

3.4.18 - 3.18.18

Hosea

This Message is Important and Here is Why We Need to Listen

Prophets sometimes do strange bizarre things. For three years, Isaiah embarrassed people by walking the streets dressed like a prisoner of war. For several months, Jeremiah carried a yoke of oxen on his shoulders. The prophet Ezekiel acted like a little boy and "played war," and another time he used a haircut as a theological object lesson. When his wife suddenly died, Ezekiel even turned that painful experience into a sermon.

Why did these men do these bizarre things?

"These peculiar things" were really acts of mercy. The people of God had become deaf to God's voice and were no longer paying attention to His covenant. The Lord called His servants to do these strange things – these "action sermons" in hopes that the people would wake up and listen to what they had to say. Only then could the nation escape God's discipline and judgment.

No prophet preached a more painful "reality sermon" than Hosea. He was instructed to marry a prostitute named Gomer who subsequently bore him three children, and he wasn't even sure the last two children were fathered by him. Then Gomer left him for another man, and Hosea had the humiliating responsibility of buying back his own wife.

What was this all about? It was a vivid picture of what the people of Israel had done to their God by prostituting themselves to idols and committing "spiritual adultery." Since God's people today face the same temptation (James 4:4), we need to listen to what Hosea wrote for his people. Every one of the persons in this reality (before) TV drama Hosea, Gomer, and the three children important teachable spiritual moments about the God whom Israel was disobeying and grieving.

Introduction

To the end of the book of Hosea (chapter 14 verse 9), the prophet attached a recommendation to any readers.

Whoever is wise, let him understand these things; whoever is discerning, let him know them; for the ways of the Lord are right, and the upright walk in them.

His conclusion is that by taking an intentional look into his life and having an honest conversation about his message and sayings, one can find the spiritual wisdom and teachable moments that can help the reader not only to avoid much personal pain and spiritual disaster, but also appreciate and understand the deeper and prophetic insight left by the prophet. God will restore the adulterous, broken, betrayed, disobedient, and help the lost find their way back from the great distance and darkness of sin.

"If you want, you can always come back to the good and right ways of God - you can always come back, and you can walk upright."

As a prophet and spokesman for God with an obvious role in the history of Israel's religious heritage (both good and bad), Hosea is a significant and crucial figure in the Old Testament. His message, sayings, and personal life point to the original source of a current of faith and tradition that flows from Deuteronomy, to II Kings, to Isaiah and Jeremiah, to the ministry of Jesus, and forward towards making a relevant connection in our present day relationship with Christ. None surpass Hosea in the passion and creativeness of his prophecy. Because of the almost unthinkable difficult thing that God asked him to do in his personal life, Hosea spoke out of a feeling of identification and trust with his God that carries with it a weight of convincing authenticity. He is not stuck someplace in ancient history, some six or seven hundred years before the time of Jesus. Hosea is very real - both then and now. He was a man of exceptional emotional range, able to reflect in his own experience and feelings the scope of divine wrath as well as those of greatest of compassions. Through the obedience of Hosea, using a clear message, prophetic sayings, and his personal life experience - Yahweh, the God of Israel, wages His final battle against Baal for the soul of His people, and we all get to learn from it. (See who is Baal)

Historical Context

The religious and political climate of Israel during the life, message, and sayings of the prophet Hosea unfolds like this. The nation of Israel is

divided into two kingdoms: the Northern Kingdom (Israel) and the Southern Kingdom (Judah). Assyria has control over Israel during this time, but they are operating under a co-regency contract agreement (vassal) allowing Israel its own political and religious freedoms (within the reason and restriction of Assyria). The prophetic career of Hosea began during these prosperous and peaceful years of King Jeroboam II and closed as the history of the northern kingdom of Israel moved toward its tragic ending under King Hoshea-ben-elah, at the hands of the Assyrians. The events and conditions of that quarter of a century (755–720 B.C.) represent Hosea's life and ministry to God's people and are reflected everywhere in the message and sayings of Hosea.

Chronological Context

By the time Hosea named his first son Jezreel (scattered), as a prophecy against the house of Jehu, the great-grandson of Jehu, Jeroboam II (786–746), was on the throne as king. Hosea's marriage and the birth of three children logically would have happened during Jeroboam's reign, so the strange beginning of his career could be accurately dated around 750 B.C. Much of the material in the first chapters of Hosea mirrors those early years of social stability and economic prosperity under Jeroboam II (1.2–9; 2.2–15; 4.1–5.7). But the "good times" would not last, as Hosea's prophecy foretold of a "wake-up and judgement" in Israel for their continued arrogance that produced idolatrous and adulterous behavior in Jeroboam's successors and throughout the kingdom. It all began to fully unravel when Jeroboam II's son, Zechariah (746–745), became king and

was then murdered in a hostile takeover by Shallum, who in turn died at the hand of Menahem (745–738). They were just getting started. The bloody art of power and politics by conspiracy and murder would now be the new normal in the downward spiral of Israel (7.7; 8.4).

In 745, Tiglath-pileser III ascended the throne of Assyria. He was not amused at the arrogance and political treachery of Israel and the processes of international history that signaled the fall of Israel were set in motion. Tiglath-pileser III was an ambitious and talented ruler whose goal was a submissive empire. By 743, he was leading a military campaign against the west to make sure that submission happened. Menahem who was now king of Israel, quickly decided that submission was the best and most healthy policy to keep his life and crown - so he paid a heavy financial tribute to Tiglath that would come from the landholders and merchants of Israel. The strategy of seeking safety by vacillation between accommodation to Assyria and resistance with Egyptian collusion was initiated (Hosea 7.11). When Pekahiah (son of Manahem 738–737) succeeded his father, the patriots of Israel who bitterly resented Menahem's submission, rallied to a military coup led by Pekah-ben - Remaliah. Remaliah murdered the young king (Pekahiah), and seized the throne (737–732), and set about the formation of an anti-Assyrian coalition. This was a bad idea (Hosea 5.8–11). In 733, Tiglath-pileser came to settle accounts with Pekah-ben-Remaliah's rebels. He ravaged the land, deported much of the population, and appropriated most of Israel's territory, leaving only the capital city of Samaria, and the hill country of Ephraim to what was left of the kingdom. The remnant was

saved when Pekah ben-Remaliah (who had somehow survived) was then murdered by Hoshea-ben-Elah who promptly re-submitted to Assyria, paid increased tribute, and assumed Israel's throne as a restricted co-regent (basically a servant) of Tiglath-pileser (Hosea 5.13; 8.9).

For a time Hoshea-ben-elah (732–724) was subservient and Israel had a breathing space (8 years) of relative quiet. Many of Hosea's "messages and sayings" in chapters 9–12 would fit into this chronological timeline. But Hoshea-ben-elah was not content to remain a servant and began to seek Egyptian support for another revolt (Hosea 9.3; 11.5; 12.1). So, when Shalmaneser V (727–722) succeeded Tiglath-pileser, Hoshea-ben-elah saw the opportunity to withhold the tribute money. This too, was a bad idea. In chapters 13–14, Hosea echoes the disastrous consequences of the revolt. In 724, Shalmaneser was in Palestine, and moved quickly to shutdown Hoshea-ben-elah and make him captive (Hosea 13.10). Israel's armies were defeated and the capital Samaria was besieged. Hosea's last prophecy anticipated the fall of Samaria (13.16); nothing of its fall is reflected in his words. The preservation of his messages in Judean circles indicates that he or some of his associates escaped to the southern kingdom during the final months of Israel's existence.

