

**Title: A Wise Response**

Text: Hosea 12-14

Date: March 29, 2026

Good morning. For your great blessing and joy, I ask that you would turn your Bibles to the book of Hosea 12. I'm sorry chapter 14. The book of Hosea 14, the very end of the book. We will be covering chapters 12-14 but only reading this final chapter.

A lot of pages rustling still. Hosea 14, the Lord says through the prophet Hosea, *"Return, O Israel, to the Lord your God, for you have stumbled because of your iniquity. Take with you words and return to the Lord; say to him, 'Take away all iniquity; accept what is good, so that we will pay with bulls the vows of our lips. Assyria shall not save us; we will not ride on horses; we will say no more, 'Our God,' to the work of our hands. In you the orphan finds mercy.' I will heal their apostasy; I will love them freely, for my anger has turned from them. I will be like the dew to Israel; he shall blossom like the lily; he shall take root like the trees of Lebanon; his shoots shall spread out; his beauty shall be like the olive, in his fragrance like Lebanon. They shall return and dwell beneath my shadow; they shall flourish like the grain; they shall blossom like the vine; their fame shall be like the wine of Lebanon. O Ephraim, what have I to do with idols? It is I who answer and look after you. I am like an evergreen cypress; from me comes your fruit. Whoever is wise, let him understand these things; whoever is discerning, let him know them; for the ways of the Lord are right, and the upright walk in them, but transgressors stumble in them."*

This is the word of God. Would you please pray with me.

O triune God, we ask that in this time that through the foolishness of preaching that you would by your spirit give us sight and insight to see Christ. And that in seeing his glory that we might behold the glory of the only begotten of you Father. To know you and to live this morning.

We pray in Jesus' name, amen.

We have all been in a situation where we responded to someone quite quickly and we realized immediately that that wasn't a very wise response. I won't take a show of hands or examples from the crowd but perhaps maybe we responded too quickly to something our friend says. Thinking that we got him in a gotcha situation, and we stick our foot in our mouths instead and we did not respond very wisely. Maybe we responded to something our spouse said with a seemingly knee-jerk snarky comment and we realized very quickly that that wasn't a very wise response either. Maybe we saw our child discouraged in some task they were doing. Maybe it's sports or school or something and we thought that they were just going to push him as far as they can go. Really encourage him to keep going. Challenge them to reach their limits but we ended up only making matters worse. We didn't respond very wisely to that situation.

But sometimes our responses to situations or to words have more significance in our lives. They're more life defining or direction defining. For instance, how do we respond wisely to a job offer whenever that job may not work best for our families? How do we respond wisely to that person who said some pretty hurtful things to us? How do we respond wisely when we are given constructive criticism by our boss? How do we respond wisely when it seems like everything in our life seems to be going wrong all at once? And in many ways responding with wisdom in these kinds of situations can be defining moments in our lives as we are confronted with these very significant more important moments and peoples and words. How we respond to that more significant more important word or more important moment is more significant for our lives. So, if that's true how much more important or how much more significant would it be if we were confronted with God himself? If we were confronted with the word of God itself? If the Creator God, the one who created all things and sustains all things, spoke to us how important and life-defining would it be to respond wisely to that situation in that word? How much more important, how much more life-determining is it to respond wisely to my Creator?

My friends today God has spoken to us in the Scriptures. This is the inspired inerrant infallible word of God, this is God's very word, let no one get that confused this morning. This is God's word. He has spoken to us. God's word is sharper than any two-edged sword. It confronts sin. It pronounces judgments. It reveals the way of salvation. It demands a response from those who hear it. How will we respond to such a word from God? What is the wise response? What is the wise response to the God revealing, sin confronting, repentance demanding, judgment pronouncing, salvation promising word of God? What is the wise response to that word? It is not an overstatement to say that the answer to that question is more than just life-defining. It is eternity determining. What is the wise response to the word of God? Our text in Hosea 12-14 focuses on this very issue and tells us that the only right and continued response that we are to have to God's word as believers is this to receive God's wisdom. That's a first response we are to have.

