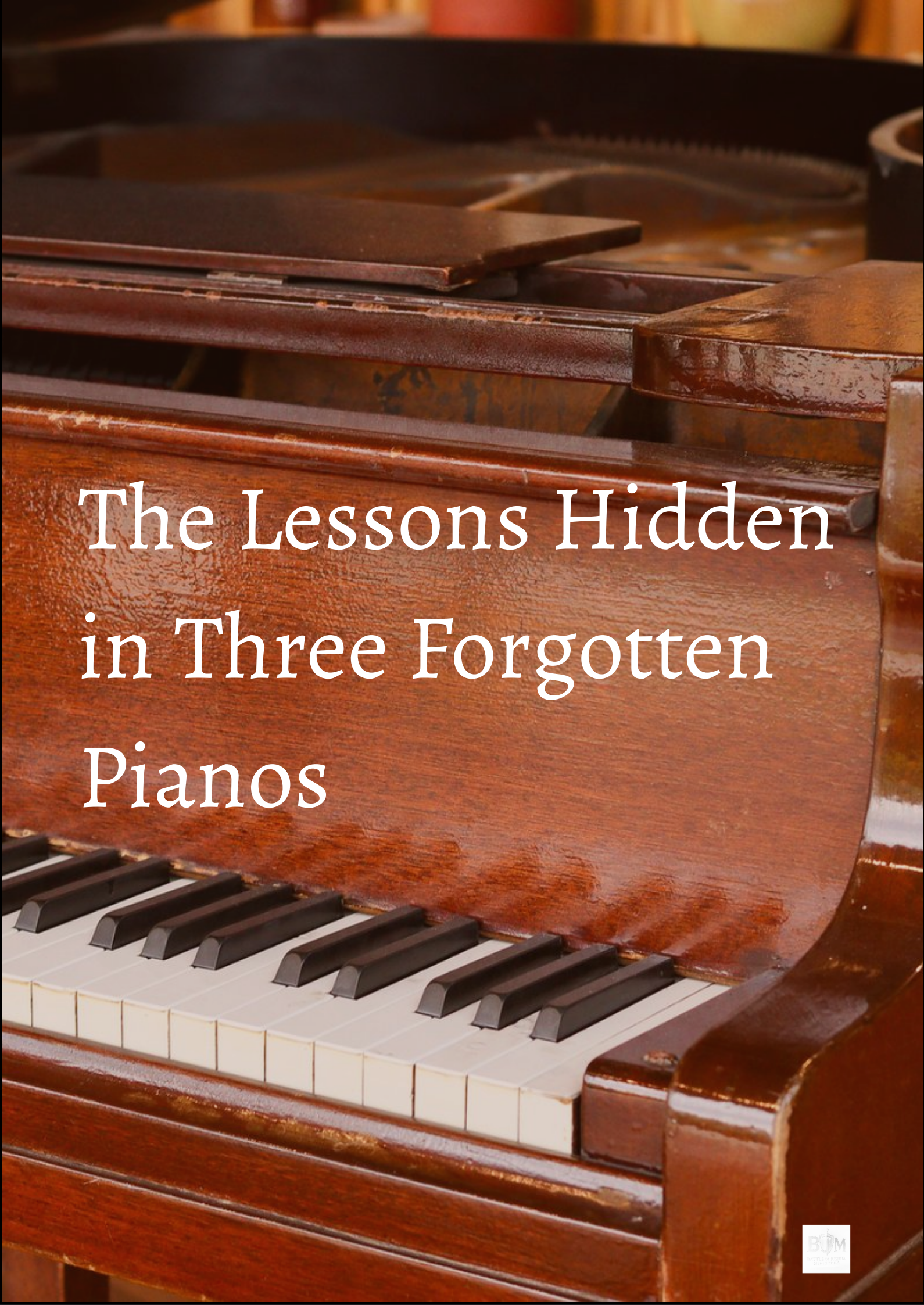


A close-up photograph of an antique piano. The image shows the keyboard with white and black keys, and the intricate mechanical action above it, including the hammer flippers and repetition spring. The wood is a rich, dark brown with a visible grain and some wear. The lighting is warm, highlighting the textures of the wood and the keys.