Hosea's Personal Context

How God used Hosea's marriage to Gomer as an extended metaphor representing Israel and her relationship to God is nothing less than bizarre. The "nutshell" version is that Israel broke God's covenant, just as

Gomer broke her marriage covenant with Hosea. Israel's greatest sin is idolatry (other god's) which comes from a lack of genuine knowledge and love for their true God. This resulted in various and repeated forms of betrayal and infidelity. With this infidelity and betrayal comes a loss complete loss of moral compass and spiritual wisdom. in ignorant acts such as seeking direction and wisdom from a stick. Israel's idolatry was Baalism, the fertility cult, which included ignorant acts such as seeking direction and wisdom from a stick. Israel believed that their worship of Baal was repaid in productivity in crops, animals and children. Forgetting their original covenant with Yaweh, who had already promised the blessing of those temporal things. Because of the continued betrayal and idolatrous practice, God promised a judgment. However, God's covenant with Israel was unconditional. Therefore, in the eschatological future, Israel will be restored. This is stated in the extended metaphor and especially in chapters 11 and 14. Hosea's marriage to Gomer was to mirror and metaphor the nation of Israel's covenant to God. When Hosea spoke to the people of Israel, he spoke from the brokenness and pain of a man who had lived through the humiliation of betrayal and rejection. It was real.

What is the Story of Hosea About?

This is a bizarre and strange story - kind of like us! Lol! God insisted His prophet Hosea construct a drastic prophetic act through his own personal life and family. He asked Hosea to marry a prostitute (or at the very least a woman who would soon leave him and become one), representing Israel's

unfaithfulness. Then to name their three children (most say only one was his) unthinkable names to symbolize the place, the reason and the result of God's judgment on Israel. In this bizarre (only God) kind of circumstance He used not only the personal life of Hosea, but also a prophetic message and the powerful sayings of wisdom from Hosea to point to a future where faithfulness and a love relationship would be restored not only in the covenant of Hosea's family, but in God's covenant relationship to Israel as well. For Hosea, his marriage to Gomer, is a complete act of obedience to God's command for God's purposes, to dramatize the divine indictment of Israel.

Hosea's life and agonizing marriage to an unfaithful woman were a personal display of God's loving heart but justful condition in his covenant with Israel.

Who is Hosea the Prophet?

Hosea was the son of Beeri, who (except for being Hosea's father) is otherwise unknown. We know that Hosea was from the Northern Kingdom, the nation to which he preached. Other than what he shares about his family and ministry there is not any biographical history for Hosea. He is however, frequently referred to throughout the New Testament by its writers.

Note: The northern kingdom continued to be called the Kingdom of Israel or Israel, while the southern kingdom was called the kingdom of Judah.

The ten tribes of the northern kingdom were named Asher, Dan, Ephraim, Gad, Issachar, Manasseh, Naphtali, Reuben, Simeon, and Zebulun—all sons or grandsons of Jacob. The two other tribes, Judah and Benjamin, set up the Kingdom of Judah in the south.

The name Hosea means “salvation”; it is the same name in Hebrew that Joshua originally bore (Deuteronomy 32:44) and of Israel's last king (2 Kings. 17:1). Hosea's marriage to Gomer and the naming of his three children form the basis for the symbolic narratives of chapters 1–3. Throughout the book of Hosea it is obvious that the prophet shared God's heartbreak over Israel's infidelity - because he was personally living it himself.

What was Hosea's Message?

The message of Hosea was this... You are God's people, and He is your God. You belong to Him, and He belongs to you. But you have been unfaithful, and you have rebelled against Him in spite of His great and faithful love for you. He has taken you back, and still you have loved other gods shown your unfaithfulness to Him once again. Now there is a judgment coming to you for your rebellious sin. You will be broken, divided, scattered, and no longer called His people. In your brokenness you will once again seek Him as your one and true God. He will hear your heart and know your love for Him, and He will restore you to Himself and you will once again be His people and He will be your God.

The message is structured around lessons from the prophet's marriage experience (chapters 1–3) and his preaching (chapters 4–7). Hosea's message comes from the prophet's heart and his experience and centers on an unconditional love for a people who prostituted themselves after other gods. Covenant requirements, as summarized in the Ten Commandments, were God's criteria for judgment. The covenant required that unfaithful religious leaders bear the weight of the burden of guilt, for not having taught or cared for the people correctly. God preferred from His people a faithful love and a personal relationship of knowing him rather than religious ritual. But these people were more in love with their rituals. Hosea is referred to by several New Testament writers (Matthew 2:15; 9:13; 12:7; Luke 23:30; Romans 9:25–28; 1 Corinthians 15:55; Revelation 6:16). The author is identified in the preface mainly with the kings of Judah, though his ministry was in the Northern Kingdom (Israel).

Who Was Hosea's Message To?

Hosea's message was to Israel. But, the sayings, the wisdom, the compassion, the love, and the honorable commitment to covenant relationship are Messianic in every way and so become a relevant word of truth for us today.

The biblical book of Hosea can be dated by the southern kings Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah (a possible range of 793 to 686 B.C.) and one northern king—Jeroboam II (793–753 B.C.). Hosea apparently preached in

Israel from about 755 B.C. to about 715 B.C. It was the time period when Israel fell from its greatest power under Jeroboam followed by their total destruction and exile under in 732–722 B.C. The people of Israel knew wealth but had gained it from unjust treatment of the poor. They were proud of their religious heritage but deeply involved in syncretistic religious practices involving the worship of Baal. The priests and prophets used their office to please the king and to gain personal power creating a political and religious system used for corruption and control. Hosea's message dealt with the unfaithfulness of God's people from the greatest to the least, and their return to a faithful love of God. Hosea prepared them for the worst by pointing to the real judgment of God, that had very real consequences for their very real sin. It was a consequence of disaster, but as is always the case with God, it is followed by the eventual hope for healing, restoration and renewed relationship. All made possible by the unending and unfailing love of God for His people.

Who Is Baal and Why Was Israel's Worship a Big Deal

For many centuries Israel was known for their idolatry and dabbling into other gods. In particular, the worship of the fertility god known as Baal. During the time of Hosea, this betrayal to Yaweh was never more evident. Agricultural villages, whose produce fed themselves and the urban centers like Jerusalem, dominated the world of ancient Israel. The Mediterranean climate brought rain only during the winter and early spring months (October–March), and any kind of drought meant that their ability to

sustain resources for living were severely threatened. This became the default excuse, for Israel's intrigue with the Canaanite storm god Baal, who was not only a pervasive figure in ancient Israel's worship, but also shows up in the ancient religious texts from Ugarit and Phoenicia. The human reality was that rain meant life, fertility, economic prosperity and power for those blessed by it. But Israel didn't have to be a victim to the human realities of food and water. They lived under a greater spiritual reality - when they were obedient and faithful to God (Yahweh), the rain always came for them - always. And, when they were disobedient and unfaithful it did not. The greatest task for the Israelite prophets became an effort to demonstrate that Yahweh was the provider of fertility, including rainfall, and that Baal was a false god (see Jeremiah 2:8; 23:13). More often than not, however, local villagers chose to combine Yahweh and Baal worship in order to maximize their chances of a good harvest (see Judges 2:11; 6:25-32). Similarly, the kings of Israel, like Ahab, in making diplomatic marriages, accepted the introduction of Baal and Asherah alongside Yahweh in the official worship centers (see 1 Kings 16:31-33). Only after the exile would Baal worship be supplanted by faithful Yahweh-only worship among the Israelites.

