

## Maintain Love and Justice (Hosea 11:12-12:14 & Romans 6:15-23)

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G'day everyone! It would be great to have your bibles open at Hosea chapter 11 verse 12 - and we're going through to the end of chapter 12.

If you're someone who likes to take notes - there's a sermon outline in the bulletin. Let me ask for God's guidance before we look at the passage together.

Let's pray...

### Intro

A true story to start off with...

I came across a poor lady recently, fleeing a domestic violence situation. She and her three children, had spent a few nights sleeping in their car. Then centre-link allowed her to stay a few nights in a motel; then she managed to stay a few nights with a relative. All the time, her husband was trying to track her down - and so she would have to keep moving on.

Finally, she decided to move to Queensland to stay with her sister, it would be safer there - for her and the children. So she packed the car for the long drive from NSW to Queensland. As she started the journey, she was pulled over by the police. It turned out her license had been cancelled because she hadn't paid a fine, which she didn't know anything about, because of moving from place to place. The only way to get her license reinstated was to pay a \$100 fine. But she needed all the money she had, for the petrol to drive to Queensland!

Hardly seems fair - does it?

But the law's the law?

Is that justice?

(pause)

What is justice anyway?

[Powerpoint 1-Defintion of Justice]

Definition:

Decisions or behaviour that are morally right and fair?

But how do we know what's morally right and fair?

Who defines what's morally right and fair?

The police?

The law?

The government?

Us?

Or God?

(pause)

In the case of this poor lady

Technically she's broken the law - and not paid a fine!

Justice says that the police must uphold the law

But - where's the love in all of that?

(pause)

Should love come into it?

Doesn't the lady deserve a break - she's fleeing from domestic violence for goodness sake?

(pause)

Can there be justice and love at the same time?

That's our conundrum for this morning?

That's what our passage from Hosea deals with...

And does knowing a person's background or history make a difference to how we treat them?

Does it make a difference to how justice and love are applied?

(pause)

And what if a person's historical behaviour wasn't good at all - and they haven't learnt from it - what place does justice and love have then?

That's the dilemma for Israel in this passage from Hosea

So God, through the prophet Hosea, gives Israel a history lesson in this passage

### **Israel's current sinful state (11:12, 12:1, 7 & 8)**

But before the history lesson - first God looks at the sins of the nation

V12 of chapter 11

#### **[Powerpoint 2-Sinful State]**

Ephraim - the largest tribe in the North are full of lies - lying to God!

Israel - the Northern Kingdom is full of deceit - trying to deceive God

And Judah the Southern Kingdom is no better - they are breaking God's rules too

Then v1 - of chapter 12

Ephraim multiples their lies - one lie - needs to another lie - and they are full of violence - and even making treaties with ungodly nations like Assyria - and trading with ungodly nations like Egypt - is not going to help their cause - they are still disobeying God

Then v7 and v8 - they duding people with dishonest scales - like charging for a 1kg of grapes - but only giving 500g to the customer

And then they boast about how rich they are - and that no-one's going to find out about how they got rich in a dishonest way?

But they can't hide their sins from God

I wonder if we examine ourselves this morning

We are a bit like the people of Israel and Judah

We break God's rules - and think we can get away with it - no one will know

We pat ourselves on the back for what we have and what we have achieved

Not realizing it could all be gone in an instance - through:

Financial ruin

Unfortunate circumstances

A tragic accident

A natural disaster

Then who will we turn to?

That's what God's saying -

Are we going to rely on our sinful ways or God's ways?

Perhaps it's a good time this morning to example our sinful state?

(pause)

## Israel's Spiritual History

Then comes the history lesson from God

He brings Israel back to the beginning of their history as a nation

[Powerpoint 3-Jacob's History)

### Jacob's History (v3, v4, v12)

Back to the OT patriarch - Jacob - son of Isaac - son of Abraham

God says to Israel - you started off dodgy from the beginning

See v3 - even when Jacob was in his mother's womb along with his twin brother

Esau - he grabbed Esau's heel and tried to come out first - he wanted to be the first born - he wanted to be number one

And if you know anything about Jacob -

His ambition didn't stop there - he cheated his older twin brother, Esau - out of his firstborn status - by conning Esau to sell his birthright status for a bowl of lentil soup - (lentil soup! It wasn't even a nice soup - like pumpkin or pea and ham!)

