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The Mission
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Hosea 11.12-12.14

If you have your Bibles with you, you can turn with me to our summary text for today. The book of Hosea. We're on the last verse of chapter 11, and then we'll be looking at all of chapter 12. Hosea chapter 11 and verse 12, through chapter 12 and verse 14.

I'll read through it and then we'll come back and explain it.

**Hosea 11:12, "Ephraim has encircled Me with lies,
And the house of Israel with deceit;
But Judah still walks with God,
Even with the Holy One who is faithful.**

**12:1, "Ephraim feeds on the wind,
And pursues the east wind;
He daily increases lies and desolation.
Also they make a covenant with the Assyrians,
And oil is carried to Egypt.**

**2 "The Lord also brings a charge against Judah,
And will punish Jacob according to his ways;
According to his deeds He will recompense him.**

**3 He took his brother by the heel in the womb,
And in his strength he struggled with God.**

**4 Yes, he struggled with the Angel and prevailed;
He wept, and sought favor from Him.**

He found Him in Bethel, And there He spoke to us—

5 That is, the Lord God of hosts.

The Lord is His memorable name.

**6 So you, by the help of your God, return; Observe mercy and
justice, And wait on your God continually.**

**7 “A cunning Canaanite! Deceitful scales are in his hand;
He loves to oppress.**

**8 And Ephraim said, ‘Surely I have become rich, I have found
wealth for myself; In all my labors They shall find in me no
iniquity that is sin.’**

**9 “But I am the Lord your God, Ever since the land of Egypt;
I will again make you dwell in tents, As in the days of the
appointed feast.**

**10 I have also spoken by the prophets, And have multiplied
visions; I have given symbols through the witness of the
prophets.”**

**11 Though Gilead has idols—Surely they are vanity— Though
they sacrifice bulls in Gilgal, Indeed their altars shall be heaps in
the furrows of the field.**

**12 Jacob fled to the country of Syria; Israel served for a
spouse, And for a wife he tended sheep.**

**13 By a prophet the Lord brought Israel out of Egypt, And by
a prophet he was preserved.**

**14 Ephraim provoked Him to anger most bitterly;
Therefore his Lord will leave the guilt of his bloodshed upon
him, And return his reproach upon him. Let us pray.**

So we enter now into the last section of the book of Hosea. In the first sections in chapters one through three Hosea talks about his life and his marriage to Gomer, who was a harlot, and how that was a picture of God's relationship with Israel.

And then in this second section that we just finished, God has been bringing charges against Israel. And here in this last section we find more or less a summary of the things that have gone on before, and this again is pressing Israel with her guilt.

And in this section, it's kind of scattered. There's all these thoughts that seem to be going through Hosea's mind; and he's jumping back and forth between several different things. But there's a general theme that we're going to see and we'll talk about that at the end as we try and make sense of all these thoughts.

And you'll see as we're going through this, that it's basically looking at Jacob, and the life of the patriarch Jacob, and how Israel was like Jacob, and also how they weren't like Jacob, but needed to be.

And so he starts off by comparing Ephraim and Judah. And again, when he speaks of Ephraim he's referring to the northern kingdom of Israel which was made up of the 10 northern tribes, and of which Ephraim was the largest. And all throughout this book, he's been doing that. And of course the southern kingdom were the remaining tribes and he refers to them as Judah. And He says,

Ephraim has encircled me with lies, and the house of Israel with deceit. But Judah still walks with God, even with the Holy One who is faithful.

He says, it's as if Ephraim has set up this war camp around God and they have encircled God with nothing but lies and deceit. That's all you could find in the Northern Kingdom, was lies and deceit.

And then he compares it to the Southern Kingdom of Judah and he says, Judah at least at this point still seems to be somewhat faithful.

Now he's going to also bring charges against Judah in just a minute, but for the moment, he says, Judah walks with God.

And what he's doing is giving a comparison. He says, Israel, you guys are terrible. All you do is lie and deceive, but in Judah there's at least some level of faithfulness still there.

But then he turns it around a bit and he says in verse one of chapter 12, **12:1 Ephraim feeds on the wind and pursues the east wind, and his daily increase lies with desolation. Also, they make a covenant with the Assyrians, and oil is carried to Egypt.**

So now he goes back to Ephraim and he says, they feed on the wind and pursue the east wind. And if you remember our past studies of Solomon and Ecclesiastes, this might jog your memory to some of the phrases that were used and how life without God at the center is like chasing after the wind; it's vanity! And he says, Ephraim, that's what you're doing. You're just chasing after the wind and you have nothing to gain by your actions. And when he talks about pursuing the east wind, the east wind, at that time was the worst and most destructive wind of all, because it came out of the desert. A wind coming out of the west came from the Mediterranean Sea and so it would bring rain, and be good for the crops.

