

The consequences of unfaithfulness

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Preacher: Sam Lenton

[0:00] Good morning, everybody. Good morning to you. A very warm welcome to Union Baptist Church.

It's great to have you with us this morning. Welcome to those of you here. Welcome to those of you joining us on the live stream as well. My name's Andrew. I'm pastor here, and it's my pleasure to welcome you to worship God today. Sam Lenton will be sharing with us later as we continue our series looking at the book of Hosea. And children, young people go to their groups after we've spent some time worshipping God together in song. I want to remind us that we come here together to worship the creator of the universe who wants to have a deep, intimate relationship with us as children and for us to call him father.

Psalm 104 says, praise the Lord my soul. Lord my God, you are very great. You are clothed with splendor and majesty. The Lord wraps himself in light as with a garment. He stretches out the heavens like a tent and lays the beams of his upper chambers on their waters. He makes the clouds his chariot and rides on the wings of the wind. He makes winds his messengers, flames of fire his servants. He set the earth on its foundations. It can never be moved.

He makes springs pour water into the ravines. It flows between the mountains. They give water to all the beasts of the field. The wild donkeys quench their thirst. The birds of the sky nest by the waters. They sing amongst the branches. He waters the mountains from his upper chambers. The land is satisfied by the fruit of his work. He makes grass grow for the cattle and plants for people to cultivate, bringing forth food from the earth. I will sing to the Lord all my life.

[1:54] I will sing praise to my God as long as I live. May my meditation be pleasing to him as I rejoice in the Lord. Praise the Lord, my soul. Praise the Lord. Let's pray as we prepare to worship God.

Lord, when we look at the beauty of the creation around us, we have so many reasons to thank you. We praise you that you made it all. You created the entire universe out of nothing.

The biggest details and the smallest details are all down to you, and you provide for us daily what we need. We don't understand how the creator God could also be our loving father, but we thank you that we can call you father, and thank you that we can know that you love us because you sent Jesus to die for us. We want to sing our praise to you today. Please give us new understanding of how great you are as we worship you. In Jesus' name, amen. I'd like to invite you to stand as we sing now, and the music group are going to lead us as we worship God together.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

Amen.

[3:57] Amen.

Amen. Amen.

The Lion, the Lamb How great is our God Sing with me how great is our God And all will sing how great How great is our God Names are powerful names Worthy of all praise My heart will sing how great is our God Name above all names Worthy of all praise My heart will sing how great is our God How great is our God

Sing with me how great is our God And all will sing how great How great is our God How great you are God You are the name above all names You are so worthy of all names And all of you are the name of all names Our thoughts and our words It doesn't reflect the praise that's due to your name And we don't reflect the praise that's due to your name We're sorry Lord that often we've not given you the praise that you're due Because we've been worshipping ourselves instead of you We've made other gods before you Lord But we thank you that you are a loving saving God Who rescues us and redeems us You redeem the wayward ones like us And welcome us back into your family

We're sometimes unfaithful But you are always faithful to us Thank you that We can hold on to your faithfulness No matter what changes around us Amen Let's continue to worship Let's continue to worship Let's continue to worship Let's pray Faithful one, so unchanging Ageless one, you're my rock of peace Lord of all, I depend on you

[8:08] I call out to you again and again I call out to you again and again You are my rock in times of trouble You lift me up when I fall down Over the storm, your love is the anchor My hope is in you alone

Faithful one, so unchanging Ageless one, you're my rock of peace Lord of all, I depend on you I call out to you again and again Again and again I call out to you again and again Again and again You are my rock in times of trouble

You lift me up when I fall down All through the storm, your love is the anchor My hope is in you alone Amen Amen Do please sit down We're so thankful for the people who serve our children and young people here at Union Baptist Church Our children and young people are precious to us And we really value the work that goes on here to teach them and to create an environment where they can develop as disciples and flourish in their faith

So we're going to pray for our children and young people now before they go off to their groups Father God, we thank you so much for all those who serve our children and young people and for the children and young people themselves We want to pray for them now as they spend time in their groups I pray that you help them to hear about Jesus To learn through your word, the Bible To come to know Jesus personally and to get to know him better and better And to be equipped and empowered to tell others about Jesus and share the amazing good news with others We want to pray especially this morning for children in year six Who are going to be exploring the next group up in Salt and Light Pray that you'll bless them particularly And we pray that all the groups and the leaders will have a wonderful time discovering more of you this morning We pray that in Jesus name Amen So children and young people It's time for you to go off to your groups If you don't know where you're going, please see Go to the registration desk downstairs and we'll see you later on And we pray that in Jesus

Wonderful. I'd now like to welcome Sheena and Cash as they share about This Time Tomorrow.

