

The pain of rejection

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[0:00] His praise will be heard, lift Him up, lift Him up, lift Him up.
You are able to do all things.

You are alive and at work in me. We believe. Oh, we believe.
Oh, God. Oh, so busy and He reigns with power and authority.
In heaven on earth, His praise will be heard, lift Him up, lift Him up, lift Him up. Oh, lift Him up.
Oh, so busy and He reigns with power and authority. In heaven on earth, His praise will be heard,
lift Him up, lift Him up, lift Him up.

[1:12] Oh, lift Him up, He is worthy.

Rise up. Rise up. People of God. Rise up. Sing of His love.
There's no other. There's no greater than our God. So rise up.
People of God. Rise up. Sing of His love. There's no other.
There's no greater than our God. So rise up.

[2:09] People of God. Rise up. People of God. Rise up. Sing of His love.
There's no other.

There's no greater. Lift Him up. Lift Him up. Lift Him up. Lift Him up. Our God.
Awesome is He. And He reigns with power and authority. In heaven on earth, His praise will be heard.

Lift Him up. Lift Him up. Lift Him up. Our God. Awesome is He.
And He reigns with power and authority. In heaven on earth, His praise will be heard.

[3:06] Lift Him up. Lift Him up. Lift Him up. Lift Him up. Lift Him up.

Lift Him up. In your hearts. Let the King of my heart be the mountain where I run.
The fountain I drink from, oh, he is my song. Let the King of my heart be the shadow where I hide.
The ransom for my life, oh, he is my song. You are good, good, oh.
You are good, good, oh. You are good, good, oh.

[4:16] You are good, good, oh. You are good, good, oh. You are good,
good, oh.

Let the King of my heart be the wind inside my sails. The anchor in the waves, oh, he is my song.
Let the King of my heart be the fire inside my face. The end of my days, oh, he is my song.
Oh, you are good, you're good. Oh, you are good, so good.
Oh, you are good, so good. Oh, you are good, oh.

[5:16] Oh, you are good, oh. You're never gonna let, you're never gonna
let me down.

Jesus.

Oh, you're never gonna let, you're never gonna let me down. You are good, you're good.
Oh, you are good, so good. Oh, you are good, so good.
Oh, you are good, good. Oh, your goodness never ends.

[6:48] Oh, you are good, you are good. Oh, you are good, you are good.
And your love endures.

You are good, you are good. You are good, you are good. You are good, you are good. You are
good, you are good. And your love endures.

Today. Today. And your love endures today.

The love unlike the world has known The love that left no stone untouched The love that fought for
our forgiveness The love that breaks the gap between us The love that chases me down The love
that waits for my return The love that shows me from the very start The love that heals the wounds

from my past Oh, what can be more beautiful

Than a life laid down for me And to this love I give my all Jesus take my everything The love that never keeps going The love where there is always more The love that wipes away my every tear The love that I've lost on my deepest feet Oh, what can be more beautiful Than a life laid down for me And to this love I give my all

[9:47] Jesus take my everything Save my everything You can have it all At the cross You poured our perfect love for us You came to save That we might know you face to face At the cross You poured our perfect love for us You came to save That we might know you face to face So I will give my every breath My every moment I will live for you Oh, what can be more beautiful

Than a life laid down for me And to this love I give my all Jesus take my everything Oh, what can be more beautiful Than a life laid down for me And to this love I give my all Jesus take my everything Good morning Good morning Good morning There are way too many young people in this room For me not to hear good morning So I'm going to do it again Good morning Good morning Oh, what a pleasure it is to be here And welcome I welcome and I acknowledge you Sitting here And on the live streaming I am happy you're here And I am so happy I've seen someone who I haven't seen since COVID Have a wave Thank you Good morning My name is Judith Hamilton And I welcome you to Union Baptist Church For Sunday morning service We continue to look at the book of Hosea The God-Sized Love Story And what a title, eh?

The God-Sized Love Story Last week, Sam Lenton challenged us To look at the consequences of unfaithfulness But he also encouraged us That God is just And full of grace He restores us And he pieces us back Through Jesus' finished work On the cross Hallelujah Hallelujah Thank you This morning This morning Andrew will support us In our look At the pain Of rejection And I think Living in this world We would have experienced Rejection In some form But we're going to look at it In a biblical context So I thought If I could give you a gift This morning What would it be?

If I could give each of you A gift this morning What would it be? And you know what it would be? All for our creator God That's a massive gift I couldn't wrap it in a box But that is an amazing gift And I hope you think it's an amazing gift All for our creator God He's so creative Look around you And that's That's a command Look around you Look at each other Different shapes Different faces Different sizes Different ages Look out the window Well we can't see a lot But it's grey But even that is God And if we This morning I was coming in And I looked at the trees

[14:27] And I saw so many shades Of green There's no one shade of green I think there are what 760 shades of green And don't quote me I didn't check So he's such an amazing God Francis Chan writes in his book Crazy Love Whatever God's reason For such diversity Creativity And sophistication In the universe On earth And in our own bodies The point of it all Is his glory God's art Speaks of himself Reflecting Who he is And what he is like This is why we are called To worship him His art His handiwork Which includes all of us We are his art And his creation Echo the truth

That he is glorious There is no one like him He's the king of kings The beginning And the end The one who was And is to come Let's pray Heavenly Father We come to you In awe To worship you May we openly And wholeheartedly Praise and recognize you For who you are And what you do Every minute Of our lives We praise you Lord Because you Are worthy of praise Of all praise Thank you That great Is your love Towards us And your faithfulness Endures forever Hallelujah Receive our expressions Of adoration

