

**SERMON NOTES**  
**Hosea 8:1-14**  
***“Is God’s Law Good?”***

Intro:

- A father explained the meaning of Lent and repentance to his three daughters – 6, 8, and 11
- *Then he asked each what they were going to give up for Lent to show their gratitude for Jesus’ sacrifice for them on the Cross*
- The father and mother said they would give up all desserts
- *The oldest and middle daughters followed suit and also promised to give up sweets until Easter*
- The youngest daughter pondered a while and then said confidently: *“I want to give up consequences.”*
  
- Ah, but we are not free to do that, are we?

SHOW SLIDE: *“You are free to choose, but you are not free from the consequences of your choice.”*

- One of the most elementary and important lessons of life is to learn the connection between choices and actions and consequences

SHOW SLIDE: *“While we are free to choose our actions, we are not free to choose the consequences of our actions.”*

- Lives have been ruined – or at least suffered major long-term damage – by the failure to understand this basic life principle:
- *You are in control of your actions – but you CANNOT control the consequences of your actions*
  
- And when the consequences begin to spin out of our control, *we protest: That’s not fair! I know what I did was wrong – but I certainly don’t deserve THAT!*
- And we begin to think of ourselves as the aggrieved victim of injustice instead of the responsible party who has sinned
- *And we get angry at God*

Proverbs 19:3 When a man's folly brings his way to ruin, his heart rages against the LORD.

- Many of us have had to learn this lesson the hard way – myself included
- “Sin will take you farther than you want to go, keep you longer than you want to stay and cost you more than you want to pay.” ?
- *Believe me, it's a painful lesson to learn – and not one you want to repeat*

Hosea 8:7 For they sow the wind, and they shall reap the whirlwind.

- What were the choices and actions that led to Israel reaping the whirlwind?

## I. REBELLING AGAINST GOD'S LAW

Hosea 8:1-3 Set the trumpet to your lips! One like a vulture is over the house of the LORD, because they have transgressed my covenant and rebelled against my law. To me they cry, “My God, we—Israel—know you.” Israel has spurned the good; the enemy shall pursue him.

- The House of the LORD in this context refers not to the Temple but rather to the land of Israel which is about to be conquered by the Vulture – Assyria
- *Israel objects and protests – surely this can't happen – after all, we are God's Chosen People!*
- We know Yahweh / we believe in Yahweh / we worship Yahweh (and Baal and Ashtoreth and Chemosh and Molech and the golden calf) / We are God's People / This is His land / We are safe and secure from harm in this land
- *Please God – remember us – we know You – we are Your People!*
- Did Israel know God?
- *To know God in the biblical sense requires living in covenant relationship with Him – and that requires following His Law and obeying His commands*
- To say, “I know God” or “I believe in God” or “I worship God” while rebelling against His commands is blatant hypocrisy

- Was Israel living as God's obedient and faithful covenant people?
- "they have transgressed my covenant and rebelled against my law"
- The Hebrew word for "rebelled" or "transgressed" is a strong word
- *Pesha means not only rebelled by breaking a rule or disobeying a command but it also includes the idea of breaking a relationship based on mutual trust*
- Pesha is an act of betrayal against a Person – not merely disobeying a rule
- *Following God's deliverance out of slavery in Egypt, God invited Israel into a conditional covenant relationship – conditional upon their obedience to His commandments*
- If Israel is obedient, then Yahweh will be their God and dwell with them and bless them and provide for them and protect them
- *But if they disobey, then God will punish them*
- "All that the LORD has spoken, we will do" the people promised
- *Did they?*
- they have transgressed my covenant and rebelled against my law.
- *Israel's rebellion was a violation of trust – an act of betrayal – an act of Pesha -- resulting in a broken relationship*
- If an Israelite was away on a trip, and while they were gone a stranger stole some items from their house – that would be an act of robbery
- *But if it were a neighbor or friend who broke into their house to steal something – that would be called Pesha – a violation of trust*
- If an unmarried man sleeps with a prostitute – that would be a sin
- *But if a married man sleeps with his best friend's wife – that would be Pesha*
- Israel's idolatry and covenant-breaking was an act of Pesha
- *They were living in active rebellion – treacherous rebellion – against God and His moral authority – thereby breaking a personal covenant relationship with Yahweh*
- "Israel has spurned the good"
- *What is 'the good'?*

