

A photograph showing a person from the waist up, wearing a light-colored, possibly white, robe. Their hands are clasped together in a prayerful position directly above an open book. The book is laid flat on a dark, textured surface, likely a wooden table. The lighting is soft and focused on the hands and the book.

of my people...

PRAYER + FASTING

***"If my people, who are called by my name,
will humble themselves and pray and seek my
face and turn from their wicked ways,
then I will hear from heaven, and I will forgive
their sin and will heal their land."***

- 2 Chron. 7:14

If my people...
PRAYER + FASTING

Main Idea:

Prayer and fasting is a time for repentance.

If my people...
PRAYER + FASTING

***“Return, Israel, to the Lord your God.
Your sins have been your downfall!”***

- Hosea 14:1

If my people...
PRAYER + FASTING

***“Return (Shoob), Israel, to the Lord your God.
Your sins have been your downfall!”***

- Hosea 14:1

If my people...
PRAYER + FASTING

“Whether you turn to the right or to the left you will hear a voice behind you saying, ‘This is the way, walk in it.”

– Is. 30:21.

If my people...
PRAYER + FASTING

“Take your words with you and return to the Lord. Say to him: ‘Forgive all our sins and receive us graciously, the we may offer the fruit of our lips.”

– Hosea 14:2

If my people...
PRAYER + FASTING

“Assyria cannot save us; we will not mount warhorses. We will never again say ‘Our gods’ to what our own hands have made, for in you the fatherless find compassion.”

– Hosea 14:3

If my people...
PRAYER + FASTING

“Now when Jesus saw the crowds, he had compassion on them because they were troubled (harassed) and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd.”

– Matt. 9:36

If my people...
PRAYER + FASTING

“The time has come,’ Jesus said. ‘The kingdom of God has come near. Repent and believe the gospel.”

- Mark 1:15

If my people...
PRAYER + FASTING

“I will heal their waywardness and love them freely, for my anger has turned away from them.”

- Hosea 14:4

If my people...
PRAYER + FASTING

***"I will heal their waywardness (meshooovaw)
and love them freely, for my anger has turned
away from them."***

- Hosea 14:4

If my people...
PRAYER + FASTING

***“The Lord has appeared to us in the past, saying
‘I have loved you with an everlasting love.”***

- Jer. 31:3

If my people...
PRAYER + FASTING

“As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Now remain in my love.”

- John 15:9

If my people...
PRAYER + FASTING

"I will be like the dew to Israel; and he will blossom like a lily. Like a cedar of Lebanon he will send down his roots; his young shoots will grow."

- Hosea 14:5-6a

If my people...
PRAYER + FASTING

“‘This is no thaw,’ said the dwarf, suddenly stopping. ‘This is Spring. What are we to do? Your winter has been destroyed, I tell you! This is Aslan’s doing.’”

- C.S. Lewis, *The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe*

If my people...
PRAYER + FASTING

**“Ephraim, what more have I to do with idols?
I will answer him and care for him.
I am like a flourishing juniper;
your fruitfulness comes from me.”**

- Hosea 14:8

If my people...
PRAYER + FASTING

**“Who is wise? Let them realize these things.
Who is discerning? Let them understand.
The ways of the Lord are right; the righteous
walk in them,
but the rebellious stumble in them.”**

- Hosea 14:9

If my people...
PRAYER + FASTING

Reflection Questions:

- 1) What has God revealed to you this past week concerning sinful practices, patterns, or beliefs in your life?
- 2) In what ways, do those things replace a dependency on God? What lies are you believing when you run back to them for life, satisfaction, or fulfillment?
- 3) Are you willing to repent and return to the Lord? Are you willing to release your sin, tear down your idols, and believe that God can and will bring you to a place of true flourishing and fulfillment?

If my people...
PRAYER + FASTING

Sunday Sermon

1/8/22

Series: If My People

Passage: Hosea 14

Title: A time of Repentance

Good morning Church! Please turn in your bibles to Hosea 14. We will be continuing in our Prayer and Fasting Series which we've entitled "**If My People.**" I hope many of you were able to enter last week into this time of Prayer and Fasting we have been and will continue to do throughout January. We handed out a description of prayer and fasting with some ideas and opportunities to help guide you through this practice in your personal life. I have incorporated fasting into my weekly routine for this month. I say that only to let you know that the staff are participating in this as well. Hopefully that is an encouragement to you. But know that what you do is ultimately between you and the Lord. This is not meant to be a legalistic practice, but a chance for us to prepare and seek the Lord.

