

“What Sayeth You? Hosea: ‘Repent and Heal’”

Scripture: Hosea 5:15-6:6

Graphics: prophets, rain, healing

Big Truth: The prophets of the Old Testament were instructed by God, sometimes begrudgingly, to speak God’s truth to His chosen people. They were not always received well and received persecution. Yet, they spoke truth and called the people back to faithful worship and action. Their call was for repentance, rejection of idol worship, love for God, and return to worship of the One True God, Yahweh. In our lives, we are called back to true faith and action, worship and prayer, healing and wholeness during every season of our lives.

Focus Phrase: Spiritual healing only comes through turning your eyes back to God alone.

1. Introduction

- A. “What Sayeth You?” That’s the title of our brand new sermon series for the first part of the summer.
- B. That phrase comes from Middle English...a bit of an ancient question that’s used to ask someone what they think.
- C. In the English Court system, that phrase is asked to a defendant at the time of charging them with a crime. “To the charge of first degree murder, what sayeth you? (or what say you?) So, it’s like, “Here’s the situation. What do you have to say about it?”
- D. Our modern phrases are similar, but not as formal. We might ask, “Whatta you think about them apples?”
- E. We’ll be using this basic question, “What Sayeth You?” to find out what several of the Old Testament Prophets had to say to the people of God in the midst of the reality of their time and place.
- F. Now, you may be thinking, “That sounds boring.” Well, as we spend time with the prophets and the leaders of Israel, it’s anything BUT boring. THAT’s because the Prophets were counter-cultural. Counter-cultural is always fun! They were edgy and said it like they heard it. Rarely boring. I mean, there are people involved! People like you and me! And that always gets exciting, right?
- G. Human nature is a pretty common experience no matter what era we live in... and God is God no matter what era we live in (amen?). What the prophets have to say to the people of Israel and Judah, is very applicable to us today, and can often be pretty brow-raising.
- H. We’ll ask the question, “What Sayeth You?” to Hosea, Moses, Jeremiah, Zechariah, and Isaiah.
- I. Origen of Alexandria, the 2nd century AD scholar and theologian said, “We must believe what is good and true about the prophets, that they were sages,

that they did understand what proceeded from their mouths, and that they bore prudence on their lips.” (Origen of Alexandria)

- J. Frank Herbert said, “The best prophets lead you up to the curtain and let you peer through for yourself.”
- K. So we’ll connect with the OT Prophets to walk up to the curtain that opens to peer into the reality of in the lives of the people of Israel. But I think we’ll find ourselves and OUR lives there as well. We’ll peer in to see what God wants to show us through these ancient texts and how we’re to respond.
- L. Let’s PRAY and then we can begin with our first prophet, Hosea.
- M. PRAY!!! (Jesus, You are Lord...)**
- N. To begin this journey to the curtain, we’ll start with the prophet Hosea. He was a prophet in Israel during the reign of King Jeroboam II in the northern kingdom of Israel, between 750-722 BC.
- O. During Hosea’s time in Israel’s history, the people of God were divided into two kingdoms, Judah in the south, which included the city of Jerusalem, and Israel (or Ephraim) in the north. The Prophet Hosea is the only recorded prophet that wrote specifically from Israel in the north. At that time, things were prosperous for the people of Israel. And, yet, King Jeroboam II was a bad dude, it says in 2 Kings 14:23-24 “In the fifteenth year of Amaziah son of Joash king of Judah, Jeroboam son of Jehoash king of Israel became king in Samaria, and he reigned forty-one years. **He did evil in the eyes of the Lord** and did not turn away from any of the sins of Jeroboam son of Nebat, which he had caused Israel to commit.”
- P. So, even though things were prosperous for Israel, they were in a heap of trouble. I suspect we can learn some things about our own current reality as a world, nation, and region.
- Q. What we’ll see is that the people were ready for, and God was ready to send, **healing** to their nation...to restore them to wholeness and holiness. And the pathway to get there led through **repentance**, or turning away from everything else, and turning TO God.
- R. Here’s where we’re heading: **Spiritual healing only comes through turning your eyes back to God alone.**
- S. Let’s read this short passage from Hosea, chapter 5, starting in verse 15.

