

Undiscovered Losses – The Test of Time

Israel Has Rebelled Against God – Hosea 7:8-11

⁸The people of Israel have mixed with foreigners; they are a thin piece of bread scorched on one side.

⁹They don't seem to realize how weak and feeble they are; their hair has turned gray, while foreigners rule.

¹⁰I am the LORD, their God, but in all of their troubles their pride keeps them from returning to me.

No Help from Foreign Nations - *The LORD said:* ¹¹Israel is a senseless bird, fluttering back and forth between Egypt and Assyria.

THE AREA OF THE TEXT - Our text comes from the book of Hosea. He was subjected to perhaps ***the greatest humiliation of all the prophets*** except for maybe Jeremiah.

- He had to **love a woman** who was **wayward**.
- A woman who **served as a mirror** for the nation to look to.
- Her **actions**, her delving into **harlotry**, ***served as a mirror*** to the Israelites who had pursued other gods.

Israel was now beginning to grow old.

- She had **started out great**.
- The ten tribes to the north which was **the fairest part of the land** of Palestine.
- She had been **inspired by** the voices of **Elijah and Elisha**.
- But now **her youthfulness was fleeing** from her.

Hosea was a man who lived ahead of his times.

- He had a very **clear perception that Israel was adrift** and heading for the rocks.
- Yet, regardless of the tone of his message, ***his words went unheeded***.

Hosea had the ability to use words to paint pictures.

Just within the **first few verses of chapter seven** **consider the pictures that Hosea uses:**

- VS. 1 -- A troop of robbers **NKJV**
- 4 -- An oven heated by the baker
- 4 -- The kneaded dough
- 6 -- The heart is like an oven
- 6 -- Sleeping bakers
- 7 -- Devoured judges and fallen kings
- 8 -- An unturned cake. (thin piece of bread)**CEV**

But when we get to verse nine of chapter seven, ***Hosea illustrates the predicament:***

- The dream is dying and her possibilities are becoming limited.
- Yet **the worst** of all is that **her losses are undiscovered**.
- She had **no idea** that there was something missing.

Hosea 7:9 KJV - "Strangers have devoured his strength, and he knoweth it not: yea, gray hairs are here and there upon him, **yet he knoweth not.**"

* Hosea 7:9 - CEV

⁹ *They don't seem to realize how weak and feeble they are; their hair has turned gray, **while foreigners rule.** (They Don't even know....)*

There are some losses that will reveal themselves at once.

- There **losses** will affect us **immediately**.
- There are **some losses** that only the test of time will reveal their absence.
- It is when the temptation comes calling to us that we soon realize **those undiscovered losses**.

Time is a great healer and a great eroder.

It dilutes commitment, blurs vision, undermines values, and destroys virtues.

Gray hair comes over time.

At the onset, there is no growth and there is no decay.

Things are static. **No progress, no regress.**

- Life has reached a plateau.
- One lives in comfortable silence.
- **No accomplishments** but also **no failures**.
- Her strength had departed but she had **not understood the reality** of it yet.

Consider what the Psalmist specifically wrote of the tribe of Ephraim:

Psalm 78:9-11 - ⁹ *The warriors from Ephraim were armed with arrows, but **they ran away** when the battle began.*

¹⁰ ***They broke their agreement with God**, and they turned their backs on his teaching.*

¹¹ ***They forgot** all he had done, even the mighty miracles (For their ancestors)*

Armed and ready for the fight, yet when the fight came to them, they turned back in the day of battle. They forget the works of God in their lives.

LOST THINGS

In the Bible, there are a lot of illustrations that give to us **the essence of things that are lost** and **the effect that they had on the individuals**.

*****The Immediate Loss**

In the Old Testament, the story of Samson illustrates the penalty of immediate loss.

- He dabbled with **the Philistines** and finally fell into the arms of Delilah.
- **His great strength** was a mystery to them.
- **He could** carry off gates, kill lions, destroy their fields with fire,
- But **he could not control** his own passions.

The Spirit moved on him and great strength came.

- But the key to his strength was his Nazarite vow.
- A vow that kept him from strong drink and from cutting his hair.
- Yet, when Delilah weaseled the secret out of him, **his loss was immediate**.

Judges 16:18-21 -

¹⁸ Delilah realized that he was telling the truth. So she sent someone to tell the Philistine rulers, "Come to my house one more time. **Samson has finally told me the truth.**" The Philistine rulers went to Delilah's house, and they brought along the silver they had promised her.

¹⁹ Delilah had lulled Samson to sleep with his head resting in her lap. She signaled to one of the Philistine men as she began cutting off Samson's seven braids. And by the time she was finished, Samson's strength was gone. Delilah tied him up ²⁰ and shouted, "**Samson, the Philistines are attacking!**"

Samson woke up and thought, "I'll break loose and escape, just as I always do."
He did not realize that the LORD had stopped helping him.

²¹ The Philistines grabbed Samson and poked out his eyes. They took him to the prison in Gaza and chained him up. Then they put him to work, turning a millstone to grind grain.

When the time to fight came, he could not do so because of the departure of his strength.

- The **element of power** had forsaken him in his greatest hour of need.
- He was **Blind**, he was **bound** in chains, and was sent to **grind** corn.

All was lost.

Judges 16:20 - He did not realize that the LORD had stopped helping him.

- Perhaps some of the saddest words in Scripture, **it was an immediate loss.**
- His sleep had robbed him of the capacity to comprehend his own weakness.
- **No man**, regardless of his status in the Kingdom of God **is invincible.**
- There has to be that **continual striving with God** –
- Through **prayer, fasting, the Word of God, Fellowship, & Evangelism.**

*****The Gradual Loss** - There are some losses that are only understood over the course of time.

- That is the great test of every man, we must stand the test of time.
- **God's great method of testing is not trial or tribulation** but rather **it is time.**
- **If I can just be faithful** over time, then **all will be well** with my soul.

