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The Mission
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Hosea 10.1-10

If you have your Bibles, turn with me to the book of Hosea and to chapter 10, as we continue our study through the book of Hosea. And we'll be looking tonight at verses one through 10.

**1 Israel empties his vine;
He brings forth fruit for himself.
According to the multitude of his fruit
He has increased the altars;
According to the bounty of his land
They have embellished his sacred pillars.**

**2 Their heart is divided;
Now they are held guilty.
He will break down their altars;
He will ruin their sacred pillars.**

**3 For now they say,
“We have no king,
Because we did not fear the Lord.
And as for a king, what would he do for us?”**

**4 They have spoken words,
Swearing falsely in making a covenant.
Thus judgment springs up like hemlock in the furrows of the
field.**

**5 The inhabitants of Samaria fear
Because of the calf of Beth Aven.
For its people mourn for it,
And its priests shriek for it—
Because its glory has departed from it.**

**6 The idol also shall be carried to Assyria
As a present for King Jareb.
Ephraim shall receive shame,
And Israel shall be ashamed of his own counsel.**

**7 As for Samaria, her king is cut off
Like a twig on the water.**

**8 Also the high places of Aven, the sin of Israel,
Shall be destroyed.
The thorn and thistle shall grow on their altars;
They shall say to the mountains, “Cover us!”
And to the hills, “Fall on us!”**

**9 “O Israel, you have sinned from the days of Gibeah;
There they stood.
The battle in Gibeah against the children of iniquity
Did not overtake them.**

**10 When it is My desire, I will chasten them.
Peoples shall be gathered against them
When I bind them for their two transgressions.**

So again we're looking at this in sections and last week when we looked at it, God talked about what Israel had been and then He described how they were now. And specifically He was talking about what they had been when He had taken them out of Egypt, and brought them in to the

Promised Land, and then how they had rejected him. And then He brought the curse against them in that they would cease to be fruitful with respect to their children. And how ultimately, their children would all be cut off. And how not one child, would survive, but they would all be cut off; not only the births, but in the womb, and even the conception of children would cease, and any child that did live would ultimately be destroyed when the Assyrians would kill them; and all this because of their sin.

And now here picks up that idea of fruitfulness again, as he turns to a very familiar image, which is used throughout the Bible when God speaks of Israel. And how they are the vine of the Lord, a vine which was planted by God.

Psalm 80, is one scripture that talks about it; how Israel after God brought them out of Egypt, and into the Promised Land, how He planted them there, He cares for them and tends to them, and expects them to be fruitful. And there are other scriptures that talk about how they are God's vine.

And so look at verse 1,

1 Israel empties his vine; He brings forth fruit for himself.

So what's He saying?

Well, again, He's saying that Israel is a vine, but when He looks at them He sees an empty vine that once had fruit, but no longer has any fruit. So it's not a dead vine that doesn't bring forth anything. It's bringing forth fruit, it's just not bringing forth fruit to God.

They were planted by God, and they were tended by God, but they're bringing forth no fruit to God.

And so as far as God is concerned, they're an empty vine!

And what God sees when He looks at their heart is that they're an empty vine, because they're not bearing any fruit for Him.

But now, when others look at them, or when they look at themselves, on the outside, they look fruitful. They don't look empty, they look like they're fruitful. But all that fruit is for themselves; it's not for God. It's to satisfy their own egos, their own goals, their own thoughts of what success should look like. And it's not that they're not working hard or hard at work, but their work has gotten in the way of their worship. And their work has taken priority over their worship. And their worship is on the wrong god with a little g. So they're no longer dependent upon God for their nourishment, they're depending on their own source of energy and their own motivation and power.

Sp where does all the fruit go then?

Well, the last part of that verse tells us. He says,

According to the multitude of his fruit He has increased the altars; According to the bounty of his land They have embellished his sacred pillars.

In other words, they gave it all away to their false gods. They used all their money, and all of their resources, to build up their altars, and their sacred pillars, so they could worship their false gods.

And so as far as God is concerned, they're worse than a dead vine, because they gave away the fruit, that God them the ability to produce, to other gods.

