



St. Columba's Church, Stewarton

(SC013595) (CCLI 1095831)

Home Service – July Week 4

Prayer

Almighty God, we come before you to worship you. We lift up our hearts to give to you the praise and the honour you deserve. Accept our praise, our prayers, the thoughts of our hearts, this act of worship. Praise and honour thanksgiving and worship are yours by right. Amen

Hymn CH4 124 Praise to the Lord, the Almighty

Reading Hosea 3: 1 – 5;

Following on from the passages that we looked at from Amos last week, this morning we look at one of the other prophets, Hosea. Both Amos and Hosea ministered during the same time scale and were probably known to each other, or at least were aware of each other's ministry.

Israel had become very prosperous but corrupt. The poor were being oppressed by the rich, therefore the rich grew wealthy by stealing the little property the poor might have. Amos especially warned them that God would punish them for such injustice. Added to this the people had thrown off Judaism and had chosen to follow the gods of the Canaanites instead of the true living God. Both the priesthood and the people were condemned by God for this great wickedness. The people no longer looked to God or put any trust in Him whatsoever. Their confidence lay with foreign alliances which they had bought through the payment of tribute. Isn't it remarkable how up to date some of the words of these ancient prophets can be.

By these associations and alliances Israel's resources and independence was being gradually removed, yet she did not seem to notice this. The prophets Amos and Hosea watched as the nation was destroying itself from within. Hosea spoke of God's people committing spiritual adultery with the false gods of the nations they were putting their trust in for protection and deliverance. He pours scorn on those who trusted in political alliances instead of the power of the Almighty God. Instead of these nations protecting and saving Israel, they would bring her into subjection and bondage. God uses Hosea and his wife Gomer as an example of their dreadful behaviour. God told Hosea to

marry Gomer and told him she would be unfaithful. Gomer left her husband and became a prostitute, to give herself to others. Hosea was broken-hearted over the things his wife was doing. In chapter 3 we read of God telling Hosea to buy her back. Through this experience Hosea revealed to the nation that they were God's chosen bride, and He was heartbroken over their rejection and faithlessness of Him.

Sometimes God gave a prophet like Hosea words to speak to the people of Israel and Judah. At other times he would give them words of love in an attempt to win back the affections of his people. Sometimes words failed and God had to resort to a different kind of communication. He would give the prophet a message to act out. The prophet's actions would be a living drama playing out the message of God in a dramatic way. There were many of these prophetic plays which took place, but none were as painful as when God asked Hosea to marry Gomer. As people saw Gomer, a woman with no moral sense, becoming more vulgar and diseased every year, they remembered that she was the prophet's wife and he had married her knowing that she would be unfaithful. They would ultimately get the message that there was a parallel between Hosea's relationship to Gomer and God's relationship to them. They were to be married to God, but they were unfaithful to him and loved many other gods. What is the point of this story?

The first message from the life of Hosea is: God's love is beyond reason. The thing that God had asked Hosea to do did not make sense. But then, God's love for Israel did not make sense either. When God entered into a covenant of love with us, the covenant does not depend on our faithfulness, but on the faithfulness of God. In spite of all that his people have done in turning away from him, God did something completely irrational — he loved us and sent us his son to free us from the slavery of our sin. A second message that the book of Hosea is giving us is: God's love is unconditional. We often give up on people. Some even write others off, or count them as finished, when their love or trust has been betrayed. But God is different, no matter what we have done, no matter where we have been, God wants us back with him and sees us as his beloved bride. God doesn't throw us away when we fail. How can we repay such love? By loving him in return and by returning to living according to his ways where we are no longer trusting in our own righteousness but leaning wholly on Him.

Prayer

Loving God, we worship you in the power of the Spirit, rooting us in your presence, filling us with your love, showering us with many

blessings, even although we do not deserve them. Merciful God, when we are enticed by the ways of the world, forgetting you, denying your love, **forgive us**. When our trust in your grace and love is lacking, preventing us from leaving our comfort zone and serving you, **forgive us**.

When we turn away from your promise of eternal life, having no hope beyond this life,

forgive us. We pray that we and all your children may be what you want us to be and do what you want us to do so that we may be content with whatever comes our way, and attain peace of mind. Heavenly Father, bless your Church here and throughout the world, that it may share to the full in the work of your Son, revealing you to men and women, reconciling them to you and to one another, that as Christians we may learn to love one another, as you have loved us. We pray for those who suffer for their faith and conviction and are tempted to turn back because their way is hard: help and strengthen them, Lord, so that they may hold out to the end, and by their loyal witness draw others to you. We pray for our country: that none may exploit others, and none be neglected or forgotten; that we may be quick to recognize true worth; and that all may work for the common life and welfare. We pray for the life of the world: that every nation may seek the way that leads to peace; that human rights and freedom may everywhere be respected and that the world's resources may be ungrudgingly shared. We pray for those who are ill: that through the healing skills you have given they may be made well. We remember those who are dying and those who are bereaved. Give comfort and a sense of your peace that they may know that your hand is upon them, your arms encircling them. Finally, we give thanks for all those who are with you now and we look to the day when we will be reunited with them in you. Until that day comes keep us safe our eyes firmly fixed upon Jesus Christ our help and our salvation. Amen

Hymn CH4 485 Dear Lord and Father of mankind

Blessing

May the Blessing of God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit be with you this day and always, Amen.

Intimations:

Summer Church Services

Sunday 28th July - St Columba's Church 11am – Joint Service

St. Columba's Church Holiday Club 2024 – 'On Your Marks'

Monday 5th August to Friday 9th August, 10.30am-12noon. To book or for more information contact Lauren Hussain 07738 689121.

Health Checks : Wednesday 31st July 11am – 12 noon in the Church Hall. Everyone welcome

Interim Moderator: Very Rev. William Hewitt BD DipPS

Session Clerk: Mrs. Mary Mitchell

Clerk to the Board: Mrs. Sheila McGill

Locum: Very Rev William Hewitt BD DipPS

Organist: Mr. Joe Auld

Order of Service: Janice Granger

email:stewartonstcolumbas@gmail.com

web: <https://stewartonstcolumbas.org>