

Israel's Salvation and Ours

Hosea

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Bible Text: Hosea 14:4-9

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If you would, please, turn to the book of Hosea chapter 14. And our God speaks to the people through his prophet Hosea and he says this beginning with verse four:

I will heal their apostasy;
I will love them freely,
for my anger has turned from them.
I will be like the dew to Israel;
he shall blossom like the lily;
he shall take root like the trees of Lebanon;
his shoots shall spread out;
his beauty shall be like the olive,
and his fragrance like Lebanon.
They shall return and dwell beneath my shadow;
they shall flourish like the grain;
they shall blossom like the vine;
their fame shall be like the wine of Lebanon.

O Ephraim, what have I to do with idols?
It is I who answer and look after you.
I am like an evergreen cypress;
from me comes your fruit.
Whoever is wise, let him understand these things;
whoever is discerning, let him know them;
for the ways of the LORD are right,
and the upright walk in them,
but transgressors stumble in them.¹

Let's pray together.

Father in heaven, we gather around your Word now recognizing that we are truly a dependent people. our very existence, the breath that we have just drawn into our lungs,

¹ Hosea 14:4-9

everything that we have, everything that we are is dependent upon you. You are our Savior. Lord, you have delivered us not only in a physical sense—and we can look back at many times in many ways that you have preserved our lives, but, Lord, more important, most important you have delivered your people from our guilt and our enslavement, from your wrath and you have brought us to your Son. This morning as we study your Word and celebrate your saving power and work, I pray that you would open our eyes to see wonderful things in your Word. And where, Lord, we were in a bad place in our walk with you, I pray that this morning there would be revival and renewal and repentance and a fresh return to you and where there is someone who is a stranger to your grace and to your Son, I pray this morning for their very life and ask you to save them. Lord, please don't leave us like we have been as we came into this place, but change us that we would leave today, Lord, being those who have experienced your work in our hearts. We ask you of this in Jesus' name. Amen.

For all the passages in this book that deal with judgment and that is really most of the book, the book of Hosea is really a salvation story. From the very beginning of the book when you see Hosea purchasing back for himself his unfaithful wife Gomer there is the message of pity and mercy and grace and salvation. And then when you come to the end of the book—and we finish this morning verses four through nine—the book ends with a promise of salvation. The northern and southern kingdoms will be disciplined severely, taken into captivity. They will suffer at the hands of Gentile nations, those nations that will serve the purpose of the true God even though they don't acknowledge the true God. They will be his instruments to discipline his wayward children.

But in the end what God tells us will take place is he will restore the nation. He will save them. What is taking place over the course of history it has a redemptive purpose. And in the end God will fulfill all of the promises that he has made to this people, all of the free grace promises that he has made to their fathers. And when the Lord does it, when he restores them and saves them, the story will not be about them, the story will be about him. Salvation's story is the story of God.

And I want us to be reminded today that whether we are talking about the salvation of Israel or we are talking about our own salvation, salvation's story is always the story of God. Our salvation is not explained by us. Our salvation is explained by him.

In Romans chapter 11 verse 25 addressing us, addressing Gentiles, most of us, not all of us here this morning, God warns Gentiles against arrogance, right? You have the Jewish nation for the most part rejecting their Messiah existing in our own day for the most part in unbelief. Yet salvation has been poured out among Gentiles and God is gathering in in this particular time in history many, many Gentiles in faith toward the Lord Jesus Christ and God warns us about arrogance, thinking that it is really about Jews and Gentiles and not about God.

In Romans 11:25 the Lord says this.

Lest you be wise in your own conceits, I want you to understand this mystery, brothers: a partial hardening has come upon Israel, until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in.

And in this way all Israel will be saved, as it is written,
“The Deliverer will come from Zion,
he will banish ungodliness from Jacob”;
“and this will be my covenant with them
when I take away their sins.”
As regards the gospel...²

I mean, if you look at unbelieving Israel right now from the standpoint of the gospel he says:

“...they are enemies of God for your sake. But as regards election, they are beloved for the sake of their forefathers. For the gifts and the calling of God are irrevocable.”³

That is, God is saying, “I have a plan for them.”