Then to respond with repentance and faith. To receive God's wisdom and respond with repentance and faith. That is what a wise response to God's word continually looks like and he unpacks that for us. He shows us how that wise response looks by first showing us how we should recognize the foolishness of bad responses. Showing us the bad thing first. What we're not supposed to do. And then in chapter 14 to show us positively what it looks like to return with wisdom. So, he shows us first how to recognize foolishness and second to return with wisdom. What is the proper response to God's word? First let's just recognize foolishness in chapters 12 & 13. If we are going to respond with wisdom, then we need to first recognize foolishness in responding to God's word so we know how not to respond and he starts saying this in Hosea 12.

If you see in the footnotes of your Bibles here the last verse of chapter 11 is verse 12. And it says that this is likely belonging with chapter 12 and so really verse 11:12 and 12:1 are like 12:1 proper. You know this is all just verse 1 of chapter 12. That's how I'm going to refer to it and in that verse in those verses the Lord is giving a kind of summary statement of what he just covered in chapters 11 & 12 or chapter 7-11. In similar fashion to 2:1 and 4:1, in chapter 6:4 the Lord abruptly ends that brief section of restoration. He abruptly ends it and turns to more judgment, more accusation. And much like the language of 7-11 Ephraim is described here as being liars, deceitful, violent, running after Assyria, running after foreign

nations, and their gods. And Judah he says here is seemingly good, right. He says Judah still walks with God. The southern kingdom still walks with God and is faithful to the Holy One. And this is a similar statement that he has in Hosea 1:7 which is an obvious reference to the historical situation of Hosea. Hosea at the time he's prophesying Judah is okay still. Hasn't gone completely down the sinful hole that Israel has found itself in but as we see in chapter 12:2 that does not absolve them. That actually ends very quickly because Judah now receives the same indictment, same judgment that Israel receives. The Lord has a contention an indictment against Judah.

And if you remember back in chapter 4:1 he has the same language of controversy or indictment where we talked about how he was like a courtroom setting. And God is the righteous judge, jury, prosecuting attorney, and he has a case against Israel, and he has another case. And this time he's saying you know what Israel, stay up there on the stand. I am calling Judah as well and you're going to sit there and receive this judgment as well according to your ways. And the author moves us along in this section of accusation and judgment with two primary movements seen in the frames of the chapters.

And so, notice in chapter 12:2 it says, *"he will repay him according to his deeds."* Everyone see that, *"he will repay him according to his deeds."* Now look at chapter 12:14 says, *"he will repay him for his disgraceful deeds."* So that's one big idea that we have here. And then look at chapter 13:1 he says, *"he,"* that is Israel *"incurred guilt through Baal and died."* And then look at chapter 13:16 where it says, *"Samaria,"* that's another name for Israel, *"shall bear her guilt, because she has rebelled against her God."* God is in these two sections talking about repaying Judah for her deeds and Israel for her deeds because the fact that they are indeed guilty to receive that punishment. But once again this sounds a lot like the rest of the book of Hosea.

You're probably thinking wow this is the same exact thing that we've heard a thousand times. But there are particular emphases or themes that run throughout this section that frame these familiar sins in a different way for a different purpose. If you remember in Hosea 1-3 the picture that we were given there was Hosea himself and his wife Gomer and his three unfaithful children and the names of those children were significant describing the sins of Israel. In chapters 4-6 we mentioned how it was this courtroom setting and God was bringing the two sins of no covenant loyalty, no faithfulness to my covenant and there was no knowledge of God in the land. It was the two things he was really emphasizing.

In chapters 7-11 just last month the Lord frames the sins of the people within the narrative of the Bible. Remember I called Israel out of Egypt, and he just kept on sinning the more I called him. And then he focused on the fact that he remembers all their sin and he reverses the blessings he once gave them or they get kicked out of the land and they lose everything the Lord once blessed them with. And here in chapters 12-14 Hosea frames this judgment specifically as we will see with a focus on the people's poor response, consistent repeated poor response, foolish response to the Word of God. And he begins these chapters on the people's poor response to God's Word by showing how they're just like their father Jacob.