Such is the case with Mary and Joseph.

Luke 2:41-46 - The Boy Jesus in the Temple

⁴¹ Every year Jesus' parents went to Jerusalem for Passover. ⁴² And when Jesus was twelve years old, they all went there as usual for the celebration. ⁴³ After Passover his parents left, but **they did not know that Jesus had stayed** on in the city. ⁴⁴ They thought he was traveling with some other people, and they went a whole day before they started looking for him. ⁴⁵ When they could not find him with their relatives and friends, they went back to Jerusalem and started looking for him there. ⁴⁶ Three days later they found Jesus sitting in the temple, listening to the teachers and asking them questions.

It took a day's journey for them to discover that Jesus was not with them.

- There are some things that only come to light under the duress of trial.
- **When the trials began to weigh in on our lives** –
- Often times it is then that we find out that **deterioration has occurred**.

- **Love** has been replaced by anger.
- **Joy** has been substituted with grief.
- **Peace** has lost out to discontentment.
- **Mercy** has been replaced by swift justice.
- **Faith** has opted for doubt.
- **Temperance** has given way to self-will.

None of this was **known until the circumstances of the trial** had been embraced.

There are a **number of spiritual activities that we often attempt to accomplish without the presence of Christ**.

- **We use** organizational skills, personal talent, or even the new methods.
- It is then that **after all** of the labor -
- **We discover** that the **Christ is not** with us.....

WHAT JESUS HAD TO SAY ABOUT LOST THINGS - When we begin to look to the earthly ministry of Jesus Christ, **He told us about lost things:**

- **Lost sheep** -- Matt. 10:6; 15:24
- **Lost coins** -- Luke 15:9
- **Lost men** -- Luke 15:24

There is one thing that He spoke of that illustrates **exactly the deterioration of the soul.**

Matthew 5:13 NKJV - Believers Are Salt and Light

¹³ “You are the salt of the earth; but if the salt loses its flavor, how shall it be seasoned? It is then good for nothing but to be thrown out and trampled underfoot by men.

Jesus spoke of the salt that had lost its flavor.

- It had the same weight.
- It had the same character.
- It had the same appearance.
- **But *the taste was gone.***
- **Such salt is good for nothing.**

Our lives are often the same way.

- **We look the same, we walk the same, we act the same -**
- But **the fire** has left our eyes....
- **Our great hopes** of doing something for God have vanished.
- **Disappointment** has robbed us of **our intensity.**
- **Disillusionment** has caused us to **build walls.**

Yet the gray hair does not appear overnight.

- It is **a gradual** day by day occurrence.
- We go **gradually** down the path.

C. S. Lewis -- The safest road to hell is the gradual one--the gentle slope, the soft underfoot, without sudden turnings, without milestones, without signposts.

How Does the Salt Lose It's Savor?

There are things that contribute to our deteriorations.

****An increasing association with the world - When we began to associate with the world – the love of the Father is not in us!**

- There is Scripture that we cannot get around.

I John 2:15-17 - Do Not Love the World

¹⁵ Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, **the love of the Father is not in him.**

¹⁶ For all that *is* in the world—the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life—is not of the Father but is of the world.

¹⁷ And the world is passing away, and the lust of it; but he who does the will of God abides forever.

****A Toleration of Partial Views of Doctrine**

Acts 2:38 is **not to debate** rather it is to save.

Acts 2:38 NKJV - Then Peter said to them, “**Repent**, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and **you shall receive** the gift of the Holy Spirit.

There comes the **great crossroads in life** - concerning New Testament salvation.

The fulfillment of John 3:3-5 NKJV - ***came on the Day of Pentecost.***

³ Jesus answered and said to him, “Most assuredly, I say to you, **unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.**”

⁴ Nicodemus said to Him, “How can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter a second time into his mother’s womb and be born?”

⁵ Jesus answered, “Most assuredly, I say to you, **unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God.**

****Inattention To Our Own Spiritual Condition**

Apostasy (**willful falling away**) begins in the place of prayer.

- When a man starts **neglecting his place of prayer**, **he is straying** from the light that **reveals the secret faults.**
- When he **gets out of that place that God can examine the soul**, again there is a nail that is coming loose.

CLOSE: – **Undiscovered losses in the end** will cause our soul to fall!!!

Song of Solomon 2:15 CEV – Our vineyards are in blossom; we must catch the little foxes that destroy the vineyards.

- Solomon informs us **that it is the little foxes** that spoil the vine.
- It is **those small things** that **destroy the life**.

The theme of this story is that little duties neglected bring great downfalls.

- The undiscovered losses in the end will cause a man's soul to fall.

The large foxes will go after the fruit that is on the vine, but **the little foxes** destroy the vine.

- Though some damage may be done by **the big fox**,
- One may still have an opportunity to bear fruit.
- But the damage that is done by the little foxes -
- **Ruins any opportunity of a future crop**.

The little foxes:

- A **critical** spirit.
- An **offended** spirit.
- A **discouraged** spirit.
- A spirit of **jealousy** and **envy**.
- A spirit of **worldliness**.

Little foxes hide behind the vines. You can see the big foxes but it is **the small ones that destroy**.

In this room, there are:

- Saints who have lost their fire.
- Young people who have drifted from commitments.
- New converts who are beginning to feel the shifting sands under their feet.
- Even preachers who have lost their inspiration.

There are areas in your life that have been found wanting for quite some time.

*****The devil loves to have you in the position.**

Because, when you are in that region, **you will never be what God wants you to be.**