There is a future plan of salvation still for ethnic Israel. It won't be apart from individual salvation. Every Israelite who will ever be saved will be saved through faith in Jesus Christ. But nonetheless, just as God is pointing out salvation upon Gentile people's right now, there is coming a day in the future when he will again pour out salvation upon ethnic Israelites.

He says:

Just as you were at one time disobedient to God but now have received mercy because of their disobedience, so they too have now been disobedient in order that by the mercy shown to you they also may now receive mercy. For God has consigned all to disobedience, that he may have mercy on all.⁴

Through unbelief and true salvation God is demonstrating that salvation is not about any kind of human goodness. All have sinned. All have come short of his glory. All are sinners deserving of his wrath, Jew and Gentile. All are capable of unbelief. All are unbelievers by nature, all are disobedient by nature, all need God's mercy and grace, all need salvation in his Son.

So that he finishes that section, verse 33:

Oh, the depth of the riches and wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments and how inscrutable his ways!

² Romans 11:25-28.

³ Romans 11:28-29.

⁴ Romans 11:30-32.

“For who has known the mind of the Lord,
or who has been his counselor?”

“Or who has given a gift to him
that he might be repaid?”

For from him and through him and to him are all things. To him be glory
forever. Amen.⁵

You look at salvation and what does the Church say? Glory be to him forever. This is how the book of Hosea ends, a promise of the future salvation of Israel. But I want us to see that Israel’s story is our story. Salvation’s story is always the same. It is the story of the gracious and true God.

What will God do when he saves Israel?

Well, the first thing he tells us he will do is he is going to bring them to repentance. What did the Lord do in saving us? What does the Lord do in saving anyone today? He must bring a person to the point of repentance. Salvation is bringing someone to repentance.

Look at what he says in verse four.

“I will heal their apostasy; I will love them freely, for my anger has turned from them.”⁶

I will heal their turning away. I will heal their leaving me, walking away from me, right? That is the history of God’s people in terms of Israel walking away from God. God doing marvelous things for them, demonstrating who he is to them, making it unmistakable who the true God is and yet they, though they would have times in believing, the story of the nation was one of apostatizing, walking away from the true God. And God says, “A day is coming when you won’t walk away from me anymore. I am going to heal this thing called apostasy. I am going to put a stop to it. I will heal your turning away from me.”

And when God says this, when he gives this “I will” recognize he is doing this in response to repentance. Remember verses one through three.

“Return, O Israel, to the LORD your God, for you have stumbled because of your iniquity.”⁷

Why all of these problems? Because of your sin.

“So return to me,” God says.

⁵ Romans 11:33-36.

⁶ Hosea 14:4.”

⁷ Hosea 14:1.

Verse two. And he even tells them how to repent. He tells them what to do, what to say, how to feel.

He says:

“Take with you words and return to the LORD; say to him, ‘Take away all iniquity; accept what is good, and we will pay with bulls the vows of our lips.’”⁸

Not only is there a turning to God, but there is a turning away from everything else you have ever trusted in.

Verse three.

“Assyria shall not save us.”⁹

This is what you are going to say to the Lord. “I am not trusting in foreign alliances anymore.”

“We will not ride on horses.”¹⁰

We are not trusting in our military might anymore.

“and we will say no more, ‘Our God,’ to the work of our hands.”¹¹

We are not going to turn to our idols anymore. We have come to the place, God, where we realize we don’t have anyone but you, you see?

End of the statement, verse three.

“In you the orphan finds mercy.”¹²

You are the god who has compassion upon orphans and we must come to the place where we recognize that without God we are orphaned. There is no one for us but the Lord God.

This is repentance. Bring this to the Lord. And then in response to this repentance, God will say:

“I will heal their apostasy; I will love them freely, for my anger has turned from them.”¹³

⁸ Hosea 14:2.

⁹ Hosea 14:3.

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Hosea 14:4.