The Lessons Hidden in Three Forgotten Pianos

God's Work of Restoration, Legacy, and Stewardship

Key Scripture: Joel 2:25. New Hope Baptist Church. Pastor Joshua L. Yeager. The Lessons Hidden in Three Forgotten Pianos is a meditation on how God restores what time appears to erode, how legacy is received and carried forward, and how stewardship defines our role as believers. Before we turn to the narratives of three instruments—a Vose & Sons, a Story & Clark, and a Cable—let us set our hearts to hear what these forgotten pianos can teach us about the God who never forgets. In Joel 2:25, the Lord promises to restore the years that the locust has eaten, reminding us that His purposes outlast our seasons of silence, scarcity, and sorrow. This sermon manuscript invites you to see beyond surfaces and into the spiritual lessons hidden in plain sight. Each instrument becomes a parable: a quiet parlor piano reborn to song, a rugged institutional workhorse that endured hard use, and a church-worn instrument that still gleams with inner gold. These are not merely accounts of furniture; they are windows into God's heart.

[Pause at the pulpit. Let the images settle. Then begin quietly.] Most people who walk into a room with old furniture see exactly that—old furniture. They see chipped wood. Faded finish. Keys that stick. Dust on the fallboard. They see what time has done to something. I see stories. I have spent time with three instruments—three pianos that most people would have passed right by, never stopping to ask what they once were, or what they might still become. And somewhere in the middle of working on those instruments—cleaning them, studying them, learning their histories—I discovered something I did not expect to find. These pianos were not really about pianos at all. They were about restoration. They were about legacy. They were about stewardship. They were about the way God works in the forgotten and the overlooked and the left-behind. So today I want to introduce you to three instruments. I want to tell you their stories. And I want to show you what they taught me—about God, about faith, and about the life you have been given to steward. Church, meet the Vose and Sons. The Story and Clark. And the Cable. Three instruments. Three histories. One lesson.

Key Scripture "And I will restore to you the years that the locust hath eaten, the cankerworm, and the caterpillar, and the palmerworm, my great army which I sent among you." We hold this promise alongside the images of silent soundboards and scarred cases. The call is not to nostalgia but to notice: where might the Lord be inviting you to hear potential where others hear nothing, to rebuild where others have resigned, to serve where others have simply stored away hope? As you turn the pages ahead, pause to ask the Spirit to name your own "piano"—the gift, calling, relationship, or ministry that has grown quiet but not empty, bruised but not beyond the reach of grace. Let us begin with Piano One: The Vose & Sons—because silence is not the end of the story.

Piano One: The Vose & Sons

Silence is Not the End of the Story

[Show Vose & Sons image.] The Vose and Sons is a name with a history behind it. This was a respected American piano maker. The Vose family began building instruments in Boston in the 1850s, and for decades, a Vose piano in your parlor meant something. It meant quality. It meant craftsmanship. It meant someone in that household took music seriously. This particular instrument sat silent for more than twenty years. Twenty years. Let that settle. The neighbors changed. Seasons came and went. Children grew up and moved away. And this piano sat in a Birmingham parlor, untouched, unplayed, waiting. Nobody played it. Nobody tuned it. At some point, I imagine, nobody even noticed it anymore. It became part of the furniture. Part of the background. It blended into the room the way things do when they haven't made any noise in a long time. But here is what I want you to understand: the music never left.

The strings were still in that piano. The hammers were still there. The keys still worked. The mechanism that makes a piano a piano was all still present. The capacity for music had not departed. The piano had simply been waiting for someone willing to look past the silence and hear what was still possible. Lesson One: Silence is not the end of the story. Write that down if you are a note-taker. Silence is not the end of the story. I know some of you have been quiet for a long time. There are people sitting in this room who once made music—in their families, in their relationships, in their ministry, in their callings—and for one reason or another, everything went silent. Maybe it was loss. Maybe it was failure. Maybe it was discouragement so deep it put your hands in your lap and kept them there. But silence is not the end of the story. The Vose taught me that. Twenty years, and when the right hands touched it, it sang again. What God placed in you has not departed. It is waiting. It is waiting for the right moment. It is waiting for you to return to the keys. [Pause. Let it land before moving on.].

