

I.N.I.

Sunday after Christmas
Dec. 28, 2014
Hosea 11:1

In Christ Jesus, our New Born King, Dear Fellow Redeemed,

It is truly amazing how over and over again the prophets, each in their own way, are commanded by God to set before their people His unchanging Word. Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Daniel all called to lay upon the hearts of the people of Israel the condemning power of God's Law—to awaken repentance and sorrow over sinful rebellion—and then to lay upon their repentant hearts again and again the tremendous love and promises of God in regard to the Messiah and His deliverance.

I'm sure that sometimes we weary of hearing from the pulpit the same old words of sin and condemnation. We weary of being told that we are sinful, by nature lost and condemned and deserving of nothing but eternal punishment. We weary of that because of our own sinful flesh. But God says that the Law must be preached in order to affect the heart. A Christian is a repentant sinner—one who daily realizes his own unworthiness before God—is aware of his own sinfulness and lost condition—and one who turns alone to the Lord Jesus for forgiveness and life. If we did not have this condemning force of the Law applied to our hearts, then we would truly weary of hearing the Gospel and would then reject the glorious Good News of God's love in His Son Jesus. For one who realizes the enormity of his sins; will truly appreciate the enormity of God's love in Christ.

And so we see in prophet after prophet after prophet the same message: Law & Gospel. The same message applied to every facet of their life and relationship to God—social, political, intellectual, as well as spiritual. The message was:

- 1) Acknowledge your sins before God and repent of them.
- 2) Turn to Him for your help, deliverance and salvation.

Sometimes God not only had these prophets proclaim this message with their mouths but also by their actions. God commanded Jeremiah not to marry and have children—because as God said in Jeremiah 16:2-4— **"YOU SHALL NOT TAKE A WIFE, NOR SHALL YOU HAVE SONS OR DAUGHTERS IN THIS PLACE." FOR THUS SAYS THE LORD CONCERNING THE SONS AND DAUGHTERS WHO ARE BORN IN THIS PLACE, AND CONCERNING THEIR MOTHERS WHO BORE THEM AND THEIR FATHERS WHO BEGOT THEM IN THIS LAND: THEY SHALL DIE GRUESOME DEATHS; THEY SHALL NOT BE LAMENTED NOR SHALL THEY BE BURIED, BUT THEY SHALL BE LIKE REFUSE ON THE FACE OF THE EARTH. THEY SHALL BE CONSUMED BY THE SWORD AND BY FAMINE, AND THEIR CORPSES SHALL BE MEAT FOR THE BIRDS OF HEAVEN AND FOR THE BEASTS OF THE EARTH."**

By not marrying and having children, Jeremiah was proclaiming to his people that because of their sinful rebellion and rejection of God they and their children will perish and be destroyed.

The prophet Hosea was also commanded by God to not only proclaim by word God's threats of punishment and promises of peace; but he was to also proclaim this by his actions.

The Lord commanded Hosea to marry a prostitute. He did this and this faithful prophet and this unfaithful, adulterous wife produced three children. All three children were given names that proclaimed in very clear words the impending doom of Israel because of their idolatry—which God calls spiritual adultery.

God and Israel had promised faithfulness to each other at Mt. Sinai. The Israelites had proclaimed: **ALL THAT THE LORD HAS SAID WE WILL DO!** They promised to worship Him only; follow only His Words and commands. But instead they became unfaithful. The Lord says they went awhoring after other gods; gave their love and worship to golden calves and to Baal, Astarte and the gods and goddesses of the surrounding nations. Yet the faithful God kept calling them back, time after time---not overlooking their unfaithfulness by saying, "That's OK!" but by calling them back to repentance and then forgiving them of their sins.

The same thing happened to Hosea. His wife was unfaithful to him and gave her love to another

man, but God commanded Hosea to take her back and love her again and again. This was a symbol or picture of God loving and forgiving Israel again and again of their idolatry; forgiving them for their chasing after other gods and worshipping them.

Throughout Hosea's book the Lord proclaims His charge of idolatry and unfaithfulness. In chapter 5 the Lord clearly reveals the judgment that would come upon them because of their unfaithfulness. In Chapters 6 & 7 Hosea reports of the still unrepentant hearts of these unfaithful people and God once again very clearly outlines for them what will happen because of their evil ways. And yet when we come to the verse that makes up our sermon text this morning; we hear words of love and mercy, not of punishment, condemnation and doom!