In 2 Chronicles 7:14 God says, *"If my people, who are called by my name, will humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, and I will forgive their sin and will heal their land."*

Last week we learned that Prayer and Fasting is a time of Preparation.

This week our main idea is that prayer and fasting is a time for repentance.

Hear God's Word this morning: READ HOSEA 14 [Pray]

When Martin Luther nailed his 95 theses to the door of All Saints Church in 1517, one of his main issues was with the practice of indulgences. Indulgences was the thought that a person could absolve their sins simply by paying money to the church or by doing good works. This disturbed Luther because not only was it flat out manipulation, what it did was encourage people to seek other means of forgiveness rather than actually repenting of their sin. Now paying for absolution is not really a common thing anymore, but that mindset is still true today. We'll do good works, we'll go to confession, we'll make reparations, we'll serve others, we'll pray for forgiveness, but when it comes to truly repenting we balk, because true repentance not only calls out our idols, it requires us to destroy them.

Luther argued: "Our Lord and Master Jesus Christ, when he said 'Repent,' willed that the whole life of believers should be repentance."

Hosea is a book about God's faithfulness to an unfaithful people. A people who constantly leave the Lord to seek life and fulfillment elsewhere and God's heart to bring them home. God desires blessing for his people. And in chapter 14, he shows us the path to get there. It's the path of repentance.

I have 4 words for you this morning. I'll give all of them to you now. We will unpack them as we go. If you are taking notes, write them down. Return, Heal, Blossom, Flourish.

Look with me at v. 1. The first word is “return.” Verse 1-3 are all about the process of repentance, of returning to the Lord. It says, **“Return, Israel, to the Lord your God. Your sins have been your downfall!”**

When we think of the concept of repentance, we often think of remorse. Of regret or being sorry. A recognition and admission of guilt. “I was wrong.” But the truth is, that is only half of what it is biblically to repent. Biblical repentance involves not only confession, but also a change of direction, a returning.

This word “Return” is the word “shoov” in the Hebrew. It means to return, go back, to come back. It reminds me of the verse in Isaiah where God says, **“Whether you turn to the right or to the left you will hear a voice behind you saying, ‘This is the way, walk in it.’”** – Is. 30:21. Turn around. Come back home.

In repentance there is an admission, admission of guilt, but there’s also a returning, a returning to the Lord. Like the prodigal son, a coming back to the Father.

I was talking with a mentor of mine this week and he used a great analogy. He said, “Imagine you are working at a company, and for whatever reason you decide to leave, just up and quit and go elsewhere. But as you are there, you realize that it was a bad decision, you were wrong, and you’re convicted about it. You could call your boss and apologize. “Look I made a mistake. I hurt you I’m sorry.” A recognition and admonition of guilt, but you stay where you are. Or you can turn around, and you can go back and [knock] “I recognize I was in the wrong. And if you would have me, I’d like to come home.” That’s repentance.

Because here’s where we can go wrong. We confess, but we remain. There is no cutting off our sin. There’s no movement away from the sin, or there’s no movement toward the Lord. That’s not repentance. You will find no power there. Repentance is a returning, and this is important because in the very act of returning there is necessarily, also, a leaving behind.

So the way forward is to return, but when you return, look at verse 2, it says, “Take words with you.” In other words, know your sin and be specific about it when coming back to the Lord. Too often we like to avoid to soul searching thing and we speak in generalities. “God forgive my sins.” “What sins?” “Oh, you know. All the times I’ve fallen short.” There’s no power in that prayer because there’s no repentance in that prayer.

Label your sins. Call them by name. “In this instance, I did not love my wife well. When I said this, I was not living in humility. When I looked at this, I was seeking to fill my cup with fleshly desires and not attaching myself to the source of life. Those are my sins, and I recognize my error, and I’m coming home. I’m choosing to surrender those things and return to you. Why would I do this?

Verse 3, because “my idols can’t save me.” Assyria is governmental power, warhorses are military power. Those things are useless in changing the human heart. “Our gods” is a recognition of the futility of idolatry, because idolatry can never deliver on the promises of God.

Life only comes from one source. Salvation only comes from one source. Victory only comes from one source...and it's not what I can produce.

For in YOU the fatherless/the orphan find compassion. Listen, this is the gospel, the good news of Jesus Christ. That an orphaned world would find the compassion of a Father again. That we who are lost would be found by one who would have compassion on us, enough to adopt us as his own, bring us into his family, restore us from shame to honor, bless us with his inheritance, and give us a new name.

