

July 21, 2002
AM Service
Patchogue Church of the Nazarene

“The Sure Judgement of God”
Hosea 10:11-15 NLT

11 "Israel is like a trained heifer accustomed to treading out the grain--an easy job that she loves. Now I will put a heavy yoke on her tender neck. I will drive her in front of the plow. Israel and Judah must now break up the hard ground; their days of ease are gone.
12 I said, 'Plant the good seeds of righteousness, and you will harvest a crop of my love. Plow up the hard ground of your hearts, for now is the time to seek the LORD, that he may come and shower righteousness upon you.' (NIV -until he comes and showers righteousness on you.)

13 "But you have cultivated wickedness and raised a thriving crop of sins. You have eaten the fruit of lies--trusting in your military might, believing that great armies could make your nation safe! 14 Now the terrors of war will rise among your people. All your fortifications will fall, just as they did when Shalman destroyed Beth-arbel. Even mothers and children were dashed to death there. 15 You will share that fate, Bethel, because of your great wickedness. When the day of judgment dawns, the king of Israel will be completely destroyed.

It's great to be blessed by the Lord and be in His favor. Israel had experienced this. Hosea compares it to an ox treading out grain. Compared to plowing the soil, threshing was an easy job. Threshing was the separation of the grain from the straw. This was done on a threshing floor (any hard surface). It may have been made of smoothed rock or of hard-beaten earth formed in a circle. The sheaves of grain would be spread out on this hard surface. Then a pair of oxen was yoked together and the yoke was attached to a vertical pole set in the middle of the threshing floor. The oxen would then be driven around and around on the straw and their sharp hooves would do the rest. The law said that the oxen should not be muzzled when doing this kind of work so that they could eat. Hosea says that Israel had become like one of these trained oxen. The nation was prosperous, life became easy and they loved it. But they had taken it all for granted. They forgot their God. (Sounds a lot like America). The Lord said through Hosea, "Now I will put a heavy yoke on her tender neck. (Israel had become soft and weak, not accustomed to self discipline but) I will drive her in front of the plow ...their days of ease are gone." Plowing was harder work. Oxen would have to pull a plow that had to break up hard soil. At the same time that it broke up hard soil, new seeds were planted.

1. False Hope

(v11a) "Israel is like a trained heifer accustomed to treading out the grain--an easy job that she loves." Israel had false hope. They put their hope in something other than God. They began to trust in their own strength, success and riches. They forgot God and lived as they pleased. (v13) "But you have cultivated wickedness and raised a thriving crop of sins. You have eaten the fruit of lies--trusting in your military might, believing that great armies could make your nation safe!" I am concerned that America has made the same mistake. America has trusted in her military might to keep her safe and with that false hope has forgotten God. When a nation pays no attention to God they cultivate wickedness, finding more and more ways to indulge their depraved nature and raise "a thriving crop of sins." The events of 9-11-01 drew our attention somewhat to God for a

little while, but not really. We really are not a nation that looks to God. We trust in our strength, success and riches – we have a false hope. In our individual lives we also put our hope in things – our own strength, success, riches. God is tacked on to our life He is not first. Our trust must be completely in Him and His will. Anything else can and will fail you and so they give false hope. Jesus will not fail in Him your hope is sure. His grace is sure, His promises are sure, His word is sure. But we must put our lives completely in His hands. He must not just be tacked on as a small part of our lives. He must be our life. You must give up your rights to yourself and ask Jesus to take over.

2. God's mercy in the face of imminent judgement

(v12) "I said, 'Plant the good seeds of righteousness, and you will harvest a crop of my love. Plow up the hard ground of your hearts, for now is the time to seek the LORD, that he may come and shower righteousness upon you.'"

Gal 6:7-8 NLT

7 Don't be misled. Remember that you can't ignore God and get away with it. You will always reap what you sow! 8 Those who live only to satisfy their own sinful desires will harvest the consequences of decay and death. But those who live to please the Spirit will harvest everlasting life from the Spirit.

a. Plow up the hard ground (of your hearts).

