

Come Trembling to the Lord

Hos. 3:1-5; 4:1-3

Introduction:

1. Have you grown weary of trying to find happiness and satisfaction in this life?
2. The Preacher of Ecclesiastes could empathize with you. As the king of Israel he had great wealth. God had given him great wisdom too. And so, with wealth and wisdom he could experiment with the things of life in search of happiness and satisfaction.
3. In Ecc. 2:1ff he describes how he tested himself with pleasure and laughter. He tried chemicals (wine, probably did not have the opiates, etc. common today). He built houses, made gardens and parks, and ponds of water. He collected possessions—slaves, flocks, herds, silver, gold and the treasures of kings. He provided himself with music, and gave himself to the pleasure of many concubines.
4. But even in all these activities he found no lasting satisfaction.
5. During Hosea's day, the nation of Israel had given themselves to such pursuits. In Hos. 3 it is symbolized in the imagery of a marriage in which the wife has gone after many lovers.
6. Read Hosea 3.

Discussion:

- I. Israel is an adulteress, turning to other gods and loving raisin cakes.
 - A. Most of us are pretty clear on what the text means when it says she turned to other gods, but what does it mean she "loved raisin cakes?"
 1. ZPEB says, "These cakes would be formed after the grapes had completely dried and when coated would be nearly imperishable. They were used as religious offerings by many ancient peoples and were used by travelers and soldiers (ex. 2 Sam. 6:19). Isa. 16:7 suggests they were highly desirable. Some thought they had fertility powers, possibly as an aphrodisiac (S of S 2:5; Hos. 3:1)" (W. White).
 2. C. F. Keil says, they "figuratively represent that idolatrous worship which appeals to the senses, and gratifies the carnal impulses and desires. Loving grape-cakes is equivalent to indulging in sensuality."
 3. Raymond Ortlund says, "The abrupt mention of raisin cakes seems odd. And that is the point. Her love is oddly misplaced. What attracts Israel to her false lover is a trivial and earthly pleasure. She does not hunger for the spiritual things God has to offer," but mere raisin cakes. They loved the pleasures of the world more than what God had to offer.
 4. The Preacher of Ecclesiastes recognized by experience that the pleasures of the world did not bring lasting satisfaction, but Israel loved these rather than God.
 5. It is easy to get caught up in this for the pleasures of the world are pleasurable, but not lastingly so (cf. Heb. 11:24-26). Young people, in your experiments with pleasure, be careful to understand two things: 1) that the pleasurable affects will wear off (Ecc. 11:9, 1); 2) that you will be held accountable.
 - B. Hosea purchases his wife for 15 shekels of silver and a homer and a half of barley.
 1. To extend this into 21st century imagery it is like Hosea purchases his wife from her pimp. She is not worth much to the pimp any more. She is about used up. She is no

longer attractive to customers.

2. Slaves were worth 20 shekels (boy) or 30 (woman) or 50 (man). Cf. Gen. 37:28; Ex. 21:32; Lev. 27:4; cf. also Deut. 22:28-29.
- C. Hosea's agreement with his wife was that she stay with him. She would not play the harlot, nor have a man (husband).
 1. The last phrase is not entirely clear, but the idea seems to be that Hosea will keep himself from her.
 2. This distance in the relationship is parallel to God's distance from Israel as described in verse 4. The Babylonian captivity began at just such a time as this, if it is not the specific time alluded to here.

II. What was Israel doing that had led to such conditions? 4:1-3 answers.

- A. There was no faithfulness (truth, KJV) or kindness (mercy, KJV) in the land.
- B. No knowledge of God.
- C. There was . . .
 1. Swearing. Making an oath without committing. Promises without follow through. Cf. Matt. 5:33ff; 23:16ff.
 2. Deception. No truth.
 3. Murder (Matt. 5:21ff).
 4. Stealing (Matt. 23:25).
 5. Adultery (Matt. 5:31-32).
 6. Violence, so that bloodshed follows bloodshed (Matt. 23:29ff).
- D. They wanted what they wanted and took it.
 1. Is this the way of life that characterizes our government?
 2. Is this the way of life that characterizes society's organizations?
 3. Is this the way of life that characterizes individuals?
 4. When it characterizes individuals it works itself into all other areas.
 5. Is this the way of life that characterizes you?
- E. The land mourned and everyone who lived in it languished.
 1. This way of operating is not healthy.
 2. It is not healthy for individuals and it is not healthy for families, churches, organizations, businesses, governments and societies.

III. The Lord loved Israel even though she was an adulteress (3:1).

- A. Even though she had "loved her raisin cakes" God loved her and so He would woo her by speaking kindly to her (2:14). He would win her with His affection, until His graciousness touched her heart.
- B. Afterward she would come trembling to the Lord (3:5).
 1. Understanding His graciousness she would be moved.
 2. She would repent and return to Him.
 3. Hos 6:1-3.
- C. And so it is with us.
 1. If we allow ourselves to be touched by His kindness, moved by His graciousness.
 2. Are you tired of trying to find happiness and satisfaction in "raisin cakes?"

3. Surely we are looking for more than that!
4. We must look beyond mere sensual pleasure. Like the Preacher in Ecclesiastes who tried such pleasures we must find it vanity.
5. He confessed that satisfaction is ultimately found in the things of God (Ecc. 12:1, 13).

Conclusion:

1. So what does all this mean? Is Hosea about some crazy story of a man marrying an unfaithful wife? Or is it about you and what you love?
2. Understand this; that the Lord loves you, even though you love your “raisin cakes” and whenever you come to understand that “raisin cakes” don’t love you, come to the God who does.
3. Come trembling to the Lord and to His goodness!