

Hosea

He Never Fails

Fairview Missionary Church | Angola, IN

Scripture: Hosea 4-11

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How many of you have ever had the joy of breaking a bone? Raise your hand. Okay, not that many. I actually, some people would say very blessed, very privileged. I've never broken a bone in my life, but how many of you have ever had to have stitches for something? Raise your hand if you've had to have stitches. More of you have had to have stitches. I also have had to have stitches in my life, and I wish that I had some awesome story of this injury and how it happened, but I actually had to have stitches because of my own stupidity, all right?

So I will share the story with you. I was in high school, so I was old enough, I should have known better. One of my friends was taking an old roll of duct tape for whatever reason. Again, we're high school boys, nobody knows. And he was wrapping the tape around his finger. What he didn't tell me is the first wrap around his finger as he put the sticky side out so that when he was done with this big ball of tape, he could just pull it off his finger.

He handed me the old roll of masking tape, and I started wrapping it around my finger, and I was wrapping it really tight, and I got it really large, and after about 15 minutes, I realized the tip of my finger was turning black. I had cut off the circulation, and so I started to panic because, you know, I don't know, I don't know science, but apparently, like, I thought my finger could fall off. And so, one of my friends that was also there, a different friend, you know, he saw me panicking, and so he pulled out of his pocket a Swiss army knife.

And so it's got all these little gadgets, and he's like, "I have something that will help you." And so he had on his Swiss army knife like a hooked razor blade. Now, it looked a little different than this. And I thought to myself, "This is perfect. I'll put the tip right there underneath all the tape, and I'll just pull, and I'll cut it all off, and we'll be fine." Well, I put it there and I started to pull, and sure enough, it slipped, and it went right into the fat of my hand right here. It skipped off of my thumb and my bone, and then went right here.

I ended up-- I still had the tape on my finger, by the way. It didn't take the tape off. And so I go to the restroom, and I'm trying to wash the blood off, and I'm still trying to get the tape off, and I can't get the tape off still. And my friend, the one who was wrapping his finger, ended up ripping off that tape with his teeth, you know, getting it off. He was the best man in my wedding. I thought he deserved that. All right. And I end up having to call my grandma to take me to the hospital to get stitches.

And so, to this day, whenever I get a big head and think a lot about myself, I just look down at my hand and I'm reminded how stupid I really am, right? You know, most of us have had these kind of physical wounds, these broken bones or times where we need stitches, and as much as these things hurt, most of us, if not all of us, have experienced a pain that is actually much worse. The pain I am referring to is relational pain.

And there's many things that cause this relational pain in our life, many things that we go through that can cause pain that hurts more than a broken bone. Maybe it's a divorce or a separation and the pain that you have from that. Maybe it's a breakup of a boyfriend or a girlfriend, somebody that you thought you were going to

marry, and so you have these years of memories, and then those are gone. Maybe it's the loss of a close friendship because of gossip.

And so you had this close friend and you shared something with them that was very secret, and they began to share that with others. Maybe it's the broken relationship between you and your adult child over some fight that was never resolved. And so for years, you have had a broken relationship. Maybe it was a fight with a sibling that caused you not to talk. Maybe it's a disagreement with your parents that you've had about your kids or something else that has caused you not to celebrate holidays together for decades.

And as much as a broken bone or stitches hurt, most of us would rather experience the physical pain of that than the pain of a broken relationship. Why? Well, because many times our physical wounds heal quicker than our emotional wounds. Our physical wounds are visible to others around us, and our emotional relational wounds we often hide. Our physical wounds make sense.

We can explain them. We can show somebody a broken arm or a cut or something that has happened. And so we can make sense of them, whereas our emotional relational wounds aren't as easy to make sense of sometimes. Today, as we continue in our series of Hosea, we will see that we serve a God that intimately understands our relational pain. He knows what it feels like.

He can sympathize with that pain because he has experienced it. We serve a God that knows what it feels like to be betrayed. We serve a God who knows what it feels like to be rejected. We serve a God who knows what it feels like to want to be known. We serve a God that knows what it feels like to pour everything into a relationship, only to be pushed aside and left behind.

We serve a God who knows what it feels like to be taken advantage of. And He knows what it feels like to have those you love walk away. In the second section of Hosea, which we're going to go through together today, from chapters 4 to 10, we will see the hurt that the Israelites have caused God. We will see the pain, the actions that they have done that have caused God pain and hurt, this relational emotional pain.

