

For it is time to... (Hosea 10 & 1 Corinthians 10:1-14 & James 3:13-18)

23-July-2017

As I reminded us all last week, following and reading the Bible, helps us remember more than just listening to the Bible talk.

So please turn your Bibles to Hosea chapter 10

There's the usual outline in the bulletin to follow and take notes, if you wish

Let me ask God for His help and understanding, let's pray...

Intro

There's a story of a man walking through the desert

And he's run out of water - and very very thirsty

He spots some men on camels ahead

And he runs to them and says "Water! Water!"

And they say - "We don't have any water, would you like to buy a tie?"

He says "No thank you!"

And keeps walking on through the hot desert sun

He soon spots some more men on camels and again runs to them saying: "Water!

Water!"

And they say - "We don't have any water, would you like to buy a tie?"

He says "No thank you!"

And keeps walking on through the hot desert sun

Finally he sees an oasis in the desert with a small building

It's a hotel!

He can't believe his luck!

He runs to the door of the hotel shouting "Water! Water!"

There's a doorman there and he says

"Sorry sir, you can't come in here without a tie!"

(pause)

This man was very very thirsty wasn't he?

(pause)

[Powerpoint 1-Jesus Promise]

When Jesus taught the people in the Sermon on the Mount

In Matthew 5:6, He said:

Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness,
for they will be filled.

Righteousness means being right with God - being in a proper and right relationship with God where you're living a life that pleases God and follows His rules for living

Jesus is making a promise here

That we're blessed (literally happy) if we're as hungry and thirsty for that right relationship with God - as that man was thirsty for water in the desert

If we're that hungry and thirsty for God

Then Jesus promises we will be filled - literally we will be satisfied completely

(pause)

We've seen so far in the book of Hosea - that Israel just aren't that hungry and thirsty for God though - are they?

And they keep repeating the same sins over and over

There's a saying that the definition of insanity is: repeating the same mistakes over and over and expecting a different result - it just doesn't work!

Israel's Problem (Hosea 10:13)

Israel's problem is summarized in the first part of verse 13 of Hosea chapter 10

[Powerpoint 2-Summary of Israel's problem]

They've planted (sowed) wickedness and reaped evil.

It's what we said a couple of weeks ago - you reap what you sow

Just like Adam and Eve - deceived themselves by thinking they knew better than God - and ate the fruit of deception from the forbidden tree - Israel has fallen for the classic mistake that all sinful human beings do

And it's there in the last part of verse 13

They deceived themselves and - they depended on their own strength to get through life instead of depending on God

As human beings we often think we know better than God or can get by without Him

Israel also depended on the strength of their warriors (their army) instead of trusting in God - they thought fighting wars and relying on military power was going to get them success - instead of relying on God

It's a classic mistake - that we all make!

We say to ourselves: "I can do it myself - I don't need God"

But can we really do everything under our own strength - really?

(pause)

Are we hungry and thirsty for God?

Or are we a bit like Israel and deceive ourselves - that we can do everything in our own strength

Two Ways for Israel to Live (Hosea 10:1-15)

[Powerpoint 3-2 ways to live]

Hosea chapter 10 shows 2 ways for Israel to live:

The 1st way is Israel's way - the wrong way - the wicked way - following their own way and disobeying God's rules for life

The 2nd way is God's way - the right way - the righteous way - following and obeying God's rules for life

Let's have a closer look at the wrong way first - and see if we can learn anything about ourselves from it...

1st Way - Israel's Way - The Wrong Way

[Powerpoint 4a-The Wrong Way-Hearts]

See verses 1 and 2 Israel were supposed to be God's vine by being a light to the nations around them and showing their faith in God to the other nations (Psalm 80; Isaiah 5; John 15) - but instead of bringing forth fruit for God - they have a deceitful (divided) heart - half on God and half on themselves - and so they **brought fruit forward for themselves** - they turned worship at their altars and

sacred stones into selfish indulgence - So God will get rid of their altars and sacred stones. What about us? Is our heart divided? Half on God and half on ourselves? Perhaps our heart is all on ourselves and God doesn't get a look in?
(pause)

[Powerpoint 4b-Wrong Way-Kings]

In verse 3 - They have trusted in their corrupt and ungodly kings - which God allowed them to have - even though God Himself is their King! And now Israel will be exiled and what use will their kings be then. And when they're in exile, they'll realize the reason they don't have any kings is **because they didn't revere** (or fear) God.

