

I will redeem them from death (Hosea 13:1-16; 1 Corinthians 15:50-58 & John 15:1-5) **13-Aug-2017**

If you could please turn your Bibles to Hosea chapter 13. If you're a person who likes taking notes, there's an outline to follow in the bulletin. Let me ask God to help us in our understanding this morning. Let's pray

Intro

A story to start off with...

Seven year old Tommy had been asking his parents for a dog but they were not convinced that the family actually needed one. After Tommy's repeated requests for a dog, his dad told him if he helped his mum with chores around the house he could earn enough money to buy a dog. Tommy was more than eager to accept this challenge. He didn't mind working if it meant that he could get a dog.

His parents took Tommy to a pet shop in town. Near the back of the shop was a cage containing a beautiful black and white puppy. For Tommy and the puppy it was love at first sight. While Tommy was occupied playing with the puppy that he was sure he would own, his dad was negotiating a fair price with the pet shop owner. Finally it was agreed that \$100 was a fair price.

Now Tommy's dad knew that his son's earnings, plus his allowance, wasn't up to that figure, so he wrote the owner a check for \$90 with the provision that Tommy would be told that he had to come up with \$10 if he wanted the puppy, which just happened to be the amount of money Tommy had saved. Tommy eagerly counted out his ten dollars, paid the owner, and then waited with great eagerness as the

owner opened the cage and handed him the puppy. Before the family got home, Tommy had already named his dog "Spot".

For a couple of years whenever you saw Tommy, you saw Spot. One day Tommy gave Spot a big hug before he left to catch the bus to school. What Tommy didn't realize was that he forgot to close the gate properly. It didn't take much of a wind to blow the gate open and Spot was out to explore the neighborhood.

When Tommy got home from school he immediately headed to the backyard to play with his much loved friend. But Spot was nowhere to be found. Tommy looked under every shrub and bush with no success. His mother joined the search but to no avail. She called their neighbours and nearby friends to see if Spot had been seen.

Poor old Spot the Dog - lost forever...

Sad story hey!

(pause)

That's what Israel, in the book of Hosea, are in danger of - being lost forever from God

(pause)

Spiritual Death (Hosea 13:1-4a, 5-6)

And it's all because of their spiritual decline

See verse 1 of Hosea chapter 13

[Powerpoint 1-Spiritual Death]

They thought they'd arrived - the largest tribe Ephraim only had to speak and everyone trembled. They were powerful and they were thought of very highly by the other tribes of Israel and the surrounding nations

It's always a danger when we think we have arrived - we start to have tickets on ourselves - and we don't see a need for God

And because of that Israel became guilty of worshipping Baal - a false god

In our case - that would be like us worshipping people or things other than God

The problem with Israel and us doing that is at the end of verse 1

Is that - they and we - DIE

Not physically but spiritually

Dead inside because of their and our sins against God

Spiritually dead!

And Lost from God - our creator

A bit like Spot the dog was lost from his owner Tommy!

And once Israel sinned - they sinned more and more - see v2

They use all their God given talents of metal work - to make idols to worship

We do the same don't we?

We make mansions to worship

We make fancy cars to worship

We make the latest flat screen - 10m wide screens - to worship

The latest Computers and Software and spend hours on them - worshipping them

And so on...

Israel even made human sacrifices to these false gods - thinking that these false gods will give them favours and bless them - in return for these human sacrifices!

What about us we make babies and as they grow up we might worship them and indulge them so much - that we don't even think they might need discipline - they're too cute for that - and we don't ever say "NO" to them.

A couple of Aussie tennis players spring to mind!

And by bringing children up this way - we're not doing them any favours - we're just sacrificing them to a cruel world - which is ready to cut down tall poppies and throw them away!!

But God says all this making and worshipping of idols is just temporary - and short lived - see v3

It's like morning mist, morning dew, chaff swirling in the wind from a threshing floor and smoke escaping out of a window

All images of something short lived - soon gone

In other words there's nothing left of Israel - they're just hollow empty people because they've turned away from God - the One being that gave them purpose in life!

And the things they've replaced God with - are just temporary and useless anyway - and they can all disappear in a moment

God reminds them in v4 - He is the ONE who brought them out of slavery in Egypt - He is the ONE who saved them

God reminds them in v5 - He cared for them in the wilderness heat and He reminds them in v6 - that He fed them in the wilderness as they left that slavery in Egypt - He brought them into the Promised Land - and they were successful and prosperous - and it was Him who allowed them to be prosperous. But then they became proud - they thought they'd arrived and they forgot all about God
Aren't we the same - the more we think we are self-sufficient, the more we think we can do everything under our own strength and ability, the more we become proud - and the less we think we need God - and we forget about Him
(pause)

But all Israel has done is swapped the slavery of Egypt for another slavery - the slavery to sin!

