

AUGUST 3, 2019 SUMMARY SERMON - PASTOR JOHN TSCHUDY

SCRIPTURE LESSON-HOSEA 11:1-11, COLOSSIANS 3:1-11, LUKE 12:13-21

Hosea is not a well-known or often studied prophet of the Old Testament but today's scripture is a reminder that we must take all of scripture seriously and having meaning if we are going to understand what God is calling us to. Hosea goes back to the time when the southern kingdom, Judah was beginning to turn from following God to the worship of the old gods and idols, yet God continues to love them and reach out to them, calling them back to faithfulness. But they refuse to follow God's way and instead more and more to worshiping the gods and things of this world and ultimately Judah will be destroyed, the Temple destroyed and the people sent into exile.

But the story of God's love and continual reaching out to God's people and calling them to faithfulness leads us into the New Testament story of Jesus and salvation. Paul is writing to a group of new converts in the letter to the Colossians. But ultimately the message is the same as in Hosea's day. Be Faithful to God not to the things of this world. God is not calling us to live down to the world's standards and practices. Rather God is calling us up to live to God's standards as we saw in Jesus Christ. Paul calls us to live lives of truthfulness, honesty, gentleness, and not slandering or bullying others. We are called to live lives recognizing that all people are created by God as equals with no one being better than others. This is especially true when the criteria we often use to judge people is created and determined by people, but often blamed on God.

It appears in the New Testament that Jesus was seen by many to be a wise and a learned teacher and many wise and learned men were seen to be Rabbis. People often sought out Rabbis to settle disputes over things between people. So the fact that the man comes to Jesus to settle a dispute between him and his brother over their inheritance was not all that surprising. Jesus wants nothing to do with the dispute and instead gives the man a warning about the dangers of greed and putting the things of this world over serving God. In the parable Jesus raises an issue we will face today in our lives. It is the same issue addressed in Hosea and by Paul in Colossians, where do we need to focus our efforts in how we live our daily lives? The man has had a good year and has so many crops that he doesn't have room to store them. The focus of his life is on making money and the things of this world. But God has other plans for the man and it turns out that he will die that night, never being able to benefit from his wealth.

The point is our first priority in how we live our lives is supposed to be serving God and making the world a better place for all to live then in gathering wealth, status and other things valued in this world for ourselves. Following and doing God's will should be our greatest priority and meeting the legitimate needs of this world will take care of itself. But too often like the man with the big harvest, we are more interested in accumulating the treasures of this world or worried about preparing for the unknown future then we are in making sure that we have served God and done what God expects of us. In all three texts the things of this world are easier to see and seem more important. But as Paul says we are part of a new creation that values the things of the world that is to come more highly than the things of this world. For the people of Judah it was easier to believe in the old gods whose idols they could see and hold and that seemed tied to the things of this world and giving them more of them, and more control over them, then worshiping and serving this unseen God who called us first to helping and serving others before ourselves.

Like the people of Judah we have a God that loves us and seeks to redeem us and forgives us. But that God demands that we serve that God by serving others and putting the valuables of this world second to doing God's Will. It is our decision. What will we as Christians, individuals, congregations and a country value most? Will we seek out and demand the truth or be content with those things we want to hear and best appeal to our senses in this world? This is a decision we all must make!