In spiritual terms, the Vose invites us to trust the persistence of design over the volume of present sound. Consider how calling, like the soundboard, resonates when touched by obedience. Though dust may settle on outward surfaces, the inner craftsmanship of God's work in you remains. When we mistake quiet for absence, we forget that seeds germinate under soil, not spotlight. The parlor may be still, but the Lord is still the Lord of the song. Ask: What practice or prayer would be the simple "touch on the keys" that reawakens music in your life? Perhaps it is confession after delay, service after disappointment, or worship after weariness. Return to the keys; you are not manufacturing meaning—you are cooperating with design.

Piano Two: The Story & Clark

Some Things Survive Because They Were Built Well

[Show Story & Clark images.]
The second piano is the Story and Clark. The Story and Clark Company was known for building instruments for the places where pianos would face hard use. Churches. Schools. Institutions. Places where the piano would be played by people who did not always handle things gently. They built instruments with cast iron frames and heavy construction, because they knew their pianos would face conditions that would destroy a lesser instrument. This particular Story and Clark began its life in a boys' home. Think about what that means. Children—boys who had likely faced real difficulty in their young lives—gathered around this instrument. Fingers that may have never touched a piano key before pressed down on these keys. Songs were played, perhaps badly at first.

But they were played. That piano absorbed years of inexperienced hands and life in community. And then, at some point, it was moved. And then, at some point after that, it was left inside an empty house. Abandoned. But not broken.

When I found this instrument and examined it, here is what struck me: it was built for exactly this. The cast iron frame. The structural integrity of the cabinetry. The quality of the materials. This piano was engineered to survive hard conditions. And survive it did. It was still standing. Still strong. After the boys' home. After the empty house. After years of being forgotten. Lesson Two: Some things survive because they were built well. The question I want to ask you today is simple: what are you building your life on? Because there will be a boys' home season. There will be a time of hard use, when life asks more of you than you expected to give. There will be an empty house season—a time when you feel abandoned, when the room you are in feels hollow, when nobody is playing any music. The Story and Clark survived because it was built well. Not because it was the most beautiful instrument. Not because it was the most expensive. But because its foundation was solid. What is your foundation? Is it solid enough to endure the empty house seasons? "For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ." If Jesus Christ is the foundation of your life—your marriage, your family, your faith—then I have good news. You were built for this. Whatever season you are walking through, the foundation will hold. [Pause. Let the congregation breathe.].

Endurance in discipleship is not accidental; it is architectural.

Spiritual disciplines (Scripture, prayer, fellowship, Sabbath, generosity) are not ornamental moldings—they are rafters and beams. When storms arrive, the unseen strength of a life hidden with Christ in God keeps the roof from lifting and the walls from racking. The Story & Clark does not boast of polish; it boasts of a frame that will not fail. Build likewise. Honor the slow work: confession that keeps the heart soft, accountability that keeps the soul honest, and service that keeps the hands available. Build with truth, not trends; with covenant, not convenience. Then, even if the house sits empty for a season, the structure will hold until song returns.

Piano Three: The Cable

God Sees Beyond the Damage

[Show Cable piano images, especially the gold interior plate.] The third piano is the Cable. Now this one—this one is different from the other two. Because this one lived in a church. The Cable was a worship piano. It was a church piano. Sunday after Sunday, season after season, someone sat at this instrument and played for the congregation. Hymns rose from these strings. The congregation sang. People wept at the altar to the sound of this instrument. Children learned their first church songs on this piano. Funerals were played. Weddings. Revivals. Ordinary Sundays that nobody remembers anymore but God. This piano was a witness to generations of praise. And then I looked at the outside. The finish was worn. The varnish had cracked. The wood showed the marks of decades of use and probably some seasons of neglect. The exterior of this instrument told a story of hard living. You would look at it and think: this piano has been through something. And then I opened it up.