[13:15] Well, good morning, everybody. In our series on This Time Tomorrow, we've been hearing about how the different experiences people have in their weekday lives, because most of our lives, as we know, happen outside church, and it's there that we're called to be disciples. Our time together in church prepares us for what we face in the week ahead. Our coming together is a time when we can be encouraged, supported, renewed, and equipped for what God wants us to do through the week, because that's where God's placed us, because that's where he wants to work his purposes out for the world. So today, we're going to hear from Cash and find out what God's been doing in his weekday life at the moment. So I'm going to hand over to Cash here.

Hi, good morning, church. So, Cash, before we start, can you give us just a snapshot of who you are, because some people may not know who you are. So, yeah. So I'm Cash, and I'm married to Shaheen, and we've both been blessed with a beautiful daughter named Evelyn.

Good. And what's been happening to you recently? So, some of you already know, but who have not yet know about this, the fact that I was being made redundant in my last role with Cisco.

So, you've been made redundant. So, this is a different kind of this time tomorrow. So, where will you be this time tomorrow? So, in my crunch situation, a typical day for me will start with a visit to a gym, gym, and then I will come back from gym, go to my prayer room and have a prayer, read a passage from the Bible, and then this will be followed with a long day spent in my office room.

Yes. So, what do you do in your office room at the moment? At the moment, I'm working on different things. I started having registered for some online trainings to refresh my professional skills, and then most of the time I spent looking different job boards applying, searching for new roles and applying for new jobs, and then catching up with my emails.

[15:34] So, who do you meet when you're doing that? Previously, in my last role, I was meeting my colleagues virtually online through WebEx mostly, because my role was home-based, but currently, I'm not seeing much people at the moment.

Time to time, I will have some virtual meetings, but not much people I'm seeing at the moment. Because you were telling me that, in fact, you quite enjoyed having the possibility of a role which actually had more people in it, because at the moment, you've been working from home a lot, and that's been quite challenging for you.

Yeah, that's true. Yeah, so since COVID, my role was mostly home-based, and I wasn't visiting office much, so it was a very rare occasion that I will visit office.

In the beginning, it was a bliss working from home, but soon I realized that not everything has to last forever. Yeah, yeah. You know, and I have to see and, you know, get back into some sort of a social life, because working virtually is not something I would prefer long-term.

Okay. So, one of the questions we ask normally is, what are the joys and challenges? So, have you any thoughts about that? Yeah, one of the joys, I will say that it has given me more time at the moment to spend, have some spare time.

[17:00] So, I've started having some different projects at home. So, one of the projects is renewing my garden, and I've been working on my garden.

And the challenges are, yeah, the challenge at the moment is obviously finding a new role. The job market is quite slow at the moment, and I'm not having much joy hearing back from recruiters, which is quite challenging.

But you're telling me that there is, you have some verses from the Bible that you are very reliant on at the moment. Do you want to talk about those? Yeah. So, one of the verses that I would like to share is that, is from Proverbs, where the Bible tells us, the horse is made ready for the day of battle, but victory comes from the Lord.

So, I trust and completely believe that God is preparing the way for me, and he will bring the right job for me at the right time, at his chosen time. Yeah. And you've had this kind of experience before, haven't you?

Yeah, this is not a new thing for me, to be in a challenging situation. Not exactly I was being made redundant, I've been in the same situation, but I've been in far more difficult situations than this before.

[18:16] But the one who has helped me before is going to help me again, and he's going to bring me out of this situation. And I firmly believe and trust in him.

Good, that's great. Good. So, how can we pray for you? Yeah, I appreciate that, you know, and I always believe that prayers can do wonders, and more we pray, and more people pray, things can speed up.

And I appreciate if you can pray that God open up that door and bring that right job for me soon.

Yeah, okay. Let me pray for you. Father God, we thank you that you have your hand on Cash's life. We thank you for the trust that he has in you, that you'll provide for him in your timing. We lift to you the need for him to find a new job soon, and we pray that you will lead him to a new work environment where he can grow and develop and make new relationships.

In the meantime, we pray that he'll be learning new things as he waits, and that you'll be preparing him for the next step in his life and discipleship. We ask that you'll encourage him this week and empower him by your spirit in all that he's doing.

[19:23] In Jesus' name, amen. Amen. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you.

Thank you.

