

2025-03-16 - A Three-Fold Revival - Shawn Mathis (318252058133322) SermonOnly

We have the sermon text before us, Hosea chapter 3, verse 5. Hosea chapter 3, verse 5. As we see here, many verses in the Bible have a lot more depth to them when we slow down and meditate upon them, such as here, it talks about the latter days, and so I preached about eschatology somewhat last week, more or less about the idea of the end times in which we live in. And now I want to go back to the verse and go into three ideas, three main thoughts in the text and show how they are applicable today. Let us listen attentively to the word of God, Hosea chapter 3, verse 5. Afterward, the children of Israel shall return and seek the Lord their God and David their king, and they shall fear the Lord and his goodness in the latter days.

Let us pray. Spirit of life and illumination, open our eyes and ears to the wonderful truth of how you indeed bring about revival and reformation in your church, God. And, of course, there are external means we've seen before in which you use the peace of society and the words of our mouth, but here in particular, God, how with respect to your people, your Spirit moves them to return, that is, repent, to seek, that is, to believe and rest in Jesus Christ and to fear, that is, to follow and obey him all the days of their life.

This is the inward revival we seek for all of us, God, and certainly it would spread forth into an outward revival in which we pray, God, that your churches would grow and be multiplied for your glorious name's sake. Amen. American Christianity has preached, talked, and exhorted about revival since the colonial days.

You're going to hear about that again when I go through church history sometime. I went through it about five years ago and sent it to a class, so it's coming up again. By the 20th century, it was common expectation in many churches.

It was talked up much, of course, by the likes of Billy Graham in my own lifetime. Reformed churches also talk about it, but we mean something different typically. It is not first and foremost emotional outbursts or about aggressive preaching from special speakers, necessarily.

Rather, we believe it comes about by the power of the Spirit of God in the same way that individual conversion occurs through repentance, faith, and following Jesus. Those are the three big points here in this text. The Old Testament language is return, seek, and fear.

Of course, they're not probably presented to us by Hosea and the Holy Spirit as distinctly separate. There may be some overlap, to be sure. It's clearly a metaphor, and the two cases, seeking as though they're using their eyes to see God, which is impossible, or returning as though you're moving your body.

That's not the idea. Those are metaphors. We'll unpack that a little bit.

What we find here in the Bible, here in the book of Acts, even further on in the New Testament, although they have many people saved at one time, and yet they are still saved

the same way. They are saved through repentance, hating their sin, faith, and following Jesus. We're not given a promise that many people will be converted, in fact, in a short period of time.

Instead, we're told to work in God's kingdom and leave the results in His hands. That's what the New Testament saints did. We know, of course, in the case of Jesus, he didn't have a lot of converts in his own ministry immediately.

It was a long-term fruit, and that happens historically as well. Sometimes it takes generations of faithful teaching and instruction and the like. What we are to do is to look for and around in the Word of God to be clear in what it teaches.

Even in this passage, we read of the three characteristics of those who are redeemed by the Lord. In this prophecy of the end times that we find ourselves in, that we, brothers and sisters, as the children of Israel, because of circumcised hearts and not circumcision of the flesh, have been graced with conversion, regeneration, with returning to the Lord, seeking Him and fearing Him. And that is what revival should be about.

Return from Sin

To return, returning from sin, of course, away from sin, we would say in today's language, is common Old Testament way of speaking. To turn, sometimes translated, or return, of course, it's a metaphor, therefore, of repentance. It's used about a thousand times in the Old Testament, but that includes, of course, the physical meaning of actually turning around in your carriage, or your feet, or your horse, or returning back, or something along the lines.

But a lot of times, it's used metaphorically, as in the case of Jeremiah here, and Hosea, to turn away from sin. Hosea warns them over and over again in the opening chapters here about the wretched violations of His holy will. And He calls them to repentance, and He expresses it in different ways.

And this here, of course, is a prophecy. Afterward, after what? The children of Israel shall abide many days, verse 4, without a king, without a prince, under the punishment of God's providence. As He takes away the external means of preservation, and protection, and peace, and prosperity that they come to rely upon in their sin, in violation of His will.

