“God’s Loyal Love: Naming God vs. Knowing God”

Hosea 4:1-19 (in the NAS and The Message)

(notes based on the sermon by Pastor Steve Massey, Hayden Bible Church, 11/8/20)

“Blessed is the nation whose God is the Lord…” (Ps.33:12a)

 Was this true of our nation? Is it still true of our nation? I think the answer is held in the vast difference between “naming God” and “knowing God”. Read Hosea 4:1 and 4:6 to see what the prophet said about this. It seems like there are severe consequences to ignoring God. Today’s message is for God’s covenant people back then, and to the church, God’s covenant people today. (Q1)

 God is bringing a charge of treason against His people, a people that name Him without knowing Him. The evidence is presented in verse 1: no truthfulness (they were phonies in their relationship with God); no mercy (not loving God or their neighbors); no knowledge of God (this “know” means a relational intimacy). The people of Israel had the trappings of spirituality, but they lived day by day as if God did not exist or made a difference in their lives. Read 2Tim. 3:1-5 to hear about people in “the last days” who are doing the same thing. The warning is to “avoid such men as these.” Let me go one step further: don’t **be** such men as these!

 Do you really **know** God? God is known as He is loved, lived for, and shared with others. (Q2) Do you fear Him, adore Him, and obey Him? Lack of knowledge of God leads to a pandemic of sin that’s out of control. Read all about it in Rom. 1:18-22. Where genuine love toward God is absent, rampant disregard of God’s law is present. 800,000 babies murdered each year, hard drugs just legalized in Oregon, children getting to decide which gender they are… wow. (Q3) A true knowledge of God yields to a recognition of His authority and a glad obedience to Him.

 Hosea 4:3 says that there are even consequences to the land. People’s sin brings a crisis to all creation. 4:4 says “Don’t point your fingers at somebody else!” Take a look at that log in your own eye. The “knowledge” talked about in 4:5-6 is not just ignorance; it’s willful disobedience. When the priests and the fathers failed to pass along a true knowing of God, the people were led into complacency. 4:10 says that they “stopped giving heed to the Lord”, meaning they ceased obeying. God will not allow His people to find ultimate satisfaction outside of true knowledge of Himself. You will never be satisfied outside of a right relationship with Him. (Q4) There are many “professing Christians in our country who are simply posers. They don’t surrender to God’s gracious authority. See what it says in 1John 2:4-6 and Matt. 7:21-23. One day God’s judgment will make clear the difference between naming Him and knowing Him. The difference will be clear between hearts enslaved to self-gratification and hearts adoring and serving Him alone.

To the people of Israel, the delights and comforts of false religion seemed better than worshipping the one true God. When God said get rid of the high places (4:13) he might have metaphorically added for us, “Clean out the things hidden in your closet.” In 4:15 Hosea warns Judah not to follow Israel. And then the crushing words of 4:17: Ephraim (Israel) is too far gone- let him go. (Q5)

 Is there any hope in all of this??! Read Hosea 2:21-23 again. There is a time coming when His people will say, “You are my God.” They will have been given new hearts that truly worship Him. Jesus Christ is the faithful prophet of God who leads His people into righteousness and, by the Spirit, imputes righteousness to them. Jesus Christ is the true and merciful High Priest who imparts intimate knowledge of God to His own. He is the Savior who redeems His own from their disloyalty. He gives us new hearts that **want** to walk in His way. He gives us new hearts that want to repent, believe, and follow Him.

 Our primary purpose is to bear witness to our King. These warnings in Hosea (and 1Cor. 10:1-12) were written for our example and our admonition. Don’t tolerate sloppy spirituality in your own life! God is to be feared and obeyed and honored in all we say, think, and do. (Q6)

**QUESTIONS:**

1. Think cause and effect. The effect is “My people are destroyed” (4:6) and the “wind” of judgment will come upon them. (4:19) Now read Hosea 4:1,6,8,10,14,17 and point out the causes of this ruin.
2. When someone truly knows God, he goes from a lover of SELF to being SELF***LESS***. Remember those last 4 letters: L= love others; E= encourage others; S= serve others; and S= share the gospel of salvation through Jesus Christ. Who can you share this with today?
3. What else in our 2020 culture would make your grandmother spin in her grave?
4. How do people try to find satisfaction outside of a close relationship with God? Here are a few to get you started: angels, political parties, crystals, pornography… What else?
5. How is this “tough love” an example of mercy? Can you think of any other merciful examples of tough love?
6. Read Ps. 86:11 (NIV). Discuss how all 4 phrases apply to today’s lesson. This might be a good verse to memorize! Yes, you can teach old dogs new tricks!

“Glory to His Name” (Hoffman/Stockton)

 Down at the cross where my Savior died,
Down where for cleansing from sin I cried,
There to my heart was the blood applied;
Glory to His Name!

* Refrain:
Glory to His Name,
Glory to His Name:
There to my heart was the blood applied;
Glory to His Name!

 I am so wondrously saved from sin,
Jesus so sweetly abides within,
There at the cross where He took me in;
Glory to His Name!