Just in a moment of silence, we just lift those to you. And Lord, we want to pray for the final week of the job club, this coming Wednesday, but also the following Wednesday, start of job club plus for three weeks.

so Lord we want to lift that to you thank you for the lovely guests that we've been welcoming each week and we pray that you'd help us as we conclude well this Wednesday and look forward to other opportunities coming up Lord and for those who've been part of the Job Club in previous times Lord that they would want to come back and join us for this special time looking at anxiety and self esteem and looking forward to what is life all about we pray that you'd give wisdom in that and we do pray again for wisdom that seems to be a common theme at the moment pray for us as we meet together on Thursday at our deacons meeting and pray that just after the service a group of us will be meeting called the Calling Committee preparing for an interview for Andrew tomorrow for the

lead pastor role here we do pray that you would give us supreme wisdom there and discernment help us and guide us for the fellowship we pray and Lord we also think on Thursday a significant day I think in many lives as the country goes to vote in the general election and again for wisdom that we cast our votes in the way that would be helpful and encouraging Lord we do pray for wisdom in that and Lord as we often think about our town here in High Wycombe we do ask you again for healing and transformation of our town of High Wycombe our nation and the wider world and to remain open to the leading of your Holy Spirit and to follow his prompting we do want to tune in to you Lord and to hear what you're telling us in these days and Lord we also pray for us to increase our trust and dependence upon your word and its truth and lean less on our own understanding we pray for Sam as he continues our studies in Hosea also for our life groups as we look back look up and look forward in this new series that we're doing we thank you for this last Wednesday or this last week when a number of us met and sort of this new way of doing life group and thank you for that and we pray that you'd continue to help us as we work in this new way so Lord we do pray for the use of our money our homes our wealth and material goods individually also as a church and a nation as we listen and respond to your word and we do pray that we'd be obedient to your command in John 13 34 it says love one another as I've loved you so you must love one another by this everyone will know that you are my disciples if you love one another so we bring all these prayers to you our Lord and Saviour

Amen thank you so much Anthony for leading us in prayer as we prepare to hear God's word read to us we're going to worship God in song again as we stand to sing In Christ Alone let's sing together in Christ alone my hope is found he is my light my strength my song this cornerstone this solid ground firm through the fiercest drought and storm what heights of love what depths of peace when fears are stilled when strivings cease my comforter my all in all here in the love of Christ [24:58] I stand in Christ alone who took on flesh fullness of God in helpless babe this gift of love and righteousness scorned by the ones he came to save till on the cross as Jesus died the wrath of God was satisfied for every sin on him was laid here in the death of Christ I live there in the ground his body lay light of the world by darkness slain then burst him off in glorious day up from the grave he rose again and as he stands in victory since Christmas lost its grip on me for I am his and he is mine born with the precious blood of Christ no guilt in life no fear in death this is the power of Christ in me from life's best cry to my nobeth

Jesus commands my destiny the power of Christ the power of Christ no evil man can ever pluck me from his hand till he returns or calls me home here in the power of Christ Christ I'll stand the power of Christ I'll stand come and ever pluck me from his hand till he returns or calls me home here in the power of Christ through the

Today's Bible reading is three passages from Hosea. I think it's fair to say it's a difficult reading. May God open his word to us.

It's on page 903, where it starts in the Church Bibles, starting at chapter 4, verses 1 to 9.

Hear the word of the Lord, you Israelites, because the Lord has a charge to bring against you who live in the land. There is no faithfulness, no love, no acknowledgement of God in the land. There is only cursing, lying and murder, stealing and adultery.

[28:47] They break all bounds, and bloodshed follows bloodshed. Because of this, the land dries up, and all who live in it waste away. The beasts of the field, the birds in the sky, and the fish in the sea are swept away.

But let no one bring a charge, let no one accuse another. For your people are like those who bring charges against a priest. You stumble day and night, and the prophets stumble with you.

So I will destroy your mother. My people are destroyed from lack of knowledge. Because you have rejected knowledge, I also reject you as my priests.

Because you have ignored the law of your God, I will ignore your children. The more priests there were, the more they sinned against me. They exchanged their glorious God for something disgraceful.

They feed on the sins of my people, and relish their wickedness. And it will be like people, like priests. I will punish both of them for their ways, and repay them for their deeds.

[29:51] We move to chapter 5, verses 1 to 7. Hear this, you priests. Pay attention, you Israelites. Listen, royal house. This judgment is against you.

You have been a snare at Mizpah, a net spread out on table. The rebels are knee-deep in slaughter. I will discipline all of them. I know all about Ephraim.

Israel is not hidden from me. Ephraim, you have now turned to prostitution. Israel is corrupt. Their deeds do not permit them to return to their God.

A spirit of prostitution is in their heart. They do not acknowledge the Lord. Israel's arrogance testifies against them. The Israelites, even Ephraim, stumble in their sin.

Judah also stumbles with them. When they go with their flocks and herds to seek the Lord, they will not find him. He has withdrawn himself from them. They are unfaithful to the Lord.

[30:49] They give birth to illegitimate children. When they celebrate their new moon feasts, he will devour their fields. Come, let us return to the Lord.

