

## **Hos. 14:1-8 “The Botanic Church”**

**For the Children:** Have you ever been to the Botanic Gardens? You see there many plants, flowers and tall trees. Of what does that make you think? About beauty, when you see all the colourful flowers carefully arranged? About strength and majesty, when you see the tall trees reaching up to the sky? Or about how useful various plants are, providing wood, fruit and seeds, oils and even medicines? That is why the Lord uses plants and trees as a way of describing His people: because He makes us beautiful, secure and useful – in the Lord Jesus Christ. **Questions:** Could we be beautiful, secure or useful without the Lord Jesus? What are some ways you could be “useful” to the Lord? What does Hosea call on God’s people to do before they can be beautiful, secure or useful?

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### **Introduction:**

#### **First Point: The Call to Repent**

- 1) A Call to Return: Israel was called by the prophet to “return” to the Lord God. That is the best way to express the repentance of those who have known the Lord in the past. The Northern Kingdom had turned from that knowledge, following idols while going through the motions of Yahweh-worship and asking for forgiveness. See 6:4, 6
- 2) Take Words: While right actions should follow when we truly know the Lord, the emphasis here is upon right *words* (v. 2). Perhaps this is because Israel was in the habit of offering words of excuse to the Lord, along with shallow and insincere words of devotion. The words required of Israel are true and sincere words of confession, and a pleading for forgiveness, aimed at being able to give acceptable praise, thanks and glory to God. These words must also reflect trust in the Lord rather than in the powers of this life – such as the political powers of Assyria and Egypt at that time (v. 3)

#### **Second Point: The Promise of Mercy**

- 1) The Lord Promises to Heal: Sinners cannot remove their own sin and make themselves offer the right words or actions. The “orphan” needs the Lord to take the initiative to show love and mercy as our Father (v. 3). He must lead sinners to a deeper repentance - heal our apostasy and love us freely (v. 4) if there is to be a solution to our sin. His anger at our sin is then turned away because of what Christ has done. He Himself must be the luxuriant cypress from which comes the precious fruit/seed that nourishes us (v. 8). Repentance that comes from this source – from the Lord Himself – will always be honoured by Him, as it is His work
- 2) The Lord Promises to Make Us Blossom: The Lord not only heals, He causes us to blossom and bear fruit abundantly. Because He is the luxuriant cypress, those in Him become like the cedars of Lebanon, the olive-tree, the grain and the vine, watered by the abundant dew of God. We sprout and mature in spiritual life (vss. 5-7). This imagery implies the beauty/fragrance of the holiness we enjoy in Christ. See Song of Solomon 2:1-2, 4:11. It also implies the stability we have in Christ – rooted like the cedars of Lebanon. Also our usefulness in His church and Kingdom, like the olive-tree and grain and grape-vine. The name “Ephraim” means “God has made me fruitful/blossom.” The same promise to the church is implied by the life and growth signified in the bread and wine of the Supper, grounded in the work of Christ, by God’s mercy

### **Conclusion:**