The syncretistic (merging) religious practices of the Israelites are exposed here as they revel (part of the metaphor of Gomer's unfaithful behavior) in worship of Baal during the harvest and new moon festivals. Passover, the Feast of Booths and the Feast of Weeks were the annual celebrations marking the agricultural year. The New Moon festivities seemed to be tied to the Sabbaths in the sense that family celebrations occurred (see 1

Samuel 20:5), and there was a cessation of work (see Amos 8:5). There was no distinction made between the gifts of Yahweh and the supposed gifts of the Canaanite god of fertility and rain, Baal. As a result, the true provider of their resources would now withdraw his generosity so that the Israelites could see their error.

4.8.18 Character: Awareness and Honesty

The Five Life Lessons and Practical Applications of Hosea

Hosea 2:16-23

And in that day, declares the Lord, you will call me 'My Husband,' and no longer will you call me 'My Baal.' For I will remove the names of the Baals from her mouth, and they shall be remembered by name no more. And I will make for them a covenant on that day with the beasts of the field, the birds of the heavens, and the creeping things of the ground. And I will abolish the bow, the sword, and war from the land, and I will make you lie down in safety. And I will betroth you to me forever. I will betroth you to me in righteousness and in justice, in steadfast love and in mercy. I will betroth you to me in faithfulness. And you shall know the Lord. And in that day I will answer, declares the Lord, I will answer the heavens, and they shall answer the earth, and the earth shall answer the grain, the wine, and the oil, and they shall answer Jezreel, and I will sow her for myself in the land. And I will have mercy on No Mercy, and I will say to Not My People, 'You are my people'; and he shall say, 'You are my God.'"

I think we have learned and understand that God's love not only comforts and secures us, but that His love also leads Him to discipline and correct us when we are unfaithful or disengaged. I am pretty sure that none of us actually start out each day with our desired outcome being unfaithfulness and disengagement - but by days end, we often times get there.

Sometimes it is because we are not completely honest with ourselves about the events, circumstances and influences of the day, other times because we are simply not being aware that our day and our character are slipping away from us and God. But mostly it is both - awareness and honesty. The bible is clear that our character is the vehicle God values and chooses to navigate all of that in us.

Romans 5:3-5

And not only this, but we also exult in our tribulations, knowing that tribulation brings about perseverance; and perseverance, proven character; and proven character, hope; and hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out within our hearts through the Holy Spirit who was given to us.

Honesty is the part of our character that maintains with various levels of integrity regarding who we are and how we are living, and must be valued and used as our day to day, moment by moment compass. First we must be honest with God, second we must be honest with ourselves, and thirdly we must be honest with the people we love. Honesty is that character virtue that keeps us from being delusional (contradiction) about living and loving.

Awareness is the activator of our character, leading us to be attentive, sensitive and responsive to the events, circumstances and influences of our day to day living. In spiritual reality, **awareness** is the Holy Spirit (God's presence) at work in us each moment making us fully aware of those

things that are good and those things that are bad. Once we are aware, it is the honesty within our character that requires or leads us to a righteous response. Awareness is that character virtue that keeps us from living and loving in a life that is an illusion (deceptive). Sounds complicated - but in all honesty, now that we are aware - it's really not.

Like Hosea, God often reveals himself to us in terms of our family relationships. The lesson we have learned from Hosea is that he indeed was a man of character - he was uniquely both aware and honest. Because he was aware and honest God used him to love his family not only in comfort and security, but in correction. Both his wife and Israel were disengaged from their roles and responsibilities, leading daily lives unaware and dishonest with God, themselves, and certainly with others. There is nothing that requires more character from us than our family - both biological and spiritual. Within our family it is absolutely essential for us to live moment to moment and day to day aware of and honest about life's events, circumstances and influences on not only ourselves but on those we love. We cannot become disengaged and dishonest - lives depend on us developing and maintaining the character of God to win the day!

4.15.18 Two - Attitude: Repentance and Redirection

Romans 5

Therefore, since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. Through him we have also obtained access by faith into this grace in which we stand, and we rejoice in hope of the glory of God. More than that, we rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, and hope does not put us to shame, because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us.

For while we were still weak, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly. For one will scarcely die for a righteous person—though perhaps for a good person one would dare even to die—but God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. Since, therefore, we have now been justified by his blood, much more shall we be saved by him from the wrath of God. For if while we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, now that we are reconciled, shall we be saved by his life. More than that, we also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received reconciliation.

Therefore, just as sin came into the world through one man, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men because all

sinned—for sin indeed was in the world before the law was given, but sin is not counted where there is no law. Yet death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over those whose sinning was not like the transgression of Adam, who was a type of the one who was to come.

But 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. And the free gift is not like the result of that one man's sin. For the judgment following one trespass brought condemnation, but the free gift following many trespasses brought justification. If, because of one man's trespass, death reigned through that one man, much more will those who receive the abundance of grace and the free gift of righteousness reign in life through the one man Jesus Christ. Therefore, as one trespass led to condemnation for all men, so one act of righteousness leads to justification and life for all men. For as by the one man's disobedience the many were made sinners, so by the one man's obedience the many will be made righteous. Now the law came in to increase the trespass, but where sin increased, grace abounded all the more, so that, as sin reigned in death, grace also might reign through righteousness leading to eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Biblical Repentance is a sincere feeling of regret or sorrow for thoughts words and deeds, a changing of the mind, or a turning from sin to God.

Redirection is the action of assigning or directing something to a new or different place or purpose.

First let's start this life lesson by understanding that - biblical repentance IS redirection, but redirection is NOT always biblical repentance. Please listen to me on this.

Repentance is not repentance unless there is a redirection.

Hosea was called to confront not only his wife, but an entire nation about repentance and redirection for their behavior and choices. Both his wife and the nation of Israel, had a bad habit of repenting but never redirecting. Both had a terrible habit of always being sorry - but never changing anything. What do you think about that, is that really repentance? Could you love or live with someone who was always sorry for their habitually bad behaviors and for making consistently bad choices, yet never changing any of it? Don't answer that yet...

Because this is precisely where we (you and I) connect with Hosea's story and his bizarre personal life. The connection points should be fairly obvious.

The bible is clear that as true believers and followers of Christ, we live in His grace. Here are two complete biblical truths about the grace of God.

One - It is completely true that His grace allows us the freedom to live

sinless before God. **Two** - It is also completely true that God's grace does not allow us the freedom to live in rebellious and unrepentant sin before Him. So the whole truth is that grace never gives us the freedom to live **IN SIN** - but rather the freedom to live **IN CHRIST** - sinless. To live in Christ is to live with a heart and love for Him, knowing that everything He sees and knows about us did not keep Him from loving and choosing us (grace). God chose to give His own life for our sins and now sees us through the lens of the love and forgiveness of His sacrifice for us - that is how He maintains a right heart towards us. **Repentance and Redirection are the day to day vehicles that God gives to us for maintaining the right heart for Him as well as within ourselves. Repentance and Redirection also allow us to maintain a correct balance of those two complete truths about grace.** There are some completed truths regarding this that we do know.

When you and I sin, it is a good and healthy practice to repent of our sin and redirect our ways.

There is a lot of good conversation to be had about daily repentance and intentional redirection as it pertains to our walk of faith in Christ. I don't know if ours will be all that is needed of that conversation, but it will certainly be a healthy portion of it. Some interpret the bible to say that once we accept Jesus, we live in His grace, and repentance and redirection are no longer needed (works). And, many interpret the bible to say that in order to honor that grace, and to display our love of Christ and His gifts to us, that repentance and redirection are essential to keeping His grace from becoming disgrace in our lives (relationship). One good indication that repentance and redirection are not only appropriate but necessary, is the

Holy Spirit (active presence of God). If the Holy Spirit is convicting us (challenging us) in that behavior or choice, there is a reason for it and if there is a reason for it God has made a provision for it. We can say we are forgiven and covered by grace, but if that is completely true, then why do we feel the shame and regret if repentance and redirection are not needed? Humility, contrition, and reform are completely appropriate. Yes, Jesus did His work - now let's do ours. Understanding grace is more about our attitude than it is about our rights as believers and followers of Christ. What true follower of Jesus wants to openly rebel, compulsively violate and continually disappoint Jesus and not give it a second thought?