But here is what I want you to recognize. If we look at this, as some do, as simply a response to repentance—that is if you repent, this is what God will do—if that is the only way we look at it, then we are in danger of, perhaps, seeing God’s saving work as simply the response to some human work that if you and I will bring the right attitude and the right words and the right deeds to God, then God will save us so that salvation is God’s response to something that man has produced. Bring your repentance and God will be good to you.

What I want you to recognize in the passage is that the very first “I will” involves God clearly doing something in their hearts.

Let me say it to you this way. Salvation God gives where there is repentance. God will not save someone and leave them in a rebellious state. So there will always be repentance where there is salvation. Repentance is just the flip side of the coin of faith. Faith is always penitent. Where there is real repentance there is always belief. So there is no salvation apart from repentance and faith, but repentance is not a human work.

Yes, we come with repentance, but what I want you to recognize is repentance is a gift from God. Penitent faith is a gift from God. No one repents apart from God so that God must produce the necessary prerequisite to him saving sinners. God demands repentance, but men left to themselves don’t repent, can’t repent so that God must give repentance in order to save people. He heals their turning heart.

When you talk about apostasy, when you talk about turning from the Lord, you are talking about a heart condition. You see the true God and you don’t want him. You see the true God and you walk away from him. So when God says, “I will heal your apostasy,” it means God must do something in your heart to make you love him and be faithful to him.

God is the one who produces repentance in man. Then man offers repentance. But it is the gift of the Lord. The Bible presents us with this thing that seems like a paradox, but it is not. It is explained by the Lord. But let me give you several statements from the Bible that just, I think, draws out this point that I am trying to make.

First of all, the Bible is clear that man is responsible for his heart condition. We are born haters of God and we are responsible for being haters of God, because we got into this condition due to our father’s sin, Adam. The first man created in an innocent state, given a command by God which he disobeyed and that is where man fell and that is where our natures were all corrupted and man is responsible for it because we were all represented by Adam. We were in Adam. When he fell, we all fell. We are all responsible for this in him so that, for example, Zechariah 7:12. Listen to this. Here is how God describes unrepentant Israel.

Listen to what he says.

“ They made their hearts diamond-hard lest they should hear the law and the words that the LORD of hosts had sent by his Spirit through the former prophets. Therefore great anger came from the LORD of hosts.”¹⁴

Why is God angry with his people, this nation that he chose for himself? Why is God angry with them? Because they have made their hearts diamond hard. They are responsible for their hard heartedness.

This is echoed in the New Testament. Romans chapter two verse five. Listen to what the Lord says.

“But because of your hard and impenitent heart you are storing up wrath for yourself on the day of wrath when God’s righteous judgment will be revealed.”¹⁵

You are storing up wrath for yourself. You are responsible for this. You will answer for this because of your heart and impenitent heart. You are responsible for your heart condition.

Now here is a second the Bible tells us. Not only is man responsible for his heart condition, but God commands men to change their heart condition. He commands men to change their hearts.

Ezekiel 18:31.

“Cast away from you all the transgressions that you have committed, and make yourselves a new heart and a new spirit! Why will you die, O house of Israel?”¹⁶

God says to them, “Create a new heart. Create a new spirit in yourself. Change your heart condition toward me.”

Oh, it gets even more plain than that. Listen to Deuteronomy 10:16.

“Circumcise therefore the foreskin of your heart, and be no longer stubborn.”¹⁷

Stop being stubborn. Circumcise your heart.

So God says, “You are responsible for your heart condition,” and he commands you to change your heart condition toward him, not to be unrepentant, not to be stubborn, which gets to a third thing the Lord tells us in his Word, which makes this seem like a paradox.

You are responsible for your heart condition. God commands you to change it. But the third thing the Bible tells us is you can’t. You are incapable of changing your heart.

¹⁴ Zechariah 7:12.

¹⁵ Romans 2:5.

¹⁶ Ezekiel 18:31.

¹⁷ Deuteronomy 10:16.

Jeremiah 13:23.