Is there something or someone we're trusting in more than God. What will we do when that something or someone is taken away?
(pause)

[Powerpoint 5a-Wrong Way-Dishonesty]

In verse 4 - Their problem also includes **dishonesty** - they have made false promises and false oaths - **breaking God's commandment about lying** - which leads to lawsuits which Hosea describes as being like (simile) a poisonous weed poisoning a good crop. It's pretty much like today where people take each other to court all the time, for the most petty things - and even lie to get their own way. It amounts to caring more about themselves than anyone else! Are we lying and being dishonest to get our own way?
(pause)

[Powerpoint 5b-false idol]

Then in verses 5 and 6 Israel has put so much faith in the **false calf idol** of Beth Aven (Bethel name corrupted) - they will mourn this calf - when it is taken off into exile in Assyria and actually given to the king of Assyria as a tribute / gift. They'll see how stupid it was to trust in a lump of gold - moulded into a calf! What lumps of gold do we have that we are trusting in?

(pause)

[Powerpoint 6a-alliances]

In verse 6b - They have even **deceived themselves** by making **ungodly alliances** - with ungodly countries like Egypt and Assyria - it's not going to help them. They're still going to end up exiled. They should have trusted in *God* instead of these ungodly alliances. And now even the dodgy kings they have trusted in - in verse 7 - will float away like a twig on the river. What ungodly alliances and friendships have we made - that we're relying on - instead of *God*?

(pause)

[Powerpoint 6b-high places]

Then in verse 8 - so much **for trusting in their false worship on high places** - they will be destroyed and - thorns and thistles (like curse of *Genesis 3*) will cover over the altars - because they won't be used anymore - a bit like a disused cemetery - when the graves are covered over with weeds. I wonder if there's

things that we've accumulated and trusted in our lives over the years. And now we don't even use them - they've been gathering dust for years. Wasn't it silly to put our hope and happiness in them? They are all temporary things - which we can't take with us when we die. God alone is permanent and eternal!

(pause)

Exile is going to be so bad for Israel in verse 8 - they'll wish the mountains and hills would fall on them and put them out of their misery

[Powerpoint 7a-Continued sin]

If only they had trusted God - but no!

In verse 9 - Nothing has changed about Israel - **they've been sinning and rebelling against God** - since the time of the Judges in Judges chapter 19 - when a terrible rape in Gibeah - caused a civil war and nearly wiped out the tribe of Benjamin! They haven't learnt anything from their disobedient history. Have we learnt anything from our disobedient history?

In fact - in verse 10 - as far as God is concerned - **they're guilty of 2 sins - double sin** - idolatry and foreign alliance - which boils down to relying on self and ignoring God

[Powerpoint 7b-Easy way]

It's like Israel always wants to take the easy way out - Hosea says in v11 they're like a trained heifer who loves threshing (a much easier job - just treading on the

grain) rather than plowing (a much harder job). The point Hosea is making here is that Israel has always taken the wrong way because it's easier than going God's way. Going God's way requires commitment, obedience and self-control. Something Israel lacks. It's funny how the wrong way, always seems wider and more inviting; than the right way, which is narrow and looks more difficult. Are we tempted by the easier, wrong way, rather than God's way?

Well that's Israel's way - the wrong way!

Perhaps we can identify some aspects of that wrong way in our lives...

2nd WAY is God's Way - the Right Way

Now let's look at the 2nd way - God's Way - the right way

And it's there in verse 12 - God says:

[Powerpoint 8-Right Way]

Sow righteousness for yourselves

What does that mean?

