

WHAT IS YOUR VIEW OF THE HEART OF GOD?

Earlier this week, I had every intention of sticking with Psalm 19:11 as the overarching theme and bringing a message on either **a warning** from God's Word—or **a blessing** that God promises for obeying His Word. We may come back to that **next** week, but the Lord led very specifically in a **different** direction **this** week.

Please turn to Luke 19 and follow along as I read verses 11-13. I'm not going to preach on this parable but do want to explain it a little bit before I share with you why I chose to **start** here.

--We know from vs 11, that Jesus spoke this parable because "they"—meaning the disciples and probably many others—were expecting Jesus to set up His earthly kingdom when He got to Jerusalem.

--He tells this parable to correct their thinking. He has to go away first—but will return some day.

--In vs 13, we see that 10 servants are given ten pounds—each servant obviously getting one pound. Although "pound" is a word for money—and in vs 15 the word "money" appears—it symbolizes something **other than** money. How do we know that? Because in "real life," not all of God's servants are **given the same amount money!** Since all of the servants are given the same thing, it doesn't refer to "**gifts**" or "**talents**," either. A number of commentators suggest it is **the gospel**—the good news that Jesus came to "seek and to save that which was lost" like it says in verse 10. Others suggest that the pound refers to **our life**. Each one of us receives **our life from God**—and each one of us have the opportunity to honor God with the life He has given us or "do nothing"—for Him—with it. I lean toward the pound symbolizing our life rather than the Gospel.

--Now vs 15. Here we see that **after** the king returns, He commands His servants to be called unto Him so "that He might know how much every man had gained by trading."

They were expected to **do something** with what they had been given—and it was supposed to **increase!**

--In vs 16, one man gained 10 pounds—not in weight, of course!

--In vs 18, another man had gained 5 pounds.

Now verses 20-21. This servant did **absolutely nothing** with what had been given him. He had the same opportunity to do what the other two did—**invest** what they had been given—but he failed to do that.

Why? He himself tells us! Vs 21 "For I feared thee, because thou art an **austere** man..."

Austere—found only here and in vs 22—means "exacting, grim, harsh, rigid, severe, and strict."

Let that sink in for a minute. God gives His servant his life—and/or the gospel. The servant is supposed to use what was given to him **by God, for God**. Instead, he **does nothing** because—in his mind—God is harsh...and rigid...and severe..." It should be obvious that this servant had **the wrong view** of God!

And because **he** had the wrong view—and Jesus spoke this parable for **our learning** as well as those who first heard it—it is certainly possible that **we can have** the wrong view of God. And so the question we are going to consider—which also serves as the title of the message—is this:

"What is Your View of the Heart of God?"

It goes without saying—but I'm going to say it anyway—that the only way to have the **correct** view of the **heart of God** is to have a **Biblical** view of the **heart of God!** So what does **God tell us** about His heart? It shouldn't be surprising to discover that God tells us what His heart is like in both the Old and New Testaments. This morning we are going to focus on primarily one passage from the Old Testament.

Please take your Bibles and turn to Hosea 11 and follow along as I read verses 1-9.

Before we get into the text itself, let's consider... **1. The background**

The nation of Israel was a united kingdom under Saul, David, and Solomon. The kingdom split into two parts—the northern and southern kingdoms—during the reign of Solomon's son Rehoboam in 930 B.C. Roughly 200 years later, the prophet **Hosea** comes on the scene. He was God's spokesman to the **northern** kingdom—which was also called Israel and Ephraim—from 760 to 710 B.C.—a span covering 50 years! God used Hosea to warn His people about the judgement that was coming through the nation of Assyria.

2. God's beloved people

A. God loved them

Vs 1 "When Israel was a child, then I loved him, and called my son out of Egypt."