He will bring them back in the latter days, such that they return, turn away from, come back to Him, and away from their sin. That's the picture here. Psalm 1, Proverbs, and alike, of course, give this picture of returning and walking down the path, because the idea, of course, of returning in a physical sense is going down a path, walking, or on a horseback, or something along those lines.

And Proverbs 1, Proverbs, and Psalm 1, and elsewhere, of course, often use the metaphor of a path, of a travel, as I'm talking about in Sunday School class, in sanctification. It is our destination to heaven, and we are walking this path of sanctification, of Christian calling, of returning away from sin, and unto God, repentance. Jesus declares in Matthew 7, 13, Enter by the narrow gate, for wide is the gate, and broad is what? The way, the path that leads to destruction, and there are many who go in by it.

Now, the idea of returning has a negative example in Jeremiah 11, 10. They have turned back to the iniquities of their forefathers, right? They have returned, they've gone back, turned around, of their forefathers who refuse to hear my words, and they have gone after other gods to serve them, the house of Israel, and the house of Judah, have broken my covenant which I made with their fathers. Like the pig returning to the mire, the people of God turned back to the stubbornness of their fathers, and false worship, breaking God's covenant, the same concerns as Hosea, common themes in the prophets.

That's Jeremiah 11:10. And note here, the generational theme, they have turned back to the iniquities of their forefathers, because humans live in generations, we live with each other, the old and young alike, and has this effect upon us, especially the older, the supposedly more mature, can have good or bad effects upon the youth around them, the negative effects in this case, unfortunately. The covenant of grace is generational, if that makes sense, and those born and baptized into it have a responsibility to own the covenant, to trust in Jesus, and not to turn back to the sins of their forefathers.

Typical usage of the word return in a positive sense is expressed in Jeremiah 3:22, for example. In Jeremiah 3:22, return, there's that word again, you backsliding children, and I will heal your backslidings. Backsliding, as in turning away from the faithful path, and God urges them to instead return, come back to me where they were before, in God's graces and mercy that is submitting and following to Him, instead of following sin.

Another example is Jeremiah 3:14. As you'll see, Jeremiah has a lot of passages on this word return, or this verb. Jeremiah 3:14, return, there it is again, all backsliding children, same theme, says the Lord, for I am married to you. I will take you, one from a city and two from a family, and I'll bring you to Zion.

The call of returning is coupled with what image? The marriage image, just like in Hosea. It's nothing new to the people of God, although at the time, in one sense, it is new. It was shocking when they first heard it, of course.

That's why God did it, to wake them up. As long as they are alive, they can return to God. And obviously, the idea of returning of a backsliding children, or we would say carnal children, or something like that, carnal Christians, means repentance.

Hating your sin, fleeing from it, going away from it, in the metaphor of walking away and turning around, doing a U-turn, and coming back to God. He says, note, I will take you, one from a city and two from a family, and I'll bring you to Zion. That any return to the Lord, the call and exhortation churches must give to their audiences, to the unbelievers, or people, of course, contextually, it's more precisely people in the church who've left the church, or left the ways of God, while having the mark of the covenant upon them, that occurs as a gift of God Almighty.

Because it is God who will take you, one from a city, two from a family, and I'll bring you to Zion, which, of course, is a good thing. The city of God, where He is, His special presence, and to bring them there, therefore, must mean they are repentant, for they are, therefore, properly supposed to be there. God will not take unrepentant people into His presence.

He will judge them and punish them until they repent. But it's God doing it, I will take you, and that's a wonderful promise here. This prophecy here in Hosea 3:5, after the children of Israel shall return, they are returning, that's true, it's not God repenting, that's true, but God, of course, by the power of the Holy Spirit, works in their hearts, such that they want to return.