But Jacob's ambition didn't stop there - he also cheated Esau out of his father's blessing - by pretending to be Esau - by covering himself with animal hair so his half blind father, Isaac, thought Jacob was Esau and gave Jacob, Esau's blessing.

Jacob hasn't got the best history when you think about it - has he?

Because of his unfair dealings with Esau, Jacob had to leave his homeland quick smart before Esau killed him - and go and work for his uncle Laban - tending sheep - see v12 - and to find a wife

And what a fiasco that turned out to be - he worked seven years tending sheep to marry Rachel - only for his uncle to swap brides on him - and he married Rachel's sister - Leah. Then Jacob had to work another seven years to marry Rachel

Some would say - that was payback! At the very least - it was a consequence of how he treated Esau

And God also reminds Israel - in v4 - of how Jacob struggled with an angel all night and asked for a blessing

Right there - God gave Jacob the name "Israel" - which means "he struggles with God"

What a picture Jacob is of the nation of Israel

Jacob struggled with God

And that's what the nation of Israel has done for centuries

Struggled to trust God, struggled to follow God's rules, struggled to worship God the way they know they should and the way God demands!

### **The Nation's History (v9-11 & 14)**

God hasn't finished the history lesson though

He then gives the nation a history lesson

[Powerpoint 4-Nation]

See v9 - God reminds them - He is their God - the one who brought them out of Egypt - out of slavery

And He reminds them of how - when they wandered in the wilderness after leaving Egypt - that there weren't any motels - only tents - temporary shelters

And He asks - do you want to go back to those days?

Remember, you're a great nation now - do you want to go back to roughing it again?

God says in v10 - I even gave you heaps of prophets and visions to warn you - and tell you that I want your obedience - but you just don't get it

God says I've even given you parables to explain it to you

Parables like Hosea's marriage to his unfaithful wife Gomer - being a picture of God's marriage to His unfaithful people, Israel - but still you don't get it!

Instead in v11 - you've been the cause of great bloodshed in the city of Gilead and sacrificed to false gods in Gilgal

Basically the nation has forgotten who they are - they are supposed to be God's people

God must have justice -

Remember we said - justice is being morally right and fair

Morally right and fair by God's standards

God can't allow sin to go unpunished -

There must be punishment and consequences

And it's there in v14

God's anger against their sin has been aroused - like a parent gets angry with a disobedient child.

For Israel the consequences are two-fold

God will leave them with the guilt of their terrible bloodshed

And He will repay them for their contempt (disrespect) of God

God will not be disrespected

Because - as God says in v5 - He is the God Almighty - God of the Heavenly Army  
- and the Lord - YHWH - the Holy God is His Name

### **Our Spiritual History?**

As we have just looked at Israel's spiritual history - perhaps this morning is a good time to look at our own spiritual history - our own walk with the Lord over the years

#### [Powerpoint 5a-Struggle]

1. Can we relate to Jacob and to Israel - have we and do we **struggle with God** - struggle with following His way - and want to go our way - do we struggle with wanting to be number one - like Jacob did - instead of realizing God is number one - not us? Have we duded people - treated people shoddily to get ahead? (pause)

#### [Powerpoint 5b-our history]

2. Perhaps it's time to **remind ourselves of our history**. How God brought us out of our Egypt - brought us out of our slavery to our sinful nature - by sending Jesus to save us from the slavery to sin? Perhaps it's time to remind ourselves of how God's brought us to where we are this morning - through the good, the bad and the ugly. And reflect on what God has done for us

#### [Powerpoint 5c-forgotten]

### 3. Like Israel have we **forgotten who we are individually and as a nation?**

We are supposed to be God's people - a light to the dark world around us, but perhaps we're spending too much time in the dark? What about our nation? It's supposed to be a Christian nation? But I doubt it is anymore? When I speak to some of the folk here - they tell me of the days when there were over 100 children in Sunday School in the churches they went to as children - and how the churches were overflowing? They tell me of times like the Billy Graham Crusades? Have we forgotten who we are - as individual Christians - and as a Christian nation? What will we do about it? Leave it to someone else? Just let it die altogether? We're in a spiritual battle against dark and evil forces - that want to destroy our Christian churches and our Christian values...

What should our response be?

#### **Required Response (v6 and Romans 6:15-23)**

The response for Israel and for us - is the same...

[Powerpoint 6-Heading]

It's there in verse 6 of chapter 12

But you must return to your God;  
maintain love and justice,  
and wait for your God always.

