

Heart of Justice or Bloodshed

I had planned on covering chapters 10 and 11 this morning, but I could not. We will tackle the wonderful insights God has for us in chapter 11 next Lord's Day, that is, if our Lord and Savior Jesus has not returned. My hope is this morning God will speak to you as he spoke to me this week. That each of us, and all of us, will be more, more spiritually alive by what God wants us to hear from Hosea and his other inspired writers of His Word. God is calling us to be more. God wants us to be more in love with him. God desires we are more in love with His Word. As His church he wants us to be more in love with each other and desire to live more alive in Him to serve others. God desires us to be alive in Him, enjoying Him and living with a passion for his glory.

I hope you will discover what God desires for you this morning and you will desire more, more of God. So we begin -

All through the Old Testament, Israel is seen as the vine or vineyard of God. The prophet Isaiah, a contemporary of Hosea wrote, "Let me sing for my beloved my love song concerning his **vineyard**: My beloved had a **vineyard** on a very fertile hill. ² He dug it and cleared it of stones, and planted it with choice **vines**; he built a watchtower in the midst of it, and hewed out a wine vat in it; and he looked for it to yield grapes, but it yielded wild grapes. ... ⁷ For the **vineyard** of the LORD of hosts is the house of Israel, and the men of Judah are his pleasant planting; and he looked for justice, but behold, bloodshed; for righteousness, but behold, an outcry!" (Isaiah 5:1-2,7) The Old Testament uses the image of the vine and vineyard to describe Israel and it should be producing good fruit. However, the

illustration shows that even though God had chosen Israel and blessed Israel - Israel did not produce good fruit. Israel did not allow God to tend it and prune it so it would grow strong and produce the best fruit. In verse 4 of Isaiah 5 God asks, “What more was there to do for my vineyard, that I have not done in it? When I looked for it to yield grapes, why did it yield wild grapes?” God blessed Israel and Israel produce sour grapes. Hosea now says the same thing as Isaiah, reading beginning at verse 1 of chapter 10, “Israel is a luxuriant **vine** that yields its fruit. The more his fruit increased, the more altars he built; as his country improved, he improved his pillars. ² Their heart is false; now they must bear their guilt. The LORD will break down their altars and destroy their pillars.” Hosea expresses that Israel is a flourishing vine, Israel has grown but as it grew by God’s blessing it built alters to idols and it built buildings that gloried man, but Israel did not bring glory to God. Israel has proven itself false to God and must fully bear its guilt of idolatry for it remains unrepentant. Israel claims a heart of justice, but as Isaiah said behold, it lives in bloodshed.

Each chapter of Hosea has looked at Israel’s sin from different viewpoints. In this chapter Hosea looks at Israel’s divided and deceitful heart that seeks bloodshed.

Verse 2 begins with “**Their heart is false.**” Other translations use “faithless” or “divided” or “deceitful” instead of false, but the message is the same, the people of Israel are lying to both themselves and to God about what they believe and what is it’s treasure. They are like the “snake oil” salesman that claims his elixir will cure everything. He knows full well he is lying but does so for his gain at other people’s expense. Israel thinks their lifestyle of self-seeking pleasures and false idols will satisfy them, they claim they are God’s, but in truth their lifestyle is destroying them. Before God saved me the story was the same. I thought I could find purpose and satisfaction through my ambition and self-seeking. My life was a wreck and I thought if I worked harder I could control the outcome. The harder I

worked to get what the world told me would satisfy - the less satisfied I became. I was racing down a road of self-destruction, but that was not all, for when a husband and father is on this path of destruction it affects his wife and children also. The women and children of Israel suffered because of the nation's unrighteousness. Let the Lord now speak to those who have ears to hear!

Do we study Hosea today for the history it holds? Do we read Hosea because God inspired it? Do we study Hosea because we want to understand Israel's mistakes? Do we read and study Hosea so that it will speak to us and help us live for God's glory? The answer is "yes" to all these but there is more. We must ask what does God want me to learn from this and how can I change to become more righteous? How is this story going to be my story if I do not seek the heart of God? How can I let God's love deep into my heart, so I can love others? Here lies the problem for Israel and one we strive with – putting to death our passion for the world and living with passion for the heart of God. Israel's heart was one of stone found in two tablets that they failed to live up to. For us, it is the same as it was for Paul in his relationship with those God placed in his life to teach and love. Paul loved the believers in Corinth, and this is my desire for us as a church – to live in God's love and relationship, Paul wrote, ["You yourselves are our letter of recommendation, written on our hearts, to be known and read by all. ³ And you show that you are a letter from Christ delivered by us, written not with ink but with the Spirit of the living God, not on tablets of stone but on tablets of human hearts. ⁴ Such is the confidence that we have through Christ toward God. ⁵ Not that we are sufficient in ourselves to claim anything as coming from us, but our sufficiency is from God, ⁶ who has made us sufficient to be ministers of a new covenant, not of the letter but of the Spirit. For the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life."](#) (2 Corinthians 3:2-6) Just as Christ has written his truth on our hearts by his Word and Spirit, so we are to deliver his Word with love, grace and mercy to the world. We are to share

Christ's love from hearts that feel all the love and joy of his salvation for us, but to fully appreciate Christ and what he has done for us. We also need to feel the pain and suffering of those who do not know Jesus, just as he did.

