**BCM Bible Study: April 3/4, 2019**

**Hosea 4-6:3**: The Unrepentant Heart

Faithlessness Diagnosed

We have learned that Israel has been unfaithful to the covenant she made with God at Mt. Sinai. God had promised to protect and care for Israel. Israel was asked to be faithful and she has failed by worshipping other gods. As a result, the terms of the covenant will be turned on Israel – she will be punished, but with redemptive intent. God wants his people to return to him in worship and love. In chapters 4 and 5, God delves deeper into the problem. What exactly went wrong?

Three significant problems are laid out in the right away: **Read Hosea 4:1**. What are the three charges against Israel? Today, we will be exploring these themes.

**Problem 1: Unfaithfulness and No Love**

* Unfaithfulness and lack of love mean Israel acted in an inappropriate manner in their relationship to God. Read chapter 4 and note where you see this theme. **Read Hosea 4.** 
  + Note the leaders: Reading this chapter may evoke many questions. For example: What is the deal with the old and new wine in vv.10 and 18? There is not time to walk through and explain all of these issues. For now, a satisfactory answer is “I don’t know! I’ll talk to Scott/do some research and get back to you.” Your goal should be to avoid tangents and direct them to the overall message of the chapter.
  + Where did you see the theme of unfaithfulness or a broken love relationship? Here are some that I have noted:
    - Verse 2 is pointing back to some of the 10 commandments.
    - Verse 6 - they ignored the laws of God
    - Verse 7 - they sinned against God and exchanged him for something else
    - Verses 10-19 – engagement in prostitution/adultery (worshipping other gods, which sometimes involved actual prostitution)
  + Unfaithfulness for the Israelites often did not mean that they completely abandoned God for the gods. Rather, they incorporated idol worship into worship of Yahweh. It was God + the gods. In doing so, they lower God to the level of wood/sticks. (v.12)
    - Paul talks about a similar pattern of behavior in Romans: **Read Romans 1:21-25.** In what way are modern people prone to fall into this type of thinking?
    - What are things to which you are often tempted to devote your life to/trust in?
  + Why do people do this? One commentator offers an answer: “The Israelites assumed that they had hit upon a formula for abundance. The last years of Jeroboam were prosperous. Surely this “blessing” was proof of righteousness, and the narrow standards of fundamentalistic Yahwism were now shown to have been needless and oppressive structures.” (Word Biblical Commentary)
    - The Bible repeatedly says that wealth and prosperity can be spiritually dangerous. Why, from your experience, do you believe this is the case? (See Matt. 6:24-34 if needed)
    - In what way does prosperity open for you the possibly to become more lenient with regard to avoiding sin?
    - **Read 1 Timothy 6:9-12, 17-19**. How does Paul tell Timothy to combat the dangers of wealth? What would it look like for you to live out these commands?

**Problem 2: Lack of knowledge**

* Go back and read the verses that have explicitly to do with knowledge of God here and in the next chapter. **Read Hosea 4:1, 5-6; 5:4-5** 
  + From these verses and the context of the chapter, what does it mean to have a knowledge of God?
  + When God made a covenant promise with Israel, he gave them a law – this law was the terms of the relationship he was establishing with them. **Read Exodus 19:5-6.** (note the conditional “if”!!)
  + “Knowledge” involves a constant awareness of and obedience to the covenant relationship as described by the law. Their obedience to God reflected the state of their relationship with Him, so the people of Israel were clearly far from Him. When the people forget and disobey the law, there is no “knowledge,” and the covenant has been annulled.
    - In what way is this different than how you typically think of acknowledging/knowledge of God?
* We too are called to obedience as outworking of our relationship with God. **Read John 14:15; 1 John 2:3-6, 5:1-3**
  + What do you learn from these verses about knowing and loving God?
  + A common trend in modern Christian thought is that loving God and obedience to his ways are somehow different things. But just as faith is expressed through works, love is expressed through obedience.
    - NOTE: The Bible doesn’t demand perfection from us, and these verses should be read in light of others that encourage Christians to keep growing and repent of their sin. These verses, in light of those, suggest that a heart that loves God is one that is growing in the character of God and will turn back to him after recognition of wrongdoing.
  + What areas of your life would you like to see come more into line with God’s ways? In what way do you struggle to live as He desires?
* In the Old Testament, the covenant was based on what God did to deliver Israel from slavery in Egypt. The people knew that the laws that God gave were for their good because of this great thing that he had done. Also, God could have given up on his people because they had broken the terms of their covenant relationship. Instead, God chose to pursue his adulterous bride.
  + What is the basis of the covenant in the New Testament?
  + How does that influence your motivation for obedience?
  + How has God continued to pursue you despite your disobedience to his will?

A Picture of Repentance

* Hosea 5 paints another bleak picture. Israel has scorned God and destruction is coming. They are looking for help, but none will come. We will read the last few verses in this chapter, followed by the beginning of chapter 6, which will paint a picture of repentance: **Read Hosea 5:13-6:3.**
  + According to these verses, what does repentance look like?
  + In what way do you feel a need to return to the Lord? To “press on to know the LORD”?