He has injured us, but he will bind up our wounds. After two days, he will revive us. On the third day, he will restore us, that we may live in his presence.

Let us acknowledge the Lord. Let us press on to acknowledge him. As surely as the sun rises, he will appear. He will come to us like the winter rains, like the spring rains that water the earth.

What can I do with you, Ephraim? What can I do with you, Judah? Your love is like the morning mist, like the early dew that disappears. Therefore, I cut you in pieces with my prophets.

I killed you with the words of my mouth. Then my judgments go forth like the sun. For I desire mercy, not sacrifice, and acknowledgement of God, rather than burnt offerings.

[31:59] This is the word of the Lord. Thank you so much, Sarah. I'd like to welcome Sam, so I can pray for him before he shares with us.

It's been great in preparation for this passage. I've met with Sam and with Tim, who's also going to be preaching later on. It's been great to share together and explore together what God has to say to us as individuals and as a church through his word.

Let's pray for Sam now as he comes to share with us. Father God, we want to pray for Sam. I want to thank you so much for the gifts of teaching and explaining your word that you've given him.

Thank you for his willingness to serve you in that way now. I pray that as he shares with us, that his words will be your words. We thank you for your word written to us in the Bible. And we pray that as Sam unpacks it to us, that we'll be able to hear that and receive from you and be able to respond in the way that you want us to, according to your Holy Spirit.

We pray for your blessing on Sam now and help us to be alert to what you're saying to us and ready to respond. We pray that in Jesus' name. Amen. Well, good morning, everyone.

[33:09] I can be and I can do whatever I want and nobody has the right to tell me that it is wrong. If you had to sum up the attitude of many in today's society, I think that sentence comes pretty close to capturing the postmodern mindset.

While unfaithfulness remains painful and destructive, TV shows, films and songs have normalised it to such an extent that it almost seems unusual to be faithful.

Brigitte Bardot, the French animal rights activist and former actress, singer and model, famous for portraying sexually emancipated characters, put it like this.

It is better to be unfaithful than to be faithful without wanting to be. Can you hear what she's saying? If you don't want to be faithful, why be faithful?

Choose unfaithfulness. Choose yourself. In the opening three chapters of Hosea, we are presented with Goma, who chose her own desires over faithfulness to her husband.

[34:29] While our natural inclination might be to distance ourselves from association with Goma the prostitute, as Andrew made clear in the first two sermons in this series, we are in fact much more like Goma than we might want to admit.

In being idolatrous by putting anything other than God first, we have committed spiritual adultery. There is no room for feeling superior here if we have been faithful in our human relationships, for God makes it quite clear that we have been unfaithful to him.

And that is the biggest betrayal of all. As we explore the consequences of the unfaithfulness of the Israelites in Hosea chapters 4 to 7, let us invite God to examine our hearts and show us how this applies to us today.

I wonder, how do you cope when faced with the question? You know the one I'm talking about. You've just checked your watch as the sermon draws to a close, already looking forward to a relaxing afternoon on the sofa, when the preacher poses the question, often just before a time of prayer.

How has God spoken to you today? Or perhaps one of the variants. What has God challenged you about? What is God asking you to do?

[35:54] What do you need to bring before the Lord in prayer? How has God spoken to me? Well, I'm not 100% certain he has, to be honest.

He's probably spoken to those with the really big problems, those committing the ultra-serious sins. They should probably go up to one of the prayer team afterwards. But me? I was thinking about the coffee, the drive home, the football match that ruined my Saturday.

The question, however daunting and however poorly responded to, if you are anything like me, reminds us that God still speaks today. The same God who spoke the promise of blessing to Abraham.

The same God who spoke the words of judgment to his people in the book of Hosea. The same God who came to us in the person of Jesus. The word who became flesh.

The word who brought light to the darkness. The same God who died and rose again. And who spoke through the disciples to build his church 2,000 years ago. The same God who grows his church today.

[37:05] While we may not always be clear whether God has indeed spoken to us on a Sunday, or on any other day of the week for that matter, there could be no doubt in the opening verses of Hosea, chapter 4, that God was speaking to the Israelites, and that he had a clear message for them.

Listen again to the charge he brings against his people. Hear the word of the Lord, you Israelites, because the Lord has a charge to bring against you who live in the land.

There is no faithfulness, no love, no acknowledgement of God in the land. These are devastating words.

Damning words of condemnation against the people chosen to be set apart. To show other nations the one true God. Note the enormity of the charge levelled against them.

No faithfulness, no love, no acknowledgement of God. Not just not much or not enough. No, there was none at all.

[38:15] But if there is an absence of these three things, what does characterise the life of the Israelites? Look at the contrast in the verses that follow. There is only cursing, lying and murder, stealing and adultery.

