“Break Up Your Fallow Ground”

Hosea 10; Jeremiah 7:23-24; John 15:1-17

(notes based on the sermon by Pastor Steve Massey, Hayden Bible Church, 2/14/21)

 All of Hosea has to do with the love of God for His own. In today’s study, God once again uses the metaphor of a vineyard to describe His chosen people. God has planted us (His vineyard) for bringing Him glory. We do that by showing a right relationship with Him and showing a right relationship with others. God intends for His people to be a refreshing reflection of His nature to the world. Our reflection should give other people some sense of what God is like, as well as show how desirous it is to have a relationship with the Living God. (Q1) God’s expectation is that His people will bear fruit for Him. (Q2) He provides everything necessary for that to happen. But an uncultivated heart, like a neglected vineyard, will not and cannot bear fruit for Him.

 When Satan cannot eliminate our witness, he seeks to assimilate us into our current culture by means of idols. Idolatry is spiritual adultery. The uncultivated heart squanders God’s grace and misuses God’s generosity. The uncultivated heart becomes hardened and unproductive. All the blessings from God that should have produced loyalty to Him have instead produced a preoccupation with personal pleasure. Does any of this sound familiar?!

 From the days of Moses to the days of Hosea, God’s people had been drifting away from Him. They failed to nurture their loyalty to Him. And when you don’t nurture your relationship with God, other loves sneak in and take His place. (Q3) In Hosea 10 God in effect says, “Now you are going to be without My blessing AND you will be without all the stuff you have accumulated because of My blessing.” Whatever is pursued and accumulated apart from God will be destroyed.

 Hos. 10:4 talks of a poisonous weed in their fields. The people didn’t just poison their relationship with God; they poisoned their relationships with other people. Instead, we are to be the very fragrance of Christ in our community. True fellowship can’t happen in an environment of “every man for himself.” Being “not right with God” always leads to being “not right with others.”

 Hos. 10:5-7 talks of the people being sorrowful about losing their idols. This highlights a key point: **being sorrowful or ashamed is not the same thing as repentance**. Anyone who has raised children knows exactly what I am talking about! Hos. 10:10 talks of twin acts of rebellion: 1) Rebellion against God’s holy law and 2) trusting in man and not in God. Read Jer. 7:23-24. You are either moving forward or moving backward. Which way are you headed?

 Is there hope for you, or is God’s judgment inevitable? Read Hos. 10:12. Can you hear the hope in this verse? A harvest of mercy from God IS STILL POSSIBLE, even though the certainty of God’s judgment of sin is coming. How? Repent and be born again! You exist for God, so repent, accept His gift of salvation, and engage your whole being for Him! This call to break up your fallow ground is a call to repentance. It is not sorrowfulness or being ashamed; it is turning from sin in full surrender to God’s gracious rule. Read Acts 3:19. The God who calls His people to repent is pleased to restore His repentant people.

 The refreshing rain of righteousness mentioned in 10:12 comes from God Himself. We are unable to produce righteousness on our own. (Q4) Now read John 15:1-17. We must be attached to Jesus (the true vine) in order to be fruitful. (Q5) Jesus came to be our substitute. He took the wrath that we deserve (because of our sin). Jesus, the Lamb of God, will either be your Savior or your Judge.

 In Christ we have what ancient Israel did not have: The Holy Spirit who enables us to live rightly. Here is HOPE: God graciously forgives disloyalty and gives righteousness to His people through the work of Jesus Christ.

 So, is it time to cultivate your heart? Repent, return from sin and self, and nurture your heart-attachment to Jesus. God’s people bring glory to Him through their relational attachment to Jesus, the true vine. Amen.

**QUESTIONS:**

1. How do we show others how desirous it is to have a relationship with the Living God? On Saturday, Doug Sowers said we could find that answer in Mark 5:19. What is the answer?
2. What is that fruit?
3. What other loves sneak in and take God’s rightful place?
4. Righteousness seems to have two definitions: a) Jesus death and resurrection is counted to believers as righteousness b) The Holy Spirit gives us the power to live rightly. Discuss these two definitions.
5. John 15:4 talks about abiding in Christ. How does one abide in Christ?

 “Amazing Grace” (Newton)

1. Amazing grace! How sweet the sound
That saved a wretch like me!
I once was lost, but now am found;
Was blind, but now I see.
2. ’Twas grace that taught my heart to fear,
And grace my fears relieved;
How precious did that grace appear
The hour I first believed.
3. Through many dangers, toils, and snares,
I have already come;
’Tis grace hath brought me safe thus far,
And grace will lead me home.
4. When we’ve been there ten thousand years,
Bright shining as the sun,
We’ve no less days to sing God’s praise
Than when we’d first begun.