

“Continually Waiting for God” (Hosea 12)(5.17.21)

Hosea 12 (ESV)

12 Ephraim feeds on the wind
and pursues the east wind all day long;
they multiply falsehood and violence;
they make a covenant with Assyria,
and oil is carried to Egypt.

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

³ In the womb he took his brother by the heel,
and in his manhood he strove with God.

⁴ He strove with the angel and prevailed;
he wept and sought his favor.

He met God at Bethel,
and there God spoke with us—

⁵ the Lord, the God of hosts,
the Lord is his memorial name:

⁶ “So you, by the help of your God, return,
hold fast to love and justice,
and wait continually for your God.”

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

⁸ Ephraim has said, “Ah, but I am rich;
I have found wealth for myself;
in all my labors they cannot find in me iniquity or sin.”

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

¹⁰ I spoke to the prophets;
it was I who multiplied visions,
and through the prophets gave parables.

¹¹ If there is iniquity in Gilead,
they shall surely come to nothing:
in Gilgal they sacrifice bulls;
their altars also are 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 provocation;
so his Lord will leave his bloodguilt on him
and will repay him for his disgraceful deeds.

The word of God for the people of God.

LET US PRAY.

Title: **“Continually Waiting for God”**

INTRODUCTION:

Hosea chapter 12 is not a popular place for preachers. You would be hard pressed to find anywhere near the number of sermons in comparison to the more popular passages. It is not hard to understand why. First of all, it is complicated by a lot of different names. Second, you have to know Biblical history. Third, it is multilayered in meaning and application. Fourth, Hosea speaks loud and clear about the coming judgment because of apostasy; which means falling away from God.

Is this relevant for us today? Ten days ago, we received a very strong indication that it is relevant. Ten days ago was our National Day of Prayer. I received an email from ChurchLeaders.com that said the President’s Proclamation for the National Day of Prayer never mentioned God; and, that this was the first time that has happened.

It seemed very surprising to me, even nonsensical, to have a proclamation on our National Day of Prayer that doesn’t mention God. So, I went online and read it myself. There is a lot of talk about prayer, of course. Faith, in all its varieties is mentioned several times. It says, we are “a Nation of remarkable religious vitality and diversity across the generations. Americans of faith can call upon the power of prayer to provide hope and uplift us for the work ahead.”

But the President does not mention God, so who are we praying to? The Proclamation does not quote scripture. The Proclamation does quote “...the late Congressman John Lewis, “Nothing can stop the power of a committed and determined people to make a difference in our society. Why? Because human beings are the most dynamic link to the divine on this planet.”

Can you see what has happened here? This is humanism. Humanity has displaced God. It is somewhat subtle and it is certainly surreptitious.

Yes, there is a powerful connection between Israel of old and the state we find ourselves in today in this country. We have fallen away from God and are looking for human solutions. There is a lot of talk about justice and mercy and love today. But, when sin-sick souls are the norm, these things are not attainable through natural means or the natural man, nor human effort. We need to continually wait on God. And, we will learn today that this waiting is not standing idly by.

BODY:

I. I tell you that our culture is trying to sustain our souls on emptiness. That is what Hosea is talking about: Ephraim feeding on wind and pursuing the east wind. Ephraim is considered the heart of Israel. The 11th chapter starts with the LORD’s tender connection with His people: Hosea 11:3–4 (ESV)

³ Yet it was I who taught Ephraim to walk;

I took them up by their arms,
but they did not know that I healed them.

⁴ I led them with cords of kindness,
with the bands of love,

and I became to them as one who eases the yoke on their jaws,
and I bent down to them and fed them.

The rest of chapter 11 is the LORD’s lament over the broken relationship with His people. The correcting rod is coming and the necessity of it hurts the heart of God. Assyria to the north and Egypt to the south are opposing nations that worship little “g” gods. Instead of standing against them, the Chosen People have compromised and made covenants with the enemies of the One true God.

Author and preacher, Lloyd J. Ogilvie, in his commentary on this scripture, said this under the heading “Contemporary Application:”

“The wind of apostasy is not a very nourishing diet. It makes for a windbag religion of false idols and the malnutrition of the soul of the people. The “east wind” is the hot, scorching, destructive wind from the desert. This is an apt description of the destruction resulting from lack of honesty with God, growing

moral decay, hedonism, and seeking the security of manipulated alliances with Assyria and Egypt. And Judah [the southern kingdom of Israel] was on its way to the same plight.”

II. Destruction lies ahead; and, in their hearts, the people know it. They thought that by compromising, by appeasing the enemy, they could buy themselves peace. Somehow, their thinking had become twisted and convoluted. Hear Ephraim in the 8th verse: “Ah, but I am rich; I have found wealth for myself; in all my labors they cannot find in me iniquity or sin.” They have mistaken God’s grace and blessings as vindication. Therefore, they assume that they must be living rightly already. But Hosea, and other prophets of God, are boldly announcing the coming judgment. If the people would listen and see the obvious signs, they would know it was true. The Lord sent the prophets. He showed them and told them what to communicate. Instead, the people depended on dead ritualistic religion; meaningless sacrifice does not please God.

III. As Hosea points back to Jacob, I point you back to Hosea. Where is the lesson?

1. This Jacob is the son of Isaac and the twin brother of Esau. It was Esau’s heel that Jacob tried to grab so that he could be born first and have the birthrights given to the firstborn. Jacob continued his deceptive ways into adulthood. Then one night he would become a new person.
2. Throughout the night Jacob wrestled with an angel. But he was more than an angel, it was the LORD. In this striving, Jacob was also striving with himself. Throughout his life he had sought a special blessing. On this eventful night, he eventually received that blessing; and, would limp every step the rest of his life to remind him of that fateful match. God named Jacob, Israel, because it means “he struggles with God.” What a fitting name for the nation of God’s chosen people, for it seems that they were always struggling to walk rightly with their God.