"Israel" is referring to the **nation of Israel** that Moses led out of Egypt. The nation of Israel was **at one time just the 12 sons of Jacob** and their families. Jacob was later given the name "Israel" by God Himself. Why did God **choose Israel** to be His special people? Because **He did!** That's **not really an answer**—but that is the one the Bible gives us! **Deut 7:7-8** "The Lord **did not set His love upon you**, nor choose you, **because ye were more in number** than any people; for ye were the fewest of all people: **⁸But because the Lord loved you**, and because He would keep the oath which He had sworn unto your fathers, hath the Lord brought you out with a mighty hand, and redeemed you out of the house of bondmen, from the hand of Pharaoh king of Egypt."

Under the direction of the Holy Spirit, Moses wrote that **God loved them because He loved them!** Here's a couple other things that are interesting about this verse:

1) God chose Jacob (Israel) who was **the younger**, to be serviced by his older twin brother Esau. **When** did God make that choice? While they were in their mother's womb! So God loved **the child** Jacob... and chose him—**before he was born!**

2) Jesus—as a young child—was taken to Egypt by Joseph, along with Mary, of course! They were later "called out" of Egypt. Mt 2:14-15 "When he [Joseph] arose, he took the young child and his mother by night, and departed into Egypt: ¹⁵ And was there until the death of Herod: that it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the Lord by the prophet, saying, **Out of Egypt have I called my son.**" Sounds a lot like the end of vs 1!

God's love for them is also mentioned in vs 4 "I drew them with cords of a man, with bands of love..."

B. God cared for them

Vs 3 "I taught Ephraim also to go, taking them by their arms..." I think the picture here is of a parent guiding a toddler in its first steps. It could also mean being carried. **Deut 1:31** "And in the wilderness, where thou hast seen **how that the Lord thy God bare thee, as a man doth bear his son...**" Either way, there is undoubtedly a demonstration of God's tender care for them.

Mid of vs 4 "and I was to them as they that take off the yoke on their jaws..." I believe the idea here is that just as a **considerate animal owner** takes the yoke off his beasts so they can eat more comfortably, God was tender and considerate in how He dealt with His people. It could also mean removing the yoke of slavery.

End of vs 4 "...and I laid meat unto them." God obviously provided for their physical needs in the wilderness.

I want to pause here for just a moment. America has **not replaced Israel**; we are not God's new chosen nation. **Believers**, however—those who have seen their need to be forgiven and have trusted Jesus and Jesus only as the payment for their sins—are also **the people of God**. **1 Peter 2:9** says as much "But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, **an holy nation**, a peculiar people..."

Although we have not been called out **of Egypt**, we have been called out of the **slavery of sin**—and have been **set free from the penalty of sin**. We also are **loved and cared** for by God. The way God dealt with the nation of Israel is the way God sometimes deals **with us**. And—sadly—the way the children of Israel "treated" God is the way **we as believers** sometimes "treat" God!

With that thought in mind, let's consider next... **3. God's backslidden people**

Vs 2 "As they called them so they went from them..."

Not an easy verse to understand—at least this first part. One commentator says the Hebrew literally reads, "They called to them; thus they went out from them." The "they" is God's prophets—who God sent to the people to call them **back** to God. They didn't listen, however, as seen in the last part of the verse: "...they sacrificed unto Baalim, and burned incense to graven images."

They obviously ignored what the prophets said—and followed idols instead!

End of vs 5 "...they refused to return."

Vs 7 "And my people are bent to backsliding from me..." To be "bent to backsliding" means to be **committed to turning** away from God instead of to Him. Not a very complimentary thing to have God say about you!

Notice the rest of vs 7 “...though they called them to the most High” —though the prophets tried to call God’s people to turn from their ways and come back to God—“none at all would exalt Him.” God’s people refused to exalt God. They would not **honor God as God**; they would not give God what He deserved.

--God deserved to **be praised** by them for His care of them and love for them—but they were bent on going away from Him and refused to return to Him.

--God deserved to **be served** by them because of His rescue of them—but they served false gods instead.

--God deserved to **be worshipped** by them—but they worshipped Baalim and graven images instead.