If you remember in chapter 11 and in the other restoration passages this representative Messiah is the one through whom this salvation will come. And how Matthew 2 sees that and Hosea 11 says, *"out of Egypt I*

*called my son.*" Well, that's referring to Jesus and through him with this new exodus come. The representative is the means of salvation. It shows the people's salvation. Well, we have a reversal of that here. Where now Jacob who is Israel the father of Israel is now used as a representative of the people's unfaithfulness of how horrible they are. Jacob's life anticipates and shows how unfaithful the people of Israel are. He says in verse 3, *"In the womb he took his brother by the heel."* That is Jacob. Remember Jacob and Esau in the womb and he in his manhood he strove with God. And this is of course referencing what we see in verse 4. They at the time when Jacob strove with or fought with the angel in Bethel and prevailed and he gets his hip put out of socket. The name Jacob means heel grabber so that's why whenever he's coming out of the womb, he's grabbing his brother's heel he is finitely called heel grabber which is just an idiom of saying he's deceitful. He trips people up. He gets them around the feet.

Notice in chapter 12:1 up in the section above that *"the house of Israel surrounds the Lord with deceit."* And notice down in verse 7 & 8 that a merchant that Jacob is *"like a merchant, in whose hands are false balances,"* or balances of deceit. Jacob in his whole life with Esau, with his father, with Laban, was always deceitful all the time. If you remember back in Genesis 25 to 35, he's always deceitful. His life is characterized by this deceitfulness. It's fitting to his name. But whenever his name gets changed because he strove with God in one, he becomes a new man. Read in verse 4,5, & 6, *"He strove with the angel and prevailed; he wept and sought his favor. He met God at Bethel, and there God spoke with us - the Lord, the God of hosts, the Lord is his memorial name."* Jacob goes up on to Bethel and he receives the promises of the Covenant: I will make you great, I will multiply your offspring, I am the God of your fathers, and I am still your God. And Israel likewise was called and has received these promises, have received this word from God. That God has spoke with us.

So, see how he switches from the singular speaking about Jacob and then saying God actually spoke with us there. We've received these covenant promises. We've received this word from God. The Lord God of hosts is our Lord. The Lord is his memorial name. That's the name that we're supposed to remember. That he's the God who was always with us. And so, what's the response Hosea says you're supposed to by the help of your God return, hold fast to covenant loyalty and justice. Wait continually for your God. Believe in him. Trust in him. Follow him. That's the response you're supposed to have to that covenant keeping God in his word. But what does 7 & 8 say? How does Ephraim respond? *"Ah, but I am rich; I have found wealth for myself; in all my labors they cannot find in me iniquity or sin."* Ephraim the deceitful one it says look at all the money I have that I've acquired through deceit. I'm going to continue to be deceitful and keep doing what I'm doing.

In fact, Ephraim is so prideful that they don't even recognize that in their ways there is any iniquity or any sin at all. Given the faithful covenant promises by God and an invitation to return the people respond with prideful deceit. But Hosea is not done. Let's move on to the next section. He continues this theme. He says in verse 9, *"I am the Lord your God from the land of Egypt; I will again make you dwell in tents, as in the days of the appointed feast. I spoke to the prophets; it was I who multiplied visions, and through the prophets gave parables."* Notice down in 13 a similar theme is communicated by God. He says, *"By a prophet the Lord brought Israel up from Egypt, and by a prophet he was guarded."* The Lord called the people out of Egypt by a prophet. He spoke his words to them in the wilderness. He sustained them by his word. He

saved them by his word. He has always given them a means for them to communicate with him and receive direct revelation from God. He multiplied visions among them. And through the prophets he gave parables. Look at verses 11 & 12. *"If there is iniquity in Gilead, they shall surely come to nothing: in Gilgal they sacrifice bulls; their altars are like stone heaps on the furrows of the field. Jacob fled to the land of Aram; there Israel served for a wife, and for a wife he guarded sheep."* In verse 11 he shows us that they're off in Gilgal. The place where the temple is not sacrificing bulls. They're sacrificing to idols.

