

Return to the Lord your God (Hosea 14:1-9; Hebrews 10:19-25)

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If you could please turn your Bibles to Hosea chapter 14. This is our final look at the book of Hosea. 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/Change?

A true story to begin with

William Fay in his book "Share Jesus without Fear" says this:

"My resume spelt "power". I was president and CEO of a multi-million dollar international corporation. I had ties with the "mob", and I owned one of the larger brothels (illegal at the time) in the United States. I was involved in racketeering, bookmaking and gambling. I had a gold Rolex, a chauffeur-driven limousine, lots of money, on to my fourth wife and I had many trophies for racquetball (like squash)... I felt I had everything that the world said spelled success. And I mocked anyone who dared share their faith in Jesus with me"

He goes on to say that one morning at his sports club - he was looking for someone to annihilate at racquetball when he looked through the little window in the door and saw a man on the court who looked like a Jew.

William brazenly opened the door and said: "What are you doing here on Yom Kippur - why aren't you doing whatever Jews do on their holidays?"

The Jewish man, a doctor, Paul Grant, said "I'm also a Christian, Yom Kippur, is the day Jews ask God to forgive them of their sins for another year. I don't have to do that because I've already received forgiveness through Jesus, the Messiah' William sneered: "Oh please, give me a break"

William goes on to say: "For months, Dr. Paul Grant would stand by his locker whilst I asked him questions, deliberately trying to make him late for his patients. I thought, 'What a stupid fool, how can this idiot sit here and let me do this to him?'"

A year and half later, William's brothel was raided by the police. He had many many phone calls from people wanting to know if their name had been mentioned to the police. Only Dr. Paul Grant called to ask if William was OK?

That's when William started to take the Christian, Dr. Paul Grant, seriously... And William started to change...

How do we know when someone has really changed?

The Bible says:

[PowerPoint 1-Change?]

Matt 7:16 - **16** By their fruit you will recognize them

Matt 7:18 - **18** A good tree cannot bear bad fruit, and a bad tree cannot bear good fruit.

That's what God wants for Israel - He wants them to change

Really change!

That's what the whole book of Hosea has been about

It's about showing Israel how unfaithful they are to their one true God

Just like Gomer was unfaithful to her husband Hosea

All God wants is for Israel to change - and be faithful to Him!

God appeals for repentance (Hosea 14:1-3)

So He calls them to change

See v1 of Hosea 14

Return, Israel to the Lord your God

It's a command - not a suggestion!

The Hebrew means turn back - repent

[PowerPoint 2-Repent definition]

A definition of repent:

- to feel or express sincere regret or remorse about one's wrongdoing or sin.
- to turn back to God and turn away from evil and sin
- change one's life in a new direction – in God's direction – a U-turn

Why should Israel do that?

Well - obviously because God said so

But also because their sin has been their downfall - it says in verse 1

It's Israel's sin that has got them in the mess they've been in - in all of the book of Hosea

And God says in v2 - they need to use words to repent

They need to say sorry

And not like a child who gets caught doing the wrong thing and says - s-o-r-r-y

But a genuine heartfelt sincere sorry

What should they be sorry for?

See v3 - they have 2 sources of their sin

- a) They've trusted in Assyria and Assyria's military might instead of trusting God
- b) And they've trusted in idols (false gods) and worshipped them instead of the one true God - YHWH

So they need to confess that it is in God alone that they must trust in - because He is the Father of Compassion - He's the one who shows compassion to the weak and the vulnerable - He's the one who shows compassion to those who return to Him

The question for us then this morning is:

Who are we trusting in - instead of God?

And what are we trusting in - instead of God?

So let's pause right now and - write it down -

And let's close our eyes - and silently confess and name anyone or anything - we are trusting in - instead of God

And let's commit to a new direction this morning:

(pause)

God's gracious promise (Hosea 14:4-8)

Once someone has repented

Like William eventually did

They can receive Jesus into their life

[PowerPoint 3-God's Promise]

And verse 4 says God Himself will heal their waywardness (backsliding)

He Himself will fix their sins

And love them freely

If only they come back to Him and say sorry!