Heart Neither Hot Nor Cold

Israel's heart is hot for the world but it is neither hot nor cold for God. They claim to be the chosen people of God but do not love him alone. This is the message of Hosea's marriage; like God, Hosea has an unwavering love for Gomer as God's unwavering love for Israel. Gomer and Israel return this agape love with unfaithfulness not once, but over and over again. Today millions of people who call themselves chosen by God, who call themselves "Christian" are doing the same thing Israel did. They go to church. They would say I am not a Jew or Buddhist or Muslim and by this they would say they are Christian. But they do not love God and serve Him only. Hosea warned the people of Israel and then God grew silent for 400 hundred years until the Son of God came to establish the New Covenant. Jesus warned and continues to warn people to turn from the path Israel chose and to follow God alone. Christ gave each believe a gift, the gift of the Holy Spirit that dwells within to change each person and give them a life force to continually help them worship God and not turn back to the world. Paul said it was easy to know if a person was of the world or of God. Paul wrote of this to the Galatians and his word could have been the words of Hosea as well for the message is the same, "Now the works of the flesh are evident: sexual immorality, impurity, sensuality, ²⁰ idolatry, sorcery, enmity, strife, jealousy, fits of anger, rivalries, dissensions, divisions, ²¹ envy, drunkenness, orgies, and things like these. I warn you, as I warned you before, that those who do such things will not inherit the kingdom of God." *Not only has Paul warned the people before, as Hosea also did, but God warns people throughout the Bible because we are slow learners and people whose attention span and memories are so very short. Paul continues with*

what it looks like when someone truly is living their life in Christ, ²² “But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, ²³ gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law. ²⁴ And those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires.”

(Galatians 5:19-24) To live for Christ is not like the fruit that ripens and there is a short window of time when it is good to eat before it turns bad. It is a life that is continually growing and ripening to an ever-sweeter state because of what Christ does in one over their entire life.

As I studied for this morning I had to ask myself, “Am I the same Christian as I was years ago?” I mean have I stagnated or am I growing closer to God? Is my spiritual fruit continuing to ripen? If I am not growing spiritually, not only am I suffering by not knowing an ever-deeper relationship with God, but also I am not the husband, father and grandfather that my family needs me to be. I was so convicted. I understand God loves me with an unfailing love and desires only the best for me and I understand that this is also what I am to desire for my family. This thought prompted questions. Am I the spiritual leader I should be for my wife? I cannot be, if I am not growing spiritually, if my life as a Christian has become routine, then I am not growing as God’s desires. Am I the spiritual mentor to my daughters and sons-in-laws that they could benefit from. Am I a good example of spiritual leadership that can help them in navigating this broken world? I cannot be, if my spiritual fruit is no longer ripening to a sweeter state with Christ. Am I the grandfather God calls me to be, as my grandchildren wrestle with what their purpose in life is? I cannot be, if I am not growing spiritually or if I have lost my passion for Christ. Am I the pastor God has called me to be? Am I shepherding all of you as God desires and as you deserve? I cannot be, if I have lost my passion for Christ and if I am not growing spiritually. What am I to do? I need to be more intentional in the precious little time I have left on this earth. I

need to love God with abandonment and this will enable me to love all of you more. Verse 24 of Galatians chapter 5 says, “Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires.” We are to crucify our flesh and the passions for the worldly, but we need to have great passion and a burning desire for Christ’s heart and all things holy.

Heart Abiding in God

Hosea is preaching that God had chosen Israel, but Israel had not chosen God. Hosea takes Israel back to the dark days of Gibeah (**ghib·aw**). Reading verse 9, “From the days of Gibeah, you have sinned, O Israel; there they have continued.” The tribe of Benjamin occupied the town of Gibeath and a terrible thing happened there that caused the other 11 tribes to come against Benjamin and almost wipe it out. If you desire to know more about this terrible past that haunted Israel, please read **Judges chapters 19 to 21**. The point Hosea is making is that those who claim to belong to God must live differently than the world, but Israel has remained or continued to live as the result of it’s past and because they did not repent they live separated from God.

