

Christ in Hosea

TRANSCRIPT (AUTO-GENERATED)

I grew up in a Christian family, but about the age of 19, I was really struck by God. He, the Spirit, just took a hold of me, and in fact, ended up giving me a passion for His word and a calling to preach and minister from it.

From those early years, one of the Bible passages that I committed to memory was Hosea 10-12. Can I just ask, anyone else have Hosea 10-12 as a memory verse?

This tells me, reminds me that I was in a holiness Pentecostal sort of vibe, and so Hosea 10-12 says, so righteousness for yourselves, reap the fruit of unfailing love, and break up your unplowed ground.

For it is time to seek the Lord until He comes and showers His righteousness on you. It's not a bad verse, I reckon.

And we're going to look at that in a minute before we get there, we're just going to do a little bit of an overview of the book of Hosea.

I was meant to be preaching this in the morning, and I went through it last night, and I just sort of couldn't speak a paragraph without having a coughing fit. So we switched it around and Ben preached Joel in the morning.

So he mentioned that this morning, but just for you guys, we're back in our Christ in Scripture project, where we aim to study every book of the Bible in a two-year period.

And we're looking for what points to the hope of glory Christ in us in each book. And tonight we are beginning, we began this morning, a four-week series in the Minor Prophets, of which there are 12.

And we're just going to be looking at Hosea, Joel, Amos and Obadiah. So Ben preached on Joel. It's online.

Please check it out. So we'll study the other eight, Lord willing, next year. And this four-sermon series will be preached morning and night, different messages.

Hosea is set in the 8th century. The 8th century BC. You've got to get your head around it.

That means it's the 700s, 750 BC to 722 BC. We don't know for sure, but that's commonly agreed that that's sort of the ministry period of Hosea the Prophet.

Like the other 8th century prophets, he's speaking mainly to the Northern tribes who are leading up to the judgment that will come upon them through Assyria in 722 BC. Hosea is called by God to prophesy to Israel. And it's chapter one, verse one.

The word of the Lord that came to Hosea, son of Beerī. During the reigns of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, Hezekiah, kings of Judah, and during the reign of Jeroboam, son of Jehoash, the king of Israel.

The strange thing with Hosea, which is not unfamiliar to other prophets, but part of his prophetic calling was to be lived out in his daily life experiences. And that's where we read next in verse two.

When the Lord began to speak through Hosea, the Lord said to him, Go marry a promiscuous woman, and have children with her, for like an adulterous wife, the land is guilty of unfaithfulness to the Lord.

So he married Gomer, daughter of Diblaim, and she conceived and bore him a son. So we can see that God tells Hosea to marry a woman whose unfaithfulness will reflect the unfaithfulness of the nation, and her name is Gomer.

Hosea chapter one describes her as a wife of unfaithfulness, or the text says prostitution. And so then children are born, and each receives a name that carries a message.

The first is Jezreel, a name associated with bloodshed and coming judgment upon Israel's royal house. The second is Lo-Ru-Ha-Ma, which means not loved, or not shown mercy. The third is Lo-Ammi, not my people.

They're pretty confronting names, aren't they, to be told to give to your children. And when we preached on Hosea last year, a lot of us were asking the question, why would God allow kids who have sort of done nothing wrong to carry that stuff?

I don't think there's an easy answer to that.

Other than the sovereign will of God is being played out on a grand scope, and yeah, there are players that are Christopher the Mill in a way, and not to say that God hasn't shown his mercy to those kids as well, but it's tough stuff to get your head

around. The reason he does it is that he wants to announce how seriously Israel has damaged its covenant relationship with God. Hosea's call is to live out the message that God has given him to communicate to Israel.

So just doing a little bit more skimming through to remind you of the Book of Hosea. Chapter 2 describes Israel's unfaithfulness through the picture of a wife pursuing other lovers.

She believes those lovers provide her bread and water and clothing and oil. But Yahweh exposes the painful truth. The gifts that she credits to her lovers have come from who?

From Yahweh. And that's the story of Israel. They have received God's provision and thanked other gods.