You farmers will like this one. He says that their altars in the fields are so many of them they're like stone heaps on the furrows of the field. Such that whenever you try to plow the field you just keep on running into these massive piles of stones. And so, Israel becomes an unplowed field. Unfit to receive the seed-sowing word of God. And then he returns to an example with Jacob. How Jacob fled to a place outside of the promised land to go serve for a wife. And that service, that word for service is not a nice word, means he's serving as a slave for a wife. *"He guarded sheep for a wife."* Jacob in other words is pictures of what the people of Israel are doing, right.

They're going to Egypt. They're going to Assyria. They're going to all the enemy nations. They're marrying their women and they're becoming idolaters. They're becoming enslaved to all these people. Instead of being guarded by the prophet who called them out of Egypt they are guarding sheep and enemy lands in order to be enslaved to their sinful ways and their gods. Given all of the prophecy, given the faithful God freeing enslavement, freeing words of the Lord to the prophets, the people use their freedom rather to enslave themselves again to idols. He's not even done there.

He continues to talk about how they're idolaters in verse 13:1-3. And then notice again back in verse 4 of chapter 13 he says, *"But I am the Lord your God from the land of Egypt; you know no God but me, and besides me there is no Savior. It was I who knew you in the wilderness, in the land of drought."* The Lord reminds them of who he is. He is the covenant-keeping God. He is the God who is Yahweh. I am the Lord who is with you. I redeemed you. I saved you. You know no one else but me. I am in relationship with you. Besides me there is no other Savior you could ever know. I have kept you. I have fed you in the land of drought. And how did they respond? Verse 6, *"but when they had grazed, they became full, they were filled, and their heart was lifted up."* They were so happy and therefore what happened? *"They forgot me."* So, the Lord becomes to them instead of a lion who calls them out of Egypt, he's a lion who lurks beside the way. He tears and he goes away. He devours them in judgment as a wild beast rips them open. He mocks them because he has taken away their kings who they thought would protect them.

My friends, given salvation, given provision, given relationship with the Lord the Israelites constantly rejected the Lord because they chose the provision over the provider. And you might think okay maybe he's done now. He's not done. There's more. Look down 13:12 & 13. Lord says, *"The iniquity of Ephraim is bound up; his sin is kept in store. The pangs of childbirth come for him, but he is an unwise son, for at the right time he does not present himself at the opening of the womb."* This very interesting picture here. That the pangs of childbirth are coming and that's like the pains of judgment. And Israel is like the child in the womb. And he feels the contractions on him. The womb closing in on him and the opening the way of being born into new life in front of him. Escape from the pain and the Lord says, *"he is an unwise son, who*

*does not present himself at the opening of the womb.*" He doesn't take the way out. He says actually I'm good in here. I'm good being crushed. What a horrible picture but what a pointed accusation that the key word there being an unwise son who does not want to be born into new life. Who does not want to respond to the ability for them to have resurrection life?

I mean just look at verse 14, *"I shall ransom them from the power of Sheol; I shall redeem them from Death. O Death, where are your plagues? O Sheol, where is your sting?"* I mean this is what Paul quotes in 1 Corinthians 15 talking about the glorious resurrection that we have in Christ. Taunting death because of God's victory over it. But immediately he says what? *"Compassion is hidden from my eyes. Though he may flourish among his brothers, the wind of the Lord, shall come, rising from the wilderness, and his fountain shall dry up; his spring shall be parched; it shall strip his treasury of every precious thing... they shall fall by the sword; the little one shall be dashed in pieces, and their pregnant women ripped open."* Horrible judgment, why? Because they were an unwise son who did not respond wisely to the word of the Lord. Though the promises of restoration come. The Israelites are never said to believe them or receive them.