And in chapter 11, we will see God's response in a beautiful poem to how God responds to those who have hurt him. So if you have your Bibles, I encourage you to open up with me to Hosea chapter 4:1. I am not going to read all of the verses. We don't have time. So I do encourage you, maybe later today, maybe sometime this week, actually read through Hosea 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10. It will not take that long. They are shorter.

And then once you get to chapter 11, you'll see a huge change, and we'll look at that as well this morning. Let me pray. Heavenly Father, as we come together today, many of us, if at least not right now in the past, have experienced this emotional, relational pain and hurt.

And it gives us peace to know that you understand that and that you don't leave us in that season, that you can give us a peace that surpasses understanding, and that since you understand that hurt, you know how to help us through. And so, Father, as we read about what took place between the Israelites and you, and as we see ourselves in the story, my prayer is that our hearts would be open to hear from you, and that if we have wandered away, we would turn back.

We ask this in Jesus' name, amen. Before we jump into Hosea chapter 4 again, I do want to just remind you of the history of Israel, God's chosen nation. So the Israelites were chosen by God, and he said, "It is through this people group that I am going to reveal myself to the world around me." And so he chooses Abraham, not because Abraham is more special, not because he's better than everybody else, not because he's more faithful.

Simply by God's grace and mercy, he chooses Abraham and he tells him, "Listen, I am going to bless the world through your descendants. You are going to grow into a great nation." And so as we track Abraham's family lineage through the Old Testament, you have Abraham and Isaac and Jacob and then Joseph and the 12 tribes. We know about the story of Joseph in the end of Genesis, and he ends up in Egypt because of a famine.

They are enslaved in Egypt under a new Pharaoh because the Pharaoh is concerned that his family is growing too large. As they are enslaved for over 400 years, God raises up the prophet Moses, who is going to deliver them. And we know the story of the plagues and them then leaving Egypt as Moses is their leader, and they begin to wander in the wilderness for 40 years, Scripture says, because of their complaining, because of their arguing, because of their disobedience.

Eventually, they end up in the Promised Land crossing the Jordan River. Moses passes away. Joshua becomes a new leader. He leads them across the Jordan into the Promised Land. They begin to conquer the nations that are living there and eventually they refuse God as their king. A new generation, Scripture says, arises that knows nothing of God. And they want a new king. And so they have kings over them and they have leaders over them.

And we watch this cycle through Israel's history of them calling out to God and God protects them and saves them. And then life gets good and they turn away from God. And then God protects them and saves them. And we see this cycle repeatedly over and over again. And here we are in Hosea at a time where God's people are going to receive His judgment. But fortunately, the story doesn't end with judgment, it ends with love.

And as you read this story, the goal is that you would see yourself in the story. You're going to see a lot of the mistakes they have made, and we have made those same mistakes. And fortunately, we can receive the same grace and mercy from God as well. So let's jump into Hosea chapter 4:1.

"Hear the word of the Lord, you Israelites, because the Lord has a charge to bring against you who live in the land, there is no faithfulness, no love, no acknowledgment of God in the land." Jump down to verse 6, he says, "My people are destroyed from lack of knowledge. Because you have rejected knowledge, I also reject you as my priests." Remember, they were going to represent God to the people.

They were his priests. Why? Because you have ignored the law of your God. I also then will ignore your children. Verse 13, "They sacrifice on the mountaintops, and they burn offerings on the hills under the oak, poplar, and terabyte trees where the shade is pleasant. Therefore, your daughters will turn to prostitution and your daughters-in-law to adultery." The Israelites have rejected their God once again.

They have acted like Gomer in this story. Remember, the adulterous wife that has walked away, and God is saying, "Listen, I have given you everything. I have blessed you richly, and in return, you have paid me back by taking the very things that I have given to you and offered them to other gods." When we read in Hosea 4 that they are offering sacrifices on the mountaintops and burnt offerings, they are offering these to other gods, not to Yahweh.

And as easy as it is to look at them and say, "How foolish can you be? Look at everything that God has given you. Why would you turn around and take those very blessings and thank another God for them?" And yet we are guilty of the same thing. Whether personally, as a city, as a country, as just the people of the world, think of all of the good things that God has given us and how we have turned around and used them for evil.

Just to get your brain rolling, let me give you a few examples. Think of marriage. Marriage is a gift that God has given to us. It's part of His design. It's meant to be a blessing to us. But for how many people does that blessing become a curse because of divorce, because of unnatural marriage, taking something that God has given to us and twisting it into something else? Think about physical intimacy. That is a gift that God has given to us between a man and his wife.

