

HOSEA 10:12

“Break Up Your Fallow Ground” | 3.4.23

I. INTRODUCTION (Hosea 10:12)

- A. Israel was in trouble. Her judgment was impending. They had left God, they weren't turning to Him, instead they were turning away from Him. The prophet is sure, Hosea holds no hope for the nation, for destruction is sure.
- B. But this doesn't deter him from showing Israel the way out of her misery. But Israel's way out, is also our way out. Israel's path forward, as found in **Hosea 10:12**, is also our path forward as God's people.

II. SOWING, REAPING AND RAINING (Hosea 10:12)

A. **Hosea 10:12** “Sow for yourselves righteousness; reap in mercy; break up your fallow ground, for it is time to seek the Lord, till He comes and rains righteousness on you.”

B. “SOW FOR YOURSELVES RIGHTEOUSNESS...”

- 1. Well, we ask why? Because the nation had largely sowed unrighteousness to God, they had forsaken God. They weren't living in light of the contract, they weren't living a right life before God and man, they had fallen short of obedience to God's covenant that He cut with their forefathers, Abraham, and Moses.
- 2. They needed to turn from themselves, and their sinful ways, towards God and His great name.
- 3. Sowing righteousness means we live in obedience to the contract, we live a right lifestyle before God and others. We are to sow RIGHT LIVING in obedience to our covenant keeping God.
- 4. Sowing righteousness means that we prioritize loving Him, and obeying Him, over everything else. It means that we have no other lovers outside of God.
- 5. Sowing is about repentance, it's about turning, and reformation, it's about being reformed afresh.

C. “...REAP IN MERCY...”

- 1. It's not uncommon for us to confuse God's grace with His mercy. God's grace is His divine empowering, and unmerited favor. God's mercy is about not getting what we deserve.
- 2. Look, we don't sow righteousness in order to reap righteousness. The exchange for right living (*obedience to God's covenant*) is mercy, or God's mercy to our lives, to all that we touch, to all that we come across.
- 3. Nobody plants an orange seed simply to get AN ORANGE. Nobody plants an apple seed hoping to get AN APPLE, but APPLES.
- 4. The exchange rate from God is not apple to apple, it's apple to APPLES. We sow righteousness (*Right living before God and others, in obedience to His covenant*), and His response to us, is MERCY, abundant Mercy. Not just mercy for us, but mercy for our families, mercy for our jobs, mercy in our money, mercy in our relationships, mercy in our cities, mercy in our nation. We get from God, is far more than we put in.
 - a. One commentator rightly said, “(Israel's) The seed time of righteousness would be followed by a reaping-time proportionate to the boundless measure of the Divine mercy.” –The Pulpit Commentary, Vol. 13, Daniel, Hosea and Joel, Pg. 306

D. “...BREAK UP YOUR FALLOW GROUND...”

- 1. What is fallow ground? Fallow ground is unusable soil. Fallow ground won't allow crops to grow. It's hard, and it prevents the seeds to go into the soil, it won't allow the seed to germinate, and grow into maturity.