Sins of parents can have horrible effects on their children.

We have all heard of the belief in generational curses. There are a couple manifestations of that that people often gravitate to. One is - "my mom was this way, so I am this way, my grandfather and my father had this behavior so I will have this behavior. The other generational curse belief is - "I will never be successful, I will never be free, I will never be blessed because of the sins of my family before me." Now there is an element of truth to both beliefs - we've seen it and some have lived it - the scripture says as much. Sin has consequences.

Exodus 20:5-6

You shall not bow down to them or serve them, for I the Lord your God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children to the third and the fourth generation of those who

hate me, but showing steadfast love to thousands of those who love me and keep my commandments.

Ezekiel 18:1

The fathers have eaten sour grapes, and the children's teeth are set on edge. ESV

I Corinthians 15:22

For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive.

Now, we have to stop right here and reconcile the truth about the gospel of Jesus and His very clear plan for redeeming us from the curse of sin and death. We are saved not only from the curse our sin - but the curse of the sin of our fathers.

Romans 8:1-2

There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. For the law of the Spirit of life has set you free in Christ Jesus from the law of sin and death.

John 8:31, 36

If you abide in My word you are truly my disciples, and you will know the truth and the truth will set you free. So if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed.

So the conclusion and absolution of this generational curse comes about through the forgiveness of our sin by the grace and mercy of Jesus Christ. He breaks the curse over our lives from all sin (committed by us and committed before us).

In all reality there are always some kind of natural consequences that occur as the result of our sin - and there are various difficulties and obstacles to face because of it. However, we must be clear on this - for those who are truly repentant and redirected in Christ Jesus, there certainly are no more spiritual consequences or judgments passed on to us because of the sins of our fathers, mothers and family before us.

Every good and perfect gift comes from God and not from anyone else.

One day Jesus told a man, "only God is good." This is not only important for us to know, but essential to our day to day wisdom in managing and overcoming the difficulties and disappointments of life. When life is difficult and disappointing it does not mean that God is not good. When we do not get what we want when we want it, again, it does not reflect on the character of God. God is still good - life sometimes is not so good, period. Remember, even against the awesome fact of suffering (sometimes our own), God is still good. Because He is good, we embrace the truth of who He is, in the face of circumstances that cause us to doubt Him when He does or does not do what we want Him to do. When people decide to reject who God is (Good), they in reality have made the conscious decision to

reject God. Not that there is a time, but, difficulty and disappointment are never the times to reject God. On the contrary, it is the time to accept and embrace Him - all of Him. When we do that the goodness of God will surely come find us.

God is continuously calling His disobedient people back to Himself, and has a plan to help us overcome human sin and restore us to High places and High purposes.

Even though there were life altering consequences and judgment for their sin, both Hosea's wife Gomer and Israel found out - God's love for them would amazingly make a way of restoration - but only through genuine repentance and decisive redirection for the behavior and choices that impacted their children and generations to come. In Jesus Christ you and I have that way of salvation and restoration - this is God's plan. News flash, we are all human, and because we are human we are subject to failure, imperfection, and even sin. But thanks be to God in Christ Jesus, we have a Savior and Redeemer. His plans for us do not include destroying us or our lives and the lives of those we love through our sin and failure - sadly, too often that is what we do. But not God, His plan for us is different. As believers and followers of Jesus we have been given day to day, moment by moment access to God Almighty. When we fail, when we sin, and when our imperfections are exposed, we can come humbly to Him and repent of our sin, and redirect our thoughts, words and deeds (behavior and attitude). God the Father, sees us (because of what He has done for us) through the suffering, sacrifice and resurrection of God the Son - Jesus Christ our Redeemer. This is how God righteously lives with us even though we have

a problem with sin - Jesus became our sin. Now our repentance honors God for what He has done for us, our redirection glorifies God in how we live our lives going forward. His plan is not to put us down but rather to raise us up, to elevate and initiate us into His plans and purposes for our life.

2 Chronicles 7:14-15

If my people who are called by my name humble themselves, 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.

James 4:6-10

Therefore it says, "God opposes the proud, but gives grace to the humble." Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. Draw near to God, and he will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you double-minded. Be wretched and mourn and weep. Let your laughter be turned to mourning and your joy to gloom. Humble yourselves before the Lord, and he will exalt you.

Giving Our Best to Our Best

4.29.18

Over the past several weeks now we have been looking at the Prophet Hosea and his relationship with his wife Gomer whom God told him to marry. Gomer was a prostitute and was unfaithful to Hosea time and time again. Of course God's plan here was to use this relationship between His prophet and his wife to illustrate how His people, the Israelites, had been unfaithful to Him over and over again as well. In

Hosea 2:2-13 (NLT) God says to His people:

"But now, call Israel to account, for she is no longer my wife, and I am no longer her husband. Tell her to take off her garish makeup and suggestive clothing and to stop playing the prostitute. 3 If she doesn't, I will strip her as naked as she was on the day she was born. I will leave her to die of thirst, as in a desert or a dry and barren wilderness. 4 And I will not love her children as I would my own because they are not my children! They were conceived in adultery. 5 For their mother is a shameless prostitute and became pregnant in a shameful way. She said, 'I'll run after other lovers and sell myself to them for food and drink, for clothing of wool and linen, and for olive oil.' 6 "But I will fence her in with thorn bushes. I will block the road to make her lose her way. 7 When she runs after her lovers, she won't be able to catch up with them. She will search for them but not find them. Then she will think, 'I might as well return to my husband because I was better off with him than I am now.' 8 She doesn't

realize that it was I who gave her everything she has -- the grain, the wine, the olive oil. Even the gold and silver she used in worshiping the god Baal were gifts from me! 9 "But now I will take back the wine and ripened grain I generously provided each harvest season. I will take away the linen and wool clothing I gave her to cover her nakedness. 10 I will strip her naked in public, while all her lovers look on. No one will be able to rescue her from my hands. 11 I will put an end to her annual festivals, her new moon celebrations, and her Sabbath days -- all her appointed festivals. 12 I will destroy her vineyards and orchards, things she claims her lovers gave her. I will let them grow into tangled thickets, where only wild animals will eat the fruit. 13 I will punish her for all the times she deserted me, when she burned incense to her images of Baal, put on her earrings and jewels, and went out looking for her lovers," says the LORD."

Here in these verses we have a synopsis about how both Israel and Gomer have betrayed the one that they were supposed to be faithful to and God's judgment towards the Israelites for that unfaithfulness.

Over the past couple of months we have been looking at some of the issues that this story brings to us today. We have examined God's call for our Repentance and Re-Direction. We have looked at how God is the giver of the good gifts in our lives. How God seeks out those of us (that's everyone) who are disobedient and then calls us to repentance so that we can fulfill His higher purpose in our lives. That brings us to today and the idea of setting the priority in our lives so that we are Giving Our Best to Our

Best. This was certainly an area where the Children of Israel and Gomer had failed miserably in. I'm so glad that we do not have this problem in our lives!

Today we are going to look into three areas that will help us as we endeavor to give our best to our best.