But a wind from the east having just come over the desert was terrible for the crops.

And he says, it's like you're seeking your own destruction by pursuing the east wind. You give gifts to the Assyrians in the north and you make covenants with them. And then you turn around and you send olive oil down to Egypt, and make deals with them. You're playing both sides against each other. And you're deceitful in your dealings. And he says you're playing a game you're going to lose. And it's like chasing the wind. And ultimately you'll be destroyed by what you're doing.

But then he turns back to Judah to also bring a charge against Judah. Now, what's interesting here is that he has just said that Judah was better than Israel.

So what's he doing here? Well, no doubt, Israel has to be thinking this. If Judah is better than us, and if at least some of the people are still faithful; if God is angry with them and threatening to bring judgment on them, then what's about to happen to us? Because he's already told us that we're worse than Judah?

Now, we know historically when God did finally bring about his judgment, he brought it on Israel first. And it would be some 120 years later before he finally brought it to the southern kingdom.

And so really what he's saying is that both kingdoms, which make up the entire 12 tribes of the original Israeli nation are going to face judgment. And of course history tells that they certainly did.

And so he's looking to the Northern Kingdom, and he's condemning them by condemning someone who's better than them. And he's saying, if these people, who are your brothers and sisters to the South, if they're still

walking with God in comparison to you, and I'm going to bring judgment on them, then how much worse trouble are you in?

You don't walk with me at all. You're all full of deceit. And then he starts bringing in Jacob.

And he says,

**2 “The Lord also brings a charge against Judah,
And will punish Jacob according to his ways;
According to his deeds He will recompense him.**

So now he's speaking of all of Israel.

Now, remember, Jacob's dead at this point. In fact, he's been dead for centuries. But here he's speaking of all of Israel under the name of Jacob. The twelve tribes of Israel if you'll remember were made up of Jacob's 12 sons. And so he's speaking to all of Israel. And he says' You're gonna get exactly what you deserve, Israel; everyone of you.

And then he turns to the man Jacob and he begins to compare the man Jacob with his descendants who make up these twelve tribes.

In verse 3 he says,

**3 He took his brother by the heel in the womb,
And in his strength he struggled with God.**

Hopefully you remember the story of Jacob; remember Jacob and Esau were twin brothers. And in the womb and all the way out they struggled together. And though Esau was the firstborn, when he was delivered, Jacob was holding on to his heel like he was trying to pull him back in, because he wanted to be the first born. And the reason of course was because the first born was the one who would receive the birthright and the blessing.

In fact, the name Jacob means, “he grasps the heel”.

Well, Jacob never stopped grabbing at Esau's heel and later on, Jacob and his mother deceived Esau, and Jacob stole away the birthright and the blessing and therefore the reputation of being a deceiver.

And then he goes to another thing that happened in Jacob's life. And he says, not only did he grab his brother by the heel in the womb, but **in his strength, he struggled with God.**

Verse 4 Yes, he struggled with the Angel and prevailed; He wept, and sought favor from Him. He found Him in Bethel, And there He spoke to us—

So here he goes to a later incident in Jacob's life and you may remember this story as well, when Jacob wrestled with the angel. And he wouldn't let the angel go. And he wrestled all night with the angel. And finally, the angel touched Jacob in the hip and he made him lame. But he still wouldn't let go. And he says, I won't let go unless you bless me.

But then he also adds something here that we don't have in the Genesis account. He says, that Jacob wept and that he pled with the angel.

And then, he gives us another piece of Jacob's life, and he says, **he found him in Bethel. And there he spoke to us**, and that He is the Lord. In fact, Bethel means house of God.

And you may remember this story when Jacob was lying down and he used a stone for a pillow and he has this vision of angels going up and down a ladder to heaven and he met God. And that's when he said, I didn't realize I was at the very house of God.

Well, here he's shaming the Israelites again, because remember the Bethel Hosea, they changed the name of Bethel. Hosea calls it Beth Aven, or the house of idols, or the house of wickedness, because they were involved in all kinds of false worship there.

Well, he's reminding them, that that's where Jacob met God. He saw God there at Bethel. And that's where God spoke to him. And Hosea says, he didn't just speak to Jacob. He spoke to all of us, to everyone of his descendants. And He's reminding them, as he will later on, that God has not ceased speaking to his people. God wasn't being silent. They just weren't listening. And so the people were without excuse.

And he says, God was sought and He was found. And who was this God who spoke to Jacob there? Well, it wasn't Baal. It wasn't the golden calves.

