

RETURN TO LOVE AND JUSTICE

LESSON SCRIPTURE: HOSEA 11-12

FOCUS SCRIPTURE: HOSEA 11:1-2, 7-10; 12:1-2, 6-14

Key Verse: Hold fast to love and justice, and wait continually for your God. Hosea 12:6

Hosea 11:1-2, 7-10; 12:1-2, 6-14 (NRSV)

Hosea 11:1-2

1 When Israel was a child, I loved him, and out of Egypt I called my son.

2 The more I called them, the more they went from me; they kept sacrificing to the Baals, and offering incense to idols.

7-10

7 My people are bent on turning away from me. To the Most High they call, but he does not raise them up at all.

8 How can I give you up, Ephraim? How can I hand you over, O Israel? How can I make you like Admah? How can I treat you like Zeboiim? My heart recoils within me; my compassion grows warm and tender.

9 I will not execute my fierce anger; I will not again destroy Ephraim; for I am God and no mortal, the Holy One in your midst, and I will not come in wrath.

10 They shall go after the

Lord, who roars like a lion; when he roars, his children shall come trembling from the west.

12:1-2

1 Ephraim herds the wind, and pursues the east wind all day long; they multiply falsehood and violence; they make a treaty with Assyria, and oil is carried to Egypt.

2 The Lord has an indictment against Judah, and will punish Jacob according to his ways, and repay him according to his deeds.

6-14

6 But as for you, return to your God, hold fast to love and justice, and wait continually for your God.

7 A trader, in whose hands are false balances, he loves to oppress.

8 Ephraim has said, "Ah, I am rich, I have gained wealth for myself; in all of my gain no offense has been found in me that

would be sin.”

9 I am the Lord your God from the land of Egypt; I will make you live in tents again, as in the days of the appointed festival.

10 I spoke to the prophets; it was I who multiplied visions, and through the prophets I will bring destruction.

11 In Gilead there is iniquity, they shall surely come to nothing. In Gilgal they sacrifice bulls, so their altars shall be like stone

heaps on the furrows of the field.

12 Jacob fled to the land of Aram, there Israel served for a wife, and for a wife he guarded sheep.

13 By a prophet the Lord brought Israel up from Egypt, and by a prophet he was guarded.

14 Ephraim has given bitter offense, so his Lord will bring his crimes down on him and pay him back for his insults.

WORD POWER!!!

- **Ephraim** – One of the tribes of Israel.
- **Indictment** – A formal charge of a crime.
- **Iniquity** – Unfair and unjust behavior.

GETTING READY!!!

Hosea is the first of the twelve “minor prophets” books in the Bible. We do not know much about him; however, we do know that Hosea’s messages were that of wanting others to be back in right relationship with God. In Hosea’s times, many had forgotten the laws of God and began being unfaithful to God by worshipping idols like Baal. This saddened Hosea, and he prophesied to the people to return to God who had always loved and cared for them.

In our scripture lesson today, Hosea first reminds the people of just how much God loves them by comparing them to a child

being loved by a caring parent. However, in Chapter 12, we see that the tone of Hosea’s message is much different. Hosea tells them of the judgment that is to come if they do not change their ways. He focuses on the tribe of Ephraim specifically. Hosea asks the people to contrast the way God lavished them with love and grace to their actions of forgetting God and sacrificing to idols. Incense was only supposed to be used to worship the true and living God. However, the Israelites worshipped the idols they made. Though throughout this God loved them still, God was calling them to repentance. The Israelites needed to return to love and justice and hold on to God’s love.

INTO GOD’S WORD!!!

Israel in Hosea’s time was in bad condition. The tribes, specifically Ephraim, had forgotten all about God. They forgot how God protected, loved, and gave compassion to them. The people got caught up in their own desires and decisions and began to choose idolatry. They made handmade statues that could neither hear, speak, or act and began making sacrifices to Baal.

Hosea, in his message, describes the feeling of this idol worship as breaking God’s heart. He says it’s like a child who forgets how much the parent loves and cares, and instead they reject the parents through their actions. Even still, Hosea reminds the tribes that God’s love is unconditional and everlasting.

The lack of their remorse or heart of repentance caused Hosea’s message to shift.

Hosea warned them of the danger of forgetting God and

worshipping statues. He prophesied that their prideful and selfish actions were disrespectful towards God. Hosea calls them to repent, turn back to God, and hold fast to love and justice. In this way, the Lord whose love is unconditional will see they are serious about God and justice in the community. However, the people chose not to listen, and judgment soon came into the land.

USING GOD'S WORD!!!

It is one thing to do wrong, but it is another thing to dismiss your actions and not ask for forgiveness. As leaders of God's love and justice, we have to be responsible for our actions. We cannot put our trust in love or money or idol worship. We are called to worship the only true and living God!

REMIX!!!

Thanks be to God for God's everlasting love and compassion unto us! Hosea's message reminds us that at times we may forget about all that God has done for us. At times we need to stop and reflect on all the blessings and favor God has shown and given us. As people of faith, we have to remember that everything we have comes from God. God gives, but God also corrects us just like a loving parent. When we go astray or don't follow God's law, we can ask for forgiveness. We are thankful that God gives us not only forgiveness, but another chance to try to do better than the day before.

QUESTIONS

1. What was Hosea's message to the people?

2. List the blessings from today's text that God gave to God's people. _____

3. What do you do when you are faced with difficult challenges?

PRAISE GOD!!!

From Amos, Habakkuk, Micah, Esther, Zephaniah, Zechariah, and Hosea, we have learned what it means to be a champion of justice and hope. These lessons have given us wonderful examples of how to be better leaders and better Christians. Thank God for the testimonies of the prophets in the scriptures that remind us of God's love and faithfulness throughout the generations. Let us be inspired to continue to do God's work of justice here on this earth.

CLOSING PRAYER

God of justice, thank you for reminding us of your faithfulness throughout the generations. Help us, O God, to see injustice around us. Give us courage and boldness to stand up for others. Thank you for your love and grace that covers us each day. Help us not only to learn about our faith but also to live it out in our daily actions. Amen.