Those areas are:

- 1) What is God's best version of you?**
- 2) What is it that God values and honors?**
- 3) Being intentional and wise about who gets your time, talent and treasure.**

Let's dig in!

I. What Is God's Best Version of You?

If we want to be able to give our best then we need to discover what it is about us that is the best. In

Psalm 139:13 (NLT) we read,

"You made all the delicate, inner parts of my body and knit me together in my mother's womb."

This of course is a very familiar portion of Scripture to us. But it is important for us to remember that it was God who formed us in our mother's womb. He was the one that put us together. He is the one who

gave us the personalities, talents and gifts that we possess and exhibit every day. Likewise in

Jeremiah 29:11 (NLT) we read,

"For I know the plans I have for you," says the LORD. "They are plans for good and not for disaster, to give you a future and a hope..."

Just as God had plans for the Israelites, He has a plan for our lives as well. One of the things that we discovered about this verse when we looking into the 5-2-1 during the Wednesday night series is that God's plan was not just for us when things were going great in our lives or if our life was panning out just like we thought it would, but God has a plan for our lives no matter what the circumstances may be. We may be on the mountaintop of our lives or we may be in the valley of the shadow of death, God still has a plan for us and He will be right there with us to help us accomplish that plan. Another verse that gives us some insight into what is God's best version of us is

Ephesians 2:10 (NLT)

"For we are God's masterpiece. He has created us anew in Christ Jesus, so that we can do the good things he planned for us long ago."

This is what we were created for! We are created anew in Jesus so that we can do good things that He has already planned for us to do! The purpose of our lives is to experience God and discover what He has created us to do for Him and then go about doing that thing. This is the best version of ourselves. Living out this life is what will give us inner peace, a sense of purpose and a joy that cannot be explained or taken away! The last verse that we are going to look at here is also one that we looked at during our 5-2-1 series and that is

Romans 12:6-8,

“God has given each of us the ability to do certain things well. So if God has given you the ability to prophesy, speak out when you have faith that God is speaking through you. 7 If your gift is that of serving others, serve them well. If you are a teacher, do a good job of teaching. 8 If your gift is to encourage others, do it! If you have money, share it generously. If God has given you leadership ability, take the responsibility seriously. And if you have a gift for showing kindness to others, do it gladly.”

So what is it that God has given you? Are you going about and doing that thing? Uh-oh! It just got pretty real. This is both for us and about us! This is relevant for our lives today and we need to stop sometimes and take a little inventory. What is the gift that God has given you? If you don't know, He will help you discover it. But whatever it may be and it does not matter what it is, **the best version of you is when you are walking with Him and fulfilling your God given destiny!**

II. What Is It That God Values and Honors?

The next thing that we need to look at when we are talking about giving our best to our best is to know what it is that God values and honors. We could spend a lot of time right here digging into hundreds of verses so I hope your comfortable because we are going to be here for about another 18 hours! Ok fine, how about 25 minutes. One of my favorite stories in the Bible that gives us clues into what it is that God values is the story of Samuel anointing David as King over Israel to replace Saul.

1 Samuel 16:1-7 (NLT) says,

"The LORD said to Samuel, "How long will you mourn for Saul, since I have rejected him as king over Israel? Fill your horn with oil and be on your way; I am sending you to Jesse of Bethlehem. I have chosen one of his sons to be king." 2 But Samuel said, "How can I go? Saul will hear about it and kill me." The LORD said, "Take a heifer with you and say, 'I have come to sacrifice to the LORD.' 3 Invite Jesse to the sacrifice, and I will show you what to do. You are to anoint for me the one I indicate." 4 Samuel did what the LORD said. When he arrived at Bethlehem, the elders of the town trembled when they met him. They asked, "Do you come in peace?" 5 Samuel replied, "Yes, in peace; I have come to sacrifice to the LORD. Consecrate yourselves and come to the sacrifice with me." Then he consecrated Jesse and his sons and invited them to the sacrifice. 6 When they arrived, Samuel saw Eliab and thought, "Surely the LORD's anointed stands

here before the LORD." 7 But the LORD said to Samuel, "Do not consider his appearance or his height, for I have rejected him. The LORD does not look at the things man looks at. Man looks at the outward appearance, but the LORD looks at the heart.""

Even the prophet Samuel was missing the boat here. He saw Eliab and thought 'Wow!' Look at this guy! He's tall, strong and handsome, surely this is the one God has chosen to be the King over Israel. But God said, 'Hold on a second there Sammy! You're not looking at this the same way that I am. I look at the heart. I value the matters of the heart foremost.' This brings us to the first and most important thing in knowing what it is that God values and that is that His value system will be very different than the value system of this world. The world is fallen, He is not. When we understand this as a starting point then it is easier to discover the things that He values. It also helps that He does spell it out for us in several passages of scripture too.

Galatians 5:22-23 (NLT) tells us,

"But when the Holy Spirit controls our lives, he will produce this kind of fruit in us: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, 23 gentleness, and self-control. Here there is no conflict with the law."

God values these character traits. That is why He has given the Holy Spirit to us so that these characteristics can be produced in our lives. Also in

Matthew 5:3-12 (NLT) Jesus taught,

“God blesses those who realize their need for him, for the Kingdom of Heaven is given to them. 4 God blesses those who mourn, for they will be comforted. 5 God blesses those who are gentle and lowly, for the whole earth will belong to them. 6 God blesses those who are hungry and thirsty for justice, for they will receive it in full. 7 God blesses those who are merciful, for they will be shown mercy. 8 God blesses those whose hearts are pure, for they will see God. 9 God blesses those who work for peace, for they will be called the children of God. 10 God blesses those who are persecuted because they live for God, for the Kingdom of Heaven is theirs. 11 “God blesses you when you are mocked and persecuted and lied about because you are my followers. 12 Be happy about it! Be very glad! For a great reward awaits you in heaven. And remember, the ancient prophets were persecuted, too.”

So here are some more character traits that God values. OK, let's get real again, how are we doing with these? How is it going with us and being loving, patient, kind and long-suffering? How are we doing at exercising self-control? Don't hate me now. Have you realized your need for God? Have you been gentle and meek and do you long for justice rather than pursue revenge? Are you merciful and do you have a pure-heart? These are the things that God values. These are the things that God desires to cultivate in our lives. These are the things that bring about the best version of ourselves. The next part of this is finding out what it is that God honors. Again we are going to look to book of 1 Samuel for a great story

that illustrates this. In 1 Samuel chapters one and two we have the story of Hannah who desperately wanted to have a baby and she cried out to the Lord to end her bareness and give her a child. God answered her prayer and gave her Samuel. She had made a promise that if God would give her a child that she would in turn give the child back to the Lord and so when Samuel had been fully weaned she left Him at the Temple with the prophet Eli to serve in the Lord's Temple. Samuel grew up and was faithful and was eventually called by God to become a prophet. So we have Hannah and Samuel who were faithful to the Lord and honored the Lord. Now Eli was the High Priest during that time and he had two sons, Hophni and Phinehas that served as priests in the Temple. Hophni and Phinehas were not faithful in their duties to the Lord in that they got into the habit of taking the best portion of the sacrifice for themselves to eat instead of making sure that piece was burned as an offering before God as they were supposed to do. So they would take the best for themselves and then just leave the scraps for God. After some time had passed God had enough of Hophni and Phinehas's ways and he was also upset with Eli for not stopping this behavior of his sons and God spoke to Eli and said,

(1 Sam. 2:29,30 NLT),

“So why do you scorn my sacrifices and offerings? Why do you honor your sons more than me -- for you and they have become fat from the best offerings of my people! 30 "Therefore, the LORD, the God of Israel, says: The terrible things you are doing cannot continue! I had promised that your branch of the tribe of Levi would

always be my priests. But I will honor only those who honor me, and I will despise those who despise me."

