**“God’s Loyal Love: Your Fruit is Found in Me”**

Hosea 14:1-9 Key Verse: Hosea 14:5

(notes based on the sermon by Pastor Steve Massey, Hayden Bible Church, 4/11/21

 God told Hosea to marry Gomer… a prostitute.

 Hosea knew he would repeatedly suffer the private heartache and the public humiliation brought on by her shame. If you are outraged by this, you are beginning to understand the Gospel: This is how God bought us for Himself! The Gospel is God’s redeeming heart for His unfaithful people. But God’s blessing goes beyond even this! You are not just saved from Hell and the wrath you deserve, but you’ve been bought for His pleasure and your blessing!

 For centuries, God’s people had been cheating on Him. They called themselves God’s children, but they did not live for Him. They were a backslidden people- they ran to pragmatism and politics to seek security and satisfaction apart from God. Sound familiar?! But they (and we) face judgment because God’s holiness demands wrath toward sin. The Book of Hosea looks to the distant future and says that GOD LOVES US STILL and will show mercy, if we but turn back and return to Him.

 The first three verses of Hosea 14 call for Israel to return with true hearts, saying, “I will no longer depend on other countries, on myself, or on idols.” Then God takes the initiative and says, “I will heal their backsliding and I will love them freely.” His grace invites them (and us) right back into a relationship with Him. You get not only forgiveness: YOU GET GOD HIMSELF! The evidence of a restored relationship is a fruitfulness that can only come from God. Hosea poetically describes this in 14:5-8. God will be like the dew for us. His grace will make us lovely and gracious and fruitful (see Ezek. 36:25-27 and John 4:13-14).

 50 years ago, we were driving in the Negev Desert south of Jerusalem. Off to the side of the road were piles and piles of rocks, each about 2 feet tall. Row after row of rock piles covered many acres. Our curiosity got the best of us, so we stopped to ask what this was all about. The farmer said that on the north side of each pile of rocks he had planted a tree in the shade. Because it only rains in the Negev once or twice each year, the rocks were there for another function: Each night the air would cool the rocks, and as the morning dew came creeping in, it would collect on the cool rocks, and then drip down and water that little tree. How I would love to go back and see that field now!

 God supplies what we need to be fruitful for Him. And like the dew, God’s greatest nourishing work often comes in the stillness. (Q1) And sometimes, God works even in the dark of night. (Q2)

 The poetry of Hosea 14:5-8 describes what we can be with His power. But too many Christians aren’t like that: they blend in with today’s society. Instead, we should be known for the fruit mentioned in Gal. 5:22-25. This is fruit PRODUCED BY GOD. If you are deeply rooted in God, you will be like those lilies in the desert. (Q3)

 Look carefully at verse 8. God is saying that He Himself is the tree. He is the source of our fruit. Doesn’t this remind you of John 15:5 where He calls Himself the vine? With His Holy Spirit living in us, we are connected to Him as fruitful branches. Fruitfulness is at the heart of God’s calling for His people: “He who abides in Me bears much fruit.” (Q4)

 Finally, in verse 9, Hosea calls us to be wise and walk in the way of righteousness that he has just laid out. Will you? Will you repent and believe that Jesus is your Savior and Lord, and be daily connected to Him so that you can be filled with His power and produce fruit for His kingdom? Will you? (Q5)

**QUESTIONS:**

1. When was the last time you were still and listened to God? Why did you make time to do this? What sometimes causes us to skip our “quiet time” with God?
2. Often the “dark of night” is a trial that seems just too much to bear. Consider James 1:2-4. Consider Fannie Crosby (see below), blind from childhood. Comments?
3. Pastor Steve said, “You will never be fruitful for Him from a position of self-sufficiency. Your only hope is to humble yourself before God.” Read Phil. 2:5-8. In your own words, state what humility has to do with the fruit of the Spirit.
4. How does one abide?
5. What is your purpose? What kind of fruit do you hope He produces in you and through you this year?

“Praise Him! Praise Him!” (Fannie Crosby)

1 Praise him, praise him! Jesus, our blessed redeemer!
Sing, O earth, his wonderful love proclaim!
Hail him, hail him! Highest archangels in glory!
Strength and honor give to his holy name!
Like a shepherd, Jesus will guard his children.
In his arms he carries them all day long.

Refrain:
Praise him! Praise him! tell of his excellent greatness.
Praise him! Praise him! ever in joyful song.

2 Praise him, praise him! Jesus, our blessed redeemer!
For our sins, he suffered, and bled, and died.
He our rock, our hope of eternal salvation,
hail him, hail him! Jesus, the crucified.
Sound his praises, Jesus who bore our sorrows,
love unbounded, wonderful, deep, and strong. [Refrain]