Fast forward to Jesus, God made flesh. It says in Matthew 9:36, "***Now when Jesus saw the crowds, he had compassion on them because they were troubled (NIV says "harassed") and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd.***"

Here's the truth: All of us are spiritual orphans whom either the Father has adopted or longs to adopt. Do you know the compassionate love of God the Father? Have you been born again through his Son? Or are you still trying to do life spiritually alone, in your own strength, are you directionless, frustrated, lifeless? Do you long for purpose? Life? Fulfillment?

This was the purpose of Jesus Christ, the Son of God who would come into the world to take away the sins of the world through his death on the cross, so in his resurrection we could be adopted by God into a new life with him.

That life that we seek is not found in our own efforts, or in our idols, or in the enticement of sin. Ad some of you know what I'm talking about this morning, you're empty. Your filling is found only in returning to the Lord. "***The time has come,***" Jesus said. "***The kingdom of God has come near. Repent and believe the gospel.***"

That is our part. Return to the Lord, name your sin, abandon your idols. Now we are brought to God's part – what HE will do in our returning to him. It can be summed up in three words: **Heal, Blossom, Flourish**

First, Heal.

Verse 4, God says, Return and "***I will heal their waywardness and love them freely, for my anger has turned away from them.***"

I will...heal. In your returning to God, you will find his healing. Now there's a couple of things about healing. First, it takes time. (Anna's face) Can God heal immediately, miraculously? Absolutely he can. Sometimes he may, and praise the Lord! But more often, healing still comes but it takes time. That's why Jesus says in John 15, "***Abide in me.***" Stay, remain, dwell. The more you stay, the more you allow your cup to be filled by his cup that never runs dry. And as you drink from that water, he will begin to heal you. Stay.

But this is where it gets fun. Heal what? What is God healing according to verse 4?

"Their waywardness" – what does that mean?

Listen to this: The word translated "waywardness" in the NIV is the word "meshoovaw" in Hebrew. It literally means, "turning away, backsliding." And it's interesting because earlier in Hosea 14, the author used meshoovaw's root word, "Shoov." Anyone remember where? It's

the very first word. "Return." There's a wordplay here. God is saying, "When you shoo, I will heal your meshooovaw. When you return, I will heal your turning away.

To unpack this, I'll just ask a simple question. Why do we leave God? Why do we sin? Why do we go wayward, turn from him in the first place? We doubt who he is. We doubt his goodness. We doubt his love for us. We doubt his capacity to fill our cup, to be our abundant supply, to give us life. That's why Satan's sometimes called the Deceiver. "Did God really say that?" "Can God really do that?" "Does it really feel like God loves you?"

That's why understanding the heart of God, the character of God, the love of God is so important. Because so often we can be deceived into letting our feelings dictate our truth about God.

This past Christmas my kids gave Becky and me a list of stuff they wanted and most of the stuff we couldn't or wouldn't get them. Any parents with me this morning? On that list were things like: I want a cellphone. I want a kitty. I want my own room.

As a parent, does my not giving them something change my love for them? Do I love them any less? Any less completely? Have I not heard them? Do I not care? Do I not have a plan to give them other good gifts? Things that might be more helpful or better for them?

As a child, we see from God the "unanswered request" or our life circumstance and we say, "It's not fair. All my friends have phones. My cousins have cats. Why can't I?" You must not love me. You must not be good. You must not be able to care for me like I feel I should be cared for. And this extends well beyond childish requests. We might say, "I deal with sickness, chronic pain and suffering, cancer, mental challenges. God has not fixed it. Others don't deal with what I deal with. God must not love me. He isn't enough."

I have fleshly desires - lust, pride, money, social status, sexuality or identity issues. God calls me to trust in him not those desires. He tells me those things are not what he wills for me. God must not love me. He must not understand. He must not be good."

When the truth is that nothing can be farther from the truth. But if we can be deceived into believing it, then the evil one can tempt us to meshooovaw (turn away).

My story is very much emersed in this reality. That's why encountering the love and grace of God during my sabbatical and in our cancer journey has been so profound for me. I used to think, when things were going well, God loved me. Of course he did! But when things didn't go my way, my tendency more often than not was to doubt that love, "What gives!? Don't you care? You don't know. You don't understand. You're a meany-head." My tendency was to be the older brother in the prodigal son story who says, "I've been here the whole time. I feel like I deserve a few things, and because you're not giving them to me, I don't know. Not really feeling the love!"

Anyone here today feel like that? Listen to me. God loves you. Look at this verse in Jeremiah. The prophet reminded the people of God, "***The Lord has appeared to us in the past, saying 'I have loved you with an everlasting love.'***" (- Jer. 31:3) How long is everlasting? How much is

everlasting? Paul says in the NT, “If only you can comprehend how long, and wide, and high, and deep is the love of God in Christ Jesus!”