“Can the Ethiopian change his skin or the leopard his spots? Then also you can do good who are accustomed to do evil.”¹⁸

Can a man change his skin color? Can the leopard change its spots? Well, that will occur before those who are accustomed to do evil become doers of good on their own. You can't change your heart by yourself. You are responsible for it, because it happened. As we are born into this world, our heart condition is due to our own sin in Adam. So we are responsible for it, God commands us to change it, but the Bible tells us, clearly, the heart of man is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked, who can know it? We are wicked to the core. We have no power to change that so that, fourth, the Bible teaches that God must grant what God commands. He must grant change of heart.

Ezekiel 11:19. Listen to what the Lord says.

“And I will give them one heart and a new spirit I will put within them. I will remove the heart of stone from their flesh and give them a heart of flesh.”¹⁹

He is talking about the future salvation of ethnic Israel and he says, “I am going to do this. This is the new covenant promise. I am going to do this. I am going to change their hearts. I am going to give them a new heart and a new Spirit. I am going to take away the heart of stone and give them a heart that feels.”

Jeremiah 24:7.

“I will give them a heart to know that I am the LORD, and they shall be my people and I will be their God, for they shall return to me with their whole heart.”²⁰

Jeremiah 32:39.

“I will give them one heart and one way, that they may fear me forever.”²¹

You see? He is going to heal their apostasy so that forever they are going to fear the Lord. And God says, “I am going to do this.”

“...for their own good and the good of their children after them.”²²

Ezekiel 36:26.

¹⁸ Jeremiah 13:23.

¹⁹ Ezekiel 11:19.

²⁰ Jeremiah 2:7.

²¹ Jeremiah 32:39.

²² Ibid.

“And I will give you a new heart, and a new spirit I will put within you. And I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh.”²³

And you remember that circumcision that God called for? Circumcise your heart. Cut away the flesh.

Deuteronomy 30 verse six.

“And the LORD your God will circumcise your heart.”²⁴

You see, he will do it.

“...and the heart of your offspring, so that you will love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul, that you may live.”²⁵

And the Bible tells us this is the work of the Spirit. Spiritual circumcision, the change of a man’s heart, a new heart in the place of the heart of stone, this is the work of the Spirit.

Roman 2:29.

“But a Jew is one inwardly, and circumcision is a matter of the heart, by the Spirit, not by the letter.”²⁶

Circumcision doesn’t happen by law keeping. Circumcision of the heart happens through regeneration. It is a work of the Spirit.

So man is responsible for his heart condition. God commands him to have a different heart condition. He cannot obey that command on his own. He is incapable of doing it, so God must grant what God commands. He must produce it.

The Bible also teaches us that we can cry out for this. We can cry out for the Lord to do this work in our hearts.

Psalm 51:10. David writes:

“Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me.”²⁷

Obviously he is already a believer, but, nonetheless, he recognizes there are things to be done in his soul that he can’t do for himself and he cries out for it.

²³ Ezekiel 36:26.

²⁴ Deuteronomy 30:6.

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Romans 2:29.

²⁷ Psalm 51:10.

What is the Lord going to do when he heals, when he saves Israel. He is going to do something internal in them. He is going to transform their apostatizing hearts into hearts that love him and are faithful to him. This is salvation. God grants repentance.

I think it was Luther who said, “God, command what you will and then will what you command.”

Second, God says, verse four, he will love them graciously.

This is salvation’s story. This is the story of God. He says:

“I will love them freely.”²⁸

And the Hebrew word comes from a root that speaks of something voluntary. The idea is generous and free. This is the story of salvation. Why has God loved men? This is something we face as soon as we believe the doctrine of election. We come face to face, sooner or later with this question.

God, why did you choose me for salvation? Why have you loved me?

So let’s think about that this morning. Why has God loved us? Why does God love anybody that he saves?

Let’s go down a list of possibilities.

Has God loved us because of the way we have loved him? Has God loved us because we loved him first? Did God look out across the whole span of human history and say, “Now here is what I am going to do. I am going to find the human beings who will love me and I am going to love them?”

