

Singing In The Valley Until We Reach The Mountaintop

In chapter 1 God commissioned Hosea (**ho-shay-ah**) to reveal the widespread apostasy and corruption in the northern kingdom of Israel and to exhort his fellow countrymen to repent and return to God. Hosea's story of his own family shows God's love for Israel and this story is true today of God's love for the world despite its rejection of God.

God came to Hosea and commanded he take on a task that would be most difficult. God said to Hosea in chapter 1, verse 2, **"Go, take to yourself a wife of whoredom and have children of whoredom, for the land commits great whoredom by forsaking the LORD."** God was saying Hosea your marriage will be symbolic and an object lesson to Israel. God gave Israel its name meaning, "God prevails" and he will prevail despite Israel's unfaithfulness. God says to Hosea in your marriage you will be the faithful husband representing Me, God of all creation. This woman Gomer, your wife, will be a pure bride that quickly will become an unfaithful bride representing my people. The reason Gomer will be unfaithful is because this is the way my people have acted and are acting in the spiritual marriage that I established with them. Hosea you are going to be faithful, because I am faithful to Israel even though she dishonors my name.

The first half of chapter 2 of Hosea focuses on the defection of Israel, the bride, away from God as illustrated by Gomer's desertion of Hosea. Like Gomer, Israel worshipped false gods. It began with worshipping the fertility gods with the common name of Baal. As the Hebrews entered Canaan after the 40 year Exodus they allowed the worship of foreign gods to become incorporated into their lives. This sin, as we saw last week, is **syncretism** or the blending of the worship of

Yahweh with other gods. Syncretism was a problem for Israel and most nations throughout history. It has continued to be a problem to this very day. We see in all though our American culture. At the time of Hosea in 750 B.C. Israel saw Yahweh as the God of the patriarchs Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. They remembered Yahweh as the God of the mighty acts, such as the plaques of Egypt, the parting of the Red Sea and the defeat of greater enemies. They saw Yahweh as the God of mighty events of the past instead of the present God who oversaw all aspects of daily life.

The Hebrews had been slaves for 400 years in Egypt and then wanders of Sinai for 40 years; they were warriors, shepherds of flocks and nomads. They settled into towns and farms, and needed to grow crops and plant vineyards, and they had not had a lot of agricultural training in over 400 years. The Canaanites did have this experience and they worshipped many gods for the blessing of the rains, cultivation and harvest of crops. As the Hebrews adopted the Canaanite way of agrarian life they began to embrace the Canaanite gods as those who oversee and bless daily life. This violated the 1st Commandment, ³“You shall have no other gods before me. ⁴You shall not make for yourself a carved image, or any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth. ⁵You shall not bow down to them or serve them, for I the LORD your God am a jealous God.” (Exodus 20:3-5) God says, through Hosea, there will be a price to pay for Israel’s sin of syncretism.

Now we come to the second half of chapter 2, which shows the promise, and hope of God that follows the discipline for disobedience.

Door of Hope

Hosea uses the imagery of Israel’s failure to give hope, reading from verse 14, “Therefore, behold, I will allure her, and bring her into the wilderness, and

15 And there I will give her her vineyards and make the Valley of Achor a door of hope.” (ay’kohr means “trouble.” *Its reputation for that former ‘trouble’ is reversed and the prophet use it as a symbol of better times to come. It is probably modern el-Buqei‘ah between Jericho and the north end of the Dead Sea.*) Finishing verse 15, “And there she shall answer as in the days of her youth, as at the time when she came out of the land of Egypt.” Life has its valleys, those times that haunt our memories of failure and sin. These can prevent us from seeing God’s vision for our future. We need to remember the mountain peaks of promise and hope surround our spiritual valleys and God desires to bring us out of the valley of despair back to him. Hosea 2:14-23 teaches one how to sing to the Lord while in the valley. The song God teaches his children is the song of hope, hope found in him through Christ. This second half of chapter 2 uses both the Valley of Achor and Jezreel, which are both sorrowful memories of Israel’s past failures founded in their disobedience and now Hosea and God use these to show hope in God.