In Jesus name Amen Psalm 22 verse 3 Encourages us That God Inhabits The praise of his people That's a strange way Of saying it Isn't it He's always With us But you know Something He's particularly Present and glorified When his people That's all of us here Lift his name In honor God enjoys it He draws even Nearer to us When we praise him So This morning Let's draw close To God In our time Of praise and worship And he Will draw close To us Please stand If you're able To And join me In reading the words Of the congregational Praise On the screen We will read together The yellow text And can we

Slow it down Go back to the first one So we can read it If you pause it That's all right I thought I took out That moving Of the Is that the first one Just go back To the beginning Isn't it wonderful To wait

on the Lord That's a wonderful Picture there That's another picture To install To bring us to awe
Isn't it Are we there So while we're
Getting there I looked for Verses of praise And some of them Might be strange But I believe They
speak To different Circumstances In our life Where we can Praise God There's so many Different
circumstances And that's the Last one Andy Okay Okay Here we go Now stop it Right there Can
you see Why is it doing that It wasn't doing that Earlier I'm going to get My computer And I'll read
And you listen Are we able to Stop it Andy Let's see So here's the First one Let's do Together The
Lord lives Praise be To my power

[19:35] Exalted be My God The rock My savior For great is the Lord And
most worthy Of praise He's to be Fared Above all Gods Praise be To the
Lord For he Showed me The wonders Of his Love When I Was in a City Under
siege Praise the Lord my Soul And forget Not all

His benefits Lord You are My God I will Exalt you And praise Your name For in Perfect Faithfulness
You have Done wonderful Things Planned Long Is that Number six Andy Yep Ready now Now you
Listen Then I Looked And heard The voice Of many Angels Numbering Thousands Upon
Thousands And ten Thousand Times Ten Thousand They Encircled The throne And the Living
Creatures And the Elders In a Loud Voice They were Saying Can we Say Worthy
Is the Lamb Worthy Is the Lamb Who was Slain To receive Power And wealth And wisdom And
strength And honor And glory And praise Thank you We're We're going To go Into a Time Of Song
Worship And And The word of the beginning One with the Lord of stars Your hidden glory in
creation

Now we're giving you a cross What a beautiful day it is What a beautiful day it is The name of Jesus
Christ my King What a beautiful day it is Nothing of bestness What a beautiful day it is The name of
Jesus Didn't want heaven without us So Jesus you brought heaven down What a beautiful day it is
What a wonderful name it is, the name of Jesus.

What a wonderful name it is, the name of Jesus. Amen.

[24:56] Amen. What a wonderful name it is, the name of Jesus Christ my
King.

What a powerful name it is, nothing can stand against. What a wonderful name it is, the name of
Jesus Christ.

You have no rising, you have no freedom, and the world is not your name.

What a wonderful name it is, what a wonderful name it is, the name of Jesus Christ my King.

What a wonderful name it is, the name of Jesus.

[26:51] What a powerful name it is, the name of Jesus. What a powerful
name it is, the name of Jesus Christ my King.

What a powerful name it is, the name of Jesus Christ my King.

What a powerful name it is, the name of Jesus Christ my King. Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen.

[30:21] And spend the weekend here. I think some might have slept. I
can't guarantee that. But I understand they looked at John 10, verse 10,
which says, The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy.

I have come that they may have life and have it to the full. So this song was taken from what they
did. did this weekend. Let us pray into this song before we sing it. Loving Father in heaven, though
the thief Satan comes only to steal and kill and destroy, we can praise you even more because you
are coming on the clouds and the king and kingdoms will bow before you.

Every chain will break as our broken hearts declare your praises. You are the lion of Judah who is
fighting our battles. Lord, we sing out loud for who can stop the Lord Almighty?

Amen. Amen.

Thank you.

[33:13] They claim it for the kingdom. God who comes to save.

He's here to set the captives free. The kingdom is on the ground. God is on the ground.

God is on the ground. He's rolling with power. God is on the ground. He's here to come.

God is on the ground. God is on the ground. The souls of the world. His heart breaks the day.

He's here to come. For the lion and the lamb. And we need a body. God is on the ground. Who can stop the Lord Almighty?

[34:22] Who can stop the Lord Almighty? Who can stop the Lord Almighty?

Who can stop the Lord Almighty? Who can stop the Lord Almighty?

Our God is the Lion, the Lion of Judah He's warring with power and fighting our battles And every name of Him, our God is the Lion The Lamb of the slain, the Savior of the Lord His God breaks the legs through every love For the Lion of the love, every love He calls Him You may sit down and I'm sure you're happy to hear that

Carrie-Anne and some of our youth are going to just give us an insight into what happened this weekend Hey We worship the God who was We worship the God who is We worship the God who evermore will be He opened the prison doors He parted the raging sea My God, He holds the victory There's joy in the house of the Lord

There's joy in the house of the Lord today And we won't be quiet We worship the God who is I have some helpers here It would be better to hear from them So I've got a bag of things I wonder what will come out first So Brandon, what have you got here?

[37:56] I've got a beach pool I've got a beach pool This, I think, is supposed to mean the pool that we went to yesterday So we went to the right We went and just had some fun in the pool It was really fun And then we went to the sauna Which was even more fun And very hard Yeah, we did that We came out And then we have to match him Thank you Okay, what's next?

We also had a quiz And I think we should challenge the congregation to a couple of questions from that quiz Come up to them Right, so we have to name it You can And the actor that Andrew's face is being stuck over So We can have the first one Put it back The greatest showman Just the greatest showman I heard the greatest showman Can anyone name the actor?

Hugh Jackman Hugh Jackman Hugh Jackman Yeah, well done The next one There's just one more There he is Does anyone know what movie this is?

