



## Week 3

# The Wonder and Danger of Light

### Check-in

How are you? Where have you seen Christ working in your life in the last week? And... our speaker this week talked about how Israel was feeling like a child receiving a punishment. So, fess up... share a time when you got in trouble as a kid. Did you put a tack on the teacher's seat? Maybe you sassed the wrong parent and got the proverbial soap-mouthwash treatment? Or, were you the perfect angel and never got in trouble? (Remember, "Thou shalt not lie" is one of the Biggies.)

### Opening Prayer

Loving Heavenly Parent, forgive us when we, like unruly children, turn away from you.

Let us lean into your unconditional love and always-open arms.

## Introduction

Welcome to week 3 of our Summer Speaker Series, efficiently dubbed, “S3.” Week 1, our own Shelly Harvey brought us the story of Sarai and Abram, (a.k.a. Sarah and Abraham,) in the Old Testament, and how, rather than trusting God, Sarai took matters into her own hands. Shelly challenged us, as God is writing our story, to quit trying to steal the pen. Then Rev. Allynn Walker followed up by talking about how “giving up the pen” means having faith that God will take care of us. God grants us strength *on the way* as we move forward in the face of difficult situations.

**Review Question: After our discussion last week, how are you doing at letting God have the pen, giving back control? Have you felt God working on your behalf in the face of your difficult situations? Are you finding strength in putting one foot in front of the other?**

## Scripture & Reflection

This week, our third Summer Speaker, back by popular demand, Andy Anthony brought us a story from the rarely-preached-from book of Hosea. A little back story... Hosea was a prophet during a really tough time in Israel’s history, as they were being invaded and influenced by other countries and religions around them. Hosea just wanted them to return to God... to turn from their pagan idols and “wicked” behavior, and find a relationship with their Creator again. In his writings, he tells the people of Israel this...

**Read Hosea, chapter 5, verse 15, to chapter 6, verse 6.**

Okay, that's a lot... and the words can be difficult to read and to grasp. Hosea is attempting to convict a people who have turned their back on their God. But in the tough words are also words of hope. Andy broke this down for us, but first...

**Question 1: What are your impressions of this passage? Given the history and context, how do these words hit us 2700 years later? Do they convict you? Do you naturally recoil from rhetoric like this, or do you find hope and challenge in it?**

Andy tackled this passage verse by verse, saying that it feels almost like Israel is a petulant child receiving a punishment. The words Hosea shares with the people of Israel feel like a parent saying, "okay, I tried to be patient and let you figure it out on your own... but you're still messing up. So, go to your room and think about what you've done." But Andy pointed out that, like any good parent, God wasn't offering these difficult words out of anger or spite, but rather, because God deeply desired to be in relationship with the people of Israel, and they were turning away from him. Andy explained that Israel thought that if they checked the boxes, offered the right sacrifices, said the right words, they didn't need a personal relationship with God. But through Hosea, God tells them otherwise... and through Hosea, God says the same thing to us. "What should I do with you? You seem to love me one moment and forget me the next. I tried to explain it to you through my Word, but you just don't seem to understand. I love you and I want a relationship with you. Come home." (v. 4-6 paraphrased.)

**Question 2: Assessment time. Where does it feel like you are just checking the boxes in your relationship with God? What helps you develop the personal connection, not just going through the motions? What practices or experiences provide that deeper relationship?**

## **Closing**

Andy closed his reflection by talking about light. When light enters a dark place, it touches every part of it. He suggested that because we have seen and felt God's love, it's like a light that enters a room... once you've seen the light, you can't unsee it. We have been touched by God's love, and therefore, we have a responsibility for it. We can no longer deny that there is a Creator who wants a deeper relationship with us, and we have a choice. We can turn from it, as Israel did. Or we can lean into the arms of our loving Parent, as Hosea challenged. Embrace the love that God has for you. Don't run from it. Let the light of God's love wash over you. Stop running. Come home.

**Take some time to share prayer requests or celebrations.**

**Close in prayer.**