

Sowing and Reaping

Hosea

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Bible Text: Hosea 10:11-15

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I am going to ask you, please, turn to the book of Hosea chapter 10 and we read God's Word beginning with the 11th verse down to the end of the chapter, verse 15.

And the Lord said to Israel through his prophet Hosea these words:

Ephraim was a trained calf
that loved to thresh,
and I spared her fair neck;
but I will put Ephraim to the yoke;
Judah must plow;
Jacob must harrow for himself.
Sow for yourselves righteousness;
reap steadfast love;
break up your fallow ground,
for it is the time to seek the LORD,
that he may come and rain righteousness upon you.
You have plowed iniquity;
you have reaped injustice;
you have eaten the fruit of lies.
Because you have trusted in your own way
and in the multitude of your warriors,
therefore the tumult of war shall arise among your people,
and all your fortresses shall be destroyed,
as Shalman destroyed Beth-arbel on the day of battle;
mothers were dashed in pieces with their children.
Thus it shall be done to you, O Bethel,
because of your great evil.
At dawn the king of Israel
shall be utterly cut off.¹

Let's go to the Lord together and ask his blessing on his Word.

¹ Hosea 10:11-15.

Our Father in heaven, we ask that you would help us in this next hour to give you all of our concentration, that we would put away, Lord, anything that would distract us and realize that we sit before your holy Word this moment. Lord, we listen. We read what you had to say to the nation of Israel before they were destroyed because they did not listen to you. And yet these things were written down, Lord, as an example for us upon whom the end of the ages has come. Lord, today we are being warned by you. We are being encouraged by you. And I pray that we would listen to your Word that way, to realize that in this message from history there is a message for us. And so we ask for the edification and the blessing of our church today in this place, but we also ask, Lord, for anyone here with us who doesn't know you and we ask for their salvation. We ask that today they would hear the good news of your Son and turn to Jesus for life. Bless, Lord, the preaching of your Word. Bless the hearing of it for your glory and for the good of souls here today. We ask for this in Jesus' name. Amen.

God is communicating to his people in the clearest way he possibly can. He is not only stating the case in a straightforward way, just with straightforward language, he is also making his case plain through illustration and through analogy. And when we come to these verses we meet, again, with some illustrations, some analogies. And he is taking these illustrations from their every day way of life, again, that they might not miss the message, that he might communicate in the clearest way possible. He takes his illustrations from their every day way of living. It was an agrarian culture and so he shares with them based upon their work of farming and gathering and threshing and all the rest, that they might not miss the truth.

What is interesting is even though our society is different, probably most of us have not ever watched a calf thresh anything, most of us have never plowed a row. We have never... we don't know what the word "harrow" means, probably. Even though we are not familiar with the illustrations to the degree that they were in the infinite wisdom of God, the illustrations still communicate very clearly. Once we explain what is going on here, the message is unmistakable. And it is a message not just that was intended for them, as I have prayed already, it is a message that is intended for us, because what they were dealing with, we are dealing with. The truth here this morning is simple, but it is powerful. It is as needed today as it ever was because we are witnessing all around us the very same issues that they were dealing with.

The simple message is this. Here is what I hope to walk way with today. It is simple, but it is powerful. You will reap what you sow. What you put out is what you get back. And because that is true, God is calling upon people who are sowing iniquity, who are sowing sin. God calls upon us, if this morning that is us, God calls upon people who are sowing iniquity to turn, to repent from their present course and to walk in a new way.

But there is another simple message here today and that is true repentance is not just a change in attitude. True repentance is a change in the course of your actions. It is a change of mind and heart that results in a new way of living. If you really repent, it is not going to be a secret. Where you have new men and new women, you have a new way of

living. If you really repent, it is going to show up in the way you live. It is going to show up in your choices.

In fact, though we know from God's Word that in the ultimate sense, repentance is something granted by God, it is a work of God's grace, even though that is true, repentance is set before us again in Scripture as a choice. Men choose to repent. It is accomplished by the grace of God, but nonetheless it is something they choose. So that set before us on the pages of the Word of God every day is a choice between life and death. The way of the Lord is the way of life. The way of disobedience is the way of death. And an almighty God who needs nothing so cares for his creatures and so cares for his children that he cries out to us and he calls upon us to choose life.

Deuteronomy chapter 30 verse says this, the Lord speaking to his people:

"I call heaven and earth to witness against you today, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and curse. Therefore choose life, that you and your offspring may live."²

He goes on to describe in that same very next verse what life looks like. Listen to this.