Isn't that a nice line? When we receive God's provision and yet thank other gods for it, they have enjoyed God's kindness while seeking their security elsewhere. Then in Chapter 3, the message becomes personal again.

God tells Hosea to go and love a woman who is loved by another and is an adulteress. The command is explicit. Hosea is to love her as the Lord loves Israel.

Even though Israel turns to other gods. Hosea requires her for 15 shekels of silver and a quantity of barley. He tells her that she is to remain with him and cease her unfaithfulness.

Then the chapter ends by looking beyond this marriage to Israel's future. After a period of deprivation, the people will return and seek the Lord their God and David their King. Hosea's family, as I just said, is a living picture of the message.

God's people have betrayed his love. Their unfaithfulness has consequences. Yet God pursues their restoration.

So, that's the story of Hosea. I hope if you've read it before, you can sort of jog your memory and go, oh, that's right. It's the story of the woman who is unfaithful and the marriage and it mirroring Israel and Yahweh, their God.

And maybe if you're someone who's never read Hosea, can I encourage you to go and read it? It's about 14 chapters, I think. So, that leads us to this original memory verse, Hosea 10-12.

I'll read it again. So righteousness for yourselves, reap the fruit of unfailing love and break up your unploughed ground, for it's time to seek the Lord until He comes and showers His righteousness on you.

Just want to look at this, I think, beautiful verse, in just line by line.

So righteousness for yourselves. The context is a society that is terribly unjust. The poor, the widow, the orphan, the refugee are not being looked after.

Amos talks a lot about that. It's a time, the 8th century, of terrible injustice and a lack of righteousness, which really means justice in the Old Testament. It means to do right by God and neighbour.

So it is a sowing, God's saying, a sowing of righteousness that is not to earn God's favour, because that's what it sounds like, you know, do good, do just, do justice to get God on your side. It's not that at all.

The people of Israel are already in a covenant relationship with God. This sowing is simply referring to the obedient partnership that Israel have agreed to live out with their God.

But if you look at verse 12 and then down to verse 13, there's a mirror and it tells you what's actually happened. It says sow righteousness for yourselves in verse 12 and in verse 13, you have planted wickedness. You haven't done that.

I thought it was good to think about this sowing righteousness. It's a really fantastic idea when you bring it into the New Testament. I think a lot of us doing good, sowing righteousness, is the fruit of God's grace at work in us, isn't it?

We are created in Christ Jesus to do good works, Ephesians 2, 8, called to let those works glorify our Father, Matthew 5, and urge to persevere in doing good to everyone, Galatians 6.

So when Yahweh says sow righteousness, he's talking about every act of generosity, honesty, mercy, and justice, being a planting of the kingdom of God, a planting of something that honours God and blesses others.

So let me ask you, by the grace of God, are you sowing righteousness?

Are you sowing righteousness, so that you can reap the fruit of unfailing love? I would just sort of submit that to you and say, that's something you can actually bank in your heart.

The idea of sowing righteousness, of just saying, I'm someone who, in an agricultural setting, sows the mercy and justice and heart of God, wherever I am, wherever I live and whatever I do. I'm called to do that.

And so that, as I'm a sower, I can reap the fruit of unfailing love. And again, I love that line. Does anyone enjoy hearing that?

Reap the fruit of unfailing love. In the context of a covenantal God, the unfailing love of God, it's an amazing thought. Our daughter and her family live in Brisbane.

And the eldest two girls are nearly five and nearly three. And our eldest son went up for a visit recently, and they did something really fun. They went strawberry picking.

And these photos came back of them strawberry picking. And we were thinking, oh, we want to be there. That looks so cool.

Because these strawberries were as big as you'd ever imagine. And I thought of that, that this idea of reaping the fruit of unfailing love is a bit like that picture. Going strawberry picking.

Galatians says, we reap what we sow. So, you know that idea of sowing, righteousness. Don't be deceived.

God cannot be mocked. A man reaps what he sows. Whoever sows to please their flesh, from the flesh will reap destruction.

Whoever sows to please the spirit, from the spirit will reap eternal life. Hosea says, the answer in verse 13, in actual fact, it says, Israel have reaped evil. They sowed wickedness.