Righteousness as we said means being right with God.

The only way we can be right with God is to be free from sin and rebellion against God

That's only possible by believing that Jesus died for our sin and rebellion and made us right with God

Once we have Jesus in our hearts

His righteousness will lead us to living a life that pleases God.

The only way to do that is to live a life that God wants us to live?

How do we know what that should be?

By following His rules in the Bible.

And by following the lessons of history in the Bible and learning from them

Our NT passage from 1 Corinthians chapter 10 - says that all the stuff written down in the OT - all this stuff Hosea's been telling us about in the last few weeks

The Apostle Paul says this in 1 Corinthians 10:6:

Now these things occurred as examples to keep us from setting our hearts on evil things as they did.

And in verse 11

These things happened to them as examples and were written down as warnings for us,

Israel never did learn the lessons from the disobedient history

Are we following and learning from the examples of Israel and Judah in the Bible?

Are we repeating the same sin in our lives over and over?

Repeating the same sin and expecting a different result just doesn't work!

Two Ways for us to Live (James 3:13-18 & 1 Cor 10:13)

Just like Hosea chapter 10 says there are 2 ways for Israel to live

[Powerpoint 9-2 ways]

Our NT passage from James chapter 3 - says there are 2 ways for us to live:

1st - Earthly way

2nd - Heavenly way

Please turn your Bibles to James chapter 3

The Apostle James shows us what these 2 ways look like in our lives

Earthly way

Firstly the earthly way

See verse 14-16

[Powerpoint 10-Earthly Way]

But if you harbor bitter envy and selfish ambition in your hearts, do not boast about it or deny the truth. ¹⁵Such "wisdom" does not come down from heaven but is earthly, unspiritual, demonic. ¹⁶For where you have envy and selfish ambition, there you find disorder and every evil practice.

James is saying that being envious or jealous comes from always thinking about ourselves. Never being satisfied with what we have or who we are.

Always wanting what others have or always wanting to be like someone else

That's what got Israel into trouble - wishing they were like other nations - having their own king (when they already had God) - and wanting what the other nations had (other false gods and riches)

James says that selfish ambition is earthly wisdom - not from God - in fact - it's from the devil.

And because selfish ambition can never be satisfied - James says it leads to all sorts of disorder in society and every evil and corrupt practice. Because people will do anything and say anything to get their own way.

Which is the exact opposite of Jesus' promise from the Sermon on the Mount - Jesus promised that seeking God's righteousness - instead of our own selfish ambition - will make us blessed (happy) and satisfy us completely

Heavenly Way

Which brings us to the other better way, James gives us

The Heavenly Way!

[Powerpoint 11-Heavenly Way]

See verse 17

¹⁷But the wisdom that comes from heaven is first of all pure; then peace-loving, considerate, submissive, full of mercy and good fruit, impartial and sincere.

James says the best way to live our lives is the heavenly way

Which has 8 elements:

Being PURE - literally means clean from any fault or sin - only one person is perfectly clean and pure of all sin and that is Jesus - so if we believe in Jesus and we model our lives on Jesus - and we are Christ-like - then we're pure - and that's a heavenly thing to do

Being PEACE LOVING - which means doing everything possible to be at peace with people - not fighting, arguing, gossiping, criticizing - but always looking for a peaceful and loving relationship. It means always offering forgiveness to others!

Being CONSIDERATE - which literally means fair and gentle - being careful not to inconvenience or hurt or harm anyone

Being SUBMISSIVE - which literally means being compliant or cooperative. Not getting in people's way and hindering. Instead - being helpful and supportive in what they are trying to achieve

Being FULL OF MERCY - the Greek literally means someone who is full to the brim of kindness and good will towards the miserable, the lonely, the afflicted, the hurt, and the sick - joined with a great desire to help them. You are spurred on by that desire to help them!