They break all bounds. Bloodshed follows bloodshed. That is quite a list of sins. In fact, we seem to have worked our way through half of the Ten Commandments in rapid succession.

With the phrasing of bloodshed follows bloodshed, suggesting ongoing, everlasting destruction and suffering, sin upon sin, death upon death, the light to the world engulfed in devastating darkness.

God sets out his charge like a prosecutor at a trial and the verdict is undeniable. Guilty. There is no defence plea that can stand against the verdict.

No alibi to escape the blame. Indeed, in verse 4, the people are told, let no one bring a charge. Let no one accuse another. For they are all included in the charge and they shall all endure the consequences of their unfaithfulness.

[39:34] Back a verse in verse 3, we see that this affects more than just the people themselves. Because of this, the land dries up and all who live in it wastes away.

The beasts of the field, the birds in the sky and the fish of the sea are swept away. This is apocalyptic language. God's creation corrupted by human sin.

It is a similar image to that scene in John Milton's epic poem, Paradise Lost, where he follows the moment of Eve plucking the forbidden fruit with the lines, earth felt the wound.

And nature from her seat, sighing through all her works, gave signs of woe that all was lost. Adam and Eve's rebellion against God resulted in the world being subjected to God's curse.

In Hosea, we see a repetition of the fall with the precious land that Israel was given, a land flowing with milk and honey, being subjected to God's curse as a result of Israel's rebellion.

[40:47] The wounds that earth felt, to use Milton's words, points us forward to the wounds that God the Son himself would suffer on the cross, not just for the unfaithful Israelites, but for you and for me, and for the unfaithful throughout history.

While the chapters ahead will unpack God's charge against his people in graphic detail, painting a stark picture of the severity of sin, chapter four presents us with a clear message.

God's people have turned from him, they have turned to sin, and they've turned his creation upside down. If the Bible ended there, there would be no hope for the Israelites, and no hope for us.

Praise God that there is so much more to come. Yes, I'm afraid the good news is not quite on the horizon yet, as chapter five launches into a further condemnation of the unfaithful.

You can imagine the whisperings amongst the people, wondering who God could really be referring to, the assumption that they must surely be exempt from this judgment, as God delivers another stark reminder of their complicity in the opening verses of this chapter.

[42:11] Hear this, you priests. Pay attention, you Israelites. Listen, royal house. This judgment is against you. The judgment is against God's people, whether they are priests, ordinary people, or members of the royal household.

They can't escape it. This judgment is against you. Can you hear the insistence in the tone of these verses?

Three sets of imperatives. Hear this, pay attention, and listen. Listen, Three commands in three lines, and a concluding statement in the fourth, to make things abundantly clear.

There's a common saying, that we have two ears, but only one mouth, because we're supposed to listen twice as much as we speak. I'll leave you to debate the wisdom of that saying, and the extent to which it reflects your own ratio in communication.

But I think the principle it alludes to is helpful, in reminding us of how much we can struggle to listen, but how incredibly important it is. Here in Hosea chapter 5, God insists three times, in three different ways, that his people listen to him.

[43:31] And it is surely a message that we would do well to take to heart too. Are we hearing God's word this morning? Are we paying attention to what he is revealing about himself, and about us?

Are we listening to what he is saying to us? Amidst the condemnation in chapter 5, we are given a glimpse of God, who has withdrawn his presence.

These are chilling, chilling words. When they go with their flocks and herds to seek the Lord, they will not find him.

He has withdrawn himself from them. Do you hear the gravity of these words? God is their God. He's their hope. Their provider. Their rescuer.

And now he's gone. The Lord who chose them as his own, has withdrawn himself from them. It sounds as though they're seeking him, and turning from their unfaithfulness.

[44:36] But as we shall see reiterated in chapter 6, this is mere religious formality. They are going with their flocks and herds to offer sacrifices, to perform religious rituals in the hope of appeasing God.

But they're not loving God. They're not faithful to God. Verse 7 reinforces this by stating in no uncertain terms.

They are unfaithful to the Lord. They give birth to illegitimate children. Acts of religion do not mask the attitudes of the heart.

God sees the heart. He knows what lays behind what we do and what we say. He knows if we're doing something for our own gain, or are seeking to bring him glory.

He knows how we're all thinking and feeling this morning, whether we're simply going through the motions, or are earnestly seeking his presence.

[45:44] In a remarkable set of images over the next five verses, God is compared to a flood of water, a devouring moth, corrosive rot, a

festering wound, and a vicious lion.

You may well never have thought of God as a moth, or rot, or wound, and they're not exactly images that we would conventionally associate with the creator, the king, the savior.

