

Hosea

Forgiveness for the Wayward

The major prophet, Hosea, addresses Israel a few years later than Amos when the Assyrian conquest is further along and the illusory confidence of the nation of Israel has by this time been shaken. The nation's unrighteousness is now being more fully acknowledged. Yet it is now a time that the society at large is having feelings of hopelessness and futility.

Hosea does not take back the stern judgment of Profound Reality that Amos has announced upon the over-confidence of a nation that was not facing the reality that it is confronting. But now, Hosea is speaking words of forgiveness and a fresh start for the survivors of the horrific tragedy that is well underway.

Hosea likens Israel to an unfaithful wife who, though deserving complete rejection, has been experiencing a period of tough training, and is now being offered restoration to full standing as wife of the household—in this case, the household of the Almighty Awesomeness who rules the course of history.

Hosea also likens Israel to a child whom this Awesome Yahweh has raised since the days of the Exodus—a child that God loves and will not abandon to complete doom.

Hosea is confronting his listeners with an Awe-filling choice—rather than (1) give up and die out as the people who revere this God, they can (2) accept the challenge of receiving the gift of forgiveness and begin again to build continuity with the Mosaic breakthrough.

In order to hear Hosea's voice speaking into our situation today, we might recall what it felt like in the 1960's of our US history. when Martin Luther King Jr. was a voice of hope in relation to the established racism that at the time seemed almost impossible to break. For those of us who are African American, or are identified with the African American oppression, King's dream at that time was like a bright light of hope, shining in a very dark place.

A sermon given at that time by James Bevel, one of King's associates, spoke a message similar to Hosea's. The title of his sermon and of a repeated line spoken again and again throughout that grim, but hopeful talk was "Love can find a way!"

Hosea and Bevel may be the right prophet for today as we face the gloom and doom of the Disunited States of America. We need to hear again (1) Hosea telling us about

forgiveness and a fresh start, (2) King about dreaming dreams of justice, and (3) Bevel telling us that "Love can find a way!"

Love in this context is an active doing of our whole lives, not a passive sentiment of comfortable escape from reality. It is this sort of love to vigorously put down the enemies that are destroying our nation. It is a stern way of love to find a way for all types and states of people. It is an empathetic sort of love that pays attention to everyone in this tough time of life, and also to listen to the prophets of old and allow their motivating imagery to inspire our living.

Love is a human essence that we don't have to create. It is a deep mountain of care within each of us. It is love for whatever and whoever neighbors us. It is the love that remains when all our foolishness, self-promotion, and lies are relinquished to the Truth of our real situation and our true capacity for loving response..

And such love is aware that human social life is not something inevitable that is going to work out OK without human response-ability making good choices. And human social life is not some state of things set in an everlasting fate. Choices can make everything much worse. And choices can make everything much better. "Love can find a way!" Hosea did this love for an extreme moment for his whole nation and for his people with those ancient Mosaic gifts.