And that's spoken in very stark languages in the Old Testament, such as here, I will take you, and I'm going to bring you here, into this great place, this great city of Zion, which is the city of God, which is the church. Jeremiah 24:7 is another passage, Jeremiah 24:7, Then I will give them a heart to know Me, that I am the Lord, and they shall be My people, and I will be their God, for they shall return to Me with their whole heart. See, now you see all these themes coming together, don't you, in the Old Testament.

Returning to God is the idea of covenant being enacted in their life by the power of the Holy Spirit, that they are My people, and I will be their God, and that can only come if they return, if they repent, if they go away from the bad path they were on. And, of course, it's God who does that. I will give them a heart to know Me, that they can return and flee their backslidden ways, is because God is working in their hearts.

Now, it's the mystery between him and the soul. We cannot look into that, of course, or see these things. We can only, but what, preach, and teach, and exhort, and warn, and the like, as Hosea does to his audience, and so we do to those around us.

But nevertheless, this text here ties a number of these themes together in Jeremiah 24:7. To return back to God means to embrace Him as their covenant-keeping Lord. We sometimes use the New Testament text, for example, in 2 Timothy 2:25, to remind us that repentance, fleeing from sin, is a gift of God.

We read there in 2 Timothy 2:25, which is a good cross-reference to Jeremiah 24:7. In humility, correcting those who are in opposition if God perhaps will grant them repentance so that they may know the truth. But I like Jeremiah 24:7 as well.

Then I will give them a heart, and they will return to Me. Now, of course, you have the word repentance more clear in the New Testament, but I'm showing you, hopefully, these texts and the metaphor there. Return is the Hebraic way of talking about repentance with respect to them, where they were before, and where they should be now.

The doctrine of repentance, therefore, which is a worthy doctrine to be spoken of here. Hosea 3:5, a parallel passage in Isaiah 35:10, we read, "...and the ransom of the Lord shall return, and come to Zion with singing, and everlasting joy in their heads. And they shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away." Isaiah, like Hosea, also has the prophecy of the future of God gathering His people together.

And when He gathers them together, it always involves repentance of returning back to Him from where they were wallowing in the mire of sin and misery. Elsewhere, in Hosea itself, we read the verb return as an exhortation, as we read in Jeremiah as well. Hosea 14:1. So near the end of the book, Hosea 14:1, "...O Israel, return to the Lord your God, for you have

stumbled because of your iniquity." So here it's a prophecy in Hosea 3:5, and there in Hosea 14:1, it's an exhortation, a warning, a call to come back to the covenant-keeping God.

In the New Testament Greek, the word is not a metaphor. It simply means, change your mind. You can put it that way.

But of course, it doesn't simply mean in the sense of, it only means, but that it's nakedly very strong in its language, as opposed to the metaphor, which can get lost in people's minds. Because part of repentance must always be, you've changed your mind about sin. It's bad.

It's wrong. I don't want to do with it. And of course, you change your mind about God as well.

He is good and great, gracious and wonderful, and I want to follow Him. So it's never just an intellectual exercise in that use of that word there in the New Testament, nor in the Old Testament. But it's emphasizing a slightly different perspective there, of course, in New Testament Greek, because it has Greek language that's slightly different, and how it uses words, of course, as all languages are, and emphasizes certain things, other languages, you can't pick up on.

And that's simply all it is. Repentance, as our Shorter Catechism describes it, unto life, because there is a repentance not unto life. People change their mind about all kinds of things, and by changing their mind, they also change their actions.

I'm no longer a Republican. I'm a Democrat. I'm no longer a Democrat.

I'm independent. I'm no longer this. I'm no longer that.

I am now this. I am now that. I've changed my mind, and the like.

We all know this. It's specifically repentance unto life, eternal life. Whereby a sinner, out of a true sense of his sin, and apprehension of the mercy of God in Christ, does, with grief and hatred of his sin, turn from it unto God, with full purpose of, and endeavor after, new obedience.

Not that you obtain it. We talked about this in Sunday School class. It's the same verb there, in the larger catechism.