When we come back to God and repent

God fixes our sin too - and loves us freely too

God does this for us through His Son, Jesus' death on the cross

So that God's anger is turned away from us - and His anger is turned on His Son

Jesus on the cross instead

And because God does heal Israel's waywardness

He says to Israel in v5-6

It's like having a fresh start

God paints a picture of what repentance brings to Israel and to any person who truly repents and turns back to God

When people turn back to God

Growth is restored - they blossom like a lily flower - see v5 - and grow spiritually - closer to God

Beauty is restored - like a lily is beautiful - the person who turns back to God - will be once more beautiful to God

Strength is restored - see v5 - there's a picture of the long and strong roots of a Lebanon tree - that's a picture of someone reconnected to God through His Son Jesus - and getting their strength from Him - and not themselves

Worth is restored - like the valuable olive tree of Israel's day see v6 - a person connected to God - has worth and value again - their life has meaning and purpose once more

Contentment is restored - just like the contentment we might get from smelling a beautiful fragrance - like the fragrance of a cedar tree - v6 - there is a new contentment and peace for those connected to God

Productivity is restored - someone connected to God will be productive - not only flourishing like grain growing and blossoming like a vine - but like a vine spreads outwards - so a person connected to God spreads outwards and is a blessing to others

That's what happens when we turn back to God!

And because Israel has turned back to God - with words of sorry from their lips as God suggested in verse 2 - they will now bear fruit for God

See verse 8 - they won't have anything more to do with false gods and idols

Because that's what genuine sincere heartfelt repentance is - it is a complete change in direction - away from evil and sin - and towards God

And so - as it says in verse 8 - they will flourish like a juniper tree flourishes

The people of Israel will start to be fruitful again because they are reconnected to God again - and as He says at the end of verse 8 - their fruitfulness comes from Him anyway!

And it's the same for us - our fruitfulness comes from staying connected to Jesus - the True Vine - as we learnt last week - and if we're not connected to Jesus - we can't be fruitful for God - and in fact Jesus says - if we are apart from Him - we can do nothing!

Response (Hosea 14:9 and Hebrews 10:19-25)

So far then

We've learnt that God wants people to turn back to Him - Repent

And when they do - God promises restoration - and it's all brought about Him - through His Son

So as always - we need a response to God's restoration - through Jesus

[PowerPoint 4-Response 1-Wise]

Our first response is in verse 9

1. And involves a **decision to be wise** - if we're wise - we will listen to what God is saying through Hosea here - and turn back to God - continue to say sorry and ask for forgiveness when we are disobeying God - and walk in God's ways - which He clearly lays down in His Word. And put our faith and trust in Jesus - the Only One who can restore us back into a loving relationship with God. Or we can decide to be unwise - dare I say foolish - and continue to walk away from God and rebel against Him. And have Hell to pay! It's a simple choice. It's the choice William Fay faced - continue thinking he was a "success" when in actual fact - in God's eyes - He was a failure! Praise God William Fay became a Christian and he's now a well-known Christian author and evangelist. One of his books is called: "Share Jesus without Fear" - I highly recommend it!

[PowerPoint 5-Hebrews 10]

2. Our 2nd response is found in our NT passage from Hebrews 10:19-25. So please turn there now. And it's a matter of us - having made the wise decision to follow Jesus - to **persevere in our faith**. The writer of Hebrews is telling us in v19 - we can be so confident in our relationship with God because of the blood of Jesus - we can now go directly to God - and talk to Him and listen to Him - it's a close personal relationship - not an arms-length or distant relationship. Because Jesus opened up access to God the Father - when He died on the cross and took the sin of the world on Him - the temple curtain that protected the way to God's presence in the Most Holy Place of the temple - that curtain was torn in two see v20 - and meant we as Christians can now go directly to the Father, because of Jesus - who is the Great priest see v21 - we don't have to go to anyone else to confess or mediate our relationship with God - we can go directly to God Himself.