- Supremely, a covenant relationship with God
- *But with that, His Law is 'the good'*
- God's Law is good because God is good
  
- "Spurned" is also a strong word in Hebrew
- *Far more serious than merely neglecting the good or ignoring the good or failing to live up to the good*
- To spurn in Hebrew carries with it the idea of rejecting / expelling / excluding
- *It is a forceful rejection of God's Law – a denial that His Law is good*
  
- Do you see the hypocrisy – the contradiction?
- We know the LORD – we worship the LORD – we believe God is good and wise and loving and righteous -- *but we reject His Law as something bad*
  
- Suppose you have a physical exam with your doctor and I ask you about it
- *How do you like your doctor?*
- Oh, he's a great guy – he's so smart and personable and knowledgeable and caring – he's great
- *How was your exam?*
- Oh, my doctor is concerned about some issues so he wrote a couple of prescriptions for me and advised me to make some lifestyle changes
- *But I'm not going to do it*
- I don't trust his advice / I don't think he knows what he's talking about / I read a blog online that has a better approach / so I'm not going to do anything my doctor prescribed or advised
- *But he's a great guy – so smart and knowledgeable and skilled and capable and caring – I just love going to see him for my exams*
  
- Or how about this scenario:
- *You ask a baseball player how he likes his coach*
- Oh he's the best! He really knows the game and has a winsome personality and really knows how to bring out the best in his players
- *So you must really enjoy his practices*
- No... they're a waste of time / I could run a much better practice / he has us doing these stupid drills that make no sense
- *Well then, his team rules must be really helpful for team morale and unity*

- Are you kidding? His team rules are from the 1950s and are stupid and divisive and take all the fun out of being on the team
- *But he's a really great guy who knows his stuff and really knows how to bring out the best in each of us*
- Do you see the disconnect?
- *Do you see the application for us today?*
- If you profess to know God and love Him – do you love His Law and obey His commandments?
- *Can you say with the Psalmist?*

Psalm 19:7-11 The law of the LORD is perfect, reviving the soul; the testimony of the LORD is sure, making wise the simple; the precepts of the LORD are right, rejoicing the heart; the commandment of the LORD is pure, enlightening the eyes; the fear of the LORD is clean, enduring forever; the rules of the LORD are true, and righteous altogether. More to be desired are they than gold, even much fine gold; sweeter also than honey and drippings of the honeycomb. Moreover, by them is your servant warned; in keeping them there is great reward.

- *Ummm... Well, I agree with most of His commands and try to follow them*
- But clearly, some of his commands are not for today
- *I mean, does God really expect people today to save sex for marriage? Does He really expect couples who love each other to wait until they get married to live together and sleep together? And does God really expect couples to stay married until death – even when they no longer have the same loving feelings that they once had?*
- *And surely if the Bible were written today, God would not still call homosexuality sinful, would He? I mean, that was just for Bible times, right? Surely God understands now that love is love, right? And two men or two women who love each other should have the same right to get married as a man and woman, right?*
- *And surely God understands now that gender is fluid and has nothing to do with biological reality and that people can be born in the wrong body – and if they are, they should do something to make their body look more like how they feel inside, right? Surely God wants people to live true to their authentic self, right?*

- I mean surely God sees how the world is changing and so His rules and commands need to change too, right?
- *After all, the Bible was written 2000 years ago – we can't blame God for not understanding then how out-dated and hateful and unfair some of His laws would appear to many people today*
- I believe God is good – but some of His laws are bad
- *Why does God equate rebelling against His Law with spurning the good?*
- Because God's Law and God's commandments are expressions of God's goodness and wisdom and love and righteousness and kindness and knowledge and justice and compassion
- *A great doctor does not give harmful prescriptions or bad advice*
- *A great coach does not run lousy practices and give bad team rules*
- *And a good God does not issue bad laws*
- *If His rules and commands are defective – that indicates His character is defective*
- *You can reject God and reject His Law – but you cannot love God and hate His Law*

Hosea 8:12 Were I to write for him (Ephraim – Israel) my laws by the ten thousands, they would be regarded as a strange thing.