2. God was calling Israel, God is calling us to plow unbroken fields, our unbroken fields. The crusty areas of our lives, our hearts, our minds, our families, our jobs, how we feel about others, how we feel about the people around us.
 - a. Breaking up the fallow ground is about breaking new ground, it's about beginning anew, it's about turning a new leaf, it's about weeding out the sin of passivity, the sin of omission, it's about removing those sinful passions that stop right living, that hinder us from honoring God.
 3. This is about allowing the rototiller of the Holy Spirit to go through the soil of our hearts, to break up the hard ground, to remove the roots, to break up the dirt clods. Why? So that it's ready for the seed time of spring!
 - a. Could we be standing on the precipice of not just a natural spring rain, but a supernatural spring rain that will give life to the sown seeds of right living before God and others?
 4. Beloved, I can hear God starting up that gas powered rototiller, letting it warm up, allowing it to idle as he adjusts the choke setting, allowing the right mixture of fuel to enter the engine, so that it runs properly when it goes through the garden of our hearts.
 - a. One commentator rightly said, *"Thus the ground that had long lain fallow must be broken up; its waste, wild state must cease and give place to cultivation; the ploughshare must be driven through it; its wild growths and weeds must be cut down and uprooted."* –The Pulpit Commentary, Vol. 13, Daniel, Hosea and Joel, Pg. 306
 5. Beloved, our cities, our Churches, our hearts, our homes, our communities have remained too long in a miserable and unsatisfactory condition.
 - a. I should say, *"My heart, my family, my church, my city, my nation has remained too long in a miserable and unsatisfactory condition."*
 6. But look, the breaking up of our fallow soil, the hard areas of our lives is never an end in itself. It's always a means unto an end. It's a means unto spring rain, rain falling on the seeds of righteousness we have sown.
- E. *"...FOR IT IS TIME TO SEEK THE LORD..."*
1. To seek God, means we've turned away from other things, and turned our towards Him, we've prioritized Him, we've put Him in first place, both in our affections and in our priorities.
 2. This is about moving away from causal, rote, programmatic prayers, to a heartfelt response to Christ, not just in our services, but in the whole of our lives.
 3. Like Israel, we aren't to relax and wait. It's time, today, not tomorrow, or next week, or next month, or next time God moves. The time is now.
 4. Seeking God is about using every way, and means, working earnestly and zealously for a renewal of life and return to worshipping God and working with Him.
 5. If we don't do it now, we will miss the seed time, the spring rain and the harvest. But you say, there's another one coming around in 2024, and yes, your right. But that means you miss out on this one. And who knows what happens over the next 12 months.
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F. "...TILL HE COMES AND RAINS RIGHTEOUSNESS ON YOU."

1. Well, why do this? Why sow righteousness? Why break up the fallow ground? Why seek God now? Because no awakening from slumber and sleep, will ever end in disappointment. He will come and rain righteousness on us. We return to Him because He will return to us!
2. If God's family will turn to Him, if you will turn to Him, He will answer us, He will meet us, He will come near us.
3. He will come to us, He will visit us, He will send rain, He will water the seeds of righteousness that we've sown, and He will exchange our efforts to obey Him, with mercy we don't deserve.
4. So folks say, okay, I'm in, but how long do I do this? Until! Ummm, until when? Until He comes and rains on us.
5. This word COMES can mean rescue, like being rescued from unjust situations or unrighteousness. If we will sow right living, a right response to God's covenant, to love Him with all of our hearts, He will rescue us both from our own personal unrighteousness, and unjust situations.
6. The idea is that God has called Israel, He's calling us to remember the covenant, remember the contract, the blessings and curses of Deuteronomy. If we will do our part of the covenant, then He would do His.
 - a. One commentator said, *"God would respond to their spiritual renewal by dealing with them in fairness and equity; He would act in conformity to His covenantal obligations and restore them to covenant privilege. By showering them with righteousness He would deliver them from their precarious state and restore the stability and prosperity that was His original intention for them."* –The Minor Prophets, Vol. 1, A Commentary On Hosea, Joel, Amos, Thomas Edward McComiskey, Pg. 178

III. CONCLUSION

- A. He will come to us. The question is, will we come to Him?
- B. Beloved, this is a season where the Holy Spirit is inviting us to draw closer to Jesus, to come near to Him, to see more, to experience more, to move away from a programmatic life, from routine religion, to a vibrant, flourishing, life giving relationship with the God of **Genesis 1**.
- C. He's beautiful, filled with splendor and light, He possess all power, authority, all the wisdom that's needed for your life, and He's inviting you to come closer:
 1. *To sow seeds of righteousness...to reap in mercy...to break up your fallow ground...to seek Him today...so that He water your freshly planted seeds*