Is that salvation’s story? According to the Scriptures that is not salvation’s story.

1 John 4:10.

“In this is love, not that we have loved God but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins.”²⁹

1 John 4:19 makes it even clearer when it says this:

“We love because he first loved us.”³⁰

God’s love preceded our love for him.

²⁸ Hosea 14:4.

²⁹ 1 John 4:10.

³⁰ 1 John 4:19.

Romans 5:8.

“But God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.”³¹

No, it is not because we have loved him. That is not why God loves us.

How about this possibility. Maybe God has loved us because we are so lovely. What do you think? God has loved us because we are so lovely in his sight.

Well, Isaiah 64:6 gives us our biblical description. Want to look in a mirror? What to see how you looked to the Lord before he saved you?

Isaiah 64:6.

“We have all become like one who is unclean, and all our righteous deeds are like a polluted garment. We all fade like a leaf, and our iniquities, like the wind, take us away.”³²

Revelation 22:11 speaking of what will be the future state of all people it says:

“Let the evildoer still do evil, and the filthy still be filthy, and the righteous still do right, and the holy still be holy.”³³

What does the evil doer look like in God’s sight? Well, he says they are filthy. We were all born evildoers. So it is not that God looked to you and said, “Well, there is a beautiful one.”

No, when he loved you first, you were filthy in his sight.

Romans 5:6 puts it this way.

For while we were still weak, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly. For one will scarcely die for a righteous person—though perhaps for a good person one would dare even to die—but God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.³⁴

No, here is the wonderful good news of the gospel. God regarded us for what we really were when he took the steps to save us. He wasn’t, you know, deceived about our true nature. He wasn’t thinking he was saving good people. Christ died for sinners. Christ died for the ungodly.

³¹ Romans 5:8.

³² Isaiah 64:6.

³³ Revelation 22:11.

³⁴ Romans 5:6-8.

So it is not because we loved him. That is not why he has loved us. It is not because we were lovely. We were filthy in his sight.

How about this? How about God loved us because of some greatness we possess? God looks out across humanity and he sees these really talented people or he sees these people who have a high standing in society. He sees these people who have great fame and great influence. So God... he saved the ones whom he has saved because of some greatness they possess. Maybe Israel began to think that way. Well, why wouldn't God love us? Look at us. Look at how wise we are. Look at how talented we are. Look at how we live, how good we are. Maybe God has looked at us and seen some greatness.

Well, the Lord destroyed that idea in Deuteronomy seven verse six. He says:

For you are a people holy to the LORD your God. The LORD your God has chosen you to be a people for his treasured possession, out of all the peoples who are on the face of the earth. It was not because you were more in number than any other people that the LORD set his love on you and chose you, for you were the fewest of all peoples, but it is because the LORD loves you and is keeping the oath that he swore to your fathers, that the LORD has brought you out with a mighty hand and redeemed you from the house of slavery, from the hand of Pharaoh king of Egypt.³⁵

He goes all the way back to Abraham and he says, "Do you know why I am taking you out of Egypt? It is because of promises I have made to Abraham and Isaac and Jacob. This is why I am delivering you."

And those promises were free grace promises. Those men never deserved or earned those promises. God says, "I have not loved you because you are so great. I have loved you because I have loved you."

How about this? How about God has loved us because God needed to love us.

Have you ever heard of this version? God needed fellowship with man. Lonely God, needful God.

Is that the truth that God created us because he needed us, that God has love us because he... there was some need in God that is met by him loving us?

Well, let the Word of God answer that. Deuteronomy 10:14. Listen to this.

Behold, to the LORD your God belong heaven and the heaven of heavens, the earth with all that is in it. Yet the LORD set his heart in love on your fathers and chose their offspring after them, you above all peoples, as you are this day.³⁶

³⁵ Deuteronomy 7:6-8.

³⁶ Deuteronomy 10:14-15.

Don't you love that next word "yet"? Everything belongs to God. He needs nothing. Yet he has loved you, despite the fact that he needs nothing he has loved you.