Why does Hosea use Jacob as an illustration? I cannot assume it is obvious. Jacob represents every human being. Our default position in life is self-seeking – what do I want and how do I get it? Each one of us wrestles internally. Each one of us must wrestle with our perfectly holy and righteous God. If you are fundamentally, the same person you have always been, self-examination may be in order. Because every human institution is made up of individuals, the sins and flaws of the individuals **will** manifest in that human entity. In this scripture it applied to the nation of Israel. It applies to our nation. That is why we have our Constitution. That is why we have so many laws. This truth applies to all levels of government and society. This truth applies to the Church.

3. Hosea’s reference to Bethel would bring to mind Jacob’s vision of heaven and earth connected by a ladder on which the angels of God traversed. Hosea is saying that lesson is for everyone – “there God spoke with us.” The LORD told Jacob, and therefore the people of God, “I am with you and will watch over you wherever you go, and I will bring you back to this land.” Soon, Assyria would take Israel captive and take the people into exile. And remember, God is with us and will not leave us until He has done what He has promised.

Jesus also cited this vision of Jacob’s ladder at Bethel in John 1:51. Jesus said that he was this connection between heaven and earth. He was from heaven and is the gate of heaven. We gain access to heaven through Jesus and by no other way.

4. There is another aspect to Jesus referencing the account in Genesis 28. First, Jacob’s vision really happened. Second, the message of the account is true. It is fulfilled in Jesus. Third, the scriptures are true. Jesus often validated the Old Testament. Fourth, scripture was relevant and is relevant today.

IV. Hosea says the nation must return to your God; the nation as a whole and each person. The obvious implication is that they have turned away from God and pursued other ways. This returning is a corporate repentance for Israel and for us. Chapter 11 uses the word repent so Hosea is being consistent.

1. Repent from what? Every form of idolatry. Think of idolatry in its most expansive definition. Do not limit idolatry to ancient gods like Baal and Asherah. Do not limit idolatry to gods made of human hands. But rather, think of idolatry as anything of human conception that we put before the Lord Jesus. A society that has turned away from God is plagued by lies and deception. The light of truth is being shut out with shades of sin. Instead of depending on God, society looks for human solutions apart from God. The marketplace is corrupt; greed and covetousness are the rule of the day. Love and justice are only catchphrases used to manipulate and further political ends.

2. What would that repentance look like? Making sure we listen and submit to the prophets of God. We would listen to those recorded in scripture and to the faithful preachers of the Lord's word. Our faith would carry over into every aspect of our lives: business, social, and leisure practices. We would truly love God, truly love our neighbor, and justice would flow from that love.

V. What is continually waiting for God? Do not imagine that it is complete passivity – like a human jellyfish pushed about by the waves, winds, and tides. Continuous waiting on God is an active anticipation and deliberately maintaining your connection to the Almighty.

From the hymn, *Have Thine Own Way, Lord*

1. Have thine own way, Lord! Have thine own way!

Thou art the potter, I am the clay.

Mold me and make me after thy will,
while I am waiting, yielded and still.

Psalm 27:14 (NIV84) Wait for the Lord; be strong and take heart and wait for the Lord.

Micah 7:7 (NIV84) But as for me, I watch in hope for the Lord, I wait for God my Savior; my God will hear me.

Isaiah 40:31 (ESV) but they who wait for the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings like eagles; they shall run and not be weary; they shall walk and not faint.

Psalm 130:5–6 (ESV) I wait for the Lord, my soul waits,
and in his word I hope; my soul waits for the Lord
more than watchmen for the morning,
more than watchmen for the morning.

And, 1 Thessalonians 1:9–10 (ESV) ... you turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God, and to wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead, Jesus who delivers us from the wrath to come.

CONCLUSION:

My original intention this week was to point us to Pentecost, which is next Sunday. Jesus ordered the disciples: Acts 1:4 (ESV) while staying with them, not to depart from Jerusalem, but to wait for the promise of the Father, which, he said, "you heard from me." My idea was that this week was to be one about waiting. When I began to examine the theme of waiting, it quickly became clear that it is a major theme of scripture.

The Church is the assembly of chosen people. Have we too, like Israel fallen away from The Way? For much of the Church, the answer is YES. We too must return to God, to the foundations of our faith. We must be continually waiting on God.

The Lord Jesus ascended to the right hand of the Father so that the promised Paraclete, God the Holy Spirit could be sent. The disciples were obedient and waited on God as Jesus commanded them. The Holy Spirit descended and the Church was birthed. Where there is no Spirit of God, there is no Church. Lord, we pray that you would once again move mightily through God the Holy Spirit. We continually wait on you God: with hope; with expectancy; with patience; with confidence; with trust; in obedience; and, in reverence.

A poem, Still Waiting by J. D. Smith

Waiting! Yes, patiently waiting!

Till next steps made plain shall be;
To hear, with the inner hearing,
The Voice that will call for me.

Waiting! Yes, quietly waiting!
No need for an anxious dread;
Shall He not assuredly guide me,
Who giveth me daily bread?

Waiting! Yes, hopefully waiting!
With hope that needn't grow dim;
The Master is pledged to guide me,
And my eyes are unto Him.
Waiting! Yes, expectantly waiting!
Perhaps it may be today
The Master will quickly open
The gate to my future way.

Waiting! Yes, trustfully waiting!
I know, though I've waited long,
That, while He withholds His purpose,
His waiting cannot be wrong.

Waiting! Yes, waiting, Still waiting!
The Master will not be late;
He knoweth that I am waiting
For Him to unlatch the gate.

Heavenly Father, we continually wait on you!
Amen and amen. Let us pray.