Here's Rowan Atkinson Here's the actor Yeah Mr. Bean's Holiday Down the front Well done Yeah So that was a really fun quiz The next item out The back This is a Nerf doc And you use it to shoot people What else can I say?

I think the Nerf game also involved Hulk or something Oh So I'm told Is that right? Yeah Yeah? Do you want to explain Do you want to explain What that was about?

[40:38] So we had to sing something So then Hulk slash Chris Would Like come here And get this jacket He was an easily distracted Hulk Yeah Yeah That you had to sing To win over Yeah Would you like to demonstrate How that worked?

No No Would any of you? Me like Do it I think Bethany was Yeah I think Bethany was I think Bethany was I don't know Why didn't you have something like Carriety Do it I can carry out to sing La la la la La la la la And here he comes There we go And the team The team who ended up With the Hulk at the end I think got ten extra points Yeah Yeah There you go Thank you Cameo Hulk There's one more thing In the back This is Wait This was ammunition For our wide game In Vernon Beaches And we had to collect these But also We all had a rank And like We had to beat each other And like If we got tagged We could see Who had the higher rank And our team won by a lot So that's Yeah Yeah we did Yeah There was also

An unexpected Added dimension To the game Which was Dodging cowpats That was Thank you everyone Yeah Yeah Okay So our young people And children Will be The weekend Wouldn't have been The weekend Without all the amazing food We agree Yes And Sarah Has been Absolutely incredible We couldn't have done it Without you You've cooked Some amazing meals You've catered for us Really well Canceled a holiday I think Yeah So Thank you so much Round of applause Thank you so much Our children and young people

Will now be going out To their groups So I'll just Pray for them Before they go out Lord thank you for this time We have together This morning And for the time We've been able to spend With our young people This weekend I pray that you will Bless us as we learn More about how wonderful You are And draw us near to you Help the leaders to teach And nurture So that the children And young people Would grow in their relationship With you Amen And pray through Amen.

Let's just pause for a minute, well less than a minute, to center ourselves in Christ.

[44:41] Heavenly Father, I simply ask that you open our ears and our hearts to your word. May we learn, take to heart, and live out your revelation of yourself through this study from Hosea.

I ask your blessings upon Ed as he reads, and on Andrew as he shares with us what you have revealed to him.

In Jesus' name, amen. Thank you. The reading today is from Hosea, chapter 8, verses 1 to 14, and then chapter 10, verses 9 to 14.

And it's page 906 in the Pew Bibles. Put the trumpet to your lips. An eagle is over the house of the Lord, because the people have broken my covenant and rebelled against my law.

Israel cries out to me, our God, we acknowledge you. But Israel has rejected what is good. An enemy will pursue him.

[46:12] They set up kings without my consent. They chose princes without my approval. With their silver and gold, they make idols for themselves to their own destruction.

Samaria, throw out your calf idol. My anger burns against them. How long will they be incapable of purity? They are from Israel.

This calf, a metal worker, has made it. It is not God. It will be broken in pieces, that calf of Samaria. They sow the wind and reap the whirlwind.

The stalk has no head. It will produce no flower. Were it to yield grain, foreigners would swallow it up. Israel is swallowed up.

Now she is among the nations, like something no one wants. For they have gone up to Assyria like a wild donkey, wandering alone. Ephraim has sold herself to lovers.

[47:20] Although they have sold themselves among the nations, I will now gather them together. They will begin to waste away under the oppression of the mighty king.

Though Ephraim built many altars for sin offerings, these have become altars for sinning. I wrote for them many things of my law, but they regarded them as something foreign.

Though they offer sacrifices as gifts to me, and though they eat the meat, the Lord is not pleased with them. Now he will remember their wickedness and punish their sins.

They will return to Egypt. Israel has forgotten their maker and built places. Judah has fortified many towns. But I will send fire on their cities.

And chapter 10, verse 9. Ephraim says, Ephraim says, Ephraim says, Ephraim says, And break up, on your own strength and on your many warriors.

[49:27] The roar of battle will rise against your people so that all your fortresses will be devastated, as Shalman devastated Beth Arbol on the day of battle when mothers were dashed to the ground with their children.

Thank you, Ed, for reading to us. Good morning, everyone. So we're continuing this series in the book of Hosea today. Just to recap, Hosea was a prophet in the 8th century BC.

He was called to bring a message to the northern kingdom of Israel. Now, we saw in chapters 1 to 3 that God called Hosea to be part of a real-life parable. God's relationship with his covenant people Israel was represented by Hosea's marriage to a prostitute named Goma.

And a tragic picture is painted of the bride's unfaithfulness, of how this makes her husband feel, and the consequences. But there is also a looking forward to a restoration of the marriage, redemption and renewal of the marriage vows which had been broken.

Now, in the rest of the book, we get a more detailed picture of the themes which are set out in chapters 1 to 3. So last week, Sam, very helpfully, showed us through chapters 4 to 7, the impact that our unfaithfulness has on God and the challenge to God's people about not just going through the motions of religion if our heart is not in the right place.

[51:02] And we saw that God, in his justice, has to deal decisively and severely often with sin. But in his mercy, he invites us back to come back to receive healing, renewal and restoration.

Now, before we get into today's text, I want to say a little about how we, as Christians living in the 21st century, relate to Old Testament prophecy like this.

We need to be wise to think about when it was written and to whom. We think about the context in political history, but we also need to think about the context in biblical history.

Because Hosea was written to a people in a different stage of biblical history to us. So I've got a diagram here from a guy called Andrew Sack, which I found really helpful as I was thinking this through.

So this is a very simplified timeline, which shows the exile as being like a divorce, is the way it's portrayed in Hosea. God is going to break his relationship with his unfaithful people and send them into exile.