Inside the Cable piano is a cast iron plate—and it was finished in gold. And when I lifted the lid of that worn, weathered, scarred instrument and looked at the interior plate, it was as brilliant as the day it was made. The gold hadn't faded. The structure was intact. The most important parts of that piano were untouched by everything the outside had been through. The outside carried scars. The inside remained beautiful. That is when I sat back and said out loud: God sees beyond the damage. Lesson Three: God sees beyond the damage. I know some of you feel like the Cable looks on the outside. You have been through something. The finish is cracked. The varnish is gone in places. You carry marks from years of hard use, loss, grief, failure, sin, shame. You look at yourself and see what time has done, and it does not look like much. But God lifts the lid. And what He put inside you—the gifts, the calling, the capacity for worship and witness and service—is still there. It is still gold. It has not faded. The scars on the outside do not determine the value of what is on the inside. The Cable taught me: the deepest scars often produce the richest music. "But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us." Earthen vessels. That is us. Cracked. Weathered. Worn. But carrying something gold inside. God sees past the earthen vessel. He sees the treasure. [Pause here. This is a landing spot. Let the congregation feel it.].

When Christ restores dignity, He does not erase history; He redeems it. The marks on the case become testimonies, not disqualifications. Like the gold plate beneath the lid, new creation begins on the inside and bears fruit on the outside over time. Holiness is not lacquer; it is life. If shame has taught you to keep the lid shut, hear the invitation to open: confession to God, conversation with trusted believers, compassionate service that reorients the soul. In that opening, light catches the gold, and the church marvels—not at perfection—but at presence: Emmanuel with us, still making music.

The Fourth Story: Mine

What I Inherited and What I Will Pass On

[Shift tone. More personal, quieter. This is the autobiographical turn.] Three pianos. Three lessons. And then—one night, standing in the room where they all sat together—I realized there was a fourth story in this room. And it was mine. I was eleven years old the first time music really got hold of me. There was a piano in the choir room at church. It was never in tune. The action was heavy and uneven. It had seen better days. Somebody also gave me a keyboard—one of those little entry-level instruments with keys that stuck and a sound that was nothing like a real piano. But I sat down at that out-of-tune church piano and at that cheap keyboard, and something was growing in me that those instruments could not contain. God was placing something inside me. And the condition of the instruments did not diminish the gift that was being formed. Because that is how God works. He does not wait for the perfect conditions before He places His gifts.

Now I am standing in a room with three extraordinary instruments. And I need to say this plainly: I did not build them. I inherited them. Someone made the Vose and Sons. Someone built the Story and Clark. Someone played the Cable Sunday after Sunday in that church. I did not earn those instruments. I received them. They came to me through the hands of others—through purchase and restoration and the right timing that only God orchestrates. And that is the moment I understood what the Spirit was saying to me through these three pianos. This is not just my story. This is the Christian story. The Inheritance of Faith. "Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us." We did not build the faith from scratch. We received it. From fathers and mothers in the faith who gave everything to preserve and pass on what God had entrusted to them. We stand on the shoulders of people who prayed prayers we never heard, made sacrifices we will never know about, and ran their race faithfully so that the next generation—so that we—would have something to receive.

Every hymn sung in your grandmother's church. Every prayer prayed over your life before you knew your own name. Every faithful Sunday school teacher, every visiting evangelist, every pastor who stayed at his post when staying was hard—they are part of the inheritance. We are compassed about with a great cloud of witnesses. And some of them played pianos. The question Hebrews puts to us is not whether we received a great inheritance—we did. The question is what we will do with it. Will we lay aside every weight and run? Will we honor what we have been given? To honor is to use and to pass on: to practice the scales of faithfulness so that the next generation hears not only our songs but learns our reasons for singing. In gratitude, we tune what we have received; in humility, we play it for others; in hope, we leave it ready for hands not yet born.

