

What happened to the fig tree? (Hosea 9:1-17 & Luke 13:1-9)

16-July-2017

Good Morning Church Family!

Please open your Bibles up to Hosea chapter 9

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...

Recap/Intro

Last week we learnt the principle of sowing and reaping

[PowerPoint 1-Reap/Sow]

The Key verse was Hosea 8:7

And we established 3 laws of sowing and reaping

Hosea 8 – Key Verse – Verse 7

“They **sow** the wind
and **reap** the whirlwind...”

The principle of sowing & reaping

THREE Laws of sowing and reaping

1. You always reap what you sow
2. You always reap more than you sow
3. You always reap later than you sow

And the point was we have to sow good seeds - Godly seeds.

There's the story of a busy minister of 2 churches who always wanted to have a nice little veggie garden. But somehow, when it came to spring - he never found time to get round to turning the soil over and planting anything. So he had this nice plot of soil, very fertile, but just growing a nice crop of weeds.

So this minister, used this plot of dirt, to teach his son an important lesson.

The conversation went something like this:

"Son, is my garden growing a crop of veggies?"

"No Dad, nothing got planted in the garden again this year"

"You're right son, but look again. Is the garden growing anything?"

"Well, yes Dad, - It's growing weeds"

"Exactly!" the minister said "It's the same in life, if good things are not intentionally planted in your life, just like nature, you too will only grow a nice crop of weeds"

(pause)

What Israel used to be like? (Hosea 9:10a)

That's the problem with Israel in chapter 9

They haven't sown any good seeds - godly seeds - and in fact they've grown a bunch of weeds in their lives...

Have a look at Hosea 9, verse 10a

[PowerPoint 2-Hosea 9:10a]

Through the prophet Hosea - God says this about Israel

¹⁰“When I found Israel,
 it was like finding grapes in the desert;
 when I saw your ancestors,
 it was like seeing the early fruit on the fig tree.

God's saying when Israel was a new nation, wandering through the desert, after God had rescued them from slavery in Egypt, they were so good

It was like finding a bunch of juicy grapes in the desert

Or going to a fig tree - which by the way takes 3 years to produce fruit - and God's saying, it's like discovering fruit - earlier than 3 years - finding fruit on the fig tree before it was expected - what a great surprise!

In other words - Israel was so fruitful - they'd sown good seeds - godly seeds - and they were growing as a godly nation.

I wonder, if God looked at us, and compared what we were like when we first became a Christian - and we were on fire for God - on fire for Jesus - we read our Bibles all the time - we couldn't get enough of Jesus - and we wanted to tell everyone about Him - there was so much fruit on our fig tree

I wonder if God would ask the same question, He's basically asking the people of Israel, in Hosea 9:

What happened to the fig tree?

What happened to Israel? (Hosea 9:1-17)

What did happen to Israel?

Well there's a few things in Hosea 9 that the people of Israel have done - and of course as always they have consequences

[PowerPoint 3a-V1/2]

In verses 1 and 2 - they're unfaithful to God - thinking that wild sex and religion parties to gain favours from the fertility gods - will get them more food and new wine - when in fact they don't realize - all blessings come from the one true God of Israel - and they'll end up hungry and thirsty!

I wonder, if we've forgotten where our blessings come from - and we think our blessings come from others - or even from ourselves - instead of realizing God is the one who supplies all our needs (Psalm 23:1-3 and Phil 4:19)

And, because they have been unfaithful, Hosea says, in verses 3 to 6

[PowerPoint 4-v3-6]

They won't last long in God's land!

It will be like being in slavery in Egypt all over again

They'll be carted off to Assyria and into exile

And they'll not be able to make sacrifices and offerings to their one true God anymore - because they'll be no temple and no priests!

Then what will they do, when it comes to their religious feast days, they won't be able to offer anything to the Lord

And even if they somehow manage to escape the Assyrian invasion from the north and run south to Egypt (in verse 6) - they'll have the same problem in Egypt and end up buried in Memphis (one of the major cities of Egypt at the time)

They'll literally be starved of God - and exiled from God's own country

Remember, what we said last week - you reap what you sow!

You sow rejection of God - and you get rejection!

I wonder if we're placing God further down our list of priorities?

If we do - God is a polite God - He'll butt out of our lives - if we ask Him to...

And it will be like being in exile - starved of God

(pause)

Israel's so far gone - they have no spiritual discernment and understanding - see verses 7 to 9 -

[PowerPoint 5-v7-9]

They even think God's chosen prophet, Hosea is a fool and a maniac - in verse 7

They can't understand why Hosea's saying there's trouble ahead when they're having such a great time partying!