Once again, I think it is good for us to pause and consider whether “the shoe fits.” Does God use **prophets** to call His people to repent of their backslidings? **No**; because **there are no modern-day prophets!**

--Does God use **pastors and the Bible**? Yes...sometimes He does!

But you know **Who** God uses even **more than** pastors and the Bible? He **Himself** convicts us in the Person of **the Holy Spirit!** People can “avoid” the Bible by not coming to church...and not reading it at home...and not listening to messages on the radio or TV.

But if you are a **true child** of God, you can’t avoid the Holy Spirit! No matter where you go, **He is there** because He is **inside of you!** But the Holy Spirit isn’t just “along for the ride,” so to speak. He will keep “preaching” to you and working on you. And that is something we should be incredibly **thankful for!**

Phil 1:6 “Being confident of this very thing, that He which **hath begun** a good work in you **will perform it** until the day of Jesus Christ:”

Next, let’s consider what God’s response was for their refusal to turn back to Him. Notice vs 5. They would **not return** to Egypt, “but the Assyrian shall be his king.” In other words, they were going to be **exiled to Assyria** and become... **4. God’s banished people**

To be banished means to be forced from **your home-land**—and to be relocated to a foreign land. And that is exactly what happened in 722 B.C. by the king of Assyria!

Vs 6. “And the sword shall abide on his cities, and shall consume his branches, and devour them...”

The sword is a reference to war that would be taking place in the cities. “Consume his branches” may refer to the towns and villages around the cities—or the people themselves being killed. Does that sound like a harsh judgement? Before you answer, let’s not forget that Hosea had been **warning them** for almost **40 years** that God would bring judgment if they refused to turn back to Him!

Judgment was not something God enjoyed bringing upon His people, though. God is **not austere**. He is **not harsh**...He is **not severe**...He **does not delight** in punishment. In fact, God is just the opposite. **He delights in mercy!** We’ll see that as we examine... **5. God’s broken heart over His backslidden people**

A. Seen in God’s words spoken by Hosea

Beginning of vs 8. “**How** shall I give thee up, Ephraim? **how** shall I deliver thee, Israel? **how** shall I make thee as Admah? **how** shall I set thee as Zeboim?” According to Deuteronomy 29:23, Admah and Zeboim were two cities God destroyed along with Sodom and Gomorrah.

Can you **sense God’s** heart here? ‘How can I do this? I don’t want to do this...I don’t want to bring judgment...I don’t want to give you up and turn you over to your enemies for judgment! But you give me no choice!’ **Ellicott wrote**: “In the depth of despair the prophet delivers himself one of the most pathetic [meaning compassionate] passages in Hebrew prophecy.” Another commentator wrote: “The cry is heart-rending. God had loved His people, yet justice demanded that they be punished.”

How do we know that that is what is being conveyed here? Because God **says as much** in the rest of the verse! Mid of vs 8. “...mine heart is turned within me, my repentings are kindled together.”

What does it mean when God says, “My heart is **turned** within me?” Let’s think about the word “turned” first.

--If we turn our heads, we go from **looking** one way to **looking** a different way.

-- But we are not talking about **the head**, are we? We are talking about **the heart**. If our heart turns, it means we go from **feeling** one way—to **feeling** a different way. The thought, then, is that God has this “struggle” inside of Him between justice and mercy.

Let's not forget that we are using human words to try to describe an indescribable God! I like how **Barnes** puts it: "...God is represented in this empassioned expression **as in doubt**, and (so to say) **divided between justice and mercy**, the one pleading against the other. At the last, God so determines, that **both should have their share** in the issue, and that Israel should be both **justly punished** and mercifully spared and relieved."

Much more could be said about the end of vs 8—and vs 9—but I want to look at a couple of more verses that show this is **not the only time** God talks about a "wrestling" in His heart between justice and mercy. This "conflict" in God's heart—if I can use that word—is also...