2. Scripture

A. READ Hosea 5:15-6:6

B. Let’s break this down a bit:

- i. First, in verse 15, God said, “I will return again to my place...” The image here, from the previous verses, is of a lion that’s attacked and injured its

- prey and then returned to its lair. The nation of Israel had been attacked by God, who's like a lion. The people hearing this would've had a VERY clear vision of lions attacking people, so this was an image that induced fear.
- ii. God said he would remove himself from their presence (back to His lair) until they saw their guilt, turned desperately back to God, and then begged for mercy...for God's favor.
 - iii. Even in this ONE verse, things seem pretty desperate. They were injured, scared, and God had removed himself from their lives. Now, if your whole nation is built upon and structured around a theocracy (being ruled by God) and it's as if that ruler has injured you and then withdrawn, it WOULD be desperate, right? Turn to your neighbor and say, "that would be desperate".
 - iv. But, praise be to God, there was a pathway for restoration...a pathway for healing...a WAY to restore, not only the presence of God, but the wholeness of the people.
 - v. And that pathway was repentance - turning AWAY from the idols that they HAD been worshiping, and TO God alone, just like God desired.
 - vi. SO, then, Hosea or the people (we're not sure) began to cry out together in community:
 - a. Let's return to the Lord, guys!
 - b. He may've torn us to pieces, but he WILL heal us...bind up our wounds.
 - c. He will revive and restore us so that we can live in His presence again!
 - d. Let's acknowledge him...let's really KNOW him again.
 - e. As surely as the sun rises (which is 100%, right?), he WILL appear...he WILL come like winter rains and spring rains that water the earth.
 - f. Can't you just feel not only the desperation, but the hope that comes from their wanting to return to faithfulness to God? I often say that "Trying to please God, pleases God." They were trying to please God.
 - g. This is all a call to repentance...a communal turning away from the unholy and unfaithful worship of things that AREN'T God...and wanting - desperately - to get back to the time when they were faithful to the One True God, Yahweh. Their God. To be His chosen people.
 - vii. What made that difficult was that they were rich and powerful...they were self-sufficient and self-confident. They had everything they needed and were secure in what they had. In some ways, they didn't need God to provide or even rescue them. Until now.
 - viii. Something that's in the earlier part of Hosea is that even though they were rich, they were also slowly being conquered by the foreign nations around

them...Assyria was slowly taking more and more land from them. They were at a crossroads. They needed help. Money wouldn't rescue them.

- ix. Have you ever been at a point in your life when you needed to make a decision about continuing on the path you've been on, or take a new road? Maybe it's an old road that you need to return to? It's never easy or fun!
- x. Through Hosea, God responded. He saw the people's desire to please Him and return to Him. God said:
 - a. "What can I do with you?" We find ourselves sometimes saying to our kids, "What am I going to do with you?" when they frustrate us, if you have kids. That's what God was expressing through Hosea.
 - b. God said, "Your love for me is fleeting...like the morning mist and dew that just disappear!"
 - c. "That's why I cut you up...caused you discomfort. My judgments were like the sun...you felt the heat and it brought your sin to light."
 - d. Then there's this (listen): God said, "For I desire mercy and not sacrifice, and acknowledgement of God rather than burnt offerings."
 - e. What he was saying was that he wanted their hearts and not their religious activity or their money. He wanted their love and faithfulness, not their sacrifices and burnt offerings at the Temple. They were lost and thought they were OK because they were doing what the Law required most of the time. God wanted them to worship Him...to love Him...to pray to Him...and to give their lives over to NOTHING and NO ONE BUT Him.
- C. Jesus helps us here. In the gospel of Matthew, Jesus quoted this very verse from Hosea. In Matthew 9:9-13: "As Jesus was walking along, he saw a man called Matthew sitting at the tax-collection station, and he said to him, 'Follow me.' And he got up and followed him. And as he sat at dinner in the house, many tax collectors and sinners came and were sitting with Jesus and his disciples. When the Pharisees saw this, they said to his disciples, 'Why does your teacher eat with tax collectors and sinners?' But when he heard this, he said, 'Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick. Go and learn what this means, 'I desire mercy, not sacrifice.' For I have not come to call the righteous but sinners.'" Hosea 6:6...out of the mouth of Jesus.
- D. Jesus' point to the Pharisees was the same as the point God was making to the Israelites. "I want you heart, not legalism. I want your love, not sacrifices."
- E. And the purpose was not just the worship and faithfulness. Through a change of heart towards God, **spiritual healing comes**.
- F. Spiritual healing only comes through turning your eyes back to God alone.