"...loving the LORD your God, obeying his voice and holding fast to him, for he is your life and length of days, that you may dwell in the land that the LORD swore to your fathers, to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, to give them."³

God says to his people, Israel, "Choose life." What does that mean? It means choose God.

What does it mean to chose life for us this morning? It means choose the Lord. Choose him. Listen to him. Follow him. Cling fast to him. For he is your life.

What does it mean choose length of days? It means you choose the Lord for he is the length of our days.

And so this morning as we hear God through the prophet Hosea, realize the same choice is set before us, life or death and to choose life means to choose the Lord.

Three simple points we will make this morning. The first one is this. You see it in verse 11. To choose sin is to choose the hard way.

Let me say that again. To choose sin, if today you choose sin, realize you have foolishly chosen the hard way. To choose sin is to choose the hard way.

God, once again, goes back to his beginning days with the nation, better days, days when they would actually listen to him, days when they were actually responsive to him.

² Deuteronomy 30:19.

³ Deuteronomy 30:20.

And notice what life was like then, verse 11.

“Ephraim was a trained calf.”⁴

A calf that was almost like a pet.

If you contrast this with Jeremiah 31:18 where he describes Israel there as an untrained calf, what he is meaning is an animal that is responsive to the master versus an animal that is not responsive to the master; an animal that is responsive versus an animal that is stubborn.

Ephraim was a responsive animal, a trained calf that loved to thresh and I spared her fair neck.

Now notice in the next statement he says, “But I will put Ephraim to the yoke; Judah must plow; Jacob must harrow for himself.”⁵

So the comparison is between threshing and plowing and plowing is more difficult than threshing. To thresh you would attach the animal like to a wheel and, for instance, stalks of corn would be walked over. Sometimes an instrument would be pulled over and this was the threshing process. It was a process that the animals enjoyed because they were unmuzzled. They could eat while they walked. They were in a fairly confined area. It wasn't hard work for the animal. It was enjoyable work for the animal.

Notice it says in verse 11, “Ephraim was a trained calf that loved to thresh.”⁶

And God says that he had made the choice to spare her fair neck. That is, he had chosen this comparatively easy work, this easy responsibility for his people. Here is what God is saying. To serve him is to carry a light burden. To serve him is not a life of irresponsibility. To walk with God means a life of labor. It is a life of responsibility. But compared with the way of sin, it is always true to say that serving the Lord is an easy responsibility. It is a pleasurable responsibility. It is a fulfilling responsibility. God gives you work to do, but it is fulfilling. It is pleasurable. It is enjoyable. It represents something that you would love to do.

That is what it means to serve God.

In fact, aren't you glad today, child of God, that you have responsibilities? Have you ever stopped to think about the blessing it is that God gives us things to do? I don't know if you are like me, but I have to admit to you that there are weekends that I have looked forward to because I had nothing to do. And I thought, you know what I am going to do with my weekend with nothing to do? I am going to do nothing. I am going to do nothing with my weekend with nothing to do. I am just going to enjoy doing nothing.

⁴ Hosea 10:11.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Ibid.

And I have got to tell you that on most of those weekends, by the end of those weekends when I had nothing to do, I wished I had had something to do. Can anybody identify with that? You know, you end up basically wasting a day. You say, “What did I do on this day? I did nothing.”

No, God is good to us. He doesn't give us nothing to do. He gives us many things to do. But the way of the Lord is a way of joyful labor, meaningful labor, productive labor, fulfilling labor. That is life in the Lord. And he had given Israel like a trained calf the choice job to do. He had given this trained calf work that was something that they loved.

I think back to the Garden of Eden. I think about Adam and Eve when they were first formed. God gave them responsibility even then in a paradise. They had work to do.

Genesis 2:15.

“The LORD God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to work it and keep it.”⁷

They had work to do.

And the LORD God commanded the man, saying, “You may surely eat of every tree of the garden, but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die.”⁸

Oh, they had a paradise to fully enjoy. Anything here is yours. They had the choice spot, designed specifically for them by God. And they forfeited it through sin. That is what Israel is doing. She has been given a choice spot, designed for her by God. He had chosen to spare her fair neck, but she is forfeiting that choice spot through sin.

Notice the end of verse 11...