[52:02] Now, there are two strands of God's people at this stage. There's the northern kingdom who go, the divorce happens in the year 722 BC. They go into exile in Assyria and end up pretty much dying out as a people.

The southern kingdom of Judah, they go on a bit longer, but their divorce, their exile happens under the Babylonians a little bit later. And they live for many years in exile, without the temple, without the priests, without the Lord.

But Hosea prophesied not only this terrible divorce to come, but also a wonderful restoration, a return from exile, a second chance, and a new start.

And the amazing message of Hosea is that even though God's people have been so unfaithful to him, he will have them back. And that restoration, that remarriage, happens through the cross of Jesus, as is shown on the right-hand side of that diagram.

As we saw in chapter 6 last week, the cross is the place where God tears down and also places together. He raises Jesus up on the third day, opening the way for our relationship with him to be restored and for us to be redeemed in that relationship.

[53:11] So when we read Hosea, if we trust in Jesus, if we're reading it as Christians, then we read it as people who are on the right-hand side of this diagram. Spiritual prostitution, spiritual adultery, the things that Hosea talks about, is something that we've been saved from.

So we read this as people who have experienced God's mercy, but with a warning not to go back. Now, I don't know how many of you watched England's game yesterday. Obviously, they had a great result.

I actually wanted to say something about the previous match. So last Sunday, cast your mind back, if you were watching that very tense and difficult-to-watch game between England and Slovakia last Sunday in the second round.

Now, we were actually watching most of the second half around the kitchen table while we had our dinner. So we were watching it on the laptop. And obviously, as the second half went on and we were 1-0 down, it was agonising as time went on.

And after we finished our dinner and the match was moving on, and Miriam and Bethany, my wife and daughter, went to continue watching the game in the lounge on the TV there. But I and my boys stayed in the kitchen watching on the laptop, on the iPlayer, or the ITV equivalent.

[54:23] Now, we'd gone past the 90 minutes, and it seemed like all hope was lost. But then as we were watching, strangely, I heard an elated shout from the front room from Miriam at the front of the house.

But from what we were seeing, where we were watching, there was nothing to shout about. And I thought, you know, that's strange, because, you know, nothing's changed in the match. And then I realised, Miriam's watching on live TV in the front room, we're watching on the iPlayer through the internet, and there's actually a delay.

It's about 40 to 50 seconds that the internet version is behind the live TV. So, when we realised this, it changed the perspective for us because we watched it, but we realised that something good was about to happen.

And sure enough, it did, and we saw Kane's header, which equalised them and propelled them.

Sorry? Was Kane's header the second one? It was the brilliant bicycle kick from Birmingham.

Yeah, it was. Yeah, thank you so much. Thank you for correcting me there. So, anyway, the good news is we scored a goal, and for those 40 to 50 seconds, it was good for us because we knew what was, we knew something good was going to happen.

[55:35] And it's a bit like that when we read this Old Testament prophecy. There's a lot of difficult stuff. There's doom and gloom there, but we know that there's good news to come. And we live on the right-hand side of that diagram in the light of that good news, which has already happened.

So, we read prophecies like Hosea in the light of knowing that there's good news to come, but we pay attention to the warnings that are given, and we think about how they apply to us.

So, let's turn to Hosea, chapter 8, the reading that Ed brought to us. It's on page 906, and we're going to work through the text there of Hosea, chapter 8. So, verse 1, it says, Put the trumpet to your lips, an eagle is over the house of the Lord.

Now, the trumpet is mentioned earlier in chapter 5. It's a warning of coming judgment. So, it's like the full-time whistle in a football match. It signifies that time has run out.

And it says, An eagle is over the house of the Lord. Now, this is also a picture of coming judgment. Now, the word in Hebrew that's translated eagle could mean an eagle or a vulture.

[56:44] Now, the significance of it being an eagle is that the image of an eagle was associated with Assyria who came to take over the nation of Israel. That might be a clue to understanding this imagery.

But also, if we think of it in terms of a vulture flying overhead, that's also a sign that something's happening. It's a warning. Now, when my family and I lived in Tanzania, we were very fortunate to live a couple of hours away from a massive game park called Ruaha National Park.

And sometimes, we'd be driving around the park looking for animals, looking for big game, and we would notice two or three vultures circling around over a particular spot.

Now, if we saw that, we would take notes because we would normally go over and drive closer to where the vultures were to investigate because it could mean that a lion had killed something down below.

And the vultures were waiting for the lions to finish before they could carry off the prey and finish it off. Now, we saw the imagery of the lion last week, and you can imagine what it might be hinting at here, that God has pronounced judgment on Israel.

[57:48] He's leaving them to be carried away by the Assyrians. Now, the reason for the judgment is there in the second half of verse one, because God's people have broken the government that they had with him and rebelled against him.

The rest of chapter eight focuses on one really important aspect of Israel's sin, her self-reliance.

And Hosea points this out. It's like he goes around to do a tour of departments of national life.

For each one, he delivers a word from God, each time condemning their self-reliance. So he begins with politics in the first part of verse four.

His first stop on the tour is the palace. Our equivalent might be the houses of parliament. It's the seat of power where rules are made and the direction is set for the nation. And in verse four, it says, they set up kings without God's consent.

They choose princes without God's approval. If the people had bothered to ask God, if they'd bothered to pray about it, they would have appointed very different rulers. Now, this is very topical for us, having just had a general election and now having a new government.

[58:56] And we've been encouraging you, encouraging each other to pray about who you voted for in last Thursday's election. And I hope that you're praying for the new government. They need our prayers.

