

Return
Hosea 11:1-11

I. The diverse excellencies of God the Father's love

- Choosing and redeeming His people from the bondage of slavery
- Instructing and calling them through His prophets and holy word
- Nurturing and supporting them as a parent teaches a child to walk
- Leading and drawing them with cords of love
- Lifting their burdens and nourishing them with daily provisions

II. Why would Israel not return to God?

(1) Hosea the Prophet (1:1-2)

- God let Hosea experience intensive grief, sorrow, and betrayal over a wife who ran after other men, so he could powerfully and vividly communicate God's grief over Israel's sin and spiritual adultery.

(2) Go after Baal and see Baal as their provider for food and water (2:5)

- A misunderstanding of God's supply chain (2:5-8)
- God the Father is the fountain of all blessings (4:11-12)
- Psalm 103:1-2
- Return: a change of understanding

(3) Hearts led astray by sensational pleasures (4:11-12)

- Exchange the glory of God for an image in the likeness of human being and earthly creatures and indulge in their impure desires (Romans 1:23-24)
- Do not be fascinated by the things of this world or what human beings can do, lest we lose our awe, wonder, and amazement for the God of the Bible.
- Return: a change of heart's affection

(4) Seek protection from Assyria (7:11-12)

- Hosea's prophetic ministry in a time of national instability and corruption
- Verse 5: Israel turned to Assyria for protection, but Assyria ended up conquering and enslaving them instead.
- Verse 6: Assyria serves as God's instrument of judgment, bringing destruction upon their cities. 722 BC: The end of the Northern Kingdom—Samaria is destroyed and Israel is taken captive to Assyria.
- Who or what is my fake refuge?
 - What are you trusting to protect you that actually ends up enslaving and destroying your life?
 - Break that attachment to false refuges, return to God, and exalt Him as the only One who can save us from sin and death.
 - He alone leads us through life's troubles, uncertainties, crisis, and conflicts, and gives us true peace, stability, and security through Jesus Christ, our rock and salvation.
- Return: a change of allegiance

III. Jesus Christ and Him crucified: The final and complete revelation of God's justice and mercy

(1) Intensive expressions of God's justice and mercy

- Verse 6: an intense expression of God's justice through punishment.
- Verses 7 & 8: an intense expression of His grief, compassion, mercy, and deep reluctance to destroy His people.
- Was God confused, indecisive, and unsure of how to handle His rebellious people? Justice and mercy often seem like two opposing choices. Must God punish because His justice cannot be compromised?

Can He simply cancel judgment when the covenant demands a response? Will He hold back His rod of discipline simply because He is merciful?

- God is not simplistic or reductionist like us. He is God, and not man—the Holy One in our midst, the Supreme Lord over everything in heaven and on earth.

(2) From the mercy seat to the atoning sacrifice on the cross: the full revelation of God's holy justice and mercy (Romans 3:25-26)

- Hosea opened a window for us to see the diverse excellencies of God's character, but we need to look across the whole counsel of Scripture to see the beautiful harmony of God's justice and mercy. Both justice and mercy come from the Holy of Holies. The supreme God has sovereign freedom to choose when, how, and to whom He extends His justice and His mercy.
- God's Testimony and Mercy Seat in the Ark of the Covenant:
 - The Ark of the Covenant, mercy seat God instructed Moses to build the Ark of the Covenant to carry the Ten Commandments, which represent God's holy standard and righteousness.
 - *You shall put the mercy seat on top of the ark, and in the ark you shall put the testimony which I will give to you. There I will meet with you; and from above the mercy seat, from between the two cherubim which are upon the ark of the testimony, I will speak to you about all which I will command you for the sons of Israel* (Exodus 25:21-22).
 - Propitiation: same greek word as mercy seat, place of atonement. Some versions like Christian Standard Bible and Lexham translate it as mercy seat while other versions translate it as propitiation or atonement. Christ is the acceptable, wrath satisfying sacrifice on our behalf.
 - Jesus Christ and Him crucified: demonstration of God's righteousness; demonstration of God's mercy and forbearance. The cross is only place we can see that perfect demonstration of God's justice and mercy.
 - Faith in Jesus Christ is the only way to receive this divine mercy and to be made right with God.

(3) Live by God's mercy

- His Mercy Is More: *Praise the Lord, His mercy is more, Stronger than darkness, new every morn, Our sins they are many, His mercy is more.*
- Come to Jesus: *Are you hopeless? Are you guilty? Caught in shame for all your sin? He pursues you, to forgive you. Rest in Him. He has paid for every failure. Mercy flows in endless stream. Come and follow, freedom calls you. Rest in Him*
- From the Depth of Woe: *To wash away the crimson stain, Grace, grace alone availeth. Our works, alas! are all in vain; In much the best life faileth. No man can glory in Thy sight, All must alike confess Thy might, And live alone by mercy. Therefore my trust is in the Lord, And not in mine own merit. On Him my soul shall rest, His word upholds my fainting spirit. His promised mercy is my fort, My comfort, and my sweet support. I wait for it with patience.*

IV. Flee back to God, tremble like a bird

- Verses 10 & 11: God is pictured as a roaring lion, a fighter and a warrior who is determined to deliver His people from exile and slavery in Assyria and return them to the promised land.
- The diverse excellencies of God the Father's love
 - Redeeming us from the bondage of sin
 - Instructing us through His Holy Scriptures
 - Nurturing our souls and growing us to be more like Jesus Christ
 - Leading us with cords of love
 - Carrying our burdens and meeting our needs every day
 - Disciplining us when our hearts are very hard and rebellious
 - Forbearance and mercy when we are trapped in sin and suffering
 - Rescue us from the slavery of sin and bring us back to His holy presence
- Flee back to God, tremble like a bird, standing in awe of the diverse excellences of God's love.