And think about how we have taken that gift, and we have taken it out of this boundary that God has put it in for our own protection and safety, and we've turned it into something else, selfish things, so that we can feel good. Think about pregnancy. Having children was a gift that God has given to us. And now for many, pregnancy is a nuisance because we are selfish. Think about money and wealth in general. There's nothing wrong with money.

There's nothing wrong with wealth. But how many times do we use our money and wealth for personal gain and manipulation? Think about things like nuclear power. What great things that we can create nuclear power to provide energy in a new way? And instead of just providing energy, we take that nuclear power and we make bombs out of it. To hurt and for evil. Think about the internet.

What an amazing invention that God has allowed us to create so that we can connect with other people and we can learn so much and we have taken that internet and we have filled it with pornography and gossip. Think about AI. I don't even know what AI is going to bring to the world yet, artificial intelligence, but it probably has the potential to bring a lot of good. And unfortunately, because I know the track record of mankind, it's probably going to turn into a lot of evil.

Think about cell phones. What a great invention so we can communicate with others and have the supercomputer in our pocket. And instead, we have turned that supercomputer into an addiction and into a way of isolation. Think about something as simple. These are all new things, but what about the invention of metal? Being able to mine for these ores and to create metal so that you can make tools and all of these other things. And instead of just making tools, we have turned them into weapons and into prisons.

We are all guilty of taking the things that God has given to us. And so it's easy for us to point fingers. But I like to say, we are experts at taking something good and finding a way to make it evil. It's what we do as human beings. Just to give you an example of what this would feel like being God who's giving these good gifts and then watching them being used for evil, it would be like gifting your child a hundred thousand dollars because you love them, you want them to have fun, you want them to enjoy it, and instead your kid takes that \$100,000 to hire an attorney to sue you for being a bad parent.

That's what we do to God. We take His gifts and then we turn them against Him. This is what the Israelites are guilty of as well. Let's look at Hosea chapter 5:9. Ephraim, which is another name that Hosea uses for Israel, will be laid waste on the day of reckoning. Among the tribes of Israel, I proclaim what is certain.

Down to verse 13, "When Ephraim, when Israel finally saw their sickness and Judah their sores, Ephraim turned to Assyria, a different nation, and they sent to the great king for help, but he is not able to cure you, not able to heal your sores. When God's people finally admitted their sickness, instead of turning back to God, they chose a different Savior, the nation of Assyria, which was a wicked and corrupt nation, far worse than even the Israelites had become.

And they decide to turn to them for military might, and they turn to Egypt believing that they can save them. And for those of you that know the end of the story, even though they turned to Assyria for help, what would be the very nation that would destroy them? Assyria. Isn't it interesting that you and I will run to anyone and anything but God to fix our problems that inevitably only He can fix.

And so we turn to other things, but God is there longing for you to turn back to Him, to run to Him. Hosea 6:6, we read, "For I God desire mercy, not sacrifice, an acknowledgement of God rather than burnt offerings." Hosea 7:11, "Ephraim, Israel, is like a dove, easily deceived and senseless, now calling to Egypt, now turning to Assyria." Here we learn a valuable truth.

Hosea chapter 6: 6. I love this verse in that it's in the Old Testament because again, just like I shared last week, so many people want to differentiate between the God of the Old Testament and the God of the New Testament and somehow not believing they're the same God. But yet here in the book of Hosea, we see the heart of God. We learn a valuable truth about God's character, that even the God of the Old Testament is not concerned about sacrifice, not concerned about burnt offerings, but instead He's concerned about mercy and about acknowledgement of Him.

God is and always has been more concerned about your heart than about your outward actions. He's more concerned about you than about what you can do. The commands that He gives us, the rules that we are

supposed to follow are for our own good, therefore our hearts, and because He wants a relationship with us. Again, we see this truth, God of the Old Testament, God of the New Testament.

He doesn't just want us to know about Him. He wants us to know Him. And there's a big difference between knowing about God and actually knowing God, having a relationship with Him. I believe it's certainly possible today that in a room this size, those that are watching online, those that might be listening on the radio, it's possible that there are many people today who know about God but don't know God.

Maybe today is the beginning of that journey, that transformation to you having a personal relationship with God. Because God's desire, His goal for you is not to get you to attend church. It's not to get you to read the Bible. It's not to get you to give money to the church. God's desire is you. He wants you. He loves you. He wants a relationship.