Being FULL OF GOOD FRUIT - living fruitful Godly lives which bring a harvest of fruit for God - by introducing others to Jesus - either by word or example - so they too can join in eternal life

Being IMPARTIAL - which means not playing favourites but treating everyone equally - we are all one in Christ - no one is better than anyone else.

Being SINCERE - in the Greek it means without hypocrisy - not being a hypocrite - it means believing in Jesus and acting like it - it means not being two-faced about people - gossiping and talking behind their back

So James is saying, if we seek these 8 elements in our lives - we are living the right way - the Heavenly way

So we need to make sure we're not tempted to live lives opposite to that

[Powerpoint 12-Temptation]

The Apostle Paul gave us some advice about temptation in 1 Corinthians 10:13

¹³ No temptation has overtaken you except what is common to mankind. And God is faithful; he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, he will also provide a way out so that you can endure it.

So here we have 4 facts about temptation

- a. Temptation is a real thing - don't ever think you can't be tempted
- b. Temptation is common to everyone - everyone gets tempted - the Devil wants us to fail and he will try every trick in the book to cause us to fail
- c. God promises that we won't be tempted beyond what we can handle
- d. Lastly, God promises that He will always provide a way out for us to endure the temptation. That should be a great comfort to us

Challenges (Hosea 10:12)

As always, I'd like to leave us with some challenges this morning

Some of you are old enough to remember the political campaign of Gough Whitlam in 1972 General Election

The basic premise of his Labor election campaign was - that after 23 years of a Liberal-Country Coalition - it really was time to change!

And that's what Hosea is suggesting to Israel that it's time to change...

And that's what I'm suggesting for us individually and as a nation - it's time to change

It's time to turn back to God - that's what Hosea 10:12 - the Key verse is all about - It's time! So turn back to Hosea chapter 10 verse 12...

[Powerpoint 13a-Challenge-Sow]

It is time to...

Sow righteousness - sowing those 8 elements we got from James: purity, peace-loving, being considerate, submissive, full of mercy, full of good fruit, impartial and sincere

So write down which ones you need to work on...

It's time to...

[Powerpoint 13b-Challenge-love]

Reap unfailing love - reaping God's love that never fails - seen on the Cross - there's no greater love - than Jesus loving us and dying for us on the cross - to give us loving forgiveness. There's no greater love than Jesus rising to life - to defeat death - and give us eternal life - that's unfailing love. That's what we get when we sow righteousness. So it's time for us to be part of that harvest of reaping others who can receive that unfailing love of God in Jesus

It's time to...

[Powerpoint 13c-Challenge-Unplowed ground]

It's time to break up our unplowed ground - the areas of our life that have never been used or worked - our unplowed ground needs to be plowed - and then we need to sow good seed in those unused and unworked areas of our life. Write down an area of your life that is unplowed. For example - perhaps you don't pray much or at all? Perhaps you don't have quiet times much or at all. Perhaps you don't show mercy to others? Perhaps you're not impartial but judgmental and critical? Whatever it is write it down - and commit that unplowed ground to God in pray - asking for His help

It's time to...

[Powerpoint 13d-Challenge-Seek]

To seek the Lord until He comes - How? In prayer. In quiet times! In Bible Study! In following and learning from the lessons of Biblical history and our own history. By reaching out to others!

Conclusion (James 3:18 & Matthew 5:9)

[Powerpoint 14-Conclusion]

The Apostle James concludes in verse 8 of chapter 3 - that peacemakers - people who have made peace with God and live lives in peace with God and in peace with others - by believing in Jesus death and resurrection

James suggests that these peace makers

reap a harvest of righteousness.

Notice he says they reap a harvest - not just a few - a harvest of others who are righteous - a harvest of others who are also right with God

That's a promise that we can claim

It's a promise that Jesus also made at the Sermon on the Mount:

In Matthew 5:9 - Jesus said:

Blessed are the peacemakers they will be called the children of God

It's time for us...

to remember those who have peace with God through Jesus - are children of God

And it's time...

to be hungry and thirsty for God!

It's time...

To be part of that great harvest work

Let's pray...