So here is our answer, what is it that God honors? God honors those men and women who honor him. So that begs the question, how do we honor God? In

John 14:15 Jesus taught,

"If you love me, obey my commandments."

I think that it is this that shows true honor. Being obedient reveals that you have honor for God. That was God's reason for removing Eli and his son's from the priesthood, they were being disobedient to how God established the sacrifices. Remember, even Moses could not enter the Promised Land because of his disobedience. Because of Saul's disobedience he lost the kingdom. Because of King David's disobedience in that he took a census of his army, Israel suffered three days of pestilence that killed 70,000. Because of disobedience, sin and death entered into the world. The point here is that **there will always be a consequence to disobedience because it dishonors God; likewise there will always be a reward for obedience because it honors God. God honors those who are obedient to Him.** So now that brings us to the final thing for us to look at this morning as it relates to giving our best for our best:

III. Be Intentional and Wise About Who Gets Your Time Talent and Treasure.

Before we get started at looking at some verses I want to spend a minute on this idea of being intentional. This is very important because it is so easy to get caught-up in our day to day ebb and flow of life that we find our selves simply existing instead of living. **God has made us with a purpose and if we don't live purposely we can waste many opportunities to do great things. We must start to be intentional about what we do each day. We must begin to live our lives on purpose for a purpose.** This is not easy but it is extremely rewarding. One of the things that I try to remember is, **"Don't Let Life Live You; Live Your Life!"** In the morning when you get up try to think of one thing that you can do that will be about giving your time, talent and treasure to those who are the best in your life. That's where we can start.

So, who is our best? Well, obviously the first one is God. How can we give God our best? I think a good place to start is in

Romans 12:1 (NLT),

"And so, dear brothers and sisters, I plead with you to give your bodies to God. Let them be a living and holy sacrifice -- the kind he will accept. When you think of what he has done for you, is this too much to ask?"

This is our daily act before God, to present ourselves to His service.

Today, I have decided to live for God. I am surrendering my will to His and I present my time, talent and treasure to His service today! This is our first

step in giving our best to the best. Make it a daily proclamation, make it intentional. And remember the story of Eli and his sons, God doesn't just want the scraps, He wants the good stuff. In

Malachi 1:8 (NLT) we read,

“When you give blind animals as sacrifices, isn't that wrong? And isn't it wrong to offer animals that are crippled and diseased? Try giving gifts like that to your governor, and see how pleased he is!” says the LORD Almighty.”

God did not withhold His best when He sent His Son Jesus to be the sacrifice for our sins so we need to follow His example and give our best for Him. Remember what Jesus taught us in

Matthew 22:37 (NLT),

“Jesus replied, “You must love the Lord your God with all your heart, all your soul, and all your mind.”

We talk a lot about this verse here are Reunion. So how are we doing with it today? Is He the desire of our hearts? Do we cut out time in our day so that our soul can commune with Him? Are we filling our mind with His word so that we can know Him better? All of these things are about giving our best to Him. This is where Gomer and the Children of Israel were failing. This is why God has given us the story of Hosea, to remind us that we ought to give our best to Him.

We also ought to give our best to those that God has given to us, our families and friends. In 1 Corinthians 13 we have the very famous portion of scripture teaching on what love is and what it is not.

1 Corinthians 13:4-7 (NLT) says,

“Love is patient and kind. Love is not jealous or boastful or proud 5 or rude. Love does not demand its own way. Love is not irritable, and it keeps no record of when it has been wronged. 6 It is never glad about injustice but rejoices whenever the truth wins out. 7 Love never gives up, never loses faith, is always hopeful, and endures through every circumstance.”

To me, one of the easiest ways that I can think of to test ourselves to see if we have been giving our best to our loved ones is to replace the word “love” in these verses with the word “I” and then ask if this is really true about me when it comes to my family, so come on and say it with me:

“I am patient and kind. I am not jealous or boastful or proud 5 or rude. I do not demand my own way. I am not irritable, and I keep no record of when I have been wronged. 6 I am never glad about injustice but I rejoice whenever the truth wins out. 7 I never give up, I never lose faith, I am always hopeful, and I endure through every circumstance.”

How often is this true about you with relation to your loved ones? And the ones in verse 7, are you kidding me? But this is a great barometer for ourselves to answer the question, Am I giving my best to my best? The good news is that God will help us with this. He longs to help us with this. He sent Jesus to die for us and the Holy Spirit to live in us so that we can show off His love like this. **When we begin to love like 1 Corinthians 13, it will be the best version of ourselves, we will be honoring Him and we will be giving our best to the best!**

Let's Pray:

God help us to discover what it is that You have created us to do. Help us to begin to peruse that destiny for our lives. Help us to then cultivate the characteristics of Matthew 5 in our lives as well as the Fruit of the Spirit. As we do these things I know that we will begin to honor you. Also help us to have the strength to give our best to you. Help us to be obedient to You and to give ourselves to your plan each day. Also help us to display the kind of love in 1 Corinthians 13 to our family and friends as this will be a powerful witness for You. Thank You Lord for this wonderful group of people here at Reunion. Amen.

5.6.18

Productivity: Creating Conquest not Consequences

Context

Chapters 11–14, are the emotional climax of Hosea's preaching and message to Israel. They look back to the climactic moments in the history of Israel, the Northern Kingdom - both the conquests and the consequences. Chapter 14 looks forward to the day when God's people repent and redirect, a day when He can love them as His people and they can love Him as their one and only true God. All of these chapters bring to a head the constant swing between God's determination to discipline and correct his rebellious and unfaithful people, and his eternal love that clearly reveals His heart to bring salvation and reward for a disciplined and faithful people. We can clearly see the struggle of Hosea to preach and write about both. Hosea knew in spite of the message of judgment and punishment, God would be true to Himself. A Holy and just God, allowing for the present life consequences of rebellion and disobedience, and the holy and loving God the Father, allowing for new starts, overcoming the past, and conquering the future. These chapters give a context to God as if He were wrestling with himself. Yet, in the end, his book rests on the image of a loving, righteous, redeeming and holy father. It will eventually become clear by chapter 14, that God will make provision for the return and conquest of His people. We all must choose whether we will live in and for that conquest, or continue to flounder and fail in our consequences.

Hosea 14:1-3

Return, O Israel, to the Lord your God, for you have stumbled because of your iniquity. Take with you words and return to the Lord; say to him, "Take away all iniquity; accept what is good, and we will pay with bulls the vows of our lips. Assyria shall not save us; we will not ride on horses; and we will say no more, 'Our God,' to the work of our hands. In you the orphan finds mercy."

The Consequences

Both Israel and Gomer (wife of Hosea), found themselves floundering, failing and unraveling in the face of crippling consequences brought about by their own repeatedly rebellious behavior and deeply flawed choices. Hosea delivered the prophetic word of the Lord to them - the good and the bad. We all want good news - never bad news, and yet in life there is both. The bad news is even worse sometimes when we realize or own up to our contributions in creating our own difficult consequences. Here is the bad news that Hosea delivered not only to Israel, but to his own wife.