B. Seen in God's words through Jeremiah

Before we look at what God had Jeremiah write, I want to again share with you the background. Roughly 100 years after the **northern** kingdom was captured and carried off to Assyria as foretold **by Hosea**, God commissioned the prophet **Jeremiah** to preach a similar message to the **southern** kingdom.

Although **the sin** of the southern kingdom was essentially the same—forsaking God and serving idols—they had **extra motivation to repent** because they had already seen God bring judgment upon the northern kingdom!

--Sadly, though—just like the northern kingdom—the southern kingdom **failed to repent**.

--And—just like the northern kingdom—**God brought judgment** upon them for their unwillingness to repent.

--And—just like in the case of the northern kingdom—God brought His judgment **reluctantly**. It was not something He delighted in doing. In fact, it was something God did **against His will!**

How can I make such a claim? Notice **Lamentations 3:31-33** "For the Lord will not cast off for ever: ³² But though **He cause grief**, yet will He have compassion according to the multitude of His mercies. ³³ For **He doth not afflict willingly** nor grieve the children of men."

Let's think about what is being said in vs 33: "For He doth not afflict willingly..."

--Who is the "He"? **God!** --Who "makes" God do things? **No one!**

So if God **does not** afflict willingly—and no one **but God** can make God do things—it is obviously something God would **rather not do!**

If God would rather **not** afflict—meaning chasten, judge, or punish—what would He **rather do?** **Have compassion** by showing mercy like it says in vs 32!

--In Lam 3:32, we see God has a **multitude** of mercies

--In Ps 103:11, we see that God's **mercy is as high as heaven** is above the earth

--In Is 55:7, we read that God will "**abundantly pardon**."

--In II Cor 1:3, we read that God is "the **Father of mercies**..."

--And in Eph 2:4, we read that God is "**rich in mercy**."

What can a proper understanding of God's **mercy-filled** heart do **to** us—and **for** us?

1) We will **not doubt** whether or not God will take us back like the prodigal son did!

2) We will **not delay** in going "boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may **obtain mercy**, and find grace to help in time of need" as instructed in Hebrews 4:16.

3) And we will not **despair** of our never-ending failures because the One who tells us to forgive others "70 times 7" will certainly stop counting when it comes to forgiving us!

In Dane Ortlund's book *Gentle and Lowly*, he has a chapter entitled "Rich in Mercy." As he closes that chapter, he asks: What **does it mean** that God is rich in mercy? He then writes:

"It means His mercy is not calculating and cautious, like ours. It is unrestrained, flood-like, sweeping..."

--It means our haunting shame is not a problem for Him, but the very thing He loves most to work with.

--It means our sins do not cause His love to take a hit. Our sins cause His love to surge forward all the more.

--It means on that day when we stand before Him, quietly, unhurriedly, we will weep with relief, shocked at how impoverished [poor, limited] a view of His mercy-rich heart we had." (179-180).

God is far from harsh and rigid and severe and strict, isn't He? Do you have the proper view of God's heart? If so, shouldn't we want to live for Him—and share what His heart is like with others?

So what does God want you to do with what you heard this morning?

1) Make sure your view of God's heart is a biblical one! He longs to cleanse and forgive and help—but we need to come to Him to receive that cleansing and forgiveness and help!

2) Recognize that you personally need mercy—every day!

--If you are **not a child of God**—if you have never trusted Christ as the payment for your sin—you are in **desperate** need of mercy. God is merciful—but He is also just. He requires perfection for us to get into heaven—and we are not! So He offers us **Christ's perfection**.

--Those that **accept Christ** escape God's judgment

--Those that **refuse Christ** will experience God's judgment in a place called hell

Don't for a moment think that you will be the exception!

--If you **are a child of God**, we still need mercy every day! Why? Because we "blow it" every day!

3) Be thankful for the chastening hand of God. Yes, be thankful for the chastening hand of God. That means He loves you—and wants you back!

4) Live for God. We have one life—that's it! We will be asked to give an account of our life when we meet Christ.