Paul addressed this in his 2nd letter to Timothy, “God’s firm foundation stands, bearing this seal: ‘The Lord knows those who are his,’ and, ‘Let everyone who names the name of the Lord depart from iniquity *or wickedness.*’ ” (2 Timothy 2:19) Israel had failed to depart from iniquity. Paul’s words could have as easily been referring to Hosea 10:12, “Sow for yourselves righteousness; reap steadfast love; break up your fallow ground, for it is the time to seek the LORD, that he may come and rain righteousness upon you.” God though Hosea is calling people to repent and live differently. God is saying if one lives in righteousness, truth and love they will glorify him and he will not turn from them, but instead he will rain righteousness upon them. The Chronicler wrote in 2 Chronicles chapter 30, “For

the LORD your God is gracious and merciful and will not turn away his face from you, if you return to him.” (2 Chronicles 30:9) This implies that God will not turn away if, if we return and live for him. In John’s 2nd letter he wrote that truth, righteousness and love are the evidence that a person is “born again.” In this same letter John was concerned about those who decided they had discovered a new way of teaching and new truths of God and the writings of the inspired men of God found in the Bible needed to be abandoned or revised for these people were the newly enlightened. This type of self-promoting behavior, which can be observed today in both pulpit and TV, has always led people away from God. The Israelites adjusted God’s Word and it led them into idol worship and as Hosea says, whoredom. The Pharisees of Jesus’ time become legalistic and power concerned and the nation of Israel suffered spiritually. Today churches that have changed the Bible lead people into walking away from God and into damnation. I praise God his Word does not change. Why do we study this unchanging Word? To live as God instructs because it is for our own good and is the only path to salvation. This brings us back to my earlier questions, “Am I and are you continuing to grow spiritually; growing in God’s truth, righteousness and love or are we the same Christians that we have been? Men are we the husbands that care for our wives more than our own lives? “In the same way husbands should love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself.” (Ephesians 5:28) Men are we the fathers and grandfathers that can breathe spiritual life into our families centered on God’s Word and prayer? If not, at some point as 2 Chronicles says God may turn his face from us. Women are you women of the Word and encouragers of your husbands helping them to be the spiritual leader God desires or are you as God said to Eve, “Your desire shall be contrary to your husband, but he shall rule over you.” (Genesis 3:16)

We all may ask, at this point, how can I live, as I should? We can all say, I talk of love, but know I am often unloving. I talk about truth, but I speak, at times, untruthfully. I desire and strive for righteousness, but I know I carry the burden of sin with me daily. How can we, who are marred with sin, live lives that glorify God? Jesus gives us the answer, “Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit by itself, **unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in me.** ⁵I am the vine; you are the branches. Whoever abides in me and I in him, **he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing.**” (John 15:4-5) God planted the vine of Israel, but they chose to not abide in God. They were the vines not of God and only Jesus is the true vine who nurtures the branches. Jesus as the true vine does not produce wild vines of sour grapes and sin as Israel became. Jesus is the true vine that produces through his branches sweet fruit of spiritual life. We are the branches of the true vine Christ; he lives in us and we live because he is our life source. If we want to be fruitful for the kingdom of God we must, must remain in Christ because then Christ remains in us. These 2 abidings or remainings are inseparable. To be fruitful one must abide in Christ and he is us. Having a union with Christ is the secret of kingdom fruitfulness. Jesus promises, and he always fulfills his promises, that if we abide in him he will abide in us and we will bear much spiritual fruit in our lives, and the lives of our family, and our church and community. Christ’s heartbeat will become our heartbeat.

It is my desire this morning that I recognize and appreciate God’s love for me through his only Son, Jesus Christ, so that, I may love Joyce as the husband God wants me to be and that I can grow to be. I do not want to be the Christian of yesterday, but I want to be more, I want to be more Christian each and every day. I want to be the father God desires for me to be and love my children and their husbands deeply. I want to be someone they can look to, someone who lives truth, righteousness and I desire the love of God be in my life and that it spills into their

lives. I want to be the grandfather that my grandchildren can trust to always love them and help them make wise decisions that will bring them closer to Christ and give them a purpose for life. I desire to be the pastor that loves all of you with the Word of God so that you may be the men and women God's desires and together we will grow ever deeper through his Word and in his love. That you may, as Paul wrote to Timothy, and is my desire as *"my true children in the faith: is for you to know Grace, mercy, and peace from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Lord. (1 Timothy 1:2)* Together, you and I, as a family and as a community may help each live truth, righteousness and love by the power of the Holy Spirit that Jesus has given to each of us and experience the gifts of Jesus, who said, *"Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. Not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your hearts be troubled, neither let them be afraid."* (John 14:27) My beloved, do not be the Christians of yesterday, but be more of a Christian each day for this is the desire of God the Father for you. God will bless you so that you may bless many in his name and bear much fruit, but you must abide in Christ and draw your life from Christ - for apart from Christ we die.

Lets come together and lift our hearts and voices to God calling out for his blessings. Call to God for his strength and plead for our submission to God and His Holy Spirit. Let us acknowledge God and ask how we can be a blessing to those he places in our lives. Let us intercede for each other. Let us pray together and pray from our hearts. Do not miss this opportunity for God to bless you and for you to bless others. I will begin our time of prayer and Garth will close and then we will finish with one last song.