Hosea 4:1-7

Hear the word of the Lord, O children of Israel, for the Lord has a controversy with the inhabitants of the land. There is no faithfulness or steadfast love, and no knowledge of God in the land; there is swearing, lying, murder, stealing, and committing adultery; they break all bounds, and bloodshed follows bloodshed. Therefore the

land mourns, and all who dwell in it languish, and also the beasts of the field and the birds of the heavens, and even the fish of the sea are taken away. Yet let no one contend, and let none accuse, for with YOU is my contention, O priest. You shall stumble by day; the prophet also shall stumble with you by night; and I will destroy your mother. My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge; because you have rejected knowledge, I reject you from being a priest to me. And since you have forgotten the law of your God, I also will forget your children.

Galatians 6:7-8

Do not be deceived: God is not mocked, for whatever one sows, that will he also reap. For the one who sows to his own flesh will from the flesh reap corruption...

Rebellion and sin have natural and logical consequences that can crush our hopes and dreams, and eventually destroy plans, promise, and progress. Pursuing a life path that habitually feeds and gratifies our flesh will create a sequence of temporal consequences that will keep us from ever reaching the desired and productive outcome we have imagined for our life and legacy. This is on us - not God.

The Conquest

Stay longer - pray harder - dig deeper, because within this tragic message of pending judgments, twists of fate, and the bizarre expectations of Hosea, there remains in place the covenant promise of God - even for the

reckless and rebellious people of Israel. Embedded in the story of Hosea there is a word of knowledge and wisdom for us today. What is it? Conquest. Jesus is our covenant promise - He is our Word - He is our Conquest. When we live in good faith and right heart relationship in Christ, then the good news that we want and need to hear comes continually to us through the presence of the Holy Spirit, and conquest of Jesus Christ our Lord! Here is the good news Hosea had to give.

Hosea 14:4-7

I will heal their apostasy; I will love them freely, for my anger has turned from them. I will be like the dew to Israel; he shall blossom like the lily; he shall take root like the trees of Lebanon; his shoots shall spread out; his beauty shall be like the olive, and his fragrance like Lebanon. They shall return and dwell beneath my shadow; they shall flourish like the grain; they shall blossom like the vine; their fame shall be like the wine of Lebanon.

Romans 8:37-39

No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. For I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Revelations 12:10-12

And I heard a loud voice in heaven, saying, "Now the salvation and the power and the kingdom of our God and the authority of his Christ have come, for the accuser of our brothers has been thrown down, who accuses them day and night before our God. And they have conquered him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony, for they loved not their lives even unto death.

Repentant hearts and Redirected Minds have both spiritual and covenant (everlasting) consequences that can restore our hopes and dreams, and rebuild plans, promise and progress. Pursuing a life path that faithfully feeds and nurtures the Spirit will create sequence of eternal conquests that will propel us forward to spiritual conquest, able to fully realize the desired and productive outcomes we have imagined for our life and legacy. This is on God - not us.

1 John 5:1-4

Everyone who believes that Jesus is the Christ has been born of God, and everyone who loves the Father loves whoever has been born of him. By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God and obey his commandments. For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments. And his commandments are not burdensome. For everyone who has been born of God overcomes the world. And this is the victory that has overcome the world— our faith. Who is it that overcomes the world except the one who believes that Jesus is the Son of God?

Conclusion

In the original Hebrew Hosea uses the term **shub**. **Shub** simply means "to turn, return or repent. Hosea says God will heal his people's many "turnings." But Hosea's message is clear; **People who turn away from God - must return to God**. Then God will turn to them with healing and conquest because he can and will love them freely. He will show mercy, He will forgive, He will not hold a grudge, He will save, He will heal, He will redeem, He will lead us to conquest.

Conquest Applications

- **Answer God's call, not that of politicians, false gods, or self and neutral gods.**
- **Do not depend on religion to make peace with God - seek real relationship in Christ Jesus, there you will find peace.**
- **Do not reduce God to an emergency default as a fall back to get you out of trouble that you yourself have created.**
- **Talk openly and honestly with God, with no attempt to deceive Him or yourself.**
- **Treat all people with love and justice while you wait for God's salvation and conquest.**
- **Serve the Lord as the only true and living God of the universe.**
- **Give God all the respect, honor, and credit - taking none for yourself.**

5.13.18

Outcome:

What They See in Us Will Shape What They Believe About Us

As biblical and secular history recall the story of Hosea his wife Gomer and the peoples of the Northern Kingdom of Israel, we see in them a common thread. These were individuals and people of hardened heart, weak character, poor behavior and rebellious attitude. As a spiritual example they were unwise, undisciplined, and unfaithful. Biblically we view them unfavorably and use their lifestyle and their life choices as what not to do and how not to live. Yet, we know from oral and biblical traditions God loved them as His children. And although He had to warn, chastise, correct, judge and punish them many times over, we know that in His unending love and sovereign mercy He kept the Covenant promises He made to their forefathers.

Isaiah 54:10

For the mountains may depart and the hills be removed, but my steadfast love shall not depart from you, and my covenant of peace shall not be removed," says the Lord, who has compassion on you.

Is the Hosea story a cautionary tale for you and I to carefully consider? Reading and learning of the children of Israel has been important to our understanding not only the heart of God, but also of the heart of humankind - us. Are we in our own humanity not also capable of similar (if not the same) behavior and choices? Just as what we saw in the story of

Hosea, Gomer and Israel has shaped what we believe about them, very distinct and real beliefs are shaped by what we see in ourselves and one another. And this my friends is why it so very important to *love God with our whole heart and to love our neighbor as ourselves*. This is one more significant connection point for us to Hosea and Israel - **shaping what people believe about us through what they see in us**. There are two strong components to this very outcome based principle. Both should be carefully considered and then consciously committed to our personal process.

One - Some people (family and friends) will never approve or like what they see in us, so what they believe about us will always be twisted and attached to their harsh judgments of us. How do we respond to those people? Simple... Maximize the opportunity to think the right things, say the right things, and do the right things anyway. God will approve you, and if they do not change their heart they will be confronted with the same judgment they used against you.

Two - We have only a small window of life opportunity for people (family and friends) to see in us the things that will influence what they believe about us. Maximize the opportunity to think the right things, say the right things, and do the right things! Use what God has given you to do and be someone that leads the people in your life to faith, hope, and love. God will approve you, and they will change their hearts and will be confronted by the same love that they see in you.

Philippians 4:4-9

Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, Rejoice. Let your reasonableness be known to everyone. The Lord is at hand; do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things. What you have learned and received and heard and seen in me—practice these things, and the God of peace will be with you.

For years Hosea's people had been a terrible example for people who were known as God's chosen people. As a result, they suffered for generations - it happens. They were judged by God under the old law and promises of His covenant with them. By most standards they are seen in history as an unfaithful and rebellious people - this has shaped what has been believed about them both justly and unjustly. That is a lasting legacy.

If we can faithfully commit to biblical outcome principles we create a ***legacy template*** of our own life, love, and faith that can be followed by the people we love most - our children, grandchildren, friends and neighbors. What they see in us will not only shape what they believe about us, but also shape and change what they believe about themselves and our God for years to come. God now sees and evaluates us under the new law and

promises of His new covenant with us in Christ Jesus. When you and I live and behave in such a way that our people can truly see Jesus in us then we have shaped what they believe about us. That is a lasting legacy.

Hebrews 7:18-22

On the one hand, a former commandment is set aside because of its weakness and uselessness (for the law made nothing perfect); but on the other hand, a better hope is introduced, through which we draw near to God. And it was not without an oath. For those who formerly became priests were made such without an oath, but this one was made a priest with an oath by the one who said to him: "The Lord has sworn and will not change his mind, 'You are a priest forever.'" This makes Jesus the guarantor of a better covenant.