They reaped evil. They have eaten the fruit of deception. So, no one in the North, in Israel, could say to God, how do we get here?

We reaped right, we sowed righteousness. It's like, he's like, no, you didn't. You didn't do that at all.

You sowed wickedness. And in the kingdom of God, in the way that God established this life, we live on planet Earth, there is a sowing and a reaping. It will have a consequence, sin.

And that is what we see in the North. We can do the same thing, not sow righteousness, so that we are actually not reaping the fruit of unfailing love. I thought about this and thought, you know, what you watch is a bit like sowing, isn't it?

You're just sowing into your heart, sowing into your mind. Saturate yourself with evil and you won't, you won't find it so easy to reap the fruit of unfailing love, amen? Sear your conscience and change your views on what is good and bad.

Is, that is, what that is, is sowing wickedness around you and in your own heart. And so we shouldn't be surprised when we reap that which is not helpful at all. What could you do this week to sow righteousness?

How could you reap the fruit of unfailing love? That's actually a real question. Can you give me an answer?

When I thought about that, that's not so easy to answer. But what would you say? Lord, I want to reap the fruit of unfailing love.

Yeah? I think that's the key. I think it's about knowing.

When you think about this in the biblical setting in the New Testament, it's John 15. It's abiding in the vine. It's sort of knowing the master and just being full of a sense of satisfaction.

Like you're saying, I love mangoes. And you get that mango and you open it up and you're like, this is a perfect mango. Like the next five minutes of my life are going to be good.

What's your fruit? What's your fruit that you would feel the same way on? Pair.

Pair. Nice. Does anyone go for pawpaw?

Pawpaw. My parents were from Queensland. I think that's what, you never see them much anymore, but like just incredible fruit.

Not everyone likes fruit, but it is beautiful. Yeah, I think to reap the fruit of unfailing love is to wake up the next morning and be like, your mercy is new to me, Lord God. I mean, I'm loving it.

Thank you. Well, the song we sang this morning, let me, first thing in the morning, what is it? I want to know your love.

The... Yeah, just try, every time we sing it, it's like just when you wake up in the morning, it's your love that just blows me away. Reaping the fruit of unfailing love.

And that leads us to this classic line that you need to know. Break up your unplowed ground. Break up your fallow ground.

I was talking about this with the podcast guys in Tristan's going, oh, that reminds me of my uncle. Break up your fallow ground. The fallow ground must be broken up.

And that's a terrible South African accent, but... It's a good old-fashioned preacher, pulpit pounding preacher, preaching. But it's the truth, the thing that happened in Israel is their hearts got crusty.

And in an agricultural setting, the ground that is unplowed is very hard to sow stuff in and then reap from. We owned a house in Bangor, which is in the Sutherland Shire. And when we moved in, we got to know the neighbours.

And the guy across the road said, mate, in 20 years, no one has ever planted grass on that lawn of yours. No one's ever made that lawn work. And Leanne and I were like, we're going to do this.

So we went down to like, canards and we got an earth turner. And we just turned that fallow ground. We turned it and turned it and we fertilised it and we put underlay on it.

And we did have the best lawn in that street. But let it be known. But you've got to break it up.

Break up your fallow ground. Don't you reckon that's a great challenge? Break up your fallow ground.

I think you can have parts of your heart that are soft, and there's this little corner of the yard. The reason that it was so hard was that the previous owners used to park their cars on the lawn.

And if you use your heart for something that's not designed for, it gets hard. It just gets hard. It's not the right thing to do.

Break up your fallow ground. Let me just ask you, where is your fallow ground? Where is your unplowed ground?

Is it the disappointments of God not providing healing that we talked about last week? Yeah, Benny was talking about healing. Sometimes we can just get really disappointed in God.

And so that aspect of our heart, which requires faith, which requires a belief in a kind and merciful God who might act, it gets hard. Is it hurts that have become hate and landed in your box of contempt?

You're a really nice person, but don't talk about that part of my life because I've got every right to hate that person. They hurt me. I hate them.