By the way, we are thinking about this, right? To choose sin is to choose the hard way. So if you are submitted to God, you have positive responsibility. God gives you responsibilities, but they are positive. Not notice something. But the way of sin is the way of negative responsibility, because God says, verse 11:

“I will put Ephraim to the yoke.”⁹

I am going to yoke up this animal now. I am not going to spare her fair neck anymore. Judah is going to have to plow. Jacob is going to have to harrow for himself.

To harrow is for the animal to carry along behind it this instrument that was meant to

⁷ Genesis 2:15.

⁸ Genesis 2:16-17.

⁹ Hosea 10:11.

level the ground after it had been plowed to prepare it further for the work that had to be done. This was comparatively hard labor.

God says, "I gave you the choice kind of work, but because you have sinned against me, I am going to yoke you up to the sin you have chosen and now your work is going to be hard."

It is a simple picture, but it is a timeless picture. It is a perfect picture to communicate this truth and the truth is this. When you choose sin you have foolishly chosen then hard pathway.

I wonder how many could stand today if given the opportunity to testify to this congregation that there was a time in your life when set before you was life and death, blessing and cursing and you chose sin and you could stand and tell us today that the life you choose was a hard life.

By the way, this isn't light. When you choose sin this isn't, well, you know, it is a little bit harder way, but it is going to work out in the end. I mean, there are times we choose a harder way, but the end is blessing. That is not sin. That is why it is a foolish choice. You choose the hard way and at the end of it there is no blessing. There is nothing productive. There is nothing joyful in the end. There is nothing that will fulfill the human heart. It is an empty, vain, destructive, delusional way, because at the end of it all, though sin promises pleasure for season and delivers it for a season, at the end of that road there is nothing but heartache and loss, devastation and destruction. It is a foolish choice.

Joyful, productive living versus joyless, vain living. Obedience to God versus the choice of sin. Israel is choosing sin and Israel now will plow.

That leads us to the second point this morning. To choose sin is to choose the hard way. Now notice the second thing in verse 12. To choose repentance is to choose a blessed way.

Here is the amazing fact of the matter in Hosea chapter 10. Even as God is telling his people how they are going to suffer of their sin, even in the midst of announcing their judgment, he is still making known to them a different way. It doesn't have to be this way.

If today God is saying, if now God is saying, if now you will choose to repent and head a different direction and choose a different course, you can have a different harvest. There can be a different outcome. God announces to them the way to have better days.

You want to know how to have better days? Maybe there is somebody here today. You are on that course of sin. It has already been hard for you. It has already been unfulfilling to you, but somehow you are still believing sin's lie and you still remain on this course that at the end it is going to just prove you to be a fool, but there you are. You are still heading that way.

Listen. I announce to you today good news. I tell you how to have a different outcome and I tell it to you not from Richard's head, but from the Word of God. This is God's way to have a better outcome.

What is it? Look at verse 12.

“Sow for yourselves righteousness.”¹⁰

And if you do that, what are you going to reap? Steadfast love.

“Break up your fallow ground, for it is the time to seek the LORD, that he may come and rain righteousness upon you.”¹¹

This is the way of repentance. Remember, I said earlier. Repentance is not just a change of attitude, is it? It is a change of attitude that will always express itself in a different course, a different choice, a different action, a different way of living. This is why God says, verse 12, “Sow for yourselves righteousness.”¹² I mean, begin to sow righteousness. Turn around. Depart from your sin. Walk a new direction. Live a different life.

By the way, this isn't Legalism, because notice the context for it, verse 12. It is time to seek the Lord. You see, it is a new way because you are walking after him. It is a new direction because you are going to walk after him. We are not talking about behaviorism. We are not just talking about moralism. We are talking about a new way because you believe God.

You see, it is a way of faith. It is a way of believing God, listening to God, loving God, following God. This is the new course. And it is a way of practical righteousness. You turn from your sin to do the things that please the Lord.

How do I know it pleases the Lord? He has told me in his Word. So I hear him. I listen to him. I believe him and I follow him. This is what it means to sow righteousness.

And God says to us that when we sow righteousness, do you know what we find in return? Not loss, not devastation, not the things you find in the way of sin. What do you find in return? You will reap steadfast love. You will reap the **חֶסֶד** (kheh'-sed) of God. You will reap the faithful, covenant love of God.

I will say it to you this way. You will find when you serve the Lord that there is never an empty return. You will find as you serve the Lord that all his promises are true. Everything he has promised to his people he will be to his people. He promises his people satisfaction of heart. He will satisfy your heart. He promises to his people his comfort, his protection, his care, his provision. Above all else he promises to his people fellowship

¹⁰ Hosea 10:12.