But Hosea constantly throughout this book has shown in chapter 1 we had judgment in a short section about restoration and it immediately switched back to judgment showing that they did not receive it. And again, in chapter 6 restoration but immediately did not receive it. And again, in chapter 11 restoration but no they did not receive it. Why? Over and over again he's trying to show us that though these words of restoration are going out to the people. Though the Lord is speaking to them for them to receive this life they always reject it foolishly. That's the point he's trying to get across. The Lord gave the people the God revealing sin, confronting repentance, demanding judgment, pronouncing salvation, promising word and they said no thank you. They said no thank you. They were deceitful and prideful in their deceit. They loved to serve other gods and foreign nations. They were so satisfied with physical provision that the Lord gave them that they forgot the Lord. They were unwise and they chose all these things over God himself.

But you know what's really interesting, that even though all those reasons and all those descriptions of their foolish response is given notice how Hosea summarizes it in chapter 14:1. He calls them to *"Return to the Lord your God, for,"* why, *"you have stumbled."* And that is the prophetic word always used is stumbling. It's actually related to the aspect of offense that we've been talking about in Luke. To not believe in the word of the Lord and to stumble into ruin. To be offended into ruin. They have rejected that word. They have stumbled over God's word. And of course they have. You know and they have all these reasons that we just gave. Other gods of other nations they seemed appealing. You know they were flourishing so much physically that you know what, who needs God when you have love and money and all these riches? Whenever you're so physically satisfying.

You know today when people stumble over the word of the Lord, they have a lot of reasons for why they do it. Don't they? Very similar to that. Well, you know other religions, Islam, spirituality, Catholicism, they just have it better. Their arguments make more sense to me. My eyes have been open to the errors of Christianity. Or maybe it's well this church hurt me. And you know any religion that allows such hypocrisies to exist it's not a true religion. I'm out of here. Or how about well science just seems to have all the answers about the world. Don't you see how much greater science is than God at answering the world's

questions. Don't you see how our religion is kind of silly? How more logical science is? Or how about, well my physical needs without God are completely satisfied. The world does a better job at satisfying my physical desires. Who needs God when you got all the provision you need here in America? Excuse. Excuse. Excuse. And any of these reasons might be given by the people who walk away from the faith and deconstruct online. But all these are just a smokescreen for a more fundamental reason that Hosea tells us here.

Notice that even after all these descriptions, all these reasons, why Israel did not respond positively what does Hosea say? *"You have stumbled,"* why, *"because of your iniquity."* People do not respond positively to the Word of God. People foolishly reject the Word of God. People stumble over it for one reason alone sin, sin. They have a deep blinding affection for sin. At the root of every reason that we could possibly give is sin. No one outsmarts God. No one has rejected God because they were too clever for him. No one rejects God simply because of reason. People respond unwisely because they love their sin.

My friends if you are here today and you have realized that you know what I have nothing to do with God, I have all the reasons in the world to have nothing to do with God, consider today that all those are just a smokescreen for something deeper within you. That you love something more than him. That you love your sin. If you are here today and you've been thinking you know what these arguments I've been hearing online for other religions or atheism or whatever these are starting to sound pretty convincing. I'm starting to think that maybe I might just walk away. Consider for a moment that whatever reasons you're formulating in your mind might be fruits of a deeper issue known as sin that you are catering to and wanting more than the Lord. Repent of that sin. Believe in the gospel of Jesus Christ the word of salvation from God lest you face judgment like these Israelites. Don't be foolish in your response to the word of God. That is what a foolish response looks like.

So, what does a wise response look like? Hosea tells us in chapter 14 to return with wisdom. Just as he sectioned off the last two with a word at the end and a word at the beginning. Look at chapter 14:1 that we just read, *"for you have stumbled because of your iniquity."* And then look at the last phrase of verse 9 but *"transgressors,"* sinners, *"stumble in the ways of the Lord."* What we will see in this chapter is the opposite of what stumbling looks like. What does it look like to not stumble? And Hosea says it looks like repentance and a reward. Repentance and a reward. Returning to the Lord looks like repentance.

He says in verse 2, *"Take with you words and return to the Lord."* What words are we supposed to take to him when we return? *"Take away all iniquity; accept... O Lord the fruit of our lips."* The sacrifices of our mouths. What is good? *"Ask the Lord in returning to him to take away all iniquity."* Instead of being like Ephraim who says, *"in all my labors there is no iniquity or sin."* Instead of being like the one of 1 John 2 he says or 1 John 1 who says *"in me there is no sin."* Be the one who goes to the Lord and says Lord I am full of iniquity take away all of it. Instead of being like Israel and saying you know what my works no iniquity in them. Turn to the Lord and say all my works are as filthy rags. Only you O Lord can take away my sin.