Why is this important for people to know? Because in the moment, in my current circumstance it might not feel like it’s true.

And in that we are enticed, not to “shoov,” - to come to him - but to “meshoovaw” – to turn away.

Jesus says this really interesting thing in John 15. He says, ***“As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Now remain in my love.”***

Does the Father love Jesus? You bet he does. Where did the Father’s love put Jesus? On the cross. Does Jesus love you? You bet he does. Where does Jesus’ love put you? On the cross.

“Whoever would follow me, must deny himself, take up his cross and follow me.” And we are going to talk about Prayer and Fasting as a time of denial next week.

But here’s the thing: That where Jesus calls us to remain. Dead to ourselves and attached to him because it’s there that we will encounter his love, his life, his goodness, his kindness, his power. It’s there we find him. It’s in that place that he begins to heal. He begins to renew us, to transform us by the renewing of our minds about our own “meshoovaw.” Where else could I possibly need to go if in this place I am fully loved?

And when he does that, he causes us to **Blossom**.

And from that God says, ***“I will be like the dew, and he will blossom like a lily.”***

Repentance not only moves us to a place of healing, but a place from which we start to blossom as well.

A place of production and growth. Of beauty. The deep roots here speaks to maturity and strength. You become mended as a person. There’s life in you. Others begin to see your fruit and be blessed by it. You become like the flower or the tree moving out of winter and into Spring.

C.S. Lewis has this quote in the Chronicles of Narnia from ***The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe***. Near the end of the Witch’s reign, her power to keep Narnia locked in an eternal winter was waning – snow starts melting, green grass starts peeking through the snow, streams start trickling, flowers start blossoming to the point when it was undeniable. And in that, C.S Lewis writes, the Witch’s right hand man, the dwarf, he suddenly realizes and stops, **“This is no thaw,” “This is Spring. What are we to do? Your winter has been destroyed, I tell you! This is Aslan’s doing.”**

Many of us have experienced thaw before, we just did last week. The weather warms up for a bit, but then goes right back into winter. That’s a great picture of us. We stop worshipping our idols for a while, but after a while we go right back to them. The Lord is the one who moves us out of Winter and into Spring. Who destroys the bondage of sin in our life. Who releases the chains of spiritual winter and moves us into a place of new life.

This brings us to our final word this morning - Flourish

From Spring, comes Summer. Human flourishing as it was intended by God. Look at verse 8. Ephraim is just a name that is sometimes used to address the people of Israel. And in verse 8

God asks, "***Ephraim, what more have I to do with idols?***" In other words, if God is the source of fullness and life, why would he ever need anything else? Why would he ever need a coping mechanism? Answer: He wouldn't.

God says, "I have nothing to do with idols. Cheap imitations of life. I don't need them." Guess what? He's telling us, "In my care, neither will you."

I will answer (hear and respond) ***in your time of need.*** I will fill even as the life of the world and the flesh drain out of your cup. I will be your strength in your weakness. I will care for you.

True human flourishing is found in relationship with our God. We're not just talking about a single bud we are talking about the pouring out of the richness of God's blessings. True flourishing means having:

A Life of purpose

Tremendous fruit

Deep satisfaction

Godly influence

Open doors for ministry

Restoration of relationships

Astonishing breakthroughs

Financial stability

Why? Because we're awesome? No. Because he is.

Don't miss this, the end of verse 8, God says, "***Your fruitfulness comes from me.***" It's not a threat. It's not even a promise. It's just a truth.

In him, we become what we were made for/ what we were intended to be. Whole, complete, healthy.

How do we get to God? Through Jesus Christ. Repent, and believe the Gospel.

So, "***Who is wise? Let them realize these things.***

Who is discerning? Let them understand.

The ways of the Lord are right; the righteous walk in them, but the rebellious stumble in them." – Hosea 14:9

In Closing, I have a few reflection questions for us again this week. Last week, was preparation. Asking God to reveal to you the areas of sin in your life and heart.

This week is repentance. Don't just acknowledge them. Return. Name them. Lay them down, forsake them and come back to him.

Return, Heal, Blossom, Flourish

2 Chronicles 7:14, "***If my people, who are called by my name, will humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, and I will forgive their sin and will heal their land.***"

Reflection Questions:

- 1) What has God revealed to you this past week concerning sinful practices, patterns, or beliefs in your life?
- 2) In what ways, do those things replace a dependency on God? What lies are you believing when you run back to them for life, satisfaction, or fulfillment?
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