

Sunday, July 31, 2022 – Easter Hill United Methodist Church
Eighth Sunday after Pentecost

Bible Study – Hosea 11:1-11

“Cords of Kindness”

Open with a word of prayer

Gathering Time (5-10 minutes)

In groups of two or three, respond to the following, “Who is the person hardest for you to extend love to?”

Hosea 11:1-11. Context. The prophet Hosea was active in the third quarter of the 8th century BCE (750-725) in the northern kingdom of Israel, which he generally calls ‘Ephraim’ as in this week’s reading. Hosea lived in a time of social upheaval, political chaos, and war - first against the kingdom of Judah and then against the Assyrians who eventually crushed Ephraim and took the people into captivity (721 BCE). As Hosea understood it, the cause of Israel’s troubles was its unfaithfulness to God’s covenant - sacrificing to the Baals, the pagan gods of the region. To symbolize this unfaithfulness, God had commanded Hosea to take a wife who was incapable of marital fidelity and who chased after many lovers. Hosea also uses the image of loving parent/rebellious son to describe the relationship between God and the people. For their rebellion, Hosea foretells that they will again return to “Egypt,” that is, captivity, this time in Assyria. In Israelite law, parents had the right to hand over a rebellious son to the authorities, who could hand down a sentence of death by stoning. In spite of God’s pain and anger at the behavior of God’s own son/people, God will not, cannot, hand them over to destruction. It had not turned out so well for Admah and Zeboiim, two cities that had been destroyed like Sodom and Gomorrah.

Read Hosea 11:1-11

What touches your heart, what do you hear in the scripture, what questions do you have, or what doesn’t make sense to you in the story?

Write down your thoughts or share your thoughts with the person or group you are with.

Read Hosea 11:1-11 again

Some reflection questions – Write down your thoughts or share your thoughts with the person or group you are with.

- Describe the feeling of a parent (or friend) who seeks the best for a child (or friend), only to watch that individual persist in going astray.
- Work as a group to restate verse 4 and the tender care God expresses about Israel.
- Why can't God just give up on the people of Israel (v. 8)?
- How does God demonstrate God's transcendence in verse 9? What does that reveal about God?
- What do we learn about God from verses 10 and 11? What do we learn about people from this passage?
- **(R)** How might a prophet notice the gap between where God calls the people and where the people are living currently? How might you be called to do that today?

Closing Reflection Question

How is this scripture calling you to change, to see, to be or what might it be calling you to do?

Prayer (10 minutes). Share prayer requests and respond appropriately.

Sending Forth (2 minutes). After all, have shared, end by praying the following or a similar prayer:

God of grace, because of your covenant faithfulness, you do not give up on us or let us go even when we deserve it. We cry out again and again: "Forgive us! Have mercy on us! Heal us! Sanctify us! Bring your kingdom!" Today, give us the eyes to see and the ears to hear where we encounter your grace and mercy through others. **Amen.**

And now we pray The Lord's Prayer....

Our Father who art in Heaven
hallowed be thy name.

Thy kingdom come, thy will be done,
on earth as it is in Heaven.

Give us this day our daily bread and forgive us our trespasses,
as we forgive those who trespass against us.

Lead us not into temptation
but deliver us from evil.

For thine is the kingdom, the power
and the glory, for ever and ever. Amen.