They are now slaves to their sin against God

It's the same for each one of us

We are all slaves to our sin

And our sin makes us spiritually dead

(pause)

Consequences of Spiritual Death (Hosea 13:7-13, 14b-16)

God through Hosea then describes the consequences of being spiritually dead

[Powerpoint 2-Consequences]

And He uses images from the animal kingdom to show how He will punish their spiritual decline

See v7 & v8

God's going to be like a lion hovering over his prey

Like a leopard lurking in the bush

God's going to be like a cranky grizzly bear that's had its bear cubs robbed and so attacks the enemy

All this is a picture of God's punishment because of Israel's disobedience

And God gives a reason for their punishment in verse 9

It's because they've not only forgotten about their God - they've actually been against Him - they are blatantly doing the opposite of what God demands

AND - He is after all they're helper. They're biting the hand that feeds them!

There's a warning here for us - that if we blatantly go against God's rules and God's word - there will be consequences. That's worth considering when we think of the present "Same Sex Marriage" debate! There will be consequences in going against God's Word

(pause)

God points out to them in verse 10 and 11 - you asked for a King, Israel, even though I, your God, am your King. You wanted to be like the other nations around you and have a king. So I, God, gave you a king. But how much help have these kings been - they've done nothing but corrupt you. And they can't save you from God's punishment either!

God has stored up all of Ephraim's sins and kept a record of them. See v12. The point is God knows every single thing they've done wrong - and it's the same for us - He knows every sinful thought, word and deed.

Unfortunately for Israel - in v13 - it's going to be such a painful time - like a woman in childbirth suffers sudden, unexpected and intense pain during childbirth - that's what the judgment on Israel will be like. Sudden, unexpected and intense pain.

God says Israel is like a baby who doesn't have the sense to come out of the womb - Israel doesn't have the sense to come out of their sin and rebellion and repent and say sorry to God - and be born again into living a life that pleases God
Again a warning for us - to come out of our sin and rebellion against God - and repent and say sorry - before it's too late

Unfortunately because Israel is unwilling to repent

God will not have compassion - the end of v14

And God will send an east wind to dry up the land and produce a famine - see v15

And this will be followed by a war - in v16 - as Israel is invaded and falls by the sword!

Famine and war!

And yet it was all so avoidable wasn't it?

(pause)

Hope of Redemption (Hosea 13:4b & 14 and 1 Corinthians 15:50-58)

Hosea chapter 13 is pretty much a chapter of doom and gloom because of Israel's continued rebellion.

God's justice demands that sin and rebellion are judged - and punished

So to sum up so far

Because of sin - Israel and us are spiritually dead

Being spiritually dead has consequences

Because being spiritually dead - means we are separated from God

And because of sin - we not only die spiritually - we also all die physically one day!

Not much hope in all of that - is there?

But - praise God - there is hope in this chapter too!

[Powerpoint 3-Hope]

Look at the end of verse 4 - there was a way out for Israel and there is a way out for us

You shall acknowledge no God but me,
no Savior except me.

If we acknowledge that God is the only true God and we believe He is our ONLY Saviour - then there's hope for us!

And there's also hope in the promise of verse 14

"I will deliver this people from the power of the grave;
I will redeem them from death.

Where, O death, are your plagues?

Where, O grave, is your destruction?

Here God promises the people of Israel - and He promises us - that He Himself will deliver them & us out of the grave and redeem them & us from death

In other words - God will buy them & us back from spiritual and physical death

How?

Well - verse 14 from Hosea 13 is quoted by the apostle Paul in our NT passage from 1 Corinthians 15:50-58 - one of our NT Bible readings this morning

It's a passage that describes what God - through His God Son - Jesus - does for us - and it's what He promised in Hosea's day - that He would save us - and buy us back from the death

Here's how the MSG version (Eugene Peterson) paraphrases 1 Cor 15:50-58 - and it's quite helpful - the Apostle Paul speaks to the Corinthians and us and says:

[Powerpoint 4-1 Cor 15]

⁵⁰I need to emphasize, friends, that our natural, earthy lives don't in themselves lead us by their very nature into the kingdom of God. Their very "nature" is to die, so how could they "naturally" end up in the Life kingdom?
⁵¹⁻⁵⁷ But let me tell you something wonderful, a mystery I'll probably never fully understand. We're not all going to die—*but* we are all going to be changed. You hear a blast to end all blasts from a trumpet, and in the time that you look up and blink your eyes—it's over. On signal from that trumpet from heaven, the dead will be up and out of their graves, beyond the reach of death, never to die again.

[Powerpoint 5-1 Cor 15]

At the same moment and in the same way, we'll all be changed. In the resurrection scheme of things, this has to happen: everything perishable taken off the shelves and replaced by the imperishable, this mortal replaced by the immortal. Then the saying will come true:

Death swallowed by triumphant Life!

Who got the last word, oh, Death?

Oh, Death, who's afraid of you now?