All of those other things are the result of that relationship. Those aren't the things that He desires. God wants you. He desires mercy, not sacrifice, an acknowledgement of Him, not burnt offerings. We go on to Hosea chapter 8 verses 5 and 6, where we read Samaria, which is also Israel, "Throw out your calf idol.

My anger burns against them. How long will these people be incapable of purity? They are from Israel. This calf, a metal worker has made it, this thing that you are worshipping, this idol, it is not a God. It will be broken in pieces, that calf of Samaria. He's saying, "Listen, why are you worshiping these things that have been made by craftsmen, by man? They're not a God." Then we jump to Hosea chapter 10.

He says, "But you have planted wickedness. You have reaped evil. You have eaten the fruit of deception. Because you have depended on your own strength and on your many warriors, the roar of battle will rise against you. That will be the consequence so that all your fortresses will be devastated as Shanaan devastated Bet Arbel on the day of battle when mothers were dashed to the ground with their children.

Hosea is making this prophecy to the people and he is saying, "Listen, it's too late. We are going to receive this judgment, the consequences for our actions. God is going to get their attention, but it's not just for the attention's sake. He does not desire them to suffer. His ultimate desire is that they would turn back to Him. God's ultimate goal for the Israelites isn't chaos. It isn't destruction. His ultimate goal is to win them back.

And so as we think about our lives today, I can't help but ask the question, is God trying to get your attention today? Are you guilty of pursuing a different God? And he asks the question, will you turn back to Him without the need for consequences? Because God is a loving and a caring God. He simply wants you and what is best for you.

Now, if you're like me, it's easy to read these stories in the Old Testament and just look at the Israelite people and think, "How foolish can you be?" Here you've witnessed and observed the blessings and the gifts of God. He's called your nation, your people. You can look back and hear all of the stories of God's goodness, and now you're going to throw all of that away in order to worship something that is made of stone or metal that has been created by a man, and you're going to call that God.

You say, well, I would never worship that idol. That is foolish. But maybe our idols just look a little different today, right? We worship and serve other things as idols. We put other things in first place in our life above God. It could be our cell phones. It could be a relationship. It could be money. It could be anything that we place above God. These are gifts that He has given to us, and then we take those very things and allow them to replace God in our lives.

And God simply wants what is best for us. I believe that is one of the realizations that everyone must come to in order to proclaim Him as their Lord. So many of us believe that we know what is best for our own lives. And so we go down certain paths and we make decisions believing that if I do this or that, it's going to bring joy, it's

going to bring happiness, and then you achieve whatever that was. We talked about this last week and you get that and you realize that it doesn't bring that satisfaction, that joy of life.

And it makes it even harder because if you get to that point and you don't have joy or satisfaction, not only do you come to that realization, but you also have to admit that you were wrong. And I still haven't met many people who like to admit they are wrong. Nobody wants to admit that. And so it's this struggle inwardly, "Does God know what is best for me or do I know what is best for me?" And of course, as you read Scripture, believing that God is our Creator, of course He would know what is best for me.

And so He wants me to know that, and knowing that is knowing Him. Let's finish today with Hosea chapter 11. Remember this poem that will show God's response to Israel's disobedience, His ultimate response. 11:1, "When Israel was a child, I loved him, and out of Egypt I called my son," jumping to verse 3, "It was I who taught Ephraim to walk, taking them by the arms, but they did not realize that it was I who healed them." Jumping down to verse 7, "My people are determined to turn from me.

Even though they call me God Most High, I will by no means exalt them." He says, "How can I give you up, Ephraim? How can I hand you over Israel? How can I treat you like Adma? How can I make you like Zeboim, nations that were destroyed? My heart is changed within me. All of my compassion is aroused.

So because of that, I will not carry out my fierce anger, nor will I devastate Ephraim again, for I am God and not a man, the Holy One among you. I will not come against their cities. Here we see God as a loving Father who raised His Son Israel. And in the midst of raising His Son, He shared everything with Him.

But then that son grew up and He rebelled and He turned against His Father, taking advantage of His generosity. Just like us. We have all taken advantage of God's generosity. We have all rebelled and turned against Him. We have all, at one point or another, tried to do things our own way and pushed Him out of the way and basically said, "God, I've got this. I don't need you." In this poem, God is emotionally torn apart.