Pray that they would be humble. Pray that they would not have a sense of self-reliance as the leaders that Hosea was talking to had. Because our leaders cannot rescue this nation.

Their policies and laws cannot rescue this nation. Only God can rescue this nation. So let's pray that our leaders would be humble servants and that they would be led by God.

Next on Hosea's tour is the place of worship. So picture a modern day Hosea turning up in a church service as he gets up onto the stage to preach. People are waiting for the sermon to begin.

They know Hosea's reputation as a hard-hitting preacher. But what he says comes as a massive shock. He says, with their silver and gold they make idols for themselves to their own destruction.

[59:52] Throw out your idols, he says. God's anger burns against his people. I mentioned a couple of weeks ago the time when Moses went up the mountain to receive the law and Aaron melted down the people's gold to make an idol of a cow while they were waiting for Moses.

And it happened again and again. It happened in Hosea's time. They put images of calves in the places designated as places of worship to God. And he points out their folly.

This calf, it's been made by a metal worker, he says. It will be broken into pieces. Now we can very easily look down on them because we don't worship idols of calves.

But do we ever worship manufactured things? Because that's what he's talking about. Do we worship our cars or our phones, our technology, things which have been made in factories? Do we worship our homes which have been built by human hands? Do we worship the created rather than the creator? In verse 12, it says, I wrote for them the many things of my law but they regarded them as something foreign.

[60:58] They have ignored God's word. They got influenced by the nations around them, by the culture around them and those practices became normal to them. Then what God's word said became like something foreign to them.

Can you see how this might apply to us today? Very often we find that what the Bible tells us in terms of lifestyle, in terms of ethics, especially in terms of sexual ethics, I think nowadays, is very different from what the society around us says.

So there's a danger that we can treat the Bible as foreign and the culture that we live in as native instead of the other way around. 1 Peter 2 verse 11 says that we're called to live as foreigners in the society that we're in and to be witnessed as foreigners, as citizens of heaven, not citizens of the world that we live in.

For the next stop on Hosea's national tour, it's the foreign office. Here, Hosea delivers God's message about the nation's diplomacy. So verse 8, Israel is swallowed up.

Now she is among the nations like something no one wants, for they have gone up to Assyria like a wild donkey wandering alone. Ephraim has sold herself to lovers. Israel, instead of being dependent on God, had sought allegiances with other nations to earn security and status.

[62:21] You can read about this in 2 Kings 15 verse 19 where Menahem, the king of Israel, paid pull, the king of Assyria, in an attempt to appease him. But this turned out to be a disastrous plan.

Do you see why Israel is accused of selling itself to other lovers? The foreign secretary, I guess, was not impressed by what Hosea was saying and Hosea moves on to the last stop, the ministry of defence in verse 14 of chapter 8.

He says this, Israel has forgotten their maker and built palaces. Judah has fortified many towns, but I will send fire on their cities that will consume their fortresses.

They thought all was well. They'd had a great increase in defence spending. All their fortifications were in place. They were safe and secure. They could withstand attack from any nation.

But they didn't realise that what was coming to break them was not a foreign army. Ultimately, it was God acting in judgement. He was insulted that they trusted in palaces and castles rather than trusting in him.

[63:25] And what about us? Are we tempted to build our security in our bank account, in our career, in our relationships, in our politics, rather than in God?

God says there will be consequences for sin. He will destroy their fortifications. He will destroy their sense of self-reliance. Hosea talks more about the consequences in verse 13.

It says, they will return to Egypt. And again, in chapter 9, verse 3, they will not remain in the Lord's land. Ephraim will return to Egypt. Now, Egypt is used here as a metaphor.

Hosea's listeners would have been hit really hard by this because etched into their cultural identity as people was the time they spent suffering in slavery under Pharaoh in Egypt. And God, if you remember the story of Exodus, had intervened and rescued them, saved them, brought them up out of Egypt and into a land flowing with milk and honey.

So to be told they were going back to Egypt meant that they would be going back to slavery. It meant that God was reversing his salvation. They would be cut off from their land and they would be under slavery, not to the Egyptians but to the Assyrians.

[64:42] Hosea described the relation between their sin and the consequence in chapter 8, verse 7. It says, they sow the wind and reap the whirlwind. This proverb describes situations in which the consequences are larger than the actions that cause them.

So we can think of situations in life where a small wrong action leads to a much larger consequence. Ever told a little white lie and then ended up having to tell bigger and bigger lies to

cover yourself and kind of dig you out of the hole?

The delusion of people who've turned away from God is saying, I'm okay because my actions have no consequences. It doesn't hurt anyone. But the message to Israel is that their actions will come back to bite them.

The very thing that they pursued, allegiance with Assyria, will be turned against them. How had things got so bad? Well, there are some clues in chapter 10. If we look at chapter 10, verse 1, it says, Israel was a spreading vine.

He brought forth fruit for himself. As his fruit increased, he built more altars. As his land prospered, he adorned his sacred stones. So as Israel became more prosperous, her faithlessness increased. [65:57] She grew further and further away from God because she became more self-reliant and less reliant on God. So as the nation became more materially fruitful, the idolatry increased.

But I want us to look at verse 12 because as we've seen again and again in Hosea, amidst this gloomy and tragic message of judgment, there's a future hope signposted once again.

So, in chapter 10, verse 12, sow 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.

An invitation is given to sow, not to sow a wind and reap a whirlwind, but to sow righteousness and reap the fruit of unfailing love. And now it sounds like a love story again, doesn't it?

So, this unfailing love is God's special covenant love and we receive it through Jesus who has made a way through his death on the cross for us to enter a new relationship with our God.

[67:04] So, how do we receive it? It says, seek the Lord and break up your unplowed ground. It's a picture of the process of repentance. Now, imagine soil from a vegetable patch that has been worked year after year.