God says: **"WHEN ISRAEL WAS A CHILD, I LOVED HIM, AND OUT OF EGYPT I CALLED MY SON.**

When Israel was a child—early in its history, at the time of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob—God tenderly led the affairs of His children so that within a few hundred years the Jewish nation grew from one man: an aged man without any children to several million descendants in Egypt. God didn't just love Israel when they were a powerful, mighty nation. He loved them from the very beginning, calling Abraham from Ur of the Chaldees to be His own. The word for "child" can also mean "an infant—from infancy." From the very beginning it was God's love that caused Israel to prosper and grow into this powerful people.

In their childhood years, the nation of Israel went from being a free people living in Canaan and then a favored people living in Goshen to being a despised people who were made to be slaves by the Egyptians. Their baby boys were killed in an effort to stop their population growth. They were enslaved, beaten, treated cruelly and many were killed.

God is reminding the Jewish people of Hosea's day about their past history and says: **When you were a little child, a young nation, I loved you; and I called you out of Egypt, my son!"**

This term, **"my son,"** is also found in Exodus 4 where God commanded Moses to say to Pharaoh: **'THUS SAYS THE LORD: "ISRAEL IS MY SON, MY FIRSTBORN. SO I SAY TO YOU, LET MY SON GO THAT HE MAY SERVE ME."** God loved the people of Israel as His own sons; His own children. He was their dear Father.

How does this passage apply to our Savior and to us? Let's read from Matthew 2:13-15. **NOW WHEN THEY HAD DEPARTED, BEHOLD, AN ANGEL OF THE LORD APPEARED TO JOSEPH IN A DREAM, SAYING, "ARISE, TAKE THE YOUNG CHILD AND HIS MOTHER, FLEE TO EGYPT, AND STAY THERE UNTIL I BRING YOU WORD; FOR HEROD WILL SEEK THE YOUNG CHILD TO DESTROY HIM." WHEN HE AROSE, HE TOOK THE YOUNG CHILD AND HIS MOTHER BY NIGHT AND DEPARTED FOR EGYPT, AND WAS THERE UNTIL THE DEATH OF HEROD, THAT IT MIGHT BE FULFILLED WHICH WAS SPOKEN BY THE LORD THROUGH THE PROPHET, SAYING, "OUT OF EGYPT I CALLED MY SON."**

The Holy Spirit applied the words of our text to the Father's only begotten Son, Jesus. These words written by Hosea some 750 years before Jesus' time were not only speaking about the past; the past actions of God's great love for His children—the Israelites; but the Eternal God was also prophesying a future act of love that He would perform—the act of sparing His Son from the wicked hands of King Herod. Joseph and Mary and the baby Jesus fled to Egypt where they stayed in obscurity until King Herod had died. Then God called His Son out of Egypt to return to the Promised Land and continue on His mission as Savior of the world.

What a marvelous parallel picture we see here. God's act of love seen in the distant past—calling His chosen son: Israel the nation—out of the slavery of Egypt and leading them safely to the Promised Land---and God's act of love seen in the distant future-calling His only begotten Son, Jesus out of Egypt in order to earn for mankind freedom from the slavery of sin and an entrance into the eternal Promised Land of heaven.

In II Peter we read that to God one day is as a thousand years and a thousand years as one day. So these two acts, even though they occurred some 1,500 years apart are taken together as one.

But do you know that there is a third way we can look at this one verse from Hosea 11? We can apply it to ourselves some 2,000 years after Christ and some 3,500 years after Israel left Egypt.

God calls all believers Israel and His children, His sons and daughters. We heard this morning from Galatians 4 that through Christ we have become adopted sons and daughters of God. This passage from Hosea also applies in a spiritual way to us. When we were young; as infants, the Lord loved us and He too has called us out of Egypt. Now I doubt that many if any of us have ever been to the land of Egypt; yet we have been spiritually called out of the bondage and captivity of the Egypt of sin and death. We too were under the spiritual captivity and bondage of the evil Pharaoh Satan—he had control over all of us because of our sins, we were slaves to him.

From this spiritual Egyptian captivity we have all been set free, called forth by the Gospel and lovingly led out through faith in Jesus. But our journey is not yet complete. The Israelites were led into the Promised Land and we too are assured that our journey will not end until we reach our goal—the Promised Land of heaven.

As we are about to close out another year of our lives; and as we see and experience the rapid flight of time; what a comfort to know that we are drawing ever closer and closer to our eternal glory and everlasting goal. The uncertainties of the next year and beyond lay ahead of us, but we have the certainty that God loves us, has called us to be His sons and daughters and will lead and guide us every step of the way. From our text we have learned that

GOD SHOWS HIS LOVE FOR US AGAIN AND AGAIN!

We have seen that in the distant past;

We see it in the present

And we will continue to see it for the future.

Amen.