So it's a threefold response:

[Powerpoint 6a-Return]

- a) **FIRST** - Return to your God - not like Israel - let's learn from our history - don't be a slave to sin anymore - don't be dishonest like Israel - don't deceive ourselves like Ephraim - don't try and be number one like Jacob. Instead put God number one:
- i. In our government. So let's lobby the government to make Godly Bible based decisions
  - ii. In our homes. So let's read the Bible with our children and grandchildren. Let's bring back them to Sunday School. Let's pray with our families. Let's study the Bible together
  - iii. In our schools. Let's promote SRE in our schools and stand up for it - so we don't lose it - like Victoria
  - iv. In our workplaces. Let's tell people we're Christians - not hide it.
  - v. In our neighbourhood. Let's get out there and show them what real Christians are like

**[Powerpoint 6b-Love and Justice]**

- b) **SECOND** - Maintain love and justice. Now there's a tricky one. Remember the poor women I mentioned at the beginning. Her and her children - victims of domestic violence - but gets her license cancelled. How do we maintain love and justice together?
- i. How did Jesus maintain justice and love? Our NT passage from Romans chapter 6 tells us - please turn to Romans 6 verses 15 to 23. And the Apostle Paul tells us in verse 18 - that Jesus has set us free from slavery to sin - and made us slaves to righteousness - slaves to being right with

God. He did that on the cross. God's justice requires sin to be dealt with - so Jesus dealt with it for us.

- ii. But the cross of Jesus is also love. Because of God's love - He gave us a free gift - the Bible calls that Grace - God's undeserved favour. We didn't deserve forgiveness - we deserved punishment. But Jesus took that and gave us forgiveness.

V23 sums it up

For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Justice = death penalty for sin - physical death and spiritual death and separation from God. Jesus died and took care of that

Love = free gift from God - forgiveness and eternal life. Again Jesus took care of that by rising from the dead

Justice maintained. Love maintained. All by Jesus.

Jesus also gave some examples of maintain love and justice in His ministry

In John chapter 8 - Jesus deals with a tricky situation.

A woman is caught in the act of adultery.

The law says she must be stoned.

Jesus tells her accusers - to look at their own history - they're sinners too!

And that all sin is offensive to God - not just the woman's sin!

She's no worse a sinner than they are!

God's justice demands that all sin is punished

Jesus maintains justice and love

By saying he won't condemn the woman - because He came to take care of sin.

But He also maintains justice by saying - don't go on sinning - you must turn away from this sin now, lady!

And Jesus maintains love by giving the woman a fresh start.

Jesus does the same with the Samaritan woman at the well in John 4

He's a Jew and she's a Samaritan - Jews and Samaritans don't talk - don't mix - in fact they hate each other

Jesus knows her sinful history - her list of five husbands and the guy's she's living with now

But He maintains justice and love

Justice - by giving a way out of her sinful life - by drinking living water from Him - by drinking Jesus - she will get her sins paid for and get forgiveness - and water that wells into eternal life. Justice - by her sin being paid for. And love - by her life changed forever and by the hope of eternity to God

Isn't that how we need to operate - just like Jesus?

Maintain justice and love

As we meet someone who's lost from God

Their history might be wicked, tragic, unfortunate, sad - whatever

But we point them to God's justice - which is Jesus on the Cross

And we show them love - a helping hand - a kind word - a meal - a hamper - a church family - an instruction manual for life - the Bible - and a Saviour who loves

them - who died for them to be forgiven - and who rose for them to have life with God forever

That's how we maintain justice and love!

[Powerpoint 6c-WAIT]

c) THIRD - Wait for your God always. If we learn anything from Jacob's history - we learn he took matters into his own hands. God had already chosen him to be Israel - but Jacob couldn't wait for God to act. He had to be number one instead of Esau - and cheated him out of his birthright and blessing. Jacob's grandfather Abraham was no different - God promised Abraham a son - but he couldn't wait and slept with his maidservant Hagar! Let's not make their mistake and commit a sin rather than waiting on God's perfect timing. God will answer and God will act - in His own good time. The Bible's history and our own history tells us that.

There's our 3 fold response this morning:

Return to God

Maintain love and justice

Wait for your God always

Let me leave you with a challenge this morning:

Is there someone you need to maintain justice and love to? How will understanding their background and history help?

Write their name down and pray and wait for God to guide you in this...

Let's pray...