They're in my box of contempt. And I'm just going to not think about the fact that Jesus said in the Sermon on the Mount that contempt is really bad. It will mess you up.

Is that what it is? Hurts that have become hate? Is it unforgiveness?

I'm not suggesting unforgiveness is easy, but it certainly hardens up your heart. Is it lust? Has your heart grown crusty because of lust?

And you've become convinced that it's unfixable. You need to get to Kennards. You need to work out, how do I break up that fellow ground?

And of course, that is pointing to the truth of the gospel and the power of the Spirit. Is it unbelief? Doubt?

Where is your unplowed ground? For Israel in the North, they had given themselves over to Baal worship. We looked up Baal worship in our Bible study.

Does anyone remember, like did you know what the bad thing about Baal was? Like what did Baal offer? Baal was really prominent in the North.

Ahab and Jezebel, they loved their Baal worship. Does anyone remember what Baal offered? Child sacrifice.

They did do a bit of child sacrifice with Baal. I don't mean to be flippant in saying that, but Moloch was the god that they often hear about for child sacrifice. Anyone remember Baal?

Yes. Yeah. Yeah, exactly.

So the whole thing is the promise of the promised land was a land flowing with milk and honey. Milk is cattle, honey is crops. But how do you get that good crops?

You need good reins. You need favourable conditions. So these people that are living off the land, they're going to Baal because Baal is the god of a few things, but the main thing is the crops, the fertility.

And what goes with fertility is ashara poles, phallic cymbals and all these shrine prostitutions. They go and do terrible things with shrine prostitutes, but it's to worship the god of fertility who would send the seed to bring life to the land.

So sorry to go into all that yucky stuff, but that's their unplowed ground. That's what got crusty. They think they're getting something from that god.

They're not just being deceived for nothing. They think they're getting something. And of course, that's what we think we're getting when we allowed our hearts to grow hard.

What do we do? We turn the soil through repentance. We say we're sorry to God.

We ask for grace to realign our hearts' allegiance. We repent, as Ben said the other day, we think again about our thinking. We think about who we're following, what we're worshipping.

We repent, and I mentioned this a few weeks ago, we might need to disavow allegiance. You might say, what do you mean?

When you keep giving yourself to a certain thing, an aspect of wickedness, it's like without knowing it, you've actually gone, I'm just signing up my life to your club. I'm giving my allegiance, my vow of allegiance, to you.

And sometimes we have to stop and go, wait a minute, what does lordship mean? It means a vow of allegiance. No, I'm not following you, Lord, small I, satanic version of leading.

I'm gonna follow Jesus, my Lord. And so this metanoia, repentance is an idea of turning, and giving an allegiance to the true God, and casting out the false gods, amen? Where is your unplowed ground?

May you break it up in the name of Jesus. It can be broken up. And it's an actually beautiful thing to see a crusty lawn or field turned ready for sowing.

And then to see that place changed with crops growing, it's like, or grass, it's like, wow, that's a transformation. And then you go, oh, dude, that's what Christianity is. It used to look like that, lifeless.

Now it's growing stuff. And where does that image keep on taking you? To the tree that grows up and gives shade to people and fruit.

And that's the picture of the Garden of Eden and the kingdom. And it's something that grows and grows and grows.

God says through Hosea, it's time to break up your fellow ground, for it's time to seek the Lord until He comes. Seek the Lord until He comes. In the Old Testament, the main idea behind seek is not that God has gone missing.

And we need to find Him. It's turning deliberately toward God, wanting Him, inquiring of Him, depending on Him and ordering our life around Him. Seek the Lord is almost shorthand for a whole life orientation towards God.

It's one of the great calls of the Old Testament, seek the Lord. Somehow it got sort of wrapped up in my holiness, Pentecostal discipleship formation as a young adult. We don't tend to talk about it so much here, but seek the Lord, seek the Lord.

Deuteronomy 429, you will seek the Lord your God, and you will find Him if you seek with Him with all your heart and with all your soul. Do you know how to seek the Lord? We talked about this a few weeks ago, I know.