Compare that with a footpath like the picture on the left here that's been trodden down by many people walking over it again and again. The vegetable patch is ready to bear fruit but the path is going to take some work, isn't it?

To break the crust, to loosen the soil, to add compost and then it will be ready to receive the refreshing, life-giving rain to let it soak in so that fruit can grow. This is a picture of our hearts and how we can make them ready to receive the shower of righteousness that God has in store for us. Because over time our hearts get hardened by repeated disobedience, behaviours which have become habits. When we resist what God is telling us, it becomes a habit and it becomes easy to resist the next time and the next time.

Sometimes our hearts get hardened by disappointment. Sometimes our hearts get hardened by being let down by other people. How do we break up the hard ground of our hearts?

[68:18] Well, a really important way is by being in genuine community with other Christians. I've been so encouraged hearing about what's been happening in our life groups over the past year.

People have been vulnerable with each other. People have been talking about what's really going on in their lives. We really need this. People have been encouraging one another through the challenges of sharing our faith on our front lines as obedient Christians.

We really need to do this together to encourage each other. I was hearing just this last week from really encouraging news from one life group who last week took the prompt to, you know, following the Bible study that we're doing with the questions there, there's a suggestion just to pause and to listen to what God might be saying to you specifically about how you can put that into practice and how you can step out in obedience.

And the group leader reported back to me that several people in the group felt that God spoke to them in specific ways about ways that he was prompting them to go and act in obedience and they were able to share that with the group.

I was just really encouraged to hear that and to hear what God is doing through these groups.

Being in a small group or meeting with others where we can be honest and vulnerable with them is a really important way to break the hard ground of our hearts so we can receive the righteousness of God showering over us, pouring into our lives so that we can be fruitful.

[69:42] 1 Corinthians chapter 1 verse 30 says, You are in Christ Jesus who has become for us the wisdom from God, that is, our righteousness, holiness and redemption.

Jesus has made it possible for us to be put right with God, to have a new start, to renew our marriage vows. We receive Jesus' righteousness so that God can look at us and see us as one who has been made pure and holy just like Jesus.

He has redeemed us from slavery and prostitution and the curse of self-reliance. If you've not yet made a decision to receive that wonderful invitation from Jesus, I urge you to make that decision today.

Don't think there's no urgency, there'll always be another chance. It'll be harder the next time and the next time and the next time as your heart grows harder. If you've already made that decision to follow Jesus, don't go back to what you've been saved from.

Don't go back to a life of idolatry, of loving created things more than the creator. Don't go back to a life of spiritual adultery, rejecting the love that God has shown you by his actions.

[70:55] Don't go back to a life of self-reliance, thinking that you can build the security and satisfaction that you need. Don't go back to a life of following the ways of this world. Live as a foreigner in this world and as a citizen of heaven.

trusting in God's ways as he reveals them to us in his word. Turn to Jesus, our rescuer, our redeemer. Allow him to shower you with his righteousness.

Let's pray. Father God, thank you for the way it speaks to us.

We thank you for the way it reveals the truth to us, the truth about you and the truth about the state of our own hearts. We're sorry for the times when we've acted like people who have not been saved by you.

We're sorry for the ways that our hearts have been hardened. Lord, please soften our hearts. Help us by your Holy Spirit to soften each other's hearts as we meet together, as we encourage each other so that we can be ready to receive your shower of righteousness made possible through Jesus so that we can be fruitful.

[72:15] we ask this in Jesus' name. Amen. Amen. Good morning.

I guess you're all glad that the general election's out of the way and all dusted are done. Is that right? Yes. Interestingly, I was just thinking about we ought to pray for our government and our MP, but we haven't got one MP, have we?

I reckon we're represented here by about four or five different MPs. So we need to pray for our various MPs and I think, well, likewise, we're represented by different people.

I know in Hazelmere, where I live, it's Lib Dem now. Wickham, I know, is Labour and I think one or two others around here are conservative. So we're well represented, I hope.

We pray. Let's come to prayer anyway. Father, as we come to you, we thank you that our biggest representative is you.

[73:32] We thank you, Lord, that we belong to you and, yes, our vote is with you, Lord. We just thank you. We thank you for the message we've just heard too, Lord. And we pray, Lord, that as we listen to messages that are preached to us Sunday by Sunday and as we share together in our various home or life groups, Lord, we pray that the message will not just go into one ear and out the other.

But, Lord, it will be something that comes into our hearts and into our lives and grows within us and is fruitful and of blessing, not just to us, but to those with whom we meet.

But, Father, we do thank you for our country. We thank you that we live in a free country. We have freedom to go about our day-to-day business without hindrance. We thank you that we are free to worship you in the way we feel led and without restriction.

We thank you for this opportunity today that we've had to come together to enjoy one another's company and as Christians to worship you and have fellowship together.

Lord, we pray that you will help us never to take this for granted. Father, we too thank you for our freedom. We worship you. We bless you for your goodness in giving us Jesus.

[74:48] We thank you, Lord, for his sacrifice and everything that he did to save and to serve us. May we also never take you, Father, Son, and Spirit for granted.

Thank you indeed that we can't thank you enough for all that you mean to us. And today, Lord, we pray for those elected to serve us in public office.

We first of all thank you, Lord, there are people willing to take office as MPs. We pray that regardless of party, as they take up their new responsibilities, they will be there to represent the people.

We pray that they will be fair, trustworthy. Their integrity will be something that cannot be questioned. And as has been mentioned in our sermon, they'll be humble and be prepared even, Lord, to turn to you.

And for those, Lord, who have been appointed, who do trust you, we pray that you will be with them in a special, very special way.