No, **verse 5 says, That is, the Lord God of hosts. The Lord is His memorable name.**

This is the name by which He is to be worshipped.

Remember, one of the greatest problems in Israel at this time was worshipping through the golden calves, or worshipping the gods of Baal. But he says, this is your God. This is the God who appeared to us way back when to our father Jacob, and who spoke to us, and blessed us.

And then he urges them once more to repent and to return. He says,

6 So you, by the help of your God, return; Observe mercy and justice, And wait on your God continually.

He says, turn to God. You can't do it on your own, but only with the help of your God. Return and be faithful and wait on the Lord, just like your Father Jacob did.

Jacob, as deceiving and conniving as he was, finally came to realize that the greatest blessing he could ever receive was from God Himself. And so he grabbed hold of Him and held on for dear life and would not let him go.

Then he turns again, and he says,

7 "A cunning Canaanite! Deceitful scales are in his hand; He loves to oppress.

If you have a King James Bible it may say a merchant. The word Canaan, can speak sometimes of the people of Canaan, or the land of Canaan, but it can also be used as a term for a merchant, because the Canaanites were known as merchant people.

At any rate he says, you come from Jacob, but you're not worthy of the name of Jacob. You're more like a Canaanite. Look at how you behave yourselves. And then he goes on to show what they do.

Verse 8

8 And Ephraim said, 'Surely I have become rich, I have found wealth for myself; In all my labors They shall find in me no iniquity that is sin.'

He says, a cunning Canaanite uses deceitful scales. In other words, they oppress other people through deceitful transactions.

And he says, that's what you're like. You love to oppress others. You put your faith and your trust in your own riches and in your own hard labor and you're just like these Canaanites, in that you have deceitful scales. And you'll do anything for money. And when God looks at you, He sees someone who looks more like a pagan Canaanite, than a God loving Israelite.

And then he moves on and in Verse 9 he says,

9 "But I am the Lord your God, Ever since the land of Egypt; I will again make you dwell in tents, As in the days of the appointed feast.

**10 I have also spoken by the prophets,
And have multiplied visions;
I have given symbols through the witness of the prophets."**

And what he's saying here is that, you're the ones who have changed. He says, I've never changed. I'm the same God today as I was yesterday,

and I'll be the same God tomorrow and forever. I'm the God who brought you out of Egypt. That's who I am.

But you're not behaving like the people you should be. You're not acting like true Israelites.

And then he says, so I'll make you to dwell in tents as an appointed feast.

The appointed feast was the feast of booths, the feast of tabernacles. That's when they would remember their wilderness wandering, and for seven days, they would live in these little tent-like structures, and remember what God did to them. It was reminder of God's discipline. It was reminder as to why they had to stay in the desert for 40 years.

It was to remind them how they were supposed to go into the promised land, but they wouldn't go. But it was also a reminder of God's faithfulness and how He provided for them during that time and how God cared for them. And he's reminding them and saying, there's a time when I'm gonna have to redo all that.

Remember right now they're saying, we live in luxury, we've got all this money, and we've got all this stuff. And he says, but I'm gonna take that all away from you and it's just gonna be me and you again.

And I'm gonna have to take you back through that desert experience again. And you're going to have to learn how to live on My provisions rather than your own provisions. And you're going to have to learn again that it's Me who cares for you and takes care of you and provides for you; and that you're not self-sufficient.

And then he reminds them again that

he's already spoken these truths through his prophets, and he's sent prophet after prophet to remind them of this truth and the covenant to which they agreed.

And over and over he's warned them about turning away from Him. And so he says, it's not that you don't know. You know full well what you're doing. The problem is you just don't care.

You're just refusing to listen to me. And of course, that's what he's been highlighting throughout this entire book. Over and over he's begged them to repent and return but they refuse.

**11 Though Gilead has idols— Surely they are vanity—
Though they sacrifice bulls in Gilgal, Indeed their altars shall be
heaps in the furrows of the field.**

Using Gilead and Gilgal as two geographical points, one on the east side, one on the west side of the Jordan. He's looking at them as a whole and saying, you have false idols in both places. Which means this false worship has permeated the entire land.

He says, but what has it done for you?

He said, it's empty. It's just like all of these altars you've set up everywhere, whether it's to your golden calves, or to your gods of Baal or whatever.

He said, they're like, when a farmer goes through his field after he's broken not up and he's picked up the stones and throw them to the side. He said, your altars are like all those worthless rocks. The only thing they're good for is to bring havoc and destruction to the plowing process. But you're collecting them and multiplying them even though they're worthless.

And it's just foolishness.