No, his love for you is not explained by what he needs. He needs nothing.

In fact, if you talked about fellowship and love, this is what is missed in that perspective that is expressed sometimes, that God needed the fellowship and God needed the love. Never forget. There was perfect love and fellowship in the godhead before there was anything.

When Jesus prays for us in John 17 he celebrates at the same time this love that he has had with the Father from all eternity.

John 17 verse 20. Jesus prays for us and listen to what he says:

"I do not ask for these only, but also for those who will believe in me through their word."³⁷

So that includes all of us. He was praying for us, too, there.

...that they may all be one, just as you, Father, are in me, and I in you, that they also may be in us, so that the world may believe that you have sent me. The glory that you have given me I have given to them, that they may be one even as we are one, I in them and you in me, that they may become perfectly one, so that the world may know that you sent me and loved them even as you loved me.

Father, I desire that they also, whom you have given me, may be with me where I am, to see my glory that you have given me because you loved me before the foundation of the world. O righteous Father, even though the world does not know you, I know you, and these know that you have sent me. I made known to them your name, and I will continue to make it known, that the love with which you have loved me may be in them, and I in them.³⁸

The love that we have gotten in on in salvation is simply the love that has existed in God from all eternity. We have simply been introduced to the love that the Father and the Son have known for one another and the Spirit of God from all eternity.

No, God didn't need someone to love. There was perfect love in the godhead before we ever existed.

³⁷ John 17:20.

³⁸ John 17:21-26.

So when you go down the list—and you can add anything else you want to add—when you begin to go down the list and you ask, “Why has God loved me?” and you eliminate everything the Bible eliminates, you are left with just one reason. Why has God loved you? Because he has freely, graciously chosen to. That’s it.

So he says, verse four:

“I will heal their apostasy; I will love them...”³⁹ voluntarily. I will love them graciously. I will love them freely, Not because they deserve it, but because I choose to be gracious to them.

That is salvation’s story.

Here is a third aspect of salvation’s story. God says he has been propitiated toward them.

“I will heal their apostasy; I will love them freely, for my anger has turned from them.”⁴⁰

He is able to do this work of salvation because justice has been satisfied.

You notice, “I will heal them. I will love them, because my anger has turned from them.”

But then we have to ask, “Why, God, has your anger turned from them, these whom you will save? Why has your anger turned from them? Is it because they have suffered enough?”

Does God look at the nation of Israel and he says when we think about this future outpour of salvation? Is it that God says, “Well, it is because they have suffered enough, they have paid for their sins?”

Or perhaps God has forgotten about their sins. You know, maybe God is like us. Maybe, you know, just like we can be angry about something, but then time passes and space takes place and we are just not angry anymore. Maybe God has forgotten how stubborn and rebellious and idolatrous they have been. Somewhere out in the future God will sort of just lose his anger. Is that the answer?

Well, that would be contrary to his promise of chapter 13 verse 12. Look at what he says there, Hosea 13 verse 12.

“The iniquity of Ephraim is bound up; his sin is kept in store.”⁴¹

God says, “I am going to preserve it in my remembrance, because I am going to punish it.”

³⁹ Hosea 14:4.

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ Hosea 13:12.

Maybe they have earned this new attitude from God. Right, through their repentance and their different living, now God will not be angry with them anymore because they have changed their ways.

Well, that wouldn't correspond with his declaration of love, would it? He says, "I have loved them graciously."

So that wouldn't be gracious. That would be something they earned.

How has God's anger been turned away from them? If you take the whole of Scripture, even the Scriptures that speak of their future salvation, it becomes plain how his anger will be turned from them. His anger will be turned from them through the offering of his own Son, just like his anger has been turned away from us. God's anger is taken away as our guilt is answered for. God's anger is taken away only through a propitiatory sacrifice. God's anger is taken away only through the work of redemption. God's anger is taken away only by the blood of his Lamb. And this is how he is going to forgive them, too.

That future day of salvation and ethnic Israel will be centered on the Lord Jesus Christ.