Second, he says to repent. Specifically, to ask forgiveness for sins. Look at verse 3 says, *"Assyria shall not save us; we will not ride on horses; we will say no more, 'Our God,' to the work of our hands."* Israel over and

over again has gone to Assyria for everything. They've gone to foreign nations and served their gods. They have been idolaters, and they say Lord forgive us of these sins. We repent of these sins O Lord. There's a brief practical application here. Whenever you ask for forgiveness, from the Lord which is something that as believers every day we are invited to do. Confess our sin and ask for forgiveness from him. Be specific with regard to the sin that you are confessing. Don't just say O forgive me and move on. Say Lord, Assyria shall not save me; I will not ride on horses anymore; I will say no more my God to the work of my hand. Be specific about the sins that you are asking forgiveness for. Same thing whenever you ask forgiveness from others in your life, right.

Probably many parents in here required this of their kids, don't just walk up and say forgive me and walk away. Say forgive me for that thing I said to you. Forgive me for that thing I obviously desired more than honoring the Lord in this situation. Forgive me for this. Be specific in your repentance and you're asking of forgiveness. That is what a wise response to being confronted by the Word of God in your sin looks like. Repenting in that way.

And finally, he says to recognize God's character in this. *"In you O Lord the orphan receives mercy."* You know the book started in Hosea 1 with those three kids, right. The second kid's name was Lo-Ruhamah and it was No Mercy. The people will no longer receive mercy from the Lord. And then the third child was Lo-Ammi, Not My People. The Lord says, *"you are no longer my people, and I am no longer I am to you."* I'm no longer that coveting keeping God to you anymore. The people of Israel because of their sin were orphaned and they were no longer receiving mercy. And here in the return and the response it's fitting that a restoration would look like recognizing that God is the one who makes spiritual orphans' sons of God. And who gives mercy to those who were not receiving mercy, to make those who are not receiving mercy receive mercy, to make those who are not a people my people again. Repentance looks like going to the Lord casting your sin at his feet and saying to him Lord grant this poor spiritual orphan your fatherhood and grant this poor spiritual orphan mercy. Make me a son of you.

The primary and proper response is seeing God's judgment, pronouncing sin, and revealing word is to repent of sin. Hosea is teaching us to continually and always grow in killing sin less to be killing us. And the result of that is the great reward of verses 4-8 he says, *"I will heal their apostasy; I will love them freely, for my anger has turned from them. I will be like the dew to Israel."* And he continues talking about how Israel though they were spiritually dead that he gives them spiritual life. That they now are like a blossoming lily. Like the trees, the great trees of Lebanon. That their shoots are spreading out. That their fragrance is like the trees of Lebanon. That they're flourishing like the grain. They're blossoming like the vine. The Lord God says in this final verse, in verse 8, he says *"I am like an evergreen cypress; from me comes your fruit."* The Lord is constantly providing spiritual life and fruit to a people once dead. What a beautiful salvation.

But who responds like this? In the book of Isaiah so far no one has. In the book of Isaiah so far, we have a pattern of as soon as a part of restoration comes, he abruptly changes to judgment and accusation. So, if I'm reading the book of Hosea kind of thinking I'm reading this section and I'm going okay where's the judgment and accusation coming? But what does he turn to instead? He abruptly turns to something else

in verse 9. To wisdom. *"Whoever is wise, let him understand these things; whoever is discerning, let him know them."* He's concluding the book with a change in the pattern to invite the reader to respond wisely. To not be like the Israelites but to have wisdom and respond right. To not be like a transgressor who stumbles in them. Conundrum, who is wise? We've seen over, and over again human beings are not wise. Wisdom doesn't come from man. Who is going to be this wise person who receives the reward who responds rightly. Well, 1 Corinthians 1 & 2 teach us I believe how God solves this conundrum. Paul is teaching about the same reality. Thank you, Jeff for pointing that out.