Yet they strike a chord here in this portrayal of Israel's unfaithfulness, because they remind us of the decay that can set in when we push God to the margins, when we don't recognize the obviously destructive consequences of not putting him first.

A flood of water, of course, is unmissable and unavoidable, and our thoughts perhaps turn to the great flood, itself, when God's anger was poured out against everyone apart from Noah's family for turning their backs on him.

The flood engulfs, and overwhelms, communicating the severity of God's anger. While the moth, the rots and the wound, linger and fester, causing destruction that's barely noticeable, but absolutely devastating.

[47:08] Yet perhaps the most powerful image here is that of a lion. Picture what is being represented here in verses 14 and 15. For I will be like a lion to Ephraim, like a great lion to Judah.

I will tear them to pieces and go away. I will carry them off with no one to rescue them. Then I will return to my lair until they have borne their guilt and seek my face.

In their misery, they will earnestly seek me. In Revelation, chapter 5, verse 5, we read of the lion of the tribe of Judah, the root of David, who has triumphed.

The suggestion in Revelation is that the lion there is Jesus, who is both triumphant lamb and lion and sacrificial lamb. But what about the lion in Hosea chapter 5?

The great lion does indeed sound like a majestic title, an image of kingship, something, of course, that C.S. Lewis adopts in his representation of Aslan in the Chronicles of Narnia.

[48:22] The lion who is good, but certainly not very safe. The lion in verse 14 is likewise certainly not safe.

For he will tear them to pieces and carry them off, with no one to rescue them. This is brutal language describing the actions of a vicious lion. But look again at verse 15.

Rather than fleeing the lion and keeping their distance from such a destructive force, it is prophesied that the people will earnestly seek him out in their misery.

They will seek the face of the one who has torn them to pieces. When we look to the cross of Jesus, we see how God can be both the one who tears to pieces and the one who pieces things back together again.

Jesus was torn that we might be healed. Jesus was struck down that we might be raised up.

[49:32] Jesus died the death we deserve so that we might live in God's presence. And where do we see signs of the healing to come in these verses?

Well, let's step into chapter 6 and hear Hosea's cry of hope. The man who was commanded by God to return to his unfaithful wife in chapter 3 to buy her back and redeem her now speaks out at the start of chapter 6 pleading with the people.

Come, let us return to the Lord. He has torn us to pieces but he will heal us. He has injured us but he will bind up our wounds.

After two days he will revive us. On the third day he will restore us that we may live in his presence.

Here is the message of hope. The message of healing. The one who has torn them will heal them.

The one who has injured them will bind up their wounds.

[50:42] They will be revived and raised up and they will live in his presence. From the imagery of floods, moths, rot, wounds and lions causing destruction we are given a picture of restoration of God the healer redeeming his people.

And did you notice the reference to the day's passing? The restoration comes on the third day. In the English Standard Version the phrase he will restore us is translated he will raise us up.

From being torn to being raised up on the third day. Are we perhaps being given a picture of the cross and the resurrection to come?

Jesus was torn but he was raised on the third day. As Christians we believe that Jesus bore that punishment that we deserve and that in defeating death he has given us victory over sin so that we might live in his presence.

Amidst this language of destruction in Hosea we are given a glimpse of the glory to come of a new creation awaiting those who return to the Lord.

[52:08] But what does it mean to return to the Lord exactly? For the people of Israel a visible outward sign of their commitment to God was surely sacrificing animals in accordance with Jewish law.

And yet look at verse 6 for I desire mercy not sacrifice an acknowledgement of God rather than burnt offerings.

despite setting out the sacrificial system for his people to follow God's message through Hosea is that there is no point going through the motions if the heart is turned away from him.

An act of faithfulness does not make the people faithful. They can present burnt offerings to God but if their hearts are turned from him then the offerings are meaningless.

In chapters 9 and 12 of Matthew's Gospel Jesus applies these very words when speaking with the Pharisees.

[53:12] We read in Matthew chapter 12 of Jesus' disciples picking and eating grain on the Sabbath provoking the anger of the Pharisees who try to draw attention to this unlawful practice as they call it.

Take a listen to Jesus' response from verse 3 onwards. He answered haven't you read what David did when he and his companions were hungry?

He entered the house of God and he and his companions ate the consecrated bread which was not lawful for them to do but only for the priests. Or haven't you read in the law that the priests on Sabbath duty in the temple desecrate the Sabbath and yet are innocent?

I tell you that something greater than the temple is here. If you had known what these words mean, I desire mercy not sacrifice, you would not have condemned the innocent for the Son of Man is Lord of the Sabbath.

For religious leaders proud in their knowledge of the scriptures it must have absolutely cut them to the heart to hear Jesus say if you had known what these words mean.