They've forgotten that Hosea is actually working for God - and He's their watchman - in verse 8 - telling them what lies ahead - if they keep rebelling against God

I wonder how our spiritual discernment and understanding is?

Are we taking the messages from Hosea seriously enough?

Or do we just say - well that was in Hosea's time - we're nowhere near as bad as the people of Israel - we're not unfaithful to God - we don't have any idols - we don't disobey God's commandments - we don't think our preachers and teachers are fools - that was in the old days of Israel - not now?

(pause)

Yet Israel are so far gone - Hosea's is reminded in verse 9 - of a terrible incident of rape - in the time of Judges - in Judges chapter 19?

Needless to say God won't stand for such wickedness!

Israel has basically taken to sin - like a pig takes to wallowing in mud

They're reveling in it

See verses 10 to 14

[PowerPoint 6-v10-14]

Hosea is reminded of how quickly - in verse 10 - they went from being fruitful grapes and fig trees to being corrupt and worshipping false gods - It didn't take long

Hosea recalls a terrible incident in Israel's history from Numbers 25:1-5 - where the people of Israel worshipped gods of Moab - including one called Baal of Peor! And for Hosea, it's like Israel has descended back into that sort of deep deep idolatry and worship of false gods - that there's no stopping them now!

They've gone so low

Because they're not fruitful anymore

God's not going to let them be fruitful ever again!

Just like the parable of the fig tree - in our NT reading in Luke 13

They've been given chance after chance to produce fruit and they haven't

So God's putting a stop to it

They'll be no more offspring for them in verse 11

What's the point of bringing children into that corrupt environment?

And even if they do have children in verse 12 - God will declare them unfit parents and take the children away

Even if they do have children in verse 13 - they might as well bring them out to be slayed - they'll have a miserable life anyway?

By this stage - verse 14

Hosea's getting quite fired up by Israel's sin and rebellion

And he says in v14 - "Give them Lord" - it's like He's going to say - "Give it to them God!" But Hosea stops himself and says "What will you give them?"

Hosea suggests empty wombs, miscarriages and dry breasts

There's no point in bringing children into this mess!

No more offspring!

No more blessings!

Again, we must take the message of Hosea seriously. And seriously examine ourselves. What are our idols? Do those idols keep us from God? Will those idols, prevent us from being blessed? What about will our world be like for our children and grandchildren? Or do we think it can't happen?

(pause)

In summary, what has happened to Israel?

Is there in verses 15 to 17

[PowerPoint 7-v15-17]

In v15 - God will drive them out of His House - their leaders are just not doing the right thing - their too rebellious!

Ephraim (aka Israel) in v16 - is like an infected, withered fig tree - no roots to grow any fruit anymore. Ironically, the Hebrew word, Ephraim, means "doubly fruitful" - that's how God saw Israel/Ephraim - they were supposed to be so

fruitful - but now they have become fruitless! And they won't be blessed with anymore offspring!

Instead in v17 - they'll wander with the other fruitless nations!

I wonder if that's what can happen to us as a nation and individually - if we continue to be fruitless for God?

(pause)

Our Response - Be fruitful or else! (Luke 13:1-9)

So we need a response don't we?

What will our response be this morning?

Well - clearly our response needs to be:

Be fruitful or else!

That's the basic message of the parable of the fig tree in Luke 13:1-9

Be fruitful or else!

How do we become fruitful?

Well - I'd like to give you a handful of responses!

[PowerPoint 8a-Response 1]

1. First we need to repent. That's what the people of Israel failed to do. We need to repent of 2 things: sins of commission and sins of omission

Sins of commission - are things we're doing - that we're not supposed to be doing!

Sins of omission - are things we're not doing - that we should be doing!

Here's an example

You might say "I didn't steal anything this week, Paul"

That's great I'll say - because that would be a sin of commission - doing something you shouldn't - God says don't steal

I might then say to you "It's good you didn't steal - but were you generous this week"

If not - that's a sin of omission -

Here's another example: "I didn't hurt anyone this week"

Yes - but did you help anyone?

You see our goal is not just to abstain from doing the wrong thing

Our goal is to be fruitful - and do the right thing!

So we need to repent of what we weren't supposed to do - and repent of what we were supposed to do and didn't do!

[PowerPoint 8b-Response 2]

2. We need to cultivate a relationship with Jesus and the Holy Spirit

How do we do that?