And remember, the original theme of this book between Hosea and Gomer. It's a picture of sexual immorality. Gomer should be giving back to Hosea her fruit, but instead she's giving it to her lover. She's being unfaithful. And Israel was being unfaithful to God.

Verse 2 says,

2 Their heart is divided; Now they are held guilty.

He will break down their altars; He will ruin their sacred pillars.

They had a divided heart. They spoke loyalty to God, but they showed loyalty to their false gods, and to Baal, and ultimately to themselves.

And so that's why God says, they were a fruitless vine, or an empty vine, because they had a divided heart. They were supposed to love the Lord their God; alone. That was the most basic "statement of faith" for the Hebrew people. But they violated that. They had a divided heart.

And, now it says they'll be held guilty. And so how does God look at them?

Well, He doesn't say, it's going to be okay. You just made a little mistake in that you were supposed to bring your fruit to me, but you didn't. And so that's okay.

No, He holds them guilty. And He says, I will break down their altars and I will ruin their sacred pillars. And all this that they've spent gathering all these fruits to put toward building up their sacred altars for these false gods, it's going to be for nothing, because I'm going to destroy it all.

I'm going to destroy, **it and them**, in the judgment!

Verse 3

3 For now they say, "We have no king, Because we did not fear the Lord. And as for a king, what would he do for us?"

Well, now God turns from destroying the altars and the sacred pillars to destroying the kings that led them into false worship. And this is looking forward to a time when God is going to bring his judgment through the Assyrian army, when He'll not only destroy the land and conquer and take captive the people, but He'll also take away their king.

And they'll say, we have no king. And why do we have no king? Because we don't fear God. And so they'll know the why when it happens.

And then they'll say, and even if we did have a king, what would a king do for us now?

When the judgment of God comes upon Israel, they'll know that no king can save them. They'll know that this judgment is because they didn't fear the Lord and that no king can protect them from the wrath of God.

And then in verse 4 he says

4 They have spoken words, Swearing falsely in making a covenant. Thus judgment springs up like hemlock in the furrows of the field.

Now, here he's describing what a divided heart looks like. He says, the words that you speak are just words. There's no truth behind it, there's no meaning behind what you say.

He says, they enter into covenants with the different nations. They made covenants with Assyria, and then they made a covenant with Egypt, but they were just words, because they were just playing them against each other. And their word couldn't be trusted.

Even the nations around them couldn't trust them, and they should have been better examples than that. When the nations around them looked them; they knew they were representatives of God, and they should have been able to trust them. Their word should have meant something. But it didn't.

And God says, your justice has become like hemlock in the furrows of the field. In other words, it's like a poisonous, noxious weed growing up in the field. That's what your justice has become. It has become so corrupt that it's a terrible thing instead of good thing.

And then look at verses 5 & 6

5 The inhabitants of Samaria fear Because of the calf of Beth Aven. For its people mourn for it, And its priests shriek for it— Because its glory has departed from it.

6 The idol also shall be carried to Assyria As a present for King Jareb. Ephraim shall receive shame, And Israel shall be ashamed of his own counsel.

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Now he turns again to the judgment. He says, the people in Samaria, remember that's the capital city. They fear because of the calf of Beth-Aven.

Beth-Aven is a nickname for Bethel, which Hosea uses, because they've taken Bethel, which means, the house of God, and they've put a calf there to worship.

And so now instead of being Bethel, being the house of God, now it's called Beth-Aven, which means, the house of evil or the house of iniquity.

And it says they fear because of the calf. And they mourn before it. The priests shriek before the calf.

And why is all this mourning and weeping and wailing for their golden calf?

Because God allowed the golden calf to be taken away by the king of Assyria. He takes away their idol, and it's given, as it were, as a gift to the king of Assyria. So they've lost their precious calf, and now the people are weeping and wailing for this great calf god that they had worshipped, and

he's been taken away, because God is bringing his judgment down upon this false worship they've turned to.

And now they're ashamed. Israel shall receive shame. Israel shall be ashamed of his own counsel. They're ashamed, because they've looked to this golden calf, to deliver them.

But when the enemy comes, they still don't see the need to turn to the real God of Israel. And they say to themselves, we've got another God who will deliver us. And what happens to that god?

