

Reflection Guide - Hosea 11

HEAT: *What is the immediate context of this text? What circumstances surround the passage? What struggle or blessing is being unpacked? What aspect of life are people responding to?*

There is a lull between Thanksgiving and Christmas that mirrors one of the hardest things in life. God's people have a problem in "the waiting". Left to ourselves, we turn too quickly from the God of the gospel to the gods of efficiency and convenience—false gods who proclaim waiting a waste, a "killing of time."

THORNS: *What sinful ways do they [we] respond to the same circumstance? Are any seen in the text?*

Hosea 11:7 My people **are bent** on backsliding from Me. Though they call to the Most High, None at all exalt Him. (NKJV)

God's commentary on Israel's condition: They call Him God with their mouths...but their hearts are far from Him. The most indicting thing? This is in response to Grace...not a tough life. They would have died w/out God and their rebellion has gone way past ingratitude. People say that we are often hurt most by the ones we love the most. God, has provided all good things for His people has had it thrown back in His face. A betrayal, rebellion of unnatural proportions. How have we also spurned God's goodness? (Where else do we see this in the God's story? Garden of Eden, etc)

Hosea 11:5 They shall not return to the land of Egypt, but Assyria shall be their king, because they have refused to return to me. (they refuse to repent) 6 The sword shall rage against their cities, consume the bars of their gates, and devour them because of their own counsels.

Israel broke its covenant with God...repeatedly...bent on backsliding...refusing to repent and return to God. Therefore, exile is the least of what they deserve. Destruction like those cities is more fitting.

BAD ROOT: *What heart issue lies at the root of their [our] sinful response? What new HEAT is created by their [our] sinful response? What about God are we failing to believe in our THORN responses? What do they [we] desire?*

Hosea 11: 2 But the more they were called, the more they went away from me.

they kept sacrificing to the Baals and burning offerings to idols. This shows where their trust, affection really were and where it was NOT.

When sin or unbelief or false teaching make it hard to see Jesus, Christians grow discouraged, become weak in faith, and may begin to turn away from the Lord. This turning away from Christ is often called backsliding: a drawing back from God, from our profession of faith, and from our commitment to follow Christ. To backslide is to relapse into unbelief, sin, and spiritual numbness. Backsliding is an act of disloyalty (last week - Gomer) and a form of rebellion (today - child). Backsliding can leave people in a weakened spiritual condition for years before they recover. (Beeke)

If you listen to God's Word in Hosea 11:7...He says His people are "bent" on this...not just "bendable"...or capable...we have a strong bend towards wandering - cheating - rebelling. This wandering, "backsliding" is not a "oops look what happened" issue. When left ourselves, our hearts drift, wander, be seduced away. It's a process that happens over time...it may not produce "scandalous sins"...rather worse it produces "cold hearts". From those cold hearts come a multitude of ills.

You may not run after sin as you did before regeneration, but now sin runs after you. And as your resistance against sin grows weaker, you welcome its approach. Offending God does not remain the

overriding burden of sin; instead, the punishment of sin, or perhaps its offense to men, becomes your primary motive for resisting temptation. You may still confess sin as sin and make vows to change, but you do both acts as an empty show of piety. Your confession comes without repentance, and you do not follow your vows with change. You speak against sin but accommodate it in practice and, on occasion, even fuel sin, in spite of your conscience ." Beeke

CROSS: *How is God or his grace displayed in the text? What aspect of Christ's work on the cross is most necessary here? What commands are in the text that I need to obey?*

Hosea 11:8 "How can I give you up, Ephraim? How can I hand you over, Israel? How can I treat you like Admah? How can I make you like Zeboyim? (destroyed like Sodom / Gomorrah) My heart recoils within me; my compassion grows warm and tender. (all my compassion is aroused (NIV), my compassion overflows (NLT))

His judgment of Israel, His child, was not a cold, dispassionate decision. He has been patient to the nth degree with His people. The prospect of Israel returning to slavery (Egypt) causes the heart of God pain Just as disciplining our own children is painful, you can feel Him hurting with His people. We also see in Hosea that the pain that our sin causes, God feels like a betrayed spouse and an estranged parent of a rebellious child. The deeper the love...the deeper the pain.

Hosea 11:9 I will not execute my burning anger; I will not again destroy Ephraim; for I am God and not a man, the Holy One in your midst, and I will not come in wrath.

God's people deserve to be destroyed b/c of their sin...it's a sin against the Eternal Holiness of God But yet, God is not going to destroy them. But isn't God Holy...doesn't His Holiness demand justice? YET it's His Holiness that compels Him to turn away His anger. Its ironic for us because we usually only associate the Holiness of God with His purity and our sin. But the point here is that he is different from us. How? We respond respond to rebellion and betrayal against ourselves with anger, bitterness, vindictiveness.

If we had offended men, or angels, as we have offended our Creator and redeemer, and they had permission and power to punish us, our case would be utterly desperate. Only he who made us, is able to bear with us. All the attributes of the infinite God must be equally infinite. As is His majesty (holiness), so is His mercy. John Newton

So how can God be so determined to judge and at the same time determined to save?

Though God is not a man...He will become One. This baby we remember during Advent is the Son of God, who unlike God's son Israel, is the Obedient Son. So the tension between God's purity and mercy will be resolved...The holiness of God will be vindicated for the sin of God's disobedient children. On the cross Jesus, the Obedient Son, will die the death that God's disobedient children deserve. He was the True Obedient Son who died for disobedient children so that by God's Grace we can share in His eternal sonship. On the cross we see the satisfaction of God's justice and the exposing of His mercy.

Romans 3:[23] for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, [24] and are justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, [25] whom God put forward as a propitiation by his blood, to be received by faith. This was to show God's righteousness, because in his divine forbearance he had passed over former sins. [26] It was to show his righteousness at the present time, so that he might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus.

On the cross God set aside His just wrath from you and I by placing it on Jesus. God judges fully and justly and He saves graciously and completely. God doesn't give us up (to judgement). Instead he He does it to His Son in your place. And now, through faith in Jesus, we can know God as Father.

GOOD ROOT: What can they [!] believe about God because of the cross? What do they [!] desire now? How does Christ enable me to obey his commands? How is Jesus the solution / motivation for transformation and action in this text?

So long as the Father is seen as harsh, judging and condemning, the soul is filled with fear and dread every time it comes to him. So in Scripture we read of sinners fleeing and hiding from him. But when God, who is the Father, is seen as a father, filled with love, the soul is filled with love to God in return. Many saints have no greater burden in their lives than that their hearts do not constantly delight and rejoice in God. There is still in them a resistance to walking close with God ... The more we see of God's love, so much more shall we delight in him. All that we learn of God will only frighten us away from him if we do not see him as loving and merciful to us. But if your heart is taken up with the Father's love as the chief property of his nature, it cannot help but choose to be overpowered, conquered and embraced by him. This, if anything, will arouse our desire to make our eternal home with God. If the love of a father will not make a child delight in him, what will? So do this: set your thoughts on the eternal love of the Father and see if your heart is not aroused to delight in him. Sit down for a while at this delightful spring of living water and you will soon find its streams sweet and delightful. You who used to run from God will not now be able, even for a second, to keep at any distance from him. (John Owen)

FRUIT: What would the expected fruit of the gospel be in this situation? What does obedience look like for you personally? Does it speak of this in the text? Where else in the Scriptures is this?

Spend some time asking each other these questions...