1st Chronicles 16, look to the Lord and His strength, seek His face always. This was a passage we looked at a few weeks ago. 2nd Chronicles 7, if my people who will humble themselves and praise, seek my face and turn from their wicked ways.

Psalms 27, my heart says of you seek His face, your face Lord, I will seek. Psalm 34, those who seek the Lord lack no good thing. Isaiah 55 has the urgency about it, seek the Lord while he may be found, call on him while he is near.

Hosea essentially says, you have been seeking everything except the one you most need to seek. It's time to seek the Lord. Seek him.

Do you pick up a little bit of urgency for Hosea? He's like, seek, seek, seek the Lord because time is running out. Seek the Lord.

And over some hundreds of years, we moved towards, from that urgency about seeking the Lord, we come to the Gospel, we find God comes looking for us. The Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost. So we're told to seek the Lord.

Luke 19 is that wonderful passage that says, Jesus is God in human flesh come to find us. He's seeking us. And Jesus said in John 14, anyone who has seen me has seen the Father.

So we're meant to seek the Lord. Jesus has come to seek us. And when we find him, we find God.

To seek the Lord is to come to Christ, remain in Christ, listen to Christ, follow Christ, desire Christ, above the rival loves of our heart. And when we live in the power of the Spirit seeking Christ, we experience the reign of righteousness.

Shower, he says, I will shower you with righteousness. Anyone been outside? I know Jack likes running in the rain, don't you?

Walking or running in the rain. But anyone got caught in a rainstorm outside and it's just fully, fully pouring? Anyone have that?

I was out in the boat the other day with Carlo and it started raining and it was just poooooh. When you're out on the water, it's interesting when you're just getting soaked. That's an amazing picture of the grace of God, isn't it?

Saturated, soaked in righteousness.

When I was thinking about finishing this sermon, I don't know if it's completely right to say it or not, but I thought immediately of Chapter 117 of Romans, for in the gospel, the righteousness of God is revealed, a righteousness that is by faith

from first to last. Just as it is written, the righteous will live by faith. The righteousness of God is revealed, like a rainstorm. It's just like...

Is that you, Lord? Yes, it is me. And this is what righteousness looks like.

All the way through the Old Testament, I told you about righteousness. It's making things right relationally. It's making things right in every way.

It's justice. It's a beautiful thing, righteousness. And here it is when Jesus turned up.

It's just revealed. No one could doubt it. He has arrived and righteousness has come with him.

In Christ, we are flooded with the righteousness of God. We are equipped to do good for God in Christ. As the righteousness showers on us.

We are restored to right relationship with God in Christ. Hallelujah. Our hearts are turned and softened through grace when he showers righteousness on us.

The grace of God in Christ is what we get when we are showered in righteousness. So all I wanna do in finishing, thank you Lord, I got through this without coughing. I appreciate that.

Let's give you the five points again. So righteousness that is due justice. That's our calling to do good in the name of Jesus.

And as you sow, you get to reap the fruit of unfailing love all by the grace of God. And we get to know God and enjoy the incredible fruit of lives changed around us through the gospel. Break up your unplowed ground.

Break up your fallow ground. Seek the Lord quick. Seek the Lord with urgency until He comes.

He comes, not it comes. He comes in relationship because He loves us and showers righteousness on us. Thank you Lord God for that incredible verse in the book of Hosea.

We are ashamed to admit that we can relate to Gomer sometimes more than Hosea. Lord, thank you that when we are unfaithful, when we are unwise, you are faithful and wise. You are good and merciful.

And you have shown your goodness and your grace once and for all in Jesus, our Lord and our Saviour. While we were sinners, Christ died for us. I thank you Lord God that that reminder is for us tonight.

That we can break up our fellow ground because you have made a way. In Jesus, there is a hope of absolute transformation. We think about the agricultural image.

Lord, I thank you that when the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed. And the Son, by faith in Him, has declared, you are free. Free from sin, clothed in my righteousness, and equipped with everything you need to do good in this life.

I thank you Lord God for all the blessings that we find in you and for this passage of Scripture tonight. May we be blessed as we worship you together in Jesus' name, amen.