It was sin that made death so frightening and law-code guilt that gave sin its leverage, its destructive power.

[Powerpoint 6-1 Cor 15]

But now in a single victorious stroke of Life, all three—sin, guilt, death—are gone, the gift of our Master, Jesus Christ. Thank God!

⁵⁸With all this going for us, my dear, dear friends, stand your ground. And don't hold back. Throw yourselves into the work of the Master, confident that nothing you do for him is a waste of time or effort.

There's our hope right there - that our faith in Jesus - guarantees our rescue from spiritual death and from physical death

By believing in Jesus - we can be guaranteed to be right with God - therefore spiritually alive again!

And by believing in Jesus - even though we die physically one day - we can be guaranteed a resurrected life in Heaven - living with God forever

In recent weeks, I've done quite a few funerals - and I thank and praise God - that I get the privilege to share this hope - that God can redeem people from death - if they care to believe in Jesus - the Redeemer!

I get the privilege to share this hope with grieving families - so they don't have to walk away with no hope!

(pause)

Remember the story of Spot the dog - who had escaped and was lost

Well thankfully there's more to the story...

A family friend mentioned seeing a council truck in the area that day.

Tommy's mum had a brainwave and called the Dog Pound, in case Spot had been taken there, and sure enough, Spot had been picked up and was being held in the dog pound. Tommy and his mum left immediately for the Dog Pound. When they arrived they found that Spot had already been put in a small cage. Tommy asked the attendant if he could have his dog back. The attendant said that he could - but he had to pay a \$25 fine for Spot running loose in the street. Tommy's mum reminded him that his carelessness had caused this problem and that she said she would lend him the money and he could, once again, do some chores around the house to pay her back. Tommy agreed and they paid the fine.

Soon Spot and Tommy were reunited. On the way back home, Tommy hugged Spot really tight and told him he loved him. Then he said, "I bought you when you were a puppy, and now I have bought you out of the pound. Spot, you are my dog two times over!"

That's what God's Redemption is like - it's the act of buying back. Humankind is God's by creation but when sin entered the human race that relationship was broken. Spiritual death entered. When Jesus died for our sins, and we claimed His sacrifice by believing in Him, we were bought by His blood and born again into the kingdom of God. SO - we are God's property twice-over. First by creation - and later by regeneration into eternal life!

Response (John 15:1-5)

So given that sin is in the world

Given that we all sin

Given that God in His grace and mercy and love - bought us back from sin and death through Jesus - the posh word for that is Redemption

Surely - there must be a response from us for that amazing grace, mercy and love?

That's where our 3rd reading from John 15:1-5 comes in

If we turn there now in our Bibles - John 15:1-5:

[Powerpoint 7-Response]

Jesus describes Himself like a vine

God the Father is the gardener -

We are branches connected to the Vine

God cuts off any useless branches from the vine - those are people who don't want to be connected to Jesus - God's Vine

And God prunes the fruitful branches on the vine - so they bear more fruit - those are people who want to stay connected to Jesus - but need to learn some lessons and be disciplined - to grow more like Jesus

Then Jesus says - the people connected to Him the Vine - are right with God - but they must remain connected to Him - because they can't bear any fruit - without being connected to Jesus-The Vine

In fact - Jesus says - being apart from Him the Vine - they can do nothing!

So friends - I encourage us all this morning - to stay connected to Jesus

How?

By constantly thanking Jesus for buying us back from sin and death

By being in constant prayer and quiet times with Him

By reading, studying and meditating on His Word - the Bible

By spending time with God's people encouraging each other that we do have hope of living with God forever

And by serving the Lord - as the Apostle Paul says "Always give yourselves fully to the work of the Lord, because you know your labour in the Lord is not in vain"

Let me finish with another story to ponder on:

An orphanage caught fire

And everyone managed to escape the building except one orphan boy who was stranded in an upstairs bedroom. The boy cried for help from the window.

Finally a man climbed up an iron-drainpipe and rescued the boy and brought him back down the drainpipe - the boy clung tightly to the man's neck

A few weeks later, a public hearing was held to decide who would have custody of the little orphan boy. A doctor, a teacher and the town's richest citizen all gave reasons why they should be chosen to give the orphan boy a home. But as they all talked the boy's eyes remained focused on the floor. Then a stranger walked up to the little boy and the stranger took his hands out of his pockets, revealing severe scars on them. The crowd gasped - but the boy recognized the stranger. It was the man who had saved him - the man had severely burnt his hands climbing up the hot drainpipe. The boy threw his arms around the man's neck and held on for dear life. The doctor, teacher and richest citizen - and the crowd - all walked away - leaving the boy and his rescuer alone! The scarred hands settled the issue

It's my prayer this morning

That Jesus's scarred hands - from the cross - which redeemed us - and bought us back to God - settle the issue for everyone here this morning

And that just like the orphan boy - we cling ever so tightly to Jesus!

Let's pray...