Endeavor. You're going that direction, although you're probably stumbling and falling down and tripping over, and maybe coming off the edge of the pathway of sanctification, to be sure. But that's where you want to go.

That's your desire. You mourn for your transgressions. They are to remourn for their transgression when he says, the children of Israel shall return and seek their God.

That, he says, as well, seek means they weren't seeking before, doesn't it? So, in talking about here, returning, it's not just an interesting thought. Oh, that's interesting. Now they're coming back to God.

No, it's a picture of repentance, in very short order, of course. But that's what's going on here, this prophecy of the future, to endeavor after Christ with all their heart, soul, mind, and strength. Without such teaching, all the revivals in the world will get you nowhere, if you don't declare the call to repent, to return back to God.

Of course, if you're talking to a Christian audience, it's returning back to God. If it's an unbelieving audience, there's no idea of returning at all, because they were never with them. They were never in the church.

They were never given the sign of the covenant and the like. That's fine, but in both cases, they need what? Repentance! What kind of a gospel is it if you're not called to hate their sin and flee to the Savior? That's what must happen. Secondly, a second thing we must have in revivals is the seeking of God, of God the King.

Seek the King

The seeking out there, of course, we'll go to the Old Testament here and see this as well. In Jeremiah 29:13, we have this verb, seek, and you will seek me and find me when you search for me with all your heart. This is a promise, to be sure, but it's also a description of what seeking involves.

It's not simply and only seeking God because you want to get goodies in life and the like. We all know this, but rather they should be urged to seek God for who he is with the sincerity of heart to submit to him, therefore. And so seeking here, again, is not just an interesting intellectual exercise or a movement of emotions or something like that, but specifically the object of God the Redeemer, of the King.

Seek the Lord, right? Capital L-O-R-D, the covenant keeping God, their God, and David, their King, King Jesus. So repentance is only the beginning. Many can repent with outward woes and tears and yet never seek out Jesus.

They must flee their sins, yes, but flee and embrace our Lord and Savior as King. They must seek the righteousness of the Messiah, right? We see that here as well. They shall fear the Lord, and the rest of the verse here, and his goodness in the latter days, all that he is and all that he has done and is doing for his people.

That's involved in as well. Deuteronomy 4:29, we read, but from there you will seek the Lord your God and you will find him if you seek him with all your heart and with all your soul when you are in distress and all these things come upon you in the latter days when you turn to the Lord your God and obey his voice. There's another theme intertwined here.

We saw return there in Jeremiah tied to God as the covenant keeping God and you shall be my people and you return back to me. And here we see seeking as well in this Deuteronomy chapter 4 which I had mentioned last week about the latter times because it mentions when you return to the Lord your God in the latter days. Returning to God or turn to here, verse 4:29, turn to the Lord your God must also involve seeking if there's any going to be any

redemption or change in the status of the person who is doing the returning and the seeking.

One must go with the other as well. And so in the latter days which we find ourselves in today by God's grace, we are given his mercy to return and to seek him out. Seeking I take to mean another way of describing faith in Jesus Christ.

Finding him as well because the seeking as we'll see when it is with sincerity of heart, that is to say belief and trust in Jesus, will have the desired effect of finding him. It will happen. Faith in Jesus Christ is a saving grace whereby we receive and rest upon him alone for salvation as he is offered to us in the gospel.

The idea of seeking the Lord their God and David their King is to find deliverance from sin. That's the idea here in this text because that's what's going on in Hosea and all the prophets. You guys keep messing things up.

Why do you insist in your stubbornness and worshiping these false gods and their false ways and their false days as well? We saw in chapter 2 they even have their own feast days. Rather you should seek God, God of the covenant and therefore who he is and what he will give them when they repent, when they return to him. Again Deuteronomy 4:29, but from there you will seek the Lord your God and you will find him if you seek him with all your heart and with all your soul.

Seeking God in this context of Hosea 3:5 is not again simply, I'd be really great if I could find the Lord, but a different way of describing faith because it will have the effect of embracing the King. They want to find the King. They want the God of the covenant.