The stumbling over the rock of offence. These people are stumbling in foolishness. They considered the word of God folly. Christ is foolishness to them but wisdom and power to those who believe. The rulers of this age did not know wisdom, so they crucified the Lord of glory. That is the common response of all humanity and sinfulness. But how does God fix it? He gives wisdom from above. And Christ becomes to us wisdom from God so that by the power of the spirit in God's wooing through his word that we might have eyes to see the wisdom that is Christ and to respond with repentance and faith wisely. And now every time that we approach Scripture as those who receive this wisdom and those who have the mind of Christ, we see the glory of Christ in the letter of the text. And we can respond wisely again, and we can respond with more faith, more hope, more repentance to kill sin and to grow in hope in Christ. Because newsflash, Hosea 14, Hosea in all scripture is not written for the unbeliever. It's written for you. It's written for the people of God, the wise.

My friends I right now speak a wisdom to the mature. I speak to those who have the mind of Christ by God's grace through faith in union with him. I speak to those who have the spirit of God and Hosea speaks to you and says, *"Whoever is wise, let him know these things."* Turn to Hosea 14 and see Christ, how Christ is the shoot and the root of the stump of Jesse. And that he is the one who makes God's people a fruitful vine. As the Lord says in John 15, *"I am the vine; you are the branches. Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing."* He might as well have just said the words of Hosea 14:8, *"I am like an evergreen cypress; from me comes your fruit."* That is Jesus ladies and gentlemen.

We get to see Jesus in these texts. And through his wisdom we can respond to these texts not with a feeling of condemnation during the judgment sections, not with a feeling of confusion during the restoration sections, but we can actually respond to those with an increased hatred of sin. And an increased hope in the restoration that the Lord has promised to those who respond wisely. *"Whoever is wise, let him understand these things."* My friends know them, understand them, read the scriptures and be wise and see Christ. And let the word push you to respond in the way that you ought as a child of God with repentance that you receive that wisdom, and we continue to repent and believe in the gospel.

I know that many of us here have also grown discouraged in our walk at times. Perhaps you have some spiritual goals you haven't hit. Maybe you indulged in a nagging sin this week. Perhaps you feel like you're in a spiritual rut. Maybe you even have begun to question whether the Lord is really working in you. Whether the Lord is completing the work he started in you. Whether he's forgiven you. Whether he still loves you. But see from this text today Christian that God is in the business of giving spiritually dead

people life. God is all about giving you fruit, life and life abundantly of making your heart, your life, your mind a lush garden of his grace and goodness. Repent of sin today and rest in the promise that the Lord does indeed take away all sin. And hope in him and in his Christ who grants you that spiritual life that you would bear fruit to God.

In church let's be the kind of church who as God's wise children constantly receive that wisdom from the Lord. Who constantly receive his word. Who constantly behold Christ in his word and responds with God produced fruit for his glory. What might a church like that look like? I can tell you it's a place where God's people are loved, where God's word is cherished, where the wisdom of the cross is proclaimed, where spiritual good is done to one another, where discipling is normal, where prayer is prioritized, where family is ordered around the family of the Lord, where God's prayers and praises are sung, where souls are saved, where branches of the tree grow out and shoot out and spread God's glory everywhere. It would look like a cultivated garden to the Lord. It would look like a slice of heaven, an embassy of God's new Eden. My friends let us receive God's wisdom and respond with repentance and faith.

Let us pray together.

Father, we pray that you would work in us all of your purposes for your glory. That we would be those who unlike those who are unbelievers that we would not love sin. That we would hate that which is against you. That we would hear your word with open ears. That we would behold your word with enlightened eyes. And that we would by your spirit through a power and the union that we have in Christ would return daily to you. That we would glory in our weakness. That we would glory in your strength. And that we would constantly grow through the means you have provided to be fruitful children of the Lord so that all might see our works and glorify the God who is in heaven.

We pray this in Jesus' name, amen.

Available online at: <https://gracechapelwl.org>