[75:55] Father, the public perception of politicians is probably as low as it has ever been. So we pray the MPs elected will act in such a way that public confidence is restored.

And to that end, we pray particularly for the government as they get to grips with the many current issues and those issues that will come. Give them and our Prime Minister, Keir Starmer, we pray, understanding, wisdom and again humility and a care for all regardless of status, wealth, poverty, colour, creed or sexuality.

We pray they will make progress towards a fairer society and a distribution of wealth and be able to keep their promises. And Father, moving on, we pray for ourselves.

We pray particularly for Andrew, for Miriam and family and also us as a church as we decide Andrew's and our future. We thank you for the way he and they have served us over the time that they have been with us and the way Andrew has stepped up in this last year to be our interim lead pastor.

Lord, we want your will to be done and the person of your choice to lead us. And Lord, the elders and deacons clearly believe Andrew is that person.

[77:25] So be with us as we, the membership, confirm or otherwise their recommendation. Be with us as we decide at our members meeting a week Tuesday.

May we come as one voice and be guided by you as to how we vote. Lord, if Andrew is the man, then Lord, we pray, confirm that in each one of our hearts and our lives.

And to that end, Lord, we pray that you will continue to lead and to bless our elders and deacons as they take us forward and make decisions that will ultimately affect us all.

Lord, we want to be a growing church, a fellowship of people growing in you and you in us and reaching out to our community and to those who do not know you.

Lord, once Living Stones is completed, we will have a new baptistry and we pray it will be in constant use as we have the joy of seeing many come to know you.

[78:35] But Lord, we don't want to wait for the completion of Living Stones. We remind ourselves that today is the day of salvation, not tomorrow, next week or next year. Now, Lord, that is the urgency and we pray, Lord, that that urgency will be upon us all.

Lord, keep us on our toes, always alert to opportunities to speak and to live for you. And regarding Living Stones, Lord, we continue to pray that planning consent for the new windows will come through soon.

And we pray, Lord, that our next meeting with the builders this coming Wednesday will go well, as will the work as the progress, the project progresses.

We thank you too, Lord, that we look forward tonight to, or this afternoon and tonight, to meet with Philip. And Lord, we were hoping to meet Rosemary Halliday as well. But Lord, we understand Rosemary's got flu, so we pray for her and for her healing and her quick restoration.

But we pray for Philip as he comes to us this afternoon and this evening. Bless him as he ministers to us and bless us as we listen to him. And may we all be encouraged, Lord, as we listen to what you are doing in France.

[79:49] And we thank you too, Lord, for them and their dedication to you. Lord, continue to use them both as they minister for you in France. And so, Lord, as we, your people, shortly will go out into our own mission field, may our words and lies be powerful and effective as we rub shoulders with family, friends, and all we come into contact with.

Lord, we ask you to use us to your glory, to open people's hearts to you that they might receive you. Lord, we pray for a harvest.

We pray that you will draw people to yourself and that we might see your name being honoured and being glorified amongst us all, because we ask it in that wonderful, powerful name of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Amen. Amen. We're accustomed to, after the sermon, to just have a time to respond.

And I switched it around to have Colin pray. Because I think the next set of songs, our song worship, actually is a response.

[81:14] And I want us to respond in our hearts as we sing those songs. In Andrew's sermon, he highlighted that we've been given an invitation to sow righteousness and to reap the fruit of God's unfailing covenant love.

And that word covenant is strong. Okay? He doesn't break his love. We have no power. And many of us have no inclination to sow righteousness.

But we can reap his covenant love because of what Jesus did on the cross. It is through him. We can't save ourselves.

None of us can save ourselves. Let's stand and sing. Who, oh Lord, could save themselves? As our response to the prayer and to the sermon.

And we pray, God. Thank you.

[82:44] Oh, Lord, could save themselves, their own soul could heal.

Our shame was deeper than the sea, your grace is deeper still.

Who, oh Lord, could save themselves, their own soul could heal.

Our shame was deeper than the sea, your grace is deeper still.

You alone can rescue, you alone can save. You alone can lift us from the grave.

[83:51] You came down to find us, let us out of death. To you alone belongs the highest praise.

You, oh Lord, have made a way.

The great divide you heal. You, oh Lord, could save yourself, your own soul could heal. For when our hearts were far away, your love went further still.

Yes, your love went further still. You alone can rescue, you alone can save.

You alone can lift us from the grave. You came down to find us, let us out of death.

[85:01] To you alone belongs the highest praise. To you alone belongs the highest praise. To you alone belongs the highest praise.

We lift up our eyes, lift up our eyes, lift up our eyes, you're the giver of life.

We lift up our eyes, lift up our eyes, and a giver of life. We lift up our eyes, lift up our eyes, and a giver of life.

You alone can rescue, you alone can save. You alone can lift us from the grave.

You came down to find us, let us out of death. To you alone belongs the highest praise.

[86:11] To you alone belongs the highest praise. To you alone belongs the highest praise.

Thank you, Father, for Jesus who healed the great divide between us and your love.

Thank you, Jesus, for rescuing us. To you alone belongs the highest praise. The last song we're going to sing is an acknowledgement that the blood of Jesus sets us apart.

What can wash away my sin? Nothing but the blood of Jesus. Let's sing together.

What can wash away my sin?

[87:18] Nothing but the blood of Jesus. What can make me whole again?

Nothing but the blood of Jesus. Nothing but the blood of Jesus. Oh, precious is the flow that makes me white as snow.

Now on the front I know. Nothing but the blood of Jesus. For my pardon this I see.

Nothing but the blood of Jesus. For my cleansing this might be. Nothing but the blood of Jesus.