[54:26] before quoting Hosea 6 verse 6. And perhaps we too would do well to take heed of what these words really mean when we are tempted to be legalistic in our approach to prioritise outward acts over inward attitudes.

How can we show mercy to the world around us? How can we acknowledge God and truly return to him? Only this past week I found myself sitting with my Bible on my lap looking like a faithful Christian.

Yet as I was preparing for this sermon and these issues were at the forefront of my mind, I realised that what others may have thought if they'd walked in and looked at me sitting in my chair with my Bible didn't necessarily match up with the reality of that moment.

I wasn't really concentrating. I wasn't really inviting God to meet with me in that moment. I'd rushed into the reading without praying and I barely took a word in.

I certainly know that I've brought that attitude into church services before. Turning up, ticking off the list that I've done it, I've come, I've registered my attendance as though that will keep God happy for the next week.

[55:43] I wonder if you could relate to that at all. Are you sometimes tempted to do religion, to tick it off your list, to turn up to a meeting, to read a book, to get something done in the hope that that's enough, that that will count?

Let us remember these words, I desire mercy, not sacrifice. As we come to the final chapter, of this morning's section of Hosea, we are confronted with language of fire, burning, and bread.

But, before all the bakers in the room get overly excited that Hosea is finally speaking their language, I should warn you that this is a far cry from the beautiful aroma of bagels, buns, and baguettes.

Rather, the smell here is more sulfurous and smoldering as the people's sins are exposed. Note, though, how eager God is to restore and heal them.

Before the sins are revealed, God's desire to redeem his people is emphasized. Whenever I would restore the fortunes of my people, whenever I would heal Israel, can you hear the despair in his voice?

[57:06] It's not just that he's caught them at a bad time. No, whenever he would restore and heal them. The sins of Ephraim are exposed and the crimes of Samaria revealed.

They practice deceit, thieves break into houses, bandits rob in the streets, but they do not realize that I remember all their evil deeds. Their sins engulf them.

They are always before me. I find the language at the end of verse two particularly powerful. Their sins aren't just associated with them, something that can be seen when you look for them.

They engulf them. This is a word that implies being fully immersed, surrounded, covered. This is an inescapable state and God always sees their sin.

before him. In the next few verses, we read of their wickedness, their lies, how they're all adulterers, all fall, and yet, verse seven, none of them calls on God.

[58:20] Amidst the chaos and the rebellion and the passion that burns for anything but God, the light still shines in the darkness as the earnest cry of the Father declares, I long to redeem them.

The consequence of their unfaithfulness is destruction, but God is the God of restoration and redemption.

There is justice for the sin of spiritual adultery, but there is also mercy as the Father opens his arms to his prodigals to return to him.

I wonder whether he is calling you to return to him this morning, reminding you that his arms are wide open for you too.

Don't let this opportunity slip you by. Don't choose yourself. Choose God. Let us come together in prayer.

[59:32] Father God, faithful one, the same yesterday, today, and forever, forgive us for our unfaithfulness.

Forgive us that we so often choose ourselves over you. We forget the one who gave us life and who loves us more than we could possibly imagine.

Humble us, Father. Bring us to our knees before you in humble adoration. Make us faithful.

When we look to the cross of Jesus, we see how God can be both the one who tears to pieces and the one who pieces things back together again.

let us meditate on this truth for a few moments as we reflect on what our heavenly father is saying to us this morning. amen.

[60:50] well thank you so much Sam for leading us so helpfully through that passage and we're going to have a bit more time to respond to what God is saying to us now as the musicians lead us.

Just ask Paul to start playing the next song as we just invite the Holy Spirit to just continue what he's doing in us and to speak into our hearts. Amen. Lord your word is a gift to us.

It's also very uncomfortable sometimes when we read the truth of who we are before you and we recognize that we are unfaithful to you.

We are the unfaithful one. The verdict is against us, each one of us and we're guilty. There's no way we can stand and justify ourselves before you.

Lord, but we just ask your Holy Spirit to help us to really hear you this morning because we recognize that together with the harsh reality of who we are and how we've hurt you and how we've distanced ourselves from you, that you are a God of mercy and we might be in this place this morning as people who feel cut to pieces, maybe because of the situations we're in but maybe because we recognize what we've done to you, Lord.

[63:22] We recognize that we've cut you to the heart but thank you that you are a God who not only cuts to pieces but you piece things together and we thank you for what you've done for us in the cross, that place where mercy and justice meet, where we just see Jesus, your son, the one that you sent to take the punishment that we deserve.

Yeah, Lord, we don't want to be people who just go through the motions. We want to respond to you in faithfulness. We don't want to be people who choose ourselves. We want to choose you.