What are you still refusing to give over to the Lord; What person, what thing, what area of your life, what sin? You know. What do you stubbornly do that God does not want you to do? What do you stubbornly *not* do that God wants you to do? In what area of your life are you keeping your heart hard towards God and what He wants? The soil that has been neglected becomes hard, full of weeds and thorns. It must be cultivated – broken up and made soft again so it can receive seed.

b. Plant righteousness.

(Do what God says – His right ways) and you will receive His mercy and love. This part to the verse does not mean that you will receive God's mercy and love in proportion to how much you do right (how much you give or how much you have sown). It means you will receive in proportion to the capacity of God to give - in the fullness of His mercy and love.

Plowing and sowing were often one operation. When the farmer plows the ground he plants seed at the same time. In this way the seed was plowed in so that it could not be taken by birds. Jesus referred to this in his parable found in Matt 13:3-8 - "A farmer went out to sow his seed. 4 As he was scattering the seed, some fell along the path, and the birds came and ate it up. 5 Some fell on rocky places, where it did not have much soil. It sprang up quickly, because the soil was shallow. 6 But when the sun came up, the plants were scorched, and they withered because they had no root. 7 Other seed fell among thorns, which grew up and choked the plants. 8 Still other seed fell on good soil, where it produced a crop-a hundred, sixty or thirty times what was sown.

There is hard and thorny ground awaiting the plow. The soil must be broken up to receive the seed. Repent so that you can receive from the Lord. For...

c. Now is the time

For now is the time to seek the LORD, that he may come and shower righteousness upon you." Now is the time. Don't wait any longer. Because God's judgement is imminent –

near, at hand. He wants what is best for you. He wants to show mercy towards you. He wants to come and shower righteousness upon you. Now is the time to repent and believe in Jesus, now is the time to give your heart to Him ... completely. Receive His mercy, love and righteousness by repentance and faith. Because of ...

3. God's sure judgement

(vs. 13 –15) "But you have cultivated wickedness and raised a thriving crop of sins. You have eaten the fruit of lies--trusting in your military might, believing that great armies could make your nation safe! Now the terrors of war will rise among your people. All your fortifications will fall...You will share that fate, Bethel (house of God), because of your great wickedness. When the day of judgment dawns...."

Sooner or later a nation will pay the price for its wickedness. Sooner or later the things we trust in will fail us – "fortifications will fall." Terror will come upon those who have not repented, believed, and lived righteously in order to receive God's mercy, love. If our hope is in God then even when false hopes are dashed to the ground, and even when judgment comes upon a nation or the whole earth we will still have hope for our hope is true not a false hope. Difficult times will come but we will have peace in the midst of war because God is with us. And we will have hope for that final judgement day.

A preacher once started his message like this:

The text this morning says that one day—we do not know when—but it asserts that one day the ages of earth will end. There will be a final judgment when God separates those whom he calls wheat and those whom he calls weeds. The one will be brought into the kingdom of their Father and the other will be thrown into the fiery furnace. Now you might ask me, "Preacher, do you really believe that there will be an end of the ages and a final day of reckoning?" I could give you a lot of educated answers about the meaning of Jesus' parables, and "End Times" theology called eschatology. But let me let me answer you directly. Yes I do. I believe that a judgment day is coming.

The idea of a final Judgment Day followed by an eternal heaven or hell seems alien to this permissive culture. Ours is a "three strikes and you're out" culture, and if you whine a bit, we will give you four or five strikes...because we don't like to have winners and losers. In such a society, it sounds strange to hear about a final Judgment Day and eternal punishment and weeping and gnashing of teeth...(but) Jesus told... parables or stories to illustrate the truth about Judgment Day...(Jesus said) a time is coming when a great separation will take place. (Yes) Judgment Day is coming!

But the good news is that there is a loving God who does not want any to perish and through His son, Jesus we have hope. Repent and believe the good news.