- G. The people of God in 750BC had lost their way and took their eyes off God. They were spiritually sick. The Pharisees in 30AD had lost their way and took their eyes off God. They were spiritually sick.
- H. And Jesus said to them, and says to us today, “Those who are well have no need of a physician but those who are sick.”
- I. The people of Israel were desperate for healing...and the only way to healing was through turning back to God’s way...acknowledging that God’s ideas are far better than ours. Same with the Pharisees.

3. Application

- A. Today, I pray that you’ve been hearing the words of God, and the prophet and the people...and the words of Jesus. I pray the Holy Spirit has been tilling up some ground in your heart.
- B. Each one of us has places of sickness and brokenness in need of healing. Maybe you even feel like God, as a lion, has attacked you and you’re injured. Or something in your life is broken right now and you’re not sure who caused it or who’s to blame.
- C. We WANT to blame God for our troubles. That’s human nature. If God knows and controls all things, then surely He is the cause of your troubles, right? And even as you and I say that, we have a deep sense that it’s just not true.
- D. At times, our brokenness is a result of our own actions...maybe we have all we need on our own and we simply forgot about God until we need Him. Maybe someone else’s actions or inactions were at the root of our troubles. Whatever the cause, we feel broken and need healing.
- E. Here’s the GOOD NEWS! **We have a gracious and merciful God that calls us to repent and turn our eyes back to Him.**
- F. This is for everyone. Healing and wholeness is for everyone! Praise God!
- G. It starts with an **acknowledgment of our sin** and our brokenness.
 - i. God said to the people of Israel, “I’ll wait for you to see your guilt and seek my face.” God is patient with us. God waits and waits and waits for us to see it. I’ll tell you that it’s a lot easier and faster to see your own sin when you ask someone who is not you to point it out. It’s a lot more painful and we want to react and be offended...but it’s a shortcut to seeing your sin. It needs to be someone you trust deeply...but it’s the straight path to the next step, which is repentance.
 - ii. **Repentance** is not feeling sorry, but turning away from your sin and turning TO God. So often, when we’re desperate, it’s easier to turn to God in prayer, crying out for mercy. It’s a lot less urgent when you and I can spend, vacation, escape, and posture our way to our own brand of health. Unfortunately, our own version of health is not health at all, but a false

sense of security. Soon enough, the sickness and brokenness return. True repentance is humble, contrite, hopeful, and honest with ourselves and God.

iii. Only then does the **healing come**. Only through turning from our worship of things that are NOT God and knowing God again can we find the peace and forgiveness and hope that God SO desires to give us.

H. See your sin for what it is. Repent of it. Receive the healing God has for you.

I. Seventeenth-century Puritan theologian Thomas Watson argued that repentance was a spiritual medicine made up of six special ingredients. "If any one is left out, it loses its virtue." 1) Sight of sin, 2) Sorrow for sin, 3) Confession of sin, 4) Shame for sin, 5) Hatred for sin, 6) Turning from sin. --The Doctrine of Repentance (1668), 18.

J. Spiritual healing only comes through turning your eyes back to God alone.

4. Conclusion

A. What Sayeth You, Hosea?

B. What starts as a call to repentance, ends with a call to being healed and living a life of wholeness and holiness.

C. Isn't that what we're here for? To hear words from God that will lead us to healing so that healing leads us to being truly ALIVE?

D. Do you have a desire to be whole? Repent and turn to Jesus.

E. Do you have a desire for spiritual healing? Repent and turn to Jesus.

F. Yet, even more than that, do you desire to be ALIVE in Christ? If so, repent and believe, be forgiven and freed so that the words of the ancient people are your words and my words (here's what The Message Bible says):

"Come on, let's go back to God. He hurt us, but he'll heal us.

He hit us hard, but he'll put us right again.

In a couple of days we'll feel better. By the third day he'll have made us brand-new, Alive and on our feet, fit to face him.

We're ready to study God, eager for God-knowledge.

As sure as dawn breaks, so sure is his daily arrival.

He comes as rain comes, as spring rain refreshing the ground."

G. Spiritual healing only comes through turning your eyes back to God alone.

H. What Sayeth YOU?

I. Let's pray...