

Restoring the Repentant  
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Hosea 13:4-6; 14:1-9

Let me start by asking an off-the-wall kind of question. Not a trick question, just a little off-the-wall. **What is the difference between the emergency room and the gym? Here's another: Sadly, when do most people (not this class...but most people) draw closest to God? Flip that around, when do we tend to drift from Him?**

Here's the point of this morning's lesson: As long as we are alive on this planet, our fallen nature will pull us toward sin and away from God. The good news is that when we repent of sin and turn to God, He is waiting to forgive us and make us WHOLE.

Hosea 13:4-6 (ESV)

4 But I am the Lord your God  
from the land of Egypt;  
you know no God but me,  
and besides me there is no savior.  
5 It was I who knew you in the wilderness,  
in the land of drought;  
6 but when they had grazed,[a] they became full,  
they were filled, and their heart was lifted up;  
therefore they forgot me.

- These three verses define the basic problem Hosea is dealing with in his prophecy.
- **Verse 4 - What does verse 4 make clear to the Israelites?**
- Verse 4 is similar to Exodus 20:3: "You shall have no other gods before me."
- Notice a difference in the wording though. Moses quoted God as saying, "you shall HAVE no other gods (little g...idols) before me." Hosea in verse 4 quotes God as saying, "you KNOW no God (big G...the true God) but me."
- God commanded them/us not to HAVE idols. Here He is reminding them/us we don't "have" God we KNOW God. Our relationship with the ONE TRUE GOD is intimate.
- **Verse 5 - What does verse 5 remind them of?**
- So, we see there is only ONE GOD; our relationship with Him is INTIMATE; and He is the same God who had taken care of the people of Israel through their history.
- But, something happened that Verse 6 to rupture that relationship.
- **What does verse 6 tell us got them off track in their relationship with God?**
- "...therefore they forgot me." Let's talk about forgetting God.
- I doubt that the Israelites developed amnesia. "God? Have I ever heard of him?"
- I don't think that is what this verse means by "...therefore they forgot me."
- **Question: How many things can you have in your mind at once?**
- **Another example...how many things can you focus on at once with your eyes?**
- If I'm not focused on God then I'm focused elsewhere.

- If He is not TOP OF MIND for me then something or someone else IS.
- **Since God is the object our of worship, what would forgetting Him mean?**
- If they had forgotten God it didn't mean their mind was blank. It must have been filled with something else. **According to verse 6 what were they worshipping?**

In his book on the Minor Prophets, James E. Smith show us:

*...Hosea looks back on the wilderness period as the ideal time in the relationship between Yahweh and his bride Israel (13:5).*

[Isn't that an interesting statement? The most DIFFICULT; DREADFUL; HUNGRY; THIRSTY; DRY time in their history...in the wilderness...was "the ideal time in their relationship to God!]

- **Question: How can God use a "wilderness" experience in our lives?**

Smith continues...

*In the wilderness Israel depended totally upon Yahweh. But "when they fed, they became full." Once in the Promised Land they had all they needed and wanted. They no longer felt dependent upon the Lord. "They became full and their heart was lifted up." Prosperity resulted in their being led away from God (cf. Deut 8:11ff.). "Therefore they have forgotten me." Here again is one of Hosea's major themes. Israel entered Canaan, prospered, and forgot God (13:6).*

Matthew Henry said in his commentary:

*"...Worldly prosperity, when it feeds men's pride, makes them forgetful of God; for they remember him only when they want him. When Israel was filled, what more could the Almighty do for them? And therefore they said to him, Depart from us,(Job 22:17.) It is sad that those favours which ought to make us mindful of God...make us unmindful of him..."*