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Ibid.

with himself and God is true to his Word. You sow righteousness and what you are going to get from him is his own loving care for your life.

But, you see, you have to sow righteousness, don't you? You have to turn. You have to repent. You have to turn from your sinful way and you have to follow him. You have to seek his face.

By the way, do you notice something else he says to do there in verse 12 if you repent? He says you have got to break up your fallow ground, the ground that is hardened, the ground that is unproductive because it hasn't been prepared for seed. There is work to be done if you are going to sow righteousness. That which has been neglected, that which has been left to itself, you now have to give your attention to. Prepare yourself to meet with God.

What does that mean practically? It means the things that you have been neglecting, the things that you have turned a blind ear to, a deaf ear to, you will now turn and be honest with yourself and look at it the way that it really is and you are willing to soften your heart and allow the Lord to do fresh new work in your life.

Anybody here with a hard heart and you have been trying to ignore the things that the Spirit of God has been striving with you about? You know the things that are wrong in your life. You know where you have gone astray. You know what you needs to change, but you have been to this point unwilling. You have hardened your heart. Well, today will you break up that hardened ground? Will you turn your attention to what has been unproductive and left alone and say, "God, right here, at this point where I have been stubborn, right at this point do a fresh work in my life I surrender to you"?

Listen. God says in verse 12 if you will do this, if you will change your ways, if you will turn to him, if you will seek the Lord by the way that he says it is time to do that, doesn't he? It is the time to seek the Lord. When is the time to seek the Lord, beloved? When is the time to seek the Lord? What day is the day of salvation? What is the answer? Now. Right now. It is time to seek the Lord, not tomorrow, not next month, not after you try your sin a little while longer. It is time to seek the Lord now.

And God says if you will do this, he says this. Here is what you, in a sense, allow him to do, because he is not going to bless your sin.

"That he may come..."¹³

That means God is going to arrive on the scene. That means God is going to show up. That means God is going to show himself present and mighty. And do you know what he is ready to do and willing to do and wanting to do?

"Rain righteousness upon you."¹⁴

¹³ Hosea 10:12.

¹⁴ Ibid.

I mean, form his own character in your life. He doesn't promise you material blessings. He doesn't promise you you are going to be healthy and wealthy and the most successful person in your business and everything is always going to go the way you want it to go, if your focus is an earthly, sensual focus, no, no, no. This is not what God promises you. He promises you himself. He promises you real righteousness. You turn to him that he may rain righteousness down upon you, fill your life with his own character.

Is that what you want? To choose sin is to choose the hard way when God offers you a life of positive responsibility, fulfilling labor. But to choose the other way is going to mean repentance so that you are willing to sow righteousness.

By the way, that is not an immediate thing, is it? You know, the whole comparison God uses, it is not an overnight thing. It takes time to prepare ground. It takes time to plow. It takes time to sow. This is a determined, long term view of life.

I will serve the Lord and I will serve him until I see my Savior face to face. You sow righteousness and this is the fruit that you get in return. God promises blessing for obedience. He does. He calls us to the right not only because it is right—and that is enough—but amazing as it is, he also blesses us in the way of doing right.

Who needs to hear this today? Who needs to heed this today? Who is wasting his or her life in the way of sin? And today you need to hear the Lord say, "Oh, there is a different way."

Will you listen?

Which gets to the third point, verses 13 through 15, and that is this. To choose stubbornness is to choose a terrible end. Right? There is the way of sin. There is the way of repentance. And if you don't choose repentance what have you chosen? You have chosen to be stubborn, sinfully stubborn. And God gives a very gracious word in verses 13 through 15 to our ears. It may not immediately sound gracious, but it is gracious, because here is what God does. Listen.

He says, "I am going to tell you why you are where you are and I am going to tell you where you are going to go. If you don't listen to me, if you don't repent, if you don't turn, you already have a taste of where you are headed in your present circumstances. And I want to remind you why you are where you are right now. And then I want to announce to you where you are headed."

Now, folks, listen. I have learned both in my own life when I have lived in sin and I have learned in ministering to others, human beings don't like to hear either one of these things. We don't like to hear why we are where we are. In fact, sometimes it just makes us angry, doesn't it? I don't need you to tell me why my life is in the shape it is.

Oh, but do you know what? We do need to hear it, because we stubbornly try to ignore it. No, we do need to hear why we are where we are and I will tell you what else we need to hear. We need to hear where we are headed if we don't listen to God.