- A strange thing – the idea of the Hebrew for strange here is alien, illicit, even prohibited
- *Israel's culture was so dominated by idolatry and sexual immorality and social injustice that the Law of God was regarded as something strange – foreign – alien – belonging to another time or place—even as something to be prohibited*
- Hmm...
- There was a time when I was growing up and even when our daughters were growing up when God's Word and Law and commandments were held in high regard in American society
- *Of course, people sinned and broke those commandments – but there was a cultural consensus that His commandments were good rules to live by*
- No longer
- *Our culture is now so strongly dominated by beliefs and ideologies which are antithetical to biblical sexual morality – that God's Moral Law is now*

regarded as something strange – weird – alien – belonging to another time and place – *and even as something bad and hateful that should be rejected and prohibited and cancelled*

- It's one thing to affirm that God's Law is good but then fail to live up to it in our fallenness
- *It's quite another to reject God's Moral Law as something bad and to regard it as morally virtuous to treat God's Law with contempt*
- That's where we are at today in our culture
- *May God have mercy on us*

## II. TRUSTING LESSER RULERS

- *No sooner had Israel received the Ten Commandments and promised to obey them – than the people rebelled and made a golden calf and worshiped it and sacrificed to it*
- Many years later – after God brought them into the Promised Land – years after Joshua's death – the people rebelled against God's Kingship over them
- *During the days of Samuel, the people insisted on having a king like the other nations – they rejected God as their King and insisted on having a human king to reign over them and protect them*
- God granted their request and gave them Saul, who proved to be unfaithful
- *So God replaced Saul with David and made this covenant with David:*

II Samuel 7:11-16 “Furthermore, the LORD declares that he will make a house for you—a dynasty of kings! ... Your house and your kingdom will continue before me for all time, and your throne will be secure forever.”

- And thus one of David's sons, Solomon, succeeded David and built the Temple in Jerusalem and became great in wisdom and power and wealth
- *Upon his death, his son Rehoboam became king*
- But the people of Israel – except for the tribe of Judah – and Benjamin and some of Levi -- rebelled against Rehoboam and the house of God's

chosen – the line of David – cutting themselves off from the line of the Messiah

- *And the northern kingdom of Israel chose Jeroboam as their king*
- And the first thing Jeroboam did was make two golden calves – and he set one in the north in Dan and one in the southern part of Israel in Bethel
- *Yahweh had commanded that His People offer sacrifices to Him only at the Temple in Jerusalem*
- But Jeroboam – and his successors – including Jeroboam II in Hosea's time -- made many altars throughout the land of Israel and appointed many priests who were not Levites, and these altars were used to worship other gods in addition to Yahweh – false gods such as Baal

Hosea 8:11 Because Ephraim (Israel) has multiplied altars for sinning, they have become to him altars for sinning.

- These altars that were built throughout Israel became altars for sinning – altars for idolatry – altars for the worship of Baal – *who was a fertility god and the worship of Baal was often accompanied by the worshipers engaging in sex with cult prostitutes which was seen as a way of gaining the favor of Baal to send rain for a good crop*
- The northern kingdom of Israel – with its capital in Samaria -- existed for 208 years – from 930 bc when they rebelled against the house of David until 722 bc when they were conquered by the Assyrians
- *During that time there were 19 kings from 9 different dynasties*
- How many of those kings were faithful to Yahweh and His Law?
- NONE. ZERO. NADA.
- *They were ALL losers – every last one of them*
- Once Israel rejected the line of David and of the Messiah – their entire history as a nation was marked by wicked kings leading them in idolatry

Hosea 8:4-5 They made kings, but not through me. They set up princes, but I knew it not. With their silver and gold they made idols for their own destruction. I have spurned your calf, O Samaria. My anger burns against them.

- At the time of Hosea, Israel was within about 30 years or so of being destroyed by Assyria

- *Even before the final conquest in 722 bc, the Assyrian army invaded parts of Israel several times*
- How did Israel respond to this grave danger?
- *Did they turn to Yahweh for help and protection? NO*

Hosea 8:8-10 Israel is swallowed up; already they are among the nations as a useless vessel. For they have gone up to Assyria, a wild donkey wandering alone; Ephraim has hired lovers. Though they hire allies among the nations, I will soon gather them up. And the king and princes shall soon writhe because of the tribute.