The punishment of the 1st 13 verses was meant not for destruction but restoration. Though Gomer forgets Hosea and Israel forgot that God is a jealous God, God the faithful Husband will not forget Israel just as Hosea did not forget Gomer. God will allure Israel into the wilderness so that she will be alone with him and free from the enticements of the world and its gods of Baals. The image of the wilderness takes us back to Israel’s youth when they were in the Sinai wilderness dependent on God. Hosea wants Israel to hear of God’s love and their hope and deliverance found in God alone. The vineyards that were destroyed, as punishment, in verse 12 will be restored.

The metaphor of the “door of hope” in the Valley of Achor, which gives birth to a new song, needs to be explained in order to have a better understanding. For Israel, the Valley of Achor was synonymous with failure and sin against God.

They well remembered that their ancestors under Joshua captured the city of Jericho. God's instructions were clear: all the spoils of Jericho were sacred and no one was to keep anything for himself. However, we read in Joshua chapter 7 that Achan (**aw·kawn**) meaning "troubler" under pressure admits to Joshua that he violated God's command and took, "a beautiful cloak from Shinar, and 200 shekels of silver, and a bar of gold weighing 50 shekels." (Joshua 7:21) This sin was exposed because after the victory over Jericho the Israel army advanced on city of Ai. It should have been an easy victory for the Hebrews. Instead Israel was repulsed in a painful defeat. Joshua did not understand why God had blessed him with victory over Jericho and he was defeated by Ai. Joshua sought the Lord in prayer and the Lord reveal Achan's sin and Joshua executed him and family. God's judgment took place in the Valley of Achor meaning failure. Now Israel 700 years later was again in a Valley of Achor created by their corruption, idolatry and rejection of God as the only God.

God now says he will transform their valley of despair and failure and forgetting the true God, who is their source of life, into a door of hope. This promise of God to Israel also has profound meaning for us today. As God's remnant church we are to share his hope with those living in the Valleys of Achor or despire we find all around us - if we will look. To those near us, those in America, we say that despite your sins and failures the God who offered a door of hope to Israel now offers a door of hope to you in Jesus Christ. Our Lord and Savior promised, ⁹ "I am the door. If anyone enters by me, he will be saved and will go in and out and find pasture. ¹⁰ The thief (*meaning the world under the influence and power of Satan*) comes only to steal and kill and destroy. I came that they may have life and have it abundantly." (John 10:9-10) Paul tells us that for the one who passes through - Christ the "door of hope" they receive abundant life. Paul wrote, ¹⁷ "Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the

new has come. ¹⁸ All this is from God, who through Christ reconciled us to himself and gave us the ministry of reconciliation; ¹⁹ that is, in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, *(those with this reconciliation are his children and his ambassadors, therefore God says as verse 18 continues he)* entrusts to us the message of reconciliation.” (2 Corinthians 5:17-18) The cross and resurrection is our door of hope. When we pass through, we are forgiven and begin to grow closer to God until we join him in heaven forever.

When we fail and sin Christ picks us up in our Valley of Achor and gives us the strength to repent and climb back to God for the door of Christ remains open. John saw this promise of God; “I looked, and behold, a door standing open in heaven! ...” (Revelation 4:1) Why do some stay in the Valley of Achor? Because they think it is all up to them – their failures hold them down because they know they do not have the power to climb out of the valley. Because they have not walked through the door of hope they do not know Christ will carry them out of the valley to his Father God on the mountaintop.

A popular song in America by Frank Sinatra recorded in 1969 is “I did my way ...” This became Frank’s theme song and in some ways is the theme song of America. Americans, in general, want to live life their way without recognition of God. Notice the 1st 3 letters of Frank’s last name, I’m just saying. A holy theme song, one of many holy songs, God has inspired for Christians is “My hope is built on nothing less than Jesus’ blood and righteousness I dare not trust the sweetest frame but wholly lean on Jesus’ name” written in 1834 by Pastor Edward Mote. This song we sang earlier, take it into you hearts.