God tells them, first of all, why they are where they are. Look at verse 13.

“You have plowed iniquity.”¹⁵

And as a result you have repeated injustice. I mean, look at your land, God is saying. All around sin is bursting out. Bloodshed touches bloodshed. People are dishonest with each other. No one keeps covenant. People kill each other. The land is in a mess in terms of its moral condition and God says, “Do you know why there is injustice everywhere? It is because you have plowed iniquity.”

By the way, it is interesting. He doesn't say you have sown iniquity. He could have said that. It is true. But he says you have plowed iniquity. What does that indicate? You have worked at it. I mean you have prepared this harvest. You have worked at sinning. You have given your efforts to sinning. And do you know what you have gotten in return for that? You have got injustice all over the place. It is hard to sin against God. It results in a hard life. And don't be deceived about it. That is the harvest you always get when you plow iniquity. You reap what you sow. There is not a single human being who has ever lived on this planet who plowed iniquity that got any other harvest on that crop.

Notice the next thing God says.

“You have eaten the fruit of lies.”¹⁶

You have believed lies. They had gone after the Baals. They had gone after false gods. They are living like the nations around them.

You have believed lies and they have told lies and they have lived according to lies because they are living as though the Baals had provided for them, these fertility gods, as though the crops are the result of Baal and everything else is a result of Baal. So they have not only believed lies, they have been telling lies. They also believed they are not in danger as someone like Hosea—we saw this a couple of Sundays ago—as someone like Hosea faithfully declared their coming judgment, they said he was a mad man. They mocked him. And, as a result, what are they getting back in return? The fruit of lies.

You believe lies. You tell lies. You live lies and you get the fruit of lies and there is no good fruit there.

Notice what is at the root of this, verse 13. Why are they where they are? Do you know why? Because they trusted in their own way.

¹⁵ Hosea 10:13.

¹⁶ Ibid.

You talk about life versus death. This is really what it is about. Will you believe God or will you believe yourself? Will you trust his way or will you trust your own way? And this has so many different expressions because in the life of Israel it was expressed in political ways. It was expressed in the way they tried to do treaties. It was expressed in the way they did business. So, I mean, there are so many different ways this gets expressed, but at the root of it, this is the issue. Whose way are you trusting? Do you believe God and his Word or do you trust your own way?

In their case, notice, they have trusted in their own military might.

“Because you have trusted in your own way and in the multitude of your warriors.”¹⁷

Here is the amazing result of this. Get this. They have trusted in their own military might. So do you know what they are going to get as a result? If they had trusted in God they would have peace and safety, but because they have trusted in their military arm, guess what they are going to get? They are going to get war.

Verse 14.

“Therefore the tumult of war shall arise among your people, and all your fortresses shall be destroyed.”¹⁸

Where are they right now? They are reaping what they have sown. They have plowed iniquity. They are reaping injustice. They have believed lies, told lies, lived according to lies. They are eating the fruit of it. They have trusted in their own way and, therefore, they are out of the way. They are in all sorts of trouble.

This is why they are where they are.

Why are you where you are this morning?

Friend who has been living in sin, and you have to admit with your own mouth that you are not satisfied, that there is an emptiness in your soul? Why is that? It is because you have plowed iniquity. It is because you have believed lies. You have told lies. You have lived according to lies. It is because you have trusted in your own way.

Do you hear this morning from the Word of God, verse 12? There is a different way. If you will sow righteousness, you will reap his love. If you will break up the fallow ground and realize it is time to seek the Lord, he will come. He will come and he will rain righteousness upon you. Will you listen?

And if you are stubborn and if you won't, God not only announces why you are where you are, he also announces where they are headed.

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Hosea 10:14.

Verse 14.

Therefore, because you have trusted your own way and all the rest. Therefore, here is what is coming.

War, the sound, the roar of war will rise among your people. All your fortresses shall be destroyed.

And then God does something here. We have lost this to history. We don't know exactly what he is talking about here, but he talks about some specific battle that took place where there were these atrocities.

He says, "As Shalman destroyed Beth-arbel on the day of battle..."¹⁹

And on this particular day of battle notice what he said happens.

"...mothers were dashed in pieces with their children."²⁰

I mean there was this heartless, cruel destruction of human life and God says, "Because you have chosen your own way, do you know what is going to come?"

He says, "This it shall be done to you, O Bethel."²¹

I mean, the Assyrians are coming and when they come it is going to be heartless. It is going to be devastating. It is going to be cruel. And why? Why are they headed toward this terrible end?