Oh, precious is the flow that makes me white as snow. Oh, love of a front I know.

[88:28] Nothing but the blood of Jesus. Nothing but the blood of Jesus.

This is all my righteousness.

And the blood of Jesus. Oh, precious is the flow that makes me white as snow.

Now I have found I know nothing but the blood of Jesus. Please take your seats.

We often leave these reminders for the end so that you remember them.

[90:06] So I have a number of reminders for you. You've already heard that this afternoon we'll have Philip Halliday with us.

I'm sorry, Rosemary won't make it. She has the flu. But we're going to have lunch at 5.30 with Phil. 5.30. 5, sorry. 5. Don't come at 5.30.

Come at 5. And then the evening service Phil will share. And that service also is a communion service. So come prepared to feast on the Lord.

The second announcement I have is for our church. Oh, the Picnic on the Rye comes up next. So next Sunday, the 14th of July, after the service, we'll have a Picnic on the Rye.

And if you remember, we've done this over the years. And it's a way to get to know each other and to enjoy each other's company. Some of us competing and some of us just enjoying being together.

[91:05] Bring your picnic lunch and something to sit on. The next reminder I have for you is the church meeting, the church members meeting on Tuesday, the 16th of July at 7.30.

And I am told that I need to say this. The church members meeting on the 16th of July will include a special church meeting to consider calling Andrew Wingfield to be lead pastor of Union Baptist Church.

I ask you that you spend this week in preparation praying, praying for Union Baptist Church and praying for God's will.

Okay. And then the last announcement. Andrew will walk us through that one. Thank you, Judith. Yeah, there isn't a slide for that one.

We wanted to say briefly about life groups. I mentioned this earlier. These are our small groups. And it's been great to hear what's been happening in the life groups over this year. The feedback has been really positive. The way these groups have supported each other to get into the...

[92:12] We'll come to that in just a moment. Supported each other to get into God's word and to encourage each other to put it into action. The groups are going to take a break over the summer.

And then they'll be restarting in the week of 23rd of September. And the sign up for groups, like we did last year, will begin on the 8th of September. There'll be two weeks in which you can sign up. Now, if you've been in a group already, you can choose to continue in the group that you've been in. But I want to encourage everyone to feel free to join a different group if there's a better day or time for you.

Or if you want to get to know some other people. And I would like to really encourage you, if you haven't been part of a life group so far, please sign up. We're going to watch a video to explain more about life groups. Thanks.

Thanks. Thanks.

[93:12] grow as disciples of Christ will enable us to go out into our community full of the Holy Spirit supported by our brothers and sisters to do our part in what God is doing here to transform High Wycombe. Paul writes so richly about discipleship to many of the early Christian churches. In his letter to the Ephesians he states that the goal is that we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ. Paul continues saying we are to grow up in every way into him who is the head into Christ from whom the whole body joined and held together by every joint with which it is equipped when each part is working properly makes their body grow so that it builds itself up in love.

We grow not individually but together as the body of Christ in community with each other. We clearly need each other in order to grow as disciples of Christ.

So community is central to achieving our mission at Union Baptist Church. An important part of building community has been done in our home groups where people have grown in faith and been supported to live a Christian life. Now God is calling us to renew and re-energize our small groups by creating new groups called life groups. In life groups we'll encourage each other to live in faith every day as we do life together. In other words the purpose of life groups is to intentionally walk together as disciples and to encourage each other to grow in maturity through trusting and obeying

Jesus Christ. We'll do this by helping each other enter into, understand, and apply God's word to our lives.

It's only by growing as disciples that we can go out on our front lines and make disciples in the hope of transforming High Wycombe. We now like to share the short animation which captures the benefits of joining a life group.

We'll be right back to you. We'll be right back to you.

[97:14] We'll be right back to you.

And we'll be right back to you. of a life group but that's only part of the story your life group needs you even more important than how life groups can benefit us individually joining a group is an act of service and maybe even your greatest act of service for the church in a life group god will work through you using your unique gifts to help and encourage others to know to love to trust and to obey god more with each other's help we will become disciples who make disciples and this has always been christ's call to those who follow him jesus said therefore go and make disciples of all nations baptizing them in the name of the father and of the son and of the holy spirit and teaching them to obey everything i have commanded you and surely i am with you always to the very end of the age we hope that you will join a life group as part of our call to fulfill the great commission with the help of the holy spirit and in our life group community we can encourage each other to become more christ-like then we can go out onto our front lines as disciples who make disciples and see our community transformed by god through his loving serving and worshipping church the great commission with the holy spirit and the holy spirit and the holy spirit and the holy spirit thank you i see it's still raining outside are we going to have ice lollies today i think it's fine okay raining then i think there probably will be ice lollies and it's so ice lollies on the lawn to my left remember to collect your children before um this is our summer ritual to have ice lollies so if if you really believe it's summer go have an ice lolly um let's end the way we started with praise and then borrow from ephesians 1 i'm not going to read the whole of ephesians 1 but i'll jump around so grace and peace to you from god our father and the lord jesus christ praise be to the god and father for lord jesus christ who has blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in christ for he chose us to him in him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight in love he predestined us for adoption to sonship through jesus christ in accordance with his pleasure and will to the praise of his glorious grace which he has freely given us in the one he loves then i'll jump for this reason ever since i heard about your faith in the lord jesus and your love for all god's people i have not stopped giving thanks for you remembering you in my prayers i keep asking that the god of our lord jesus christ the glorious father may give you the spirit of wisdom and revelation so that you may know him better i pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened in order that you may

know the hope to which he has called you the riches of his glorious inheritance in his holy people and his incomparably great power for us who believe amen have a blessed week thank you so