And then he goes back to Jacob again and in verse 12 he says,

12 Jacob fled to the country of Syria; Israel served for a spouse, And for a wife he tended sheep.

He reminds him again of what Jacob was, because Israel was very proud that they came from Jacob. And they would compare themselves to Gentiles and they would say, but we're not like all these other pagan Gentile dogs out there. We're the children of Jacob.

Just like the story of the Pharisee and the publican we mentioned Sunday in our study of Matthew.

And so God reminds them of who Jacob really was. He reminds them that God didn't choose Jacob because he was this mighty man who was wiser or better in any way than anyone else. He said, no. This was a man who got run out of his own house because he stole his brother's birthright and blessing. He was a fugitive in another country, and living as a slave under his uncle who kept changing his ways, just to be able to get a wife.

And for 14 years, he served for that wife, and he's reminding them that, Jacob was a nobody. And so he says, Stop thinking so highly of yourselves because you're descendants of Jacob.

But then he reminds them also of what Jacob did. Not only did Jacob care for sheep to get a wife, but then he turns it to what He did for them.

He said in verse 13,

And by a prophet, the Lord brought Israel out of Egypt. And by a prophet, he was preserved.

Now, that word preserved here is the same one that was used for Israel in tending sheep. It's the idea of, I also brought **you** out of slavery.

It's not just that Jacob was a nobody that I took care of in Syria. But it's the idea that the whole nation was a nobody. You were all slaves in Egypt.

You didn't mount up an army, and get out of Egypt by your own bootstraps or in your own strength and wisdom, or by your own courage.

He said, I came to **you** and I led **you** out of Egypt by the prophet. And by the prophet, I have continued to lead you. And I have continued to care for you this whole time.

And so He's reminding them of how ungrateful they are. He says, I loved you and I cared for you and I redeemed you, but still you won't listen to me. You have all these idols from Gilgal to Gilead, and you're worshipping all these false gods, who've done absolutely nothing for you, when I'm the only one who is worthy of your worship.

And then he says,

14 Ephraim provoked Him to anger most bitterly; Therefore his Lord will leave the guilt of his bloodshed upon him, And return his reproach upon him.

He says, Israel has provoked me by their ingratitude. He said, I cared for them; I took them out of Egypt. I saved them and by my mercy and grace, I have kept them, but because they have been ungrateful; they have provoked me to anger.

And now he says, Your blood is on your own head. When you're finally destroyed, and when I bring down my wrath and my curse upon you, and when the Assyrians come and destroying you. He says, it's going to be on you.

He says, they're just going to be getting what He told them in the very beginning of this passage. They're going to get what they deserve. He said, I tried to show you mercy, but you wouldn't have it. And so now you'll get death. And you're going to have no one to blame but yourself.

So, He's comparing them first to Jacob, right? Because Israel is a deceiver, and Jacob during the first part of his life was a deceiver. And he says, Israel, you're just like Jacob in that way. You're a deceiver. You're a scoundrel. You're a bunch of rogues and villains and you live on deception.

And not only do you deceive others, but you're self-deceived. You've deceived yourselves! You look at yourselves and you say, "Look at all this money we've made. Look at all these things we've done. We're not guilty of anything. We can't be guilty of anything and be blessed like this can we?"

He says and so you're like Jacob in his early years, because that was his mindset in his early years.

But then he says, you should be like Jacob in his latter years. When he turned from being a deceiver to one who wrestled with God and wouldn't let him go until he was blessed. One who finally came to realize that what he needed more than anything was not the blessings that could be had in the here and now, but the eternal blessing of knowing and serving God. And he wouldn't let go of it until he received it. And so he pursued it at Bethel until God spoke to him.

He says, Israel, that's what you need to be like. He said, just coming from Jacob or having Jacob's name, that doesn't mean anything. He says again, who was Jacob? He was a nobody. He was someone who was driven out of his own land and had to go live in another land just to get a wife.

He said, just knowing Jacob or coming from Jacob's line, that doesn't mean anything in and of itself!

What you really need is My blessing! That's the only blessing that counts for eternity!

And what you need to be like is Jacob in his latter years. And you need to return to your God and you need to show your faithfulness to me, and

you need to wait upon God for His mercy and His blessing. And you need to do like Jacob, and grab onto God and not go and say, Lord, we're not leaving until you bless us.

Otherwise, you're going to be destroyed in your sin.

And really it's the same message God gives to us today. To either confess and repent and turn from our sin and follow Christ or die in our sins and spend eternity in hell. It's really that simple . There's only two destinations. Heaven and hell. And there's only one way to heaven and that's through Jesus Christ.