End of verse 15.

"Because of your great evil."²²

Because you choose sin.

Life and death is set before you. You choose death and you are going to get death. You will reap what you sow.

Their self trust is going to lead to destruction, utter devastation, end of verse 15.

"At dawn the king of Israel shall be utterly cut off."²³

¹⁹ Hosea 10:14.

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ Ibid.

²² Hosea 10:15.

²³ Ibid.

What kind of destruction? Well, this kind. You are not going to have a nation anymore. You are not going to have land anymore.

What kind of destruction? Well, this kind. You are not going to have a nation anymore. You are not going to have land anymore. You are not going to have a king anymore. You are going to lose it all.

Can I say to you this morning that when you chose sin there is a lot to lose in this life. There is a lot to lose in this life. But you choose sin and there is an absolute utter devastation that is beyond this life. It is called an eternity outside of the loving, accepting presence of God. It is called hell.

The good news this morning is that God's nature, as expressed and displayed toward Israel has not changed. We will see it tonight in chapter 11. The Father heart of God, so that God, just as he warned Israel, just as he announced a different way and a better way to Israel, so God does with the world today. So he does with this congregation this morning.

Why is our world in the state that it is in? Do you see injustice bursting out everywhere? Do you see a world that is in the upheaval and the loss of the destruction? It is all around us. Do you see it?

Why is it in this condition? It can be explained with one word, can't it? Sin. This world is like it is because of sin. This is why we are where we are.

Well, where is it headed? Where is this world of sin headed? It is headed to absolute, utter destruction. Can it be different? For souls living in this world right now, for you, friend, can it be different? Instead of injustice and the fruit of lies, can you know righteousness? Can you know the perfect faithful love of God in this world? Can you know it? Yes, yes you can. How has God made the way possible for us to avert destruction and know the everlasting love of God? How has God done it?

God gave his only begotten Son whose name is Jesus, who entered into this sin sick world, born of a virgin, God in human flesh who then lived a sinless life in this sin sick world and engages life as a perfect substitute, the Lamb of God on a cruel rugged cross. And there he became the sin sacrifice of God as the wrath of God was poured out upon his own Son that our sins might be atoned for, that is, all the sins of all those who will look to Jesus for life.

And if today you will turn from your sin and look to God's Son, there is forgiveness and reconciliation and not just for a moment or a day, but for forever.

Have you trusted in that way?

By the way, realize something. You come to a king when you come to Jesus. You come to a king. You don't come to a beggar. You don't come to someone who is wringing his hands and he says, "Oh, if you don't come to me I will be undone."

No, listen. He doesn't need you. But he has loved you and he does care, as we will see tonight. He does care. He does beseech sinners through the preaching of the gospel. He does beg men to be reconciled to himself, but not because God has any need. It is because he knows of the great need that you have that he begs you to be reconciled to him because that is what is best for you and that is what is to his glory in the saving side of things.

But will you listen? Will you choose life?

Through the preaching of the gospel life and death has been set before you this day. And the Bible says today is the day to seek the Lord. It is time to seek the Lord. Will you turn to it? Will you trust it? Will you look to his mercy seat? Will you look to his perfect Son, the only one in whom men can be reconciled to God.

I have got news for you, friend. You can't come to God any other way. You can't be reconciled to him any other way but Jesus. Will you run to his side?

"Sow for yourself righteousness. Reap steadfast love. Break up your fallow ground. For it is time to seek the LORD, that he may come and rain righteousness upon you."²⁴

Let's bow together for prayer.

Our Father in heaven, we thank you that though you need nothing, you offer to us everything in your Son. We thank you that you love us, Lord, though we are unlovely and though all of us who know you for a long time or we spurned your love and even now there are some sitting in this place who have spurned your love, we pray for them, Father, that today they would hear your voice, today they would choose life, today they would turn from their stubborn, sinful way and know that positive, blessed responsibility that belongs to the disciples of Jesus. Lord, wherever we have been foolish, wherever even we as your children, where we have listened to the voice of sin, I pray that we would wise up this moment and sow righteousness. We love you, Lord. We thank you for loving us in the way that you have, that, indeed, those who know you through your Lord Jesus, Lord, we do meet with your steadfast love every day. Let us not forget what we have heard today, Father. Let us not be unresponsive to it. We ask in Jesus' name. Amen.

²⁴ Hosea 10:12.