So this metaphor of seeking like they're on the ground looking for treasure or something or out there looking for God like he's a man highlights a bunch of intersecting beliefs and practices in the Christian life, particularly faith, faith in Jesus, trusting in him, relying upon him, loving him even. It doesn't have to be specifically faith. It can involve love as well because if you're going to seek David their king, you don't think they're going to love David.

Of course they're going to love Jesus. The seeking is again not just for the goodies but because they really want him. If within sincerity of heart, 4:29, with all your soul, you seek him, you will find him.

That's a gospel promise, brothers and sisters. Seeking will happen. This is another way of describing faith.

Jeremiah 50 verse 4 through 5. In those days and in that time, says the Lord, the children of Israel shall come and they and the children of Judah together with continual weeping they shall come and seek the Lord their God. They shall ask the way to Zion with their faces toward it saying, come and let us join ourselves to the Lord in a perpetual covenant that will not be forgotten. So Jeremiah's got a lot of things going on there, doesn't he? And the prophecies.

We had finished reading Jeremiah and our family devotions and ran across all these verses. I remember them. Here, repentance and faith leads to salvation with the Lord of the

covenant in those days and that time, says the Lord, the children shall come and they and Judah together weeping they shall come.

Obviously, that's an outward expression, presumably of sincere hearts of repentance and seek God in the way to Zion itself. They want him and they are sorry for what they did. The object of this faith, of course, is twofold here in the text.

And as we know in the rest of the Bible, actually threefold. It's Trinitarian in other words. Seek the Lord their God is to seek the Father, Father God.

One cannot believe or trust in Jesus without also trusting in the Father for the salvation is Trinitarian. And of course, specifically here, David their King. So we have often in the Old Testament hints of the Trinity, that the coming Messiah isn't just but another man like Moses.

There's something special about him, unique even. The Lord said to my Lord, set thou on my right hand. We read in the Psalms and picked up again in the book of Hebrews.

Lord, Lord, there's two Lord. What's going on here? David recognizes something divine. He knows it's only God himself who can save them from their misery as their King as well.

Ezekiel 34:23, we read and Ezekiel 34:23, I will establish one shepherd over them and he shall feed them. My servant, David, he shall feed them and be their shepherd. Now I suppose in dispensationalism, someone actually believes that.

I'm not sure. I've never heard that as dispensationalist. But if we're supposed to take things literally, as they say, if you recall in Wednesday night study, then why shouldn't it be David? Of course, it's not David.

What we read instead is that Jesus is out of the grave, but David's still in the grave, right? Amen. Literally, Peter's argument in Acts chapter 2 verse 29, after quoting a Psalm, nor will you allow your Holy One to see corruption, he quotes. He points out David is not talking about himself because he's dead.

Quote, men and brethren, Peter writes, it speaks, let me speak freely to you of the patriarch David that I just quoted, who says, let not your Holy One see corruption. He is both dead and buried. So it's not about him.

That's the implication. And his tomb is with us to this day. Therefore, being a prophet, that is David, and knowing that God has sworn with an oath to him that the fruit of his body, according to the flesh, he will raise up what? The Christ to sit on his throne.

The prophecy, therefore, is about Jesus because David's still on the ground. That's his argument. It's a simple, common sense argument.

David's dead. So clearly, either you believe the Psalms, in the case they're quoted in Acts 2, or here, as I quoted Ezekiel 34, not a Psalm, that they don't know what they're talking about, or they know what they're talking about. God inspired their words.

We've got to draw another conclusion because David's dead. The conclusion is Jesus is that David. It's a picture of the Messiah, in other words.

Fear the LORD

And then thirdly, fear the Lord. Revivals must preach and teach, whether small time or big time or however you want to look at it. As I know the word, typically, in my mind, I always say something dramatic.

It's not what I mean. I mean simply bringing people from the dead, conversion, being born again, must have repentance. They must return to God, must have faith.

They must seek Him and seek no one else. And it must include the fear of the Lord, the third point. Fear of God, of course, is a very well-known theme in the Old Testament, returning and seeking and now fearing Him.

So I don't think I need to go through all the text there. We're aware of this. So let's talk about fear of God in the New Testament.

It's commanded in the great vision of Revelation, and it's commanded upon the entirety of the earth, Revelation 14:7. Then I saw another angel flying in the midst of the heaven, having the everlasting gospel to preach to those who dwell on the earth, to every nation, tribe, tongue, and people, saying with a voice, Fear God, and give glory to Him, for the hour of His judgment has come, and worship Him who made heaven and earth, the sea, and the springs of water. Everyone is called to fear God in this understanding of fear. Accompanied, of course, by the fruit of the Spirit as well, 1 Peter 3:15, Christians specifically are called, but sanctify the Lord your God in your heart, and always be ready to give a defense to everyone who asks you a reason for the hope that is in you with meekness and fear.

So here you have three things going on here. Sanctify the Lord God in your hearts, be ready to give an answer, or the apology, right, of the hope. There's a grace of God within you, the hope that's in you, with meekness, that's another grace of God, inward grace as we talked about in Sunday School class, of the Spirit of God within you, and fear, that too is an inward grace or a gift.

The word grace and gift is the same in the Greek. Hope, meekness, and fear in the Christian life. Now, it's a synonym, of course, for reverence and great respect, but it is the word phobos, where we get phobia from in the New Testament.

So it has a connection to that idea, and as I said before, there is a serious and wonderful, I hope, very awe-inspiring reverence and great respect for the Son, and space when you go out there, how scary it is in that sense. We use the word kind of scary, isn't it, going out there? And so it is all the more with God Almighty. Even if you've done nothing, I've not done anything wrong with the Son, it's still going to consume you.

It's that powerful and that majestic. God is all the more. That's the picture here.

Or another way of looking at it, it's not the idea of slavish fear of a servant cowering before his master, and it should be if you're not a believer. They ought to have that fear, because it may drive them to Christ. But rather, the godly fear of a child not wanting to disappoint his father.

We read this in Hebrews 12:28. Therefore, since we are receiving a kingdom which cannot be shaken, let us have grace by which we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear. So clearly, the synonym's there.

Great reverence, of course, we would say today. Sanctification includes fear. Talk about the doctrine of repentance, the doctrine of faith, returning, seeking, and now fear.

More or less, there's another way of talking about sanctification in the Old Testament, because they're like, in their mind, if you're really following the Lord, it's going to be expressed in your actions, one way or the other, even if you stumble on your feet, that baby still kind of walks, doesn't he? Of course they do. The toddler's still toddling. And there's fear.

And love, of course. Love is there in the Old Testament. Hosea 3:5 uses the shorthand for spiritual maturity.

A kid who doesn't fear their parents is missing the point. Not a lot of maturity going on there. They ought to have this proper respect for their parents, especially in this context of Hosea 3:5, of the people of God breaking the covenant in such a manner that God is bringing an invasion upon them.

And they're going to be trotted off in a foreign land, no longer a temple. It's like losing our churches, losing our pastors, losing our nation. That'd be horrifying.

That's what he put them through, because that's how stubborn they were. They must repent and seek God and fear him. And any kind of preaching and teaching instruction, even if the purpose isn't per se for a revival, as we typically think of it, ought to have these sometime in their ministry.

They're preaching throughout the year, even. Sometime, some way, so people know. They understand what's going on.

When we're calling for revival, we're not saying, well, just come to our church, please. But we're saying flee sin, embrace Jesus, and follow God all the days of your life. That's a threefold revival.

Let's pray to these ends and pray for the Spirit of God to be with us to expand his kingdom. Amen. God above, may you indeed move our hearts to continue to return to seek and fear you, our God, but many others as well.

And may many more be gathered into your kingdom, into the city of Zion, as you say, one from a city, two from a family. God, you take them and take even more, we pray, that they would be there and they would fear the Lord of the covenant and his goodness in the latter days, we pray.