

“3 Preachy Prophets”

Pastor Mike's contribution to the “3 preachy prophets” devotion. To see others contribution's check out the NC Synod's online summer bible study. Synod's Summer Bible Reading this year is the “3 Preachy Prophets: Amos, Joel, Hosea” together. Daily devotions will be posted on Facebook and the website, you can subscribe to receive them in your inbox. Writers from NC Synod congregations—pastors, deacons, and laypeople—will share their thoughts about a chapter and offer questions to ponder. As we read though Amos, Joel, and Hosea and consider their lessons for our lives today. Join us.

Bad News to Good News

Hosea 1

This first chapter of Hosea is a bit rough. Using Luther's imagery, there is a lot of straw in this manger before we get to Jesus. Like other prophets, Hosea begins with the phrase, “The word of the LORD.” It is not Hosea's word, but a trustworthy authoritative Word from God Himself. God asks Hosea to do the extraordinary act of marrying a prostitute named Gomer. It is an allegory in the flesh of our unfaithfulness to God, seen in Gomer's self-centered running around town and always running away from Hosea. Picture Hosea's broken heart as the reality of God's hurt over our fickle unfaithfulness, blatant disloyalty and passionate pursuit of other loves.

To focus only on Gomer and our unfaithfulness however, would be like mistakenly focusing our attention on the wayward prodigal rather than the patient waiting Father. The tangled mess of the straw is only to reveal the amazing contrast of the ridiculous, relentless love-without-end of the Savior. So, God pulls no punches on how tangled this web of sin is. He makes this most unlikely to succeed union to produce children; a boy named “not my child” and a girl named “no mercy.” Really? Kind of like God asking you to name your own kids Judas and Jezebel. We get it. We're that broken.

This painful disobedience transcends the bounds of time implicating even the well-meaning disciples who betrayed, denied, and ran away from their Savior. Even Paul, the best of the apostles at the zenith of his faith journey, admits to confirmand Timothy, that the saying is true that Jesus Christ died for sinners, of which he was the foremost. We would drown in this straw of sin if our failings—like Gomer's, the disciples and the apostles, and all before us—were the final and only word that defined us.

Like Hosea marrying a prostitute, we have a God who has chosen a tainted bride, the church, who as Paul reminds, while we were yet sinners, our Groom died for us. In the cosmic reality of time, just as everyday Hosea had to forgive Gomer, so our God, while we are yet sinners in a sense, dies for us each day. And in our most clear moments we can see a cross, like Gomer could see the moistened eyes of Hosea and we die to ourselves to see an absolutely amazing Savior who is always there for us.

Question

To Consider: 1. How does Luther's comment—if we keep the first commandment, thou shall have no other gods before me, we fulfill all the other commands—make sense in this story and in our lives?

Prayer

Lord, this past year has been one filled with challenging circumstances and situations. We pray that we have learned something about You and ourselves. What really matters and what we really can live without. We confess that we have even considered sacred things that are really straw before You. We repent of even worshipping our worship. Our form over function, our religion over relationship, and our fixation on the gifts rather than the Giver. May we come home to You alone again this day. Amen.