“God’s Loyal Love: Will You Seek His Face?”

Hosea 5:1 - 6:3 (in the NIV and The Message)

(notes based on the sermon by Pastor Steve Massey, Hayden Bible Church, 11/15/20)

 The world’s craziness has found us, even here in North Idaho!

 We seem to hear nothing but hopelessness and uncertainty. Is there anything certain? YES! God is immutable. He never changes. His love and grace are absolute, unchanging parts of His nature. But most of today’s lesson is harsh: God tells His wayward people that if they look for Him, they will not find Him. He has withdrawn Himself from them. You need to stay with me all the way to the end to hear the wonderful message of hope! But first, read Hosea 5:1 - 6:3.

 5:1 gives a warning of Divine judgment. If God says, “Hear this… take heed… give ear” you better listen, brother. Even the kings back then were leading their people astray. How about now? Do you have a heart that has been snared by sin? Sin is blinding and binding and captivating and confusing. Unfortunately, we all know the conscious-numbing nature of sin. God’s knowledge of my sin is absolute. In 5:3-4 God says, “I know you, but you do not know me.” The people of Israel thought they could “name” God, irrespective of how they lived their lives. They thought they could benefit from religious activities even though their hearts were far from Him. But God had a perfect understanding of their hearts… and He has a perfect understanding of our hearts. (Q1) (Q2)

 5:6 says “He has withdrawn Himself from them.” When you hide sin from God, He hides Himself from you. But He hasn’t gone someplace; YOU’VE gone someplace. In reality, fellowship has been withdrawn. God has not gone anywhere: YOU are the one who has wandered off. Caution: could the staleness of your walk be because of sin hidden in your heart? Are you really seeking God, or are you just engaged in “sin management”? (Q3)

 Christian heritage without Christian holiness is a fast track to God’s judgment. The people of Israel were walking by “human precept”. They were trying to solve their problems without God. In 5:13 they even sought help from the king of Assyria, a man as wicked as they were! In 5:12 and 5:14 it talks of a moth that eats from within and a lion that devours from without. Both seemingly negative, but both can serve God’s purposes for His people. Some of the things we pray against may actually be tools in the Potter’s hand. Words and warnings are sometimes not enough. (Q4) (Q5)

 5:15 finally gives a hint of hope. Hope is found not in hiding sin, but in acknowledging sin and running to God. God Himself is the reward, not a list of earthly blessings. The wonder of salvation is that we KNOW God. The only way to escape God’s wrath is to run to God. The Bible calls this repentance. Have you heard me mention “repent/believe/follow”??!

 You see, God’s knowledge of man’s sin is absolute. God’s judgment of man’s sin is absolute. And God’s resolve to redeem and reconcile His repentant people is absolute! Read 6:2. It provides a Divine echo of the work of our Savior, God’s chosen way to deal with His wayward people. Now that’s hope!

 Speaking of hope, let’s look at the hope written by two other prophets of old: Read Isaiah 53:5 and 11. The sins of God’s people will be placed on the future King (Jesus). Jesus’ perfect loyalty has been offered as a substitute for our disloyalty. The wrath of God has been satisfied in Christ. Run to Him! There is now no condemnation to those whose lives are hidden in Christ. Now read Zechariah 10:6. Wow! It’s like when we were kids and we called out “do-overs!”. It’s like getting a Mulligan after a bad golf shot! God promises to restore us completely. WOW!

 Lord, thank You for giving us warnings, giving us discipline, AND giving us a way back to You. Amen.

**QUESTIONS:**

1. Why did Israel’s spiritual adultery block her way back to God?
2. How do people today “go their own way” instead of following God?
3. Hidden sin can cause indifference, a “religion” that is just going through the motions. What are the effects of hidden sin on prayer? Bible study? Fellowship with other Christians? What can be done about this sorry state?
4. How can “the moth” or “the lion” or any other discipline be useful?
5. What is the most important thing our nation needs right now?

“Amazing Grace” (Newton)

Amazing grace

How sweet the sound

That saved a wretch like me

I once was lost

But now I'm found

Was blind, but now I see

'Twas grace that taught

My heart to fear

And grace my Fears relieved

How precious did

That grace appear

The hour I first believed