6.3.18

The Prophetic Voice of Hosea – Perhaps the Best is Yet to Come

The Tribes of Israel are the traditional divisions of the ancient Jewish people. Biblical history records the twelve tribes of Israel as the descended sons and grandsons of the Jewish patriarch Jacob, and are called "Israel" from Jacob's name given to him by God (Genesis 32). The twelve tribes of Israel were descended from his twelve sons - Reuben, Simeon, Judah, Issachar, Zebulun, Benjamin, Dan, Naphtali, Gad, Asher, Ephraim and Manasseh. Initially, these tribes formed a united kingdom, and then eventually split (922 B.C.).

It's been almost three thousand years since that split took place. Ten of the twelve tribes of Israel rebelled against King Rehoboam, the son of King Solomon and grandson of King David. The Bible continued to refer to these ten tribes as Israel while the other two tribes (Judah and Benjamin) that remained loyal to David's descendants were known as the kingdom of Judah or simply Judah.

In most biblical literature Israel is referred to as the northern kingdom and Judah as the southern kingdom. The dominant of Israel's northern tribes were the descendants of Jacob's son Joseph through his sons Ephraim and Manasseh—prophesied by Jacob to be the chief nations of the world

in the last days (Genesis 49:1, Genesis 49:22-26; also Deuteronomy 33:13-17).

About two-hundred years after the kingdom split, the northern tribes of Israel fell to Assyria and were deported by the Assyrians to the northern parts of their empire. Often referred to now as the lost tribes of Israel, they migrated in mass to the northwest parts of Europe, far from the Middle East.

The kingdom of Judah fell to Babylon more than a century after Israel's deportation, but its people were not lost to history. We know them today as the Israeli - Jews.

The name Ephraim is sometimes used representatively in Scripture to describe the entire northern kingdom, though it can also refer solely to the descendants of Joseph's son of that name—prophesied to become a "multitude of nations" (Genesis 48:19). Interestingly, this promise to Ephraim has been interpreted as being fulfilled as the British Empire and Commonwealth.

Genesis 48:17-21

When Joseph saw that his father laid his right hand on the head of Ephraim, it displeased him, and he took his father's hand to move it from Ephraim's head to Manasseh's head. And Joseph said to his father, "Not this way, my father; since this one is the firstborn, put your right hand on his head." But his father refused and said, "I

know, my son, I know. He also shall become a people, and he also shall be great. Nevertheless, his younger brother shall be greater than he, and his offspring shall become a multitude of nations." So he blessed them that day, saying, "By you Israel will pronounce blessings, saying, 'God make you as Ephraim and as Manasseh.'
"Thus he put Ephraim before Manasseh.

Manasseh was prophesied by his father to become a great nation as well (just not as great as Ephraim), and that he would eventually separate himself from the multitude of nations. This prophecy can and has also been seen as being fulfilled in the formation, growth and dominance of the United States of America.

In a further revealing prophecy regarding the United States and Britain, Jacob (Israel) said, **"Let my name be named upon them"** (Genesis 48:16). These references to "Israel" in end-time prophecy have often been interpreted as being the United States or the English-speaking countries of the British Empire or both. Important to remember that there are also times in a more narrow scriptural sense that "Israel" can only mean all twelve tribes. To more accurately interpret we have to look at specific verses in their context to see which is meant.

"Judah," however, always refers to the Jews, the descendants of the house or kingdom of Judah. We must also understand that the modern nation called Israel is really Judah, made up of Jews. Understanding this critical part of biblical history will help us more fully comprehend a passage of

Scripture in the book of Hosea, which is a possible prophecy about Ephraim (the multitude of nations). It warns of destruction to follow the end-time ascendancy of the Israelite nations.

Hosea 5:5-7

“The pride of Israel testifies to his face; therefore Israel and Ephraim stumble in their iniquity; Judah also stumbles with them. With their flocks and herds they will go to seek the Lord, but they will not find Him; He has withdrawn Himself from them. They have dealt treacherously with the Lord, for they have begotten pagan children. Now a new moon will devour them and their heritage.”

A new moon occurs one month apart. Using a literal interpretation a new moon “devouring” them would seem to mean that Israel, Ephraim and Judah will all fall within one month.

For certain we know that this prophecy was not fulfilled in ancient times. As already mentioned, ancient Judah fell to Babylon more than a century after Israel fell to Assyria. That being the case, in the end it appears they will all three fall together—within one month of each other. Clearly this prophecy remains to be fulfilled.

Remember that Israel (Jacob) gave his name to Ephraim and Manasseh, the ancestors who would become predominantly the British and American peoples. As Ephraim is mentioned separately in this prophecy, the reference to “Israel” (Northern Kingdom) would more than likely apply to

the United States, which is now obviously the more dominant of the two nations.

For two centuries prior to World War II, the roles were reversed with the multitude of nations—the British Empire—a greater power than the single nation, the United States. But today as we know America is globally recognized as the greater of the two.

“Judah” refers to the Jewish people, particularly those who now constitute the modern nation (1948) in the Middle East that calls itself Israel.

I think it is irresponsible to not only consider, but to strongly acknowledge that there are many credible bible scholars and end-times specialists who interpret this prophecy of Hosea to be referring to all three of these modern day nations—as the United States, Britain and Israel (Judah). There is also credible support for the interpretation that in order for this prophecy to be fulfilled, eventually all three will have to fall within the span of a month. Hosea 5:6 shows these nations turning back to God, but finding it's too late. Because of their sins, He will let them suffer temporal defeat and collapse.

(This prophecy could not have been fulfilled until after the rise of Britain and the United States as world powers in the 19th century and the formation of the Jewish state of Israel in the 20th.)

To many Christians of western culture this interpretation and idea seem both improbable and inconceivable - I get it. But that does not make it

impossible or less real, we will never see what we don't want to see. But, if we take a moment to separate ourselves out and away from the comforts and constitutions of our western lifestyle and prosperous dreams, we might the opportunity to see something different. **First**, place yourself into the plans and purposes of the almighty God. **Then**, view your faith in God through the lens of what **HE** wants for **YOU** - ultimately. At the end of every day we are His children, called by His name, living in His tender mercies and under His good grace. God has always said in His word from Old Covenant to the New Covenant, that He wants to bring His people, His children, His Church - home. Jesus said, "**I am going to prepare a place for you, that where I am - there you will be also.**" If you will allow your self to take a moment to distance your heart and mind from identity politics, political correctness, and the deceitful notion that everyone deserves and gets a trophy, you be able to see once more from a biblical perspective.

Start with this...

Consider the present day reality that Israel and the United States are perhaps the most maligned and criticized nations on earth. Consider as well, that Christians and Jews are the most persecuted and victimized people groups in the world. Persecuted and victimized by the three greatest anti-Christ anti-Semitic movements in the history of mankind - Progressivism, Communism, Radical Islamism. Their attacks and terrorism against Christianity and Judaism are not only a historical reality, but they are the reality of present-day anti-Semitic and anti-Christ global ideology. How does Hosea's prophecy look now?

How does this end for us? With a new car, a new cellphone, and a new house? The answer is no - we will according to the great promises and covenants of our faith, end up with something eternally better. The message and prophecies like Hosea's are not gloom and doom - they are hope and help. How does God begin to accomplish this? Well, perhaps He has already begun. Perhaps God was using the obscure prophet Hosea to speak to His people of all times and all places that to redeem, rescue and reward, He must eventually bring all things to an end. Could you believe for a moment today that there very well may be more to the prophetic voices of the past than mere eschatological speculation? Perhaps the strange and bizarre story of Hosea, is God's voice! God's voice speaking out and down into time itself... saying to His people, hold on, the best is yet to come.