- **Look back at verse 6. In the ESV it's says: "...their heart was lifted up."**
- **What does it say in your translation? What do you think it means?**
- I like the GRITTY paraphrase of The Message:
- Hosea 13:6 (MSG) *I took care of you, took care of all your needs, gave you everything you needed. You were spoiled. You thought you didn't need me. You forgot me.*
- Parents, let's get real. Most of us have been blessed with good kids. But kids will be kids. Ever looked at your kid and at least THOUGHT...if not said: "You spoiled brat! How dare you!" Maybe someone else's kid. Do you think anyone ever looked at me or you and said that?
- "Yeah, you gave birth to me. Yeah, you've fed, housed, and clothed me. Yeah, you've sacrificed for my well-being. But I DON'T NEED YOU. I've got this COVERED!"
- How much would it HURT to hear that?
- Makes me do some soul-searching. Have I become a spoiled BRAT where my Heavenly Father is concerned? Has my heart been EXALTED with pride to the point that God is not TOP OF MIND? Am I depending on me or stuff, instead of Him?
- I doubt anyone in this room would shake their fist at God and say: "I don't need you!"

- I doubt the Israelites did that either. Instead, they replaced Him with other gods (little g). They just drifted...slowly, ever slowly from the God they were so close to in the wilderness.
- **Question: What are some ways we can make sure we are not guilty of forgetting God?**
- This lesson isn't totally negative. God is ready to RESTORE our relationship with Him. Let's look verse by verse at Chapter 14:1-3. Hosea writes...

Hosea 14:1-9 (ESV)

14 Return, O Israel, to the Lord your God,  
 for you have stumbled because of your iniquity.  
 2 Take with you words  
 and return to the Lord;  
 say to him,  
 "Take away all iniquity;  
 accept what is good,  
 and we will pay with bulls  
 the vows[a] of our lips.

- **Question: Why would we need to take with us "words" when we return to the Lord? And what about "we will pay with bulls the vows of our lips?"**

Psalm 51:16–17 (ESV)

16 For you will not delight in sacrifice, or I would give it;  
 you will not be pleased with a burnt offering.  
 17 The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit;  
 a broken and contrite heart, O God, you will not despise.

Hebrews 13:15 (ESV)

15 Through him then let us continually offer up a sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of lips that acknowledge his name.

- Our words are words of CONFESSON, REPENTANCE, and PRAISE.

3 Assyria shall not save us;  
 we will not ride on horses;  
 and we will say no more, 'Our God,'  
 to the work of our hands.  
 In you the orphan finds mercy."

- We won't turn to foreign nations for protection! We won't depend on our "war horses"...our own resources. And no more will we consider the "work of our hands"...our idols...as "Our God." We'll stop worshipping work, prestige, money.

- 1 John 1:9 promises us if we “confess our sins” God is “faithful and just to forgive us our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness.” Look at how God promises to respond to repentance in verse 4:

4 I will heal their apostasy;  
 I will love them freely,  
 for my anger has turned from them.

5 I will be like the dew to Israel;  
 he shall blossom like the lily;  
 he shall take root like the trees of Lebanon;

6 his shoots shall spread out;  
 his beauty shall be like the olive,  
 and his fragrance like Lebanon.

7 They shall return and dwell beneath my[b] shadow;  
 they shall flourish like the grain;  
 they shall blossom like the vine;  
 their fame shall be like the wine of Lebanon.

8 O Ephraim, what have I to do with idols?  
 It is I who answer and look after you.[c]  
 I am like an evergreen cypress;  
 from me comes your fruit.

- **God said, “I will heal their apostasy;” What is apostasy?**
- God said, “If you will just TURN from your sin...your FORGETFULNESS of me...just make me TOP OF MIND again...I will RESTORE YOU.” Look at the language:
- I will LOVE YOU FREELY
- You will BLOSSOM...you will TAKE ROOT like a TALL TREE...you will be FRAGRANT, sweet smelling to those around you. You will be BLESSED and PROSPER like golden grain.

So, What’s The Takeaway?

**You tell me...what did you get out of this lesson that applies to how we live our lives this week?**

In verse 9 of chapter 14 God gives us the PRESCRIPTION to recover from SPIRITUAL AMNESIA -- FORGETTING GOD:

9 Whoever is wise, let him understand these things; whoever is discerning, let him know them; for the ways of the Lord are right, and the upright walk in them, but transgressors stumble in them.

This week, let’s be WISE and UNDERSTAND that if we’ve drifted, we can repent. And God is waiting with open arms to RESTORE our relationship.