He's hurt. In the poem, we see the range of emotions. One second, he's angry and wants to give punishment to correct. And naturally, he says the punishment is going to be severe. But then the next moment he's heartbroken, and he says he is moved by His mercy and His compassion, and He is going to choose to forgive the Son He loves. And so in history, we see that God does allow Israel to be conquered by Assyria, but that's not the end of the story.

It's actually the beginning of the story because God's love would be so great that He would choose to send Jesus to die in our place. God sent Jesus to pay the price for the penalty that you and I all deserve. Here as we read in this poem about God and like a loving Father, I think the best way we can understand the pain and the hurt that we have caused Him and the struggle with the emotions.

Think about the parent that has poured everything into their child, has loved them, and in their mind they have images of bringing home that child as a baby, the innocence of that child and loving that child and caring for that child and hugging that child. And then that child grows up to be somebody like Adolf Hitler. And you see all of the atrocities that your child commits, but yet in your mind and in your heart, you still see that innocent child.

Some of you have experienced that, where your child has walked away, your child has made awful decisions in life, but yet you try to balance that with that same image in your head of that innocent child laying in the crib that you loved and cared for. And here God is remembering His people. He's remembering us. And so He says, "Listen, I love you so much. I want to give everything for you because I still see you as that innocent child." God shows His mercy and His compassion.

So where are you at on your journey today? Maybe you find yourself in a position where you have rebelled against God. You're sure that you can do better on your own. Can I just encourage you, turn back now before it's

too late? Acknowledge God as that loving Father who has blessed you richly. Don't put your faith or your trust in earthly things. Hear His voice and find rest with Him.

Make the decision to stop taking His gifts and His love and using them for selfish game. Maybe you are in a position right now where things seem to be going well. You're saying, "Pastor, I'm here at church, but life is pretty good. I mean, my relationships are good, my finances are good, my health is good. I'm just at a time where I don't really need God. It doesn't make sense. I'm a self-help kind of guy.

Can I warn you that the consequences might be just around the corner? I wish that I didn't have so many stories that I could share of individuals that have come into the office to talk with me or talk with somebody else. And they were even sitting in a service like this, and they felt God tugging on their heart or tugging on their life because there was something in their life that wasn't right, but they just kept kind of pushing it down. They knew it was a problem, but they thought, we'll work through it. And then that problem brings lifelong consequences.

Something happens. They made a decision and now there's jail time, now there's a broken relationship, now there's whatever it is. And they say, "I should have listened to God." Now, the great thing is God will forgive, God still loves you, God still accepts you, you still can walk your life with God, but you now have to deal with the lifelong consequences of your decision. And it's so hard to watch people walk through that. Don't wait until it's too late.

Can I encourage you to repent, to ask for forgiveness, to make a change, to receive His grace and His mercy? Maybe you're here and you're in a season of consequence where God is desperately trying to get your attention so that you will turn back to Him. You're going through some kind of trial right now, some kind of hurt, some kind of pain. I first want to say, stop believing the lie that you're too far gone. You're not too far gone.

Don't let the enemy convince you that you are not loved and that you are forgotten and that it's too late. May I remind you that God loves you right where you are? When Hosea is giving this prophecy to the Israelites, they are in the midst of turning from Him, but yet He says, "I still love you." He wants a relationship with you. Turn to Him. And finally, this morning, maybe you are resting in God's hands.

You're at a point in your journey where maybe you've gone through the rebellion, you've gone through the consequences, and now you're at a place where you say, "I wish I wouldn't have done that, but I'm walking with God now." Can I encourage you today to take time to thank Him for His love? Don't take it for granted. Be reminded that He desires mercy, not sacrifice. Be reminded that He is concerned about your heart far more than your outward actions.

I would encourage you to not fall into the trap of just going through the motions and continue to submit your heart to Him. As always, there will be people up here that would love to pray with you if you want prayer about anything you're going through. The altars are always open. If you want to do your business with God, no one's going to bother you. You come do your business, you can go back to your seat during closing song. The people will stay up here after the song if you want prayer after that. Let me close. Heavenly Father, thank you for loving us where we're at.

Thank you for reminding us that there is not a single person here that is more holy than anybody else. We have all rebelled. We have all turned away. And so we simply stand in awe of Your grace and Your mercy and Your forgiveness. If there are any here that have not received that, I pray that their hearts and their eyes would be open, that they would hear Your voice calling to them, that they would turn to You.

It's in Jesus' name we pray. Amen.