

Listening for the Promise

WEEKLY DEVOTIONAL

First Sunday in Lent – February 22, 2026

“¹²Therefore, just as sin came into the world through one man, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men because all sinned – ¹³for sin indeed was in the world before the law was given, but sin is not counted where there is no law. ¹⁵But the free gift is not like the trespass. For if many died through one man’s trespass, much more have the grace of God and the free gift by the grace of that one man Jesus Christ abounded for many.”

- Romans 5:12-13, 15 -

During the summer of 1874, swarms of Rocky Mountain locusts invaded the Great Plains in the United States and Canada. Often referred to as the Locust Plague of 1874, or the Grasshopper Plague of 1874, the locusts swarmed over an estimated 2,000,000 square miles (5,200,000 km²) and caused millions of dollars' worth of damage. Residents described swarms so thick that they covered the sun for up to six hours.

Compared to previous infestations in the region, the 1874 plague was significantly more damaging. A record drought in the Midwest and Great Plains had arrived, which caused the grasshoppers (estimated at 120 billion to 12.5 trillion) to not only thrive but also to swarm when local vegetation was ruined. The arriving locusts would pile up to over a foot high and ate crops, trees, leaves, grass, wool off sheep, harnesses on horses, paint from wagons, even the handles on pitchforks.

The locusts would eat for several days from fields and trees and in some instances also ate food inside the farmers' homes before they moved on. Carpets and clothes were damaged by the locusts in the process. The locust excrement and carcasses polluted ponds and streams. Train tracks "slick with grasshopper guts" caused trains to lose traction, according to the book *It Happened in Nebraska*. The sight must have been ghastly, and it's difficult to imagine for those of us that did not experience the horror.

However, the Grasshopper Plague serves as a good metaphor for Paul's description of sin from Romans, chapter 5. Sin leads to more sin, which leads to more sin. It infests on the human race. It spreads quickly like a plague. It can start off slowly and quietly; it often does. But then, before you know it, sin is widespread and menacing, affecting both the guilty and innocent alike. Really, we are all guilty because we have all sinned and fallen short of God's glory. But the good news is Jesus Christ is the antidote to the plague of sin. Through his blood shed on the cross, we have been forgiven, and by His grace, we are set free from the plague of sin and given new life in Him.