entire Great Plains, the storm had displaced 300,000 tons of topsoil. These conditions from 1930-40 left half a million people homeless. Families lost their homes, farms, and some took their own lives in hopeless desperation. By 1940, 2.5 million people who had flocked to plains with such great hopes and dreams were forced to move away. Those were some dark times indeed!

Were the “Former Days” Really “Better Than These?”

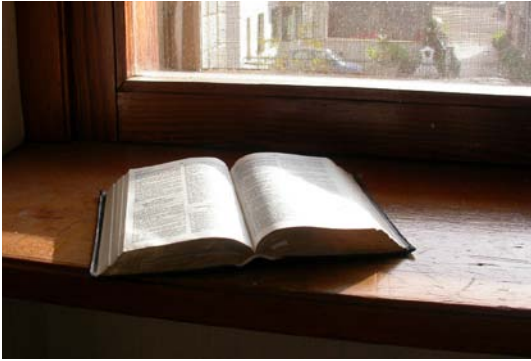
Why would the Preacher of Ecclesiastes say that asking why the “**former days**” were better is unwise? Perhaps for several reasons:

It Is Shortsighted. Those who lived through the “Dust Bowl” faced a horrible time, but their “**former days**” had seen World War I, “the war to end all wars,” and the Spanish Flu. As the “Dust Bowl” ended American involvement in World War II began. When were their “**better**” days? The attitude expressed in Ecclesiastes 7:10 forgets the challenges of the past and doesn’t realistically consider the full picture of the present. The Psalmist declared, “**This is the day which the LORD has made; let us rejoice and be glad in it**” (Ps. 118:24, NASB).

There Have Always Been Times That Were Worse. The word “**better**” is a relative term. It depends on what is being compared. The Holy Spirit illustrates this in Proverbs: “**Better is a dry morsel and quietness with it than a house full of feasting with strife**” (Prov. 17:1, NKJV); “**Better is a little with righteousness than great income with injustice**” (Prov. 16:18). A dry morsel isn’t good and having too little isn’t good, but injustice and strife are worse than both. To say the past was “**better**” draws an invalid comparison. It compares some pleasant thing we remember (or imagine) from the past with some unpleasant thing in the present (without considering everything in the present).

It Is Self-Centered. Paul taught that the disciple of Christ should, “**look out not only for his own interests, but also for the interests of others**” (Phil. 2:4). The mindset of Ecclesiastes 7:10 doesn’t do that. It’s all about how I feel about things. If things aren’t going well for me, I assume life is just as horrible for everyone else. If I look fondly to some golden age of the past, I assume that everyone else must see it the same way. What about the convert to Christ? His or her “**former days**” were days of sin and separation from God. Was that “**better**” for such dear souls? What about the young? Everything lies ahead of them. Do we rob them of their joys of the present and their dreams of the future by our skewed perspective on an idealized view of the past? Love “**does not seek its own**” (1 Cor. 13:5).

It Focuses Only on the Negative. The “Dust Bowl” was one of the worst manmade environmental disasters in history—but there were also good things that came out of it. Many lessons were learned that have helped



prevent it from repeating itself. My mother was born the year “Black Sunday” hit Amarillo. That was a good thing! Any point in time has **“enough trouble of its own”** that’s why Jesus teaches that we should **“not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself”** (Matt. 6:34, NIV). In Ecclesiastes 5, the Preacher teaches that God gives man **“riches and wealth”** and **“power to eat of it”** as a **“gift of God”**

(5:19) so that **“he will not dwell unduly on the days of his life, because God keeps him busy with the joy of his heart”** (5:20, NKJV). Seeing the past as **“better”** ignores the good things all around us that God has given to us to busy us with joys within our hearts.

Times Will Get Better. The rains returned to the Great Plains and the droughts of the “Dust Bowl” came to an end. Amarillo is still a dry and windy place but driving through the city you would never know that a day like “Black Sunday” once descended upon it. Last Spring a dust storm blew through town. It was hazy and the sun was obscured for a while like you might see during a mild rainstorm, but it passed quickly. No matter how bad things get, things will likely improve with time. No matter how bad they get, there are still reasons to **“rejoice in the Lord always”** (Phil. 4:4a). Christians can know, no matter how dark things become, **“our salvation is nearer than when we first believed”** (Rom. 13:11b). May we cling to that hope through any “Black Sunday” life throws our way.



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We are so glad that you joined us today.
Please come again.