- *Israel turned to other nations for security and protection*
- If Egypt was threatening, they turned to Assyria for help
- *If Assyria was threatening, they turned to Egypt*
- If Judah was threatening, they turned to Syria and vice-versa
- When it became clear that Assyria was the greatest threat – and no other nation could protect them – then they gave heavy tribute to Assyria – kind of like businesses giving money to the mob to protect them from the mob
- *And Israel continued in their worship of other gods*
- Rather than turning to Yahweh in repentance and trust – they turned to other kings and nations and to other gods
- Were these other nations and kings loyal allies? NO
- *Quite the opposite*
- Not only did Assyria NOT protect them – Assyria took all their tribute money and then ended up destroying and putting an end to the northern kingdom of Israel

Hosea 8:7 For they sow the wind, and they shall reap the whirlwind.

- There is only ONE true and living God: Yahweh – the God of the Bible – the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob – the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ
- The only way we can know this God is by His self-revelation, for our minds are incapable of understanding an infinite and all-powerful God who created the heavens and the earth
- *God has revealed Himself in His creation but more fully in His Word – both OT and NT – and supremely in the Word made flesh – Jesus*
- The God of the OT is the same as the God of the NT
- As the worship song says: *He is the same God*

And the God of the Bible is not only a loving and merciful God but also a Perfectly Just God

- Justice requires that sin and law-breaking and disloyalty and wickedness must be punished
- *Israel rejected God's Law – spurned what was good*
- Indeed, Israel rejected God's Reign as King over them altogether
- *And then they rejected God's chosen Davidic line of kings*
- And then they turned to foreign kings and foreign gods rather than Yahweh
  
- They sowed the wind and reaped the whirlwind
- *Assyria utterly destroyed Israel – the people lost everything – and the northern kingdom of Israel ceased to exist*

*“While we are free to choose our actions, we are not free to choose the consequences of our actions.”*

Take-aways and Responses:

- We reap what we sow

Galatians 6:7 Do not be deceived: God is not mocked, for whatever one sows, that will he also reap.

- And sometimes we reap the whirlwind -- more than we think fair
- *Because we tend to underestimate the gravity of our sin*
- “Sin will take you farther than you want to go, keep you longer than you want to stay and cost you more than you want to pay.”
  
- And we fail to take into account that God takes our rebellion quite personally as an act of unfaithfulness and a violation of trust
- *And because many people have a false view of God: “I believe in a non-judgmental God of love”*
  
- It is true that God is love // it is also true that God is just – and there is no contradiction between His perfect love and His perfect justice

- *And since we have all broken His Law – many times – we all stand condemned before a perfectly Just God who must punish sin*
- Which brings us to the Good News of the Gospel
- The Cross + God's Justice = No condemnation
  - Those who put their hope for salvation and eternal life in a non-judgmental God are in serious peril
  - *Anyone who thinks the God of the NT is not judgmental has never paid close attention to the teachings of Jesus and has never read the last book of the NT which is full of God's judgments*
  - NO – our hope of eternal life in heaven has nothing to do with a non-existent non-judgmental God
  - Our hope of eternal salvation is found in the Cross of Jesus Christ and only in the Cross of Jesus Christ
  - Sin must be punished -- and at the Cross Jesus bore all our sins and suffered the full and just punishment for all our sin and rebellion
  - *And therefore...*

Romans 8:1 There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.

- We often think that our forgiveness and salvation are due to the love and mercy and grace of God
- *This is true*
- *The Cross of Jesus Christ is the greatest demonstration of how much God loves you – even in your sin*
- But it is just as true that our forgiveness and salvation are due to the Justice of God

I John 1:9 If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

- *Faithful and JUST to forgive us*
- Why “just”?
- *Because our sins were fully and justly punished at the Cross – and it would be UNJUST for God to punish us for sins that have already been fully punished*

- And God demonstrated that He had accepted Jesus' death as full payment for our sins by raising Jesus from the dead
  - If you have put your trust in the truth that Christ died for your sins and was raised from the dead – then you have NOTHING to fear from the Justice of God
  - If you have not received by faith the gift of salvation and eternal life in Jesus Christ – *then you have everything to fear from the Righteous Judgment of God*
  - *God loves you and is eager to forgive you and accept you into His family today if you will trust in Jesus Christ as your Savior and Lord today*
- God is good and therefore His will is good and therefore His Law is good and good for us
    - God's Law is an expression of His character and His will
    - *All of God's rules and commandments proceed from His wisdom and love and righteousness and goodness and knowledge of what is best for us*
    - As you trust His character and His will – so trust His moral Law and rules

Psalm 119:97-103 Oh how I love your law! It is my meditation all the day. Your commandment makes me wiser than my enemies, for it is ever with me. I have more understanding than all my teachers, for your testimonies are my meditation. I understand more than the aged, for I keep your precepts. I hold back my feet from every evil way, in order to keep your word. I do not turn aside from your rules, for you have taught me. How sweet are your words to my taste, sweeter than honey to my mouth!