Lord, I just invite you to come by your Holy Spirit now, work in each one of us. come Holy Spirit, help us to respond to you in this space we have now as we worship now.

Amen. Let's continue to respond as we worship together. Feel free to stand if that feels right or just to stay seated as the musicians lead us. here is love here is love vast as the ocean loving kindness as the flood when the prince of life our ransom shed for us his precious blood.

Who his love will not remember who can cease to sing his praise he will never be forgotten throughout heaven's eternal days.

[65:25] grace takes my sin calls me bread pays my debt completely love rescued me seated me with my king forever more on the mount of crucifixion fountains open deep and wide through the flood gates of God's mercy flowed a vast and gracious tide grace and love like mighty rivers poured in cells from above heaven's peace and perfect justice peace is to kill to world in love grace takes my sin calls me bread pays death completely love rescued me seated me with my king forever more!

! You alone shall be my glory, nothing in the world I see.

You have blessed and sanctified me, God himself has set me free. Grace takes my sin, calls me bread, pays my death completely.

Love rescued me, seethed at me with my King forever. Grace takes my sin, calls me bread, pays my death completely.

Love rescued me, seethed at me with my King forevermore.

[68:42] Grace takes my sin, calls me bread, pays my name.

Grace takes my sin, calls me bread, pays my name.

Amen. And bore contempt on all my pride.

Forbid it, Lord, that I should boast, Saved in the death of Christ my God.

All of my things that trump me most, I sacrifice them to His blood.

[70:23] See from His head, His hands, His feet, Sorrow and love flow mingled down.

It is such love and sorrow need. All thoughts compose so rich a crown.

O'er the whole realm of nature I'm high, And when Africa is born, Love so amazingly, so divine, Demands my soul, my life, my hope.

Amen. Amen. Do please sit down. Before we draw this time together to a close, just like to share with you some announcements about some things which are coming up in the weeks to come.

So first of all, next Sunday, the 7th of July, we've got an evening service. And before the evening service, we're going to have a tea at 5pm.

[72:01] And this is a great opportunity to meet with Philip and Rosemary Halliday, who are our mission partners who are working with BMS in France. And they're also going to be sharing about their work. And Philip is going to be preaching at the evening service next week.

So we do hope you can join us here for a tea at 5pm to help the hospitality team know how many people to cater for. We really need to know numbers.

So if you can follow the QR code on there, or we've sent out the link in the This Week sheet, please can you just sign up and let us know if you're coming and how many people are coming with you so just we can prepare for the catering.

But I do hope we can share that time with you. And it'd be a wonderful time to hear more about Philip and Rosemary and the work they're doing in France for the Gospel. The following Sunday, so that's the 7th, the following Sunday on the 14th, we're going to have a picnic after the morning service on the Rye.

It's a great opportunity to spend time together to get to know people that you don't know so well. So on the 14th, please bring with you a picnic lunch and something to sit on. And we're going to gather close to the Lido entrance over on the Rye after the morning service.

[73:08] And we do hope you can join us for that. And then the other exciting thing which is happening in July is Fit for Life. If you'd like to come and join with Kim, who's going to be leading that.

It's a great opportunity to do some exercise. It's open to everyone. You can start really gentle. And that's going to be on the three Tuesdays, the 9th, the 16th and the 23rd, 1pm till 2pm here in the Hub.

So do hope you can join us for that. And please, the aim of this is to, it's something you can invite your friends to. So please have a think about if you'd like to come to that, who you could invite to come as well.

Now, we're going to bless each other now. And we're going to use the words of a blessing from the end of 2 Corinthians. This is called the grace. So the words are going to come up on the screen.

Thank you, David, just in case you're not familiar with this.

What we'd like to do when we say this at this church is we'd like to just look around at each other as a way of blessing each other as we say these words. So let's bless each other with these words as we look around to each other.

[74:06] So may the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all. Amen.

Do apologize. The words weren't quite what I was expecting there. That was my fault. Thank you for bearing with me. Do hope you can stay for some refreshments. It looked like summer has started this week.

So we've decided that there's going to be ice lollies after the service. The ice lollies are going to be served on the lawn. We do have a small lawn, which is just to my left outside this building between the hub and the cottage.

Ice lollies are going to be served there. If you've got children, then please go and collect your children first. They definitely don't want to miss out on ice lollies. So collect your children.

If you're able to help the leaders pack up their sessions, that'd be great as well. And then, parents, we need you to be in supervision of your children out on the lawn, out there, when they're having ice lollies.

[75:04] Tea and coffee, as normal, in the hall here. And we'd love to pray with you. Anyone with the praying hands badges or anyone with the leaders badge, we'd love to have a chat with you and pray with you after the service. God bless you and thank you for coming.

Thank you.