Stewardship: Owners for a Moment, Stewards for a Lifetime

[This is the application turn. More direct, pastoral, challenging.] Here is the hard truth those three pianos taught me: I do not actually own them. I am their steward. I am the person who has been entrusted with their care for this season of their existence. Before me there were others. After me there will be others. What I do with them in the time I have them—whether I restore them, maintain them, use them for music, share them, pass them on in better condition than I found them—that is my stewardship. This is exactly how the Christian life works. You do not own your gifts. You are steward of them. You do not own your family. You are a steward of those relationships. You do not own your church. You are a steward of the community God has placed you in. You do not own your finances, your influence, your platform, your years. You are a steward of every single one of those things. Stewardship is not primarily about money. It is about legacy. It is about asking: when my season is over, will the people who come after me have something worth receiving? Will I have faithfully maintained and passed on what I was given?

"Moreover it is required in stewards, that a man be found faithful." Found faithful. Not found impressive. Not found wealthy or talented or celebrated. Found faithful. The Vose and Sons sat silent for twenty years. But the music never left the instrument. The question is whether we will be the ones with the faithful hands that finally restore it to song. In practice, stewardship sounds like this: we schedule time to tend the gifts God planted; we invest in people rather than platforms; we repair what's worn instead of replacing what's inconvenient; we document stories so memory does not evaporate; we give away music so others can learn to play. In congregational life, it means maintaining instruments and ministries, mentoring younger believers, and generously resourcing mission so that the melody of the gospel never drops out of the next measure. In our homes, it means telling the old stories again, praying aloud, reading Scripture at the table, and modeling repentance when we miss a note. Found faithful is not a title; it is a lived tempo.

To carry a legacy well, we also learn to rest the instrument. Sabbath restores resonance. Even pianos need tuning and intervals of quiet so wood and wire can settle. So do souls. Stewards rest not as consumers of leisure but as worshipers who trust the Composer to sustain the song. When we return, our touch is gentler, our ear more discerning, and our courage renewed to play through difficult passages. In every season, we ask: what am I handing to those after me? May it be truer, clearer, and more in tune with the heart of God than when it first came to my care.

Conclusion: What the Three Pianos Taught Me

The Vose and Sons taught me that silence is not the end of the story. If God placed music in you, it is still there. The silent seasons do not cancel the calling. The Story and Clark taught me that some things survive because they were built well. Build your life, your family, your faith on a foundation that can withstand the hard seasons. Build on Jesus Christ. The Cable taught me that God sees beyond the damage. The scars on the outside do not determine the value of what is on the inside. What God placed in you is still gold. And all three together taught me: we are stewards of what others built. We inherit a great faith. We are surrounded by a great cloud of witnesses. And we are called, in our generation, to be faithful with what we have received—and to pass it on.

Closing and Benediction

[Drop your voice. Slow down. This is the benediction of the message.] I want to close with the words that started us this morning. Joel chapter two, verse twenty-five. "And I will restore to you the years that the locust hath eaten, the cankerworm, and the caterpillar, and the palmerworm, my great army which I sent among you." God is a restorer. He restores years. He restores seasons. He restores things that looked beyond restoration. He restores people who have been silent for twenty years. He restores families that looked like an empty house. He restores the worn and the weathered and the scarred and the forgotten. The music never left. It was simply waiting to be heard again. Amen. [Move to invitation. Give the congregation a moment to respond. Pray.].

Preacher's Notes. Sermon Focus: Joel 2:25—restoration. The pianos are illustrations of God's restorative work and our responsibility as stewards of inherited gifts and faith. Three Lessons: (1) Silence is not the end—The Vose. (2) Built to survive—The Story & Clark. (3) God sees beyond damage—The Cable. Invitation: Open altar call. Invite those who need restoration—of hope, calling, relationships, faith—to come forward. Also invite anyone who has never trusted Christ as Savior. Time Guide: 35–45 minutes at a measured pace with pauses. New Hope Baptist Church. Pastor Joshua L. Yeager. As you depart, consider a simple next step: choose one "instrument" in your life and schedule a small act of tuning this week—an apology given, a call made, a practice resumed, a prayer revived. May the Lord, the Restorer of years, conduct your steps in hope.