I want you to look at this with me so I am not just reading to you. Go to the book of Zechariah chapter 12 and look at verse 10.

Another "I will" from the Lord. Here is what he is going to do.

"And I will pour out on the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem a spirit of grace and pleas for mercy, so that, when they look on me, on him whom they have pierced..."⁴²

Has the Lord been pierced? Has the Lord been wounded? Who was pierced for our sins? The Lord Jesus Christ.

Look on.

"...they shall mourn for him, as one mourns for an only child, and weep bitterly over him, as one weeps over a firstborn. On that day the mourning in Jerusalem will be as great as the mourning for Hadad-rimmon in the plain of Megiddo. The land shall mourn..."⁴³

But notice this is going to be done through the individual salvations that are occurring. This is going to be individual redemption. Notice what it says.

The land shall mourn, each family by itself: the family of the house of David by itself, and their wives by themselves; the family of the house of Nathan by itself, and their wives by themselves; the family of the house

⁴² Zechariah 12:10.

⁴³ Zechariah 12:10-12.

of Levi by itself, and their wives by themselves; the family of the Shimeites by itself, and their wives by themselves; and all the families that are left, each by itself, and their wives by themselves.⁴⁴

It is a great outpouring of individual conversion.

Verse one.

“On that day there shall be a fountain opened for the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem, to cleanse them from sin and uncleanness.”⁴⁵

That is how the Lord’s anger is turned away. It is through salvation. It is through his Son, the one whom they pierced, the one they will look upon and mourn and recognize they rejected the Messiah.

What is the Lord doing in salvation? Look back at Hosea chapter 14. He grants repentance. He transforms their hearts. He loves them graciously and freely. His anger is turned away from them through the sacrifice of his Son.

So here is the fourth picture of salvation for Israel and for us. God says, “Now I will be committed to your fruitfulness. I will make you fruitful.”

Verse five.

I will be like the dew to Israel;
he shall blossom like the lily;
he shall take root like the trees of Lebanon;
his shoots shall spread out;
his beauty shall be like the olive,
and his fragrance like Lebanon.
They shall return and dwell beneath my shadow;
they shall flourish like the grain;
they shall blossom like the vine;
their fame shall be like the wine of Lebanon.⁴⁶

God will be the source of their fruitfulness. He is like dew. He is like the one who waters them.

And then their fruit will appear. They are going to blossom like the lily and their fruit is going to remain because they are going to take root like the trees of Lebanon. So God is going to cause it. It is going to appear. He is going to sustain it.

⁴⁴ Zechariah 12:12-14.

⁴⁵ Zechariah 13:1.

⁴⁶ Hosea 14:5-7.

And then he gives a picture of this fruitfulness having an effect on others. There is going to be this public display, the salvation of God as their fruitfulness is apparent because he describes in verse six their roots spreading out and their beauty is like the olive. This beauty is going to appear and like a fragrance. The world will recognize the saving work of God in his people.

They are going to return to the land he has promised them. They are going to dwell beneath his shadow. And they are going to flourish. They are going to be fruitful like grain. They are going to blossom like the vine and their fame...

Again, there is that public effect. Their fame will be like the lion of Lebanon.

Isn't it wonderful to know that this is always salvation's story? Do you know, Christian, the Lord has not only granted you repentance, he has not only changed your heart, he has not only loved you freely, he has also ordained that you and I will be fruitful.

I want you to look, real quickly, at John chapter 15. You know the verse, but I want you to look at it and remember it, John chapter 15. And listen to what our Lord said to his disciples and says to us this morning. John 15 look at verse 16.

Jesus says this.

“You did not choose me.”⁴⁷

“Wait a second, Lord,” Matthew could say. “I remember sitting at that tax collector's table when you came by and you called me to yourself. I mean, I chose to get up from that table and to follow you.”

You know, Peter could say, “I could remember when I was out, you know, fishing like I had always done and you came by and you called me and I chose to leave those nets behind and my father's business behind and to follow you. I mean, I chose you.”