He's taken away into captivity. And their king could do nothing about it. And their precious golden calf god could do nothing about it. And none of the things they placed their faith in, could save them, because they had misplaced their faith.

And we see that happen time and time again with people in the church. They take their eyes off God and they get their eyes on themselves and they try and serve in their own power and they look fruitful on the outside, and they truly think they're being fruitful because they're working hard, but because they're putting their hard work ahead of their worship, or in place of their worship and their love for the word of God, God won't accept their fruit. Because **their fruit** is self righteous fruit, which they've gained **without** the power of the Holy Spirit as their guide. And so they have their priorities all messed up, because they've placed their faith in something other than the one and only true God.

And so God wipes out their king, and He wipes out their false god, and their false religion.

And then in verse 7

7 As for Samaria, her king is cut off like a twig on the water.

He says, Samaria, and again, this the capital city of Israel, or the northern kingdom, he says, her king is cut off like a twig on the waters. In the King James, it says, like the foam on the water. And both have the same idea of something that's very light and it's floating on the top of the water, and it's being thrown about or tossed about. And he says, that's what your king is like. He's not a rock like the Lord, your God. He's like a bubble on the top of the water being blown around everywhere.

The real God of Israel is stable. He's firm. He can't be moved. He can defend you. But this human king that you want, this worldly thing that you've placed your faith and trust in, it's like a twig on the waters. It's just being thrown here and there and everywhere.

And that could refer to anything that we place our faith and trust in besides God, whether it be ourselves, or our careers, or our families or even our hard work, that **we see** as serving the Lord. But it means nothing if God's not the focus.

Verse 8 Also the high places of Aven, the sin of Israel, Shall be destroyed.

God says, he's been cut off, like the high places of Aven, which again means in Bethel where the golden calf was. And he says the sin of Israel, shall be destroyed. And all of their altars, and their calf gods, they'll all be destroyed.

Again and again and again he goes back to what the original problem was in the northern kingdom of Israel? They had these golden calves that they worshiped from the time of Jeroboam. And every king, it said, but they **did not turn** from the sins of Jeroboam. They followed in his footsteps.

And it was that idolatry that was their great sin. And he says, this is why all this judgment is coming. And since you wouldn't destroy the calf

worship, He says, I'll destroy it. I'm coming in and I'm going to take it all away. And then in the last part of that verse 8 he says,

**The thorn and thistle shall grow on their altars;
They shall say to the mountains, "Cover us!"
And to the hills, "Fall on us!"**

The thorn and the thistle shall grow up on their altars. In other words, they'll be nothing left of it. All that will be left will be weeds. Have you ever gone to what used to be a flower garden, but it hasn't been tended to for a long time? And all these weeds have grown up and taken over and covered everything in it. And it doesn't even look like a garden anymore. And you start to cut back the weeds and you find all these things that were underneath, maybe a sitting bench or a little statue or a bird feeder or whatever. And you wouldn't even know they were there, because the weeds had grown over them.

Well, God said, that's what it's gonna be like. It's going to be destroyed and it won't be used for so long that when people do come back, they're not going to be able to find all your little idols and statues, because they're going to be overgrown with weeds.

And how will the people respond when God brings His judgment? He says, they'll cry out. They shall say to the mountains, cover us, and to the hills, fall on us! It'll be a suicidal cry! They're saying, here comes the judgment of God. Where can we hide? Where can we run? There's no place for us to run! He's everywhere.

So all we can do is ask the mountains to fall on us. It would be better if we were dead than to face the wrath of God.

This is the same language that the Lord Jesus picks up later on in the New Testament when he talks about when the final judgment will come and what the people will do.

And in the book of Revelation, when it speaks of God's judgment coming, he says, what will the nations cry out? They'll cry out for the mountains to fall upon us, and to cover us, and the hills to fall upon us.

And notice the irony of it all.

Where were all of their false idols? Where did they worship?

They worshipped on the mountains and on the high hills. It was on these high mountains where they rejoiced, and where they had their big parties before their false gods. And where they were involved in all kinds of sexual immorality and delighting themselves before their false gods.

And here they're gonna go to those same hills and they're going to ask those same hills to cover them, and to destroy them, and to take their lives. because God's wrath is coming upon them.