That - the writer of Hebrews - should give us complete confidence - he uses the word assurance - in v22 - we have complete assurance because of what our faith in Jesus brings

What is this assurance we have?

See v22 - that Jesus' death on the cross has washed away our sin and has cleaned up our guilty conscience. We don't need to feel guilty of our sins anymore - if we've repented and put our faith in Jesus

So the writer of Hebrews says - our response should be - in v23 - to hold on to the hope we have - unswervingly - the Greek means - unmoved - without wavering.

In one of our Bible study groups this week - we discussed the word - hope

In our language today - we use hope - like this:

I hope the Knights win on the weekend

I hope you have a great weekend

You'd have to agree that - that sort of hope - doesn't sound very confident - does it?

That's not the hope that v23 describes when it says:

[23 Let us hold unswervingly to the hope we profess, for he who promised is faithful.](#)

One of our Bible study members suggested - it is sure hope - certain hope -

Why is it sure or certain hope - because the person who promised it - God - is always faithful and always keeps His promises!

This sure hope - is that believing in Jesus not only gives us forgiveness of our sins - but has us looking forward to a guaranteed place in Heaven - living with God forever

So with that place in Heaven guaranteed

The writer of Hebrews gives us our response!

See v24

[Spur one another on towards love and good deeds](#)

So let people know when they are loving and how they can be loving towards others. Let them know how much their love and good deeds are appreciated - let them know how much people appreciate their prayers, their phone calls, their visits. That will spur them on to do more of the same.

Then see v25

Don't give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but encouraging one another

Some people argue - they don't need to come to church to be a Christian.

I'm sorry I don't agree for 2 reasons

First - you should want to come to say thank you to Jesus - He saved you!

Second - and this is the point in v25 - coming to church is not just about ourselves - it's about encouraging one another! How can we encourage a whole heap of people if we don't come! Do you know how encouraged I am - when I see Cheryle turn up here on a Sunday morning - it probably takes her 2 hours - and 2 people to help her - just to get here! I'm encouraged by that - what commitment and effort! It would be so easy to not bother.

Friends we're here to encourage each other - to keep going -

These are tough times -

And the writer of Hebrews says - in v25 - don't give up meeting together - as some do - but keep on encouraging one another - especially he says - as the Day - the Day that Jesus comes back approaches -

And the writer of Hebrews is not just talking about meeting together on Sunday either - there's plenty of other opportunities to meet together and encourage one another...

There's growth groups/Bible studies

Prayer meetings

Communication corner ministries

Evangelism team

Choir and music groups

Visiting people in their homes, hospitals and aged care

All these opportunities to encourage one another

(pause)

Conclusion

Remember my story of William Fay - at the start

Remember his Christian friend, Dr. Paul Grant -

Dr. Paul could have stopped going to the squash court each week and getting teased and ridiculed by William Fay

But Dr. Paul persevered - because he had that full assurance that his faith gave Him - that Jesus is the only way to the Father - the only way to receive forgiveness - and the only way to Heaven

Dr. Paul was not going to stop encouraging William - it was too important

He wanted to see William repent - and turn back to God

Just like Hosea wanted Israel to turn back to God

Dr. Paul was spurred on to keep encouraging William

Dr. Paul was part of a church - that hadn't given up meeting together - and praying together - and hadn't given up encouraging each other

So Dr. Paul was faithful to God

And it paid off!

(pause)

We need to persevere and encourage and pray for those who are lost from God

The Day of Jesus's return is approaching

We don't know when

What if it's tomorrow - and there's someone we didn't tell about Jesus - or there's someone we couldn't be bothered to encourage

Then what?

Let's pray...