Well, there was a human choice made. But behind that human choice from all eternity was the choice of God that explains the choices of men, because God had to grant to them, just like he has to grant to us the heart that says, “Yes.”

“You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit and that your fruit should abide.”⁴⁸

I chose you. I will make you fruitful and your fruit will last.

“...so that whatever you ask the Father in my name, he may give it to you. These things I command you, so that you will love one another.”⁴⁹

⁴⁷ John 15:16.

⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁹ John 15:16-17.

Look back at Hosea 14. We finish with the Lord's closing challenge. The book ends with a challenge.

Verse eight. After all of this message, now the Lord basically says to the people, the people living at the time they received this message. He says to them, "Make a choice. I have set life and death before you. Make a choice."

Verse eight.

"O Ephraim, what have I to do with idols?"⁵⁰

Do you get the picture? God has nothing to do with idols, which means if you want God, what must you set aside? Idols. You see, you have a choice. You can go the way of idols, but you won't have the Lord.

Or you can choose the Lord, but recognize he has nothing to do with idols. God is not this God whom we can make up in our brains and form with our hands. No, this God, the true God is the God who answers when you call to him. He is the God who actually hears. He is the God who actually exists. He is the God who actually does things.

"It is I who answer and look after you."⁵¹

And he is the source of everlasting life. Choose the way of idols, you choose the way of death. Choose the way of idols, you choose that transitory pathway that ends with nothing, but choose the Lord and, notice what he says. He says:

"I am like an evergreen cypress; from me comes your fruit."⁵²

Everlasting fruitfulness, everlasting gain, everlasting life. This is the Lord. Make a choice. Idols or God, death or life, the loss of everything or an everlasting fruitfulness. Make a choice.

So that in verse nine God says, "Now take action."

Making a choice is not passive. Making a choice requires action.

Verse nine.

"Whoever is wise..."⁵³

Right? We can hear our Savior saying, "If anybody has ears to hear..."

⁵⁰ Hosea 14:8.

⁵¹ Ibid.

⁵² Ibid.

⁵³ Hosea 14:9.

“Whoever is wise, let him understand these things; whoever is discerning, let him know them; for the ways of the LORD are right, and the upright walk in them, but transgressors stumble in them.”⁵⁴

What do you do? You understand it? You say, “I see it.” You know it. You say, “I believe it.” And then you follow it. You walk.

Unless you are an unbeliever in which case all of this just causes you to stumble.

Is there somebody here today you call yourself Christian, but your ways deny your profession?

It is, in all likelihood it is an apocryphal story, been more than one version of it. But even a myth sometimes can have a good lesson in it. Maybe you have heard the story of Alexander the Great and his armies and there is someone, some soldier fleeing from the battlefield and he ends up at the feet of Alexander the Great and he says to the soldier, “What is your name?”

And the soldier’s name was Alexander. And so he is told, “Change your name or change your ways.”

You call yourself Christian, but what do your ways say?

I say to you this morning, “Change your name or change your ways.”

How do you respond to this message? You understand it. You believe it. And you take up your cross to follow the Son of God. And when you look up one day and the road is finished and you are standing in his presence, you will understand that this salvation story is not a story about you. It is a story about him.

What a good, merciful, gracious God he is.

Let’s pray.

Father in heaven, thank you for the gospel. Thank you for our Savior. Thank you for your sovereign, loving work in our hearts that for all your people here this morning we know that we are a people who have been circumcised in heart. It is the work of your Spirit. You have healed our apostasy. You have loved us freely. You have ordained our fruitfulness. You are our evergreen cypress and you have led us into the way that is eternally fruitful. Let us examine ourselves in light of your kindness, Lord, that wherever our ways don’t match our profession, let us pursue you this moment. Let us understand and believe and follow. And I pray for anyone, Lord, who has not yet come to your Son, looking to his shed blood alone, his death and his resurrection for their life. I pray today

⁵⁴ Ibid.

for their salvation. Grant them, Lord, repentance and faith. We pray for this in Jesus' name. Amen.