Verse 9 “O Israel, you have sinned from the days of Gibeah; There they stood. The battle in Gibeah against the children of iniquity Did not overtake them.

We've seen this before, this story of Gibeah.

Again, it was one of the most violent, and terrible stories in all of the Old Testament. It's where the the Levites concubine was raped to death and then cut into pieces and then sent throughout the land. And all the tribes of Israel are fighting among themselves, and they're killing each other, and the tribe of Benjamin is almost totally destroyed in the process.

And he says, Israel, you've never gotten beyond this. You're just as wicked today, as you were back in the days of Gibeon. He says, your

wickedness might look different, but it's still wickedness and you've never repented, and you've never changed.

And why?

Because their heart was divided. It was divided way back then, and it's still divided now. And it all goes back to the fact that they rejected Yahweh as their God and King, and they said we don't have a king like all the nations around us, and so we'll just do what's right in our own eyes. And that's what they did.

And people still do that today. Even church members and professing Christians do the same thing. They reject the word of God, and they reject the counsel of Godly people, and they go their own way, and they do what they want to do, and then they try and justify it by their own human logic.

But there was a king in Israel. And there's a king today and He hasn't changed since the days of Israel, and He never will change!

And so their heart was divided.

And then verse 10.

10 When it is My desire, I will chasten them.

Peoples shall be gathered against them

When I bind them for their two transgressions.

He says, when it is **My** desire, I will chasten them. In other words, the consequences of our sin are up to God, and those consequences we don't determine. We don't determine the severity of our chastening, and we don't determine the timing. But we can rest assured, if we don't repent, and return, those consequences will come.

And the people are no doubt saying, yea, yea, God's been saying that for years. For the last two hundred years, He's threatened to punish us, but nothing ever happens. And they're almost right. He has been patient. But

that patience is about to come to an end. And just like always, in God's time, He'll pick the place and He'll choose the process to bring about His judgment.

And in this case, He will raise up a nation against them. And in not too many more years, the Assyrians will come down, and they will destroy them, and bring them all into captivity, and Israel will be no more.

And he says, they will be chastened for two sins.

Number one, for rejecting God as their king and for rejecting the Davidic king He had chosen for them, which was in essence the same thing as rejecting His Son, Jesus Christ.

And then their second sin was rejecting the worship of the One and only true God of Israel. Instead they chose to follow the worship of Baal and to bow down to a golden calf. And to worship by committing sexual immorality. And so these were Israel's two great sins.

And the judgement was about to come. He says, I'm going to do away with all of your false worship, and I'm going to do away with your false king, and I'm going to bring you into captivity. And that's not an idle promise. It's going to happen. And in fact, we know it did happen.

And so how does all that apply to us?

Well, we need to recognize that Israel of old was the church of the Old Testament. And the church is God's vine. It's supposed to be fruitful **for Him**. And if we're not fruitful, we suffer the same judgment.

But we have the same problem as Israel. We're born with divided hearts. The scripture says, our heart is wicked. So wicked it asks, who could know it?

And that all the thoughts and imaginations of our heart are only wicked continually. And so we're born with a heart that hates God, and loves self, just like Israel did.

So we can't bear any good fruit in our own strength. If God blesses us with anything, what do we do? We use it on ourselves. Anything we do, we do it for ourselves.

You might say, well, I'm very successful. I'm very fruitful. I mean, I'm not a lazy sluggard. I've done a lot of things with my life. But everything you've done is for yourself. It's all for self-glory, just like Israel. And if it's for self-glory, when God comes and examines our lives, what does He see?

He sees a tree that bears no fruit. He sees an empty vine. A vine that needs cut down, because it's not bearing fruit, at least no fruit to Him.

And that's what we all deserve, because in and of ourselves, we can bear no fruit. Because we have a divided heart. And we everyone deserve to be burned up.

And the only way we can ever bear good fruit is to be born again and to be given a brand new heart. A heart that's no longer divided, but one that abides in Him and one in which His word abides. And as the word of God abides in our heart, and the spirit of God abides in heart and as Christ abides in our heart, and as we abide in his word, then and only then can we become fruitful and produce the kind of fruit that will be acceptable to God.

Amen