- A love relationship with God is maintained by following His rules
  - *You may have heard it said, "Christianity is about a personal relationship with Jesus – NOT about following a bunch of religious rules."*
  - The personal relationship part is true
  - *And no – following a bunch of religious rules will not get you into heaven*
  - God accepts us as righteous in His sight on the basis of our faith in Jesus – *NOT on the basis of our rule-following*

- BUT... that doesn't mean that obedience is optional in the Christian life

John 14:21 "Whoever has my commandments and keeps them, he it is who loves me. And he who loves me will be loved by my Father, and I will love him and manifest myself to him."

- Think about it: what do sinful, finite creatures like us know about what it takes to abide in a love relationship with the Creator of the universe?
- *God tells us in His Word – in His Law – in the commandments of Jesus – what it takes to please Him and live according to His will*

- God's Law keeps us from getting disoriented

Psalms 119:105 Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path.

- ITALY – hiking in woods – following path – off path – disoriented
- Some people might say that following the path is restrictive and diminishes our freedom to forge our own way
- *But what actually happens when we stray off the path of God's truth?*
- Thinking we are free – we end up enslaved to the surrounding culture's falsehoods and deceptions and delusions
- *We end up lost and disoriented – like many people today who cannot even answer the question, What is a woman? – and who think that men can have periods and get pregnant and breastfeed babies*
- If you want to wander around lost in the woods along with many others in our society who have rejected God's Moral Law – you are free to do so – *but you are not free from the consequences of doing so*
- And one of the consequences of following the crowd in a culture that rejects biblical truth is that you end up permanently lost and excluded from the kingdom of heaven

Matthew 7:13-14 "You can enter God's Kingdom only through the narrow gate. The highway to hell is broad, and its gate is wide for the many who choose that way. But the gateway to life is very narrow and the road is difficult, and only a few ever find it.

- The Law as taught by Jesus reveals the narrow path to Christlikeness – empowered by Holy Spirit

- How did Jesus develop godly character?

John 15:10 If you keep my commandments, you will abide in my love, just as I have kept my Father's commandments and abide in his love.

- The character of Christ was formed as he lived closely connected to His Father and His love and kept his Father's commandments
- *What is God's ultimate will for us?*
- To become like Jesus
- *How do we know what that looks like?*
  
- Different people have different ideas of what Jesus was like and what it would mean for us to be like Jesus
- *So is this just a matter of subjective opinion – we each create our own reality in our own minds of what it means to become like Jesus?*
  
- No – Jesus gives us His commandments as a light to the path that leads to Christlikeness
- *As we obey His commandments – which are consistent with the Father's commandments in the Bible – then we abide in His love and we grow in Christlike character*
- The Law shows us what godly character looks like – and the Holy Spirit within us empowers us to live in obedience to God's commandments –and as we do so – we become more like Jesus who lived his life in perfect obedience to all of God's commandments

- The Law gives us a vision of who we are becoming and are destined to be as new creations in Christ

- (Pastor Steffan – Wed PM Bible study)
- If God's Law is an expression of His character – then obeying God's Law is how we grow in godly character and Christlikeness – and disobeying His commandments is a betrayal of our true self – authentic self – in Christ

- The Law shows us how to live authentically to our true self and true identity in Christ
- Crucial question especially for those of you 30 and under – growing up in a culture that is hostile to God’s Moral Law: *Is God’s Law good?*
- How about you?
- *Will you affirm that God is good and therefore His will is good and therefore His Law is good?*
- Do you affirm that God’s laws and rules and commandments are good for us to obey and live by?
- *Do you affirm that God’s Moral Law proceeds from His wisdom and love and righteousness and therefore it is in your best interests to seek to obey God’s commandments?*
- Do you confess that you have broken God’s laws and commandments and therefore are in need of a Savior?
- *Have you received Jesus Christ as your Savior and Lord?*
- Are you willing to follow Jesus on the narrow path of obedience to God’s commandments even in the midst of a culture that is hostile to God’s Law?

Prayer

Closing Song / Altar Call