Jesus tell us in John 15:4-5:

⁴Remain in me, as I also remain in you. No branch can bear fruit by itself; it must remain in the vine. Neither can you bear fruit unless you remain in me. ⁵"I am the vine; you are the branches. If you remain in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing.

So the only way we can bear any fruit is to remain attached to Jesus the vine.

Why would we want to remain attached to Jesus?

Well - He loves us - He died for us on a cruel cross - He gives us forgiveness and eternal life - why wouldn't we want to remain attached to someone who gives us all of that?

What does remaining attached to Jesus look like?

Well believing in Jesus - also gives us the Holy Spirit

He's like our life coach

He's the one who helps us be fruitful

So how can we get connected to Jesus and the Holy Spirit and stay connected

Well - if we think of Jesus and the Holy Spirit as being life coaches

If we want to get fit - we might hire a fitness coach and meet the coach at the gym a few times a week - and listen to the fitness coach's advice - we'll get fit

If we don't turn up at the gym and go to maccas instead - and we tell the coach we'll be there next week - and then we don't turn up next week - but go to the movies instead

Then we're not very committed and we're not going to get fit are we?

It's the same with spending time with Jesus and the Holy Spirit

We need to be committed

In 2 ways -

- a) We need to be in prayer - praying to Jesus to help us be fruitful - praying to the Holy Spirit to reveal what He would have us do
- b) We need to be in the Bible - read the Bible - particularly passages which talk about being fruitful - Matthew 7, Luke 3 and 13, John 15, Romans 7 and Galatians 5

By the way - research shows we only retain 10% of what we hear
 We retain 20-40% of what we read - so that's why it's important to have your Bibles open now - as we read the word together. We retain about 60% of what we study - so studying the Bible is even better than just reading it. And we retain 100% of what we memorize - so committing God's word to memory is best of all! All of that keeps us connected to Jesus and connected to the Holy Spirit!

[PowerPoint 8c-Response 3]

3. We need to know what type of figs we have on our fig tree. What fruit has God given us? God has given us all different types of gifts so we can be fruitful. 1 Corinthians 12 is a great chapter in identifying what gifts we have. We even have a spiritual gifts/skills survey [Show] that many of you have completed - so most of us have an idea of what our spiritual gifts - what type of figs we have. And if we don't - I suggest looking at 1 Cor 12, Ephesians 4 and Romans 12 to get an idea - or I can give you one of these surveys to complete

[PowerPoint 8d-Response 4]

4. As well as knowing what type of figs we have. We need to count the figs on our fig tree. In the parable, how did the guy know there were no figs on his tree? He went and counted them - didn't he? And there weren't any!
 If we want to lose weight - what do we need - some scales, how many figs to we weigh? We need to watch how many calories/kilojoules we eat. We need to read the packets and labels to check the calories.

It's the same with our time - if we're always running late - we need a watch, we need a diary of what we have planned each day, we need to be organized. Same with money - if we're always in debt - we need a budget, we need a calculator - we might need some accounting software on our computer to manage our money. We might to change our pin number on our account, so our husband/wife can't get at the money!

In the same way. We need to be organized and we need to count our figs to see if we're being fruitful.

And there's some general fruit of the Spirit - that we all have - and need to exercise - we'll find them in Galatians 5:22-23:

²² But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, ²³ gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law.

Which of these - are we having trouble with - what will we do about that?

(pause)

[PowerPoint 8e-Response 5]

5. Once we've identified our types of figs and counted them - we know what gifts God has given us. We now need to use our figs! In other words, we need to be fruitful. The point of the parable is that the fig tree was supposed to be bearing fruit. The man had been coming for 3 years to see if there was any fruit. Now remember, the fig tree doesn't bear fruit for the first 3 years. So this means the man has come in year 4, year 5 and year 6 and there's still been

no fruit. And he's ready to chop the fig tree down. But the man taking care of the tree, asks for a 2nd chance, to wait just one more year to see if it bears fruit. If not, that's it - the tree will be chopped down. That's how God treated Israel, except He gave them 2nd chance after 2nd chance - and then said - enough! No more chances, I'm chopping my fig tree, of Israel, down! That's it.

Challenge

My challenge for us this morning is to:

[PowerPoint 9a-Challenge A]

Identify the gifts God has given you - the figs you have on your tree so to speak - write them down.

[PowerPoint 9b-Challenge B]

Be honest - which of these gifts are you not using?

[PowerPoint 9b-Challenge C]

Are we in danger of having our fig tree chopped down?

Are we in danger of having to ask ourselves - what happened to my fig tree?

And just being left with a whole bunch of weeds...

Let's pray...