God’s righteousness is the rock solid foundation on which we build our hope and his door is open and the door’s name is Jesus Christ. Israel faltered, nations falter and America falters, but God is immoveable and steadfast, reading from Isaiah 56 ⁴“For thus says the LORD: ... hold fast my covenant, ... ⁵I will give them an

everlasting name that *you* shall not be cut off. ... ⁶ the foreigners who join themselves to the LORD, ... to love the name of the LORD, ... and holds fast my covenant ...” will know my love, mercy and have hope. (Isaiah 56:4-6)

Door of Mercy

Our song, our heart song is an answer to the Lord’s of amazing love, grace and mercy. As we sang a little while ago, “Hide me now under Your wings, cover me within Your mighty hand. When the oceans rise and thunders roar I will soar with You above the storm. Father You are King over the flood, I will be still and know You are God.” God wants to hear from us our worship, just as he did with Israel, in verse 2:15b, Hosea speaks for God saying, “And there she will sing there as in the days of her youth, as in the day when she came up from the land of Egypt.”

(NASB) The Hebrew word translated in the ESV as “answer” (*anah* /aw·naw) is translated by most of the other Bible translations as “sing”. God offers his love to all and the offer must be answered. One either enters the door of hope or does not. God says he will allure Israel until she returns to him through the door of Christ.

Jesus calls the lost, “Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and eat with him, and he with me.”

(Revelation 3:20) Christ is the only hope for mankind and as our Lord and Savior he has commissioned us to tell the world the good news he offers. How are we doing? Are we being obedient and sharing the gospel of good news with those who are lost we meet in life? Jesus gave two great commands; he gave these both to Israel and to you and me, “The Lord our God, the Lord is one. ³⁰ And you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.’ ³¹ The second is this: ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’ There is no other commandment greater than these.” (Mark 12:29-31) To better understand how God has blessed us and why these 2 commandments are the prime directive for our lives you might consider taking a

month and daily praying through the Beatitudes and what they mean for your life in Christ.

Door of Opportunity

Christ, our door of hope leads those who believe to the door of opportunity. The Beatitudes are found in Christ's Sermon on the Mount given in Matthew chapter 5, and contain 9 "Blessed" verses. Christ shows us how God has blessed those he has called and how these blessing should shape our lives. They tell us how we are blessed and how we are to bless others. When we start each day confessing our spiritual poverty and ask God to fill us with his spirit to help us sin less and strengthen our ability to serve it changes how we live each day. This is what Israel forgot. My beloved, as each day comes to close you can again read Matthew 5:1-12 and ask, how did I fulfill these Beatitudes in my life this day? Christ is the only door of hope and he is the door of opportunity.

If one is still and listens to the Lord he will lead them to those he has prepared to hear the gospel. As we sang, "I will be still and know You are God." I promise you if you take the time to be with the Lord – he will reveal his goal for your life – step-by-step, day-by-day. This is the message Jesus the Christ, our Lord and Savior gave to John and he gives to each of us, ⁷ "The words of the holy one, the true one, who has the key of David, who opens and no one will shut, who shuts and no one opens. ⁸ I know your works. Behold, I have set before you an open door, which no one is able to shut. I know that you have but little power, and yet you have kept my word and have not denied my name." (Revelation 3:7-8) The question before us is as a church and as individuals, will we be obedient and guide people to Christ the door of hope, mercy and opportunity?

This is the good news that Hosea brought to Israel and the good news God brings to us through his word in the Book of Hosea, Yahweh is relentless in his desire to

have people be in relationship with him by worshipping him above all else in this world. Israel brings judgment upon themselves because of their sin. The good news is God restores Israel. Reading from Hosea 2:23, “**I, God, will sow her for myself in the land. And I will have mercy on No Mercy, and I will say to Not My People, ‘You are my people’; and he shall say, ‘You are my God.’**” God showed mercy to Israel. Today God shows mercy to us and because of his Son, Jesus Christ, we can sing in the valley, “It is well with my soul. It is well, it is well with my soul. My sin ... oh, the bliss of this glorious thought ... My sin, not in part but the whole is nailed to the cross and I bear it no more. Praise the Lord, praise the Lord, O my soul!” It is the faith that Christ gives and builds upon and sustains in us that makes us like the seed that fell on good soil. We are to be the “**seeds that fell on good soil and produced grain, some a hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty.**” (Matthew 13:8) Hosea says God sings to us “**You are My people!**” and we are to sang back to God, “**You are my God!**” For all who sing in the valley of failure, sin and despair Christ transforms the valley into the door of hope, mercy and opportunity – the door is Christ! Your job is to live Christ and show others that he is an open door. Amen.