

# IT'S NOT ABOUT WHAT WE POSSESS IT'S ABOUT WHO POSSESSES US

Pentecost 10 – Year C – August 1, 2010

Hosea 11:1-11 Psalm 107:1-9 Colossians 3:1-11 Luke 12:13-21

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Today's reading from the Prophet Hosea in the Hebrew Scriptures & a short parable from the Gospel of Luke point us to a greater understanding of the depth of God's love for the children of God – no matter how much the Kingdom of Israel rejected God, and no matter how foolish the man in the parable turned out to be.

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The Kingdom of Israel is the 'Northern Kingdom' one of the two splinter kingdoms that came into being as the united kingdom of David & Solomon came to an end. 10 of the tribes of Hebrew people formed the Kingdom Israel to the north. Their capital was established in the city Samaria. The remaining two tribes of Judah and Benjamin set up shop as the new Kingdom of Judah, in the south. Their capital – Jerusalem.

When Hosea first began to prophecy about the pending destruction of the Northern Kingdom, the priests who were surrounding the King of Israel in Samaria urged the King to send Hosea to Judah – let him prophecy there., they said. They wanted no part of his message of the disaster that was coming to Israel by way of the Kingdom of Assyria.

But God did not call Hosea to be a prophet for Judah. The message from God that was given to Hosea was for the Northern Kingdom.

God's great desire was that the children of Israel would return to the faith of their fathers and mothers. It doesn't appear that God particularly cared about the distinctions between Northern or Southern Kingdoms, Samaria or Jerusalem, Israel or Judah. God desired a return from apostasy. A turning away from the worship of idols and false gods.

You can hear the anguish and pathos in the heart of God in the reading today, as Hosea pours out – not so much a message of destruction – but a final plea, a reminder that above all things, God loves the children of Adam & Eve, the heirs of Abraham. God brought them out of bondage in Egypt. God loved them like a child.

At this point in the development of the Hebrew scriptures, when we hear that God *taught Ephraim to walk* – we should hear a metaphor. Ephraim was one of the two sons of Joseph, the beloved son of Jacob. Here, Ephraim is a byword for all of the children of Israel – for all the Hebrew children. By referring to Ephraim in this manner, the image of God as a loving parent is made all the more powerful. One who lifts infants to their cheeks,

one who feeds their child, and leads them with cords of human kindness and bands of love. God does not desire to give up Ephraim

*How can I give you up, Ephraim? How can I hand you over, O Israel? How can I make you like Admah? How can I treat you like Zeboim?*

We know that Ephraim is a metaphor, a byword for the Hebrew people. We know that Israel is the name of the Northern Kingdom. What about Admah & Zeboim? To what do those make reference? Why are they included in God's litany of lament?

Admah & Zeboim were sister cities with two other well-known cities over which God anguished. When Sodom & Gomorrah were destroyed, two other nearby cities were also lost in the holocaust: Admah & Zeboim. Names that aren't present in our conscious memory of that famous story – but cities that likewise came to utter destruction. Searching for 10 faithful people,

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But it will be for naught: Ephraim – Israel – the Northern Kingdom – will become victims of ethnic cleansing. A footnote to recorded

history as the 'lost ten tribes of Israel.'

Foolishness of another sort is set before us in the reading from Luke's gospel today. The man in the parable recorded by Luke is not at risk because he is wealthy. The problem for the Rich Fool is not that he was rich. His problem is that he is a fool.

This is an incredibly short parable. Six sentences. But true to form, with Luke you get a lot of bang for your buck.

First we notice that this parable is not a condemnation of wealth. So far as we know, the Rich Fool came into his wealth in an honest way. Scripture gives us plenty of examples and stories about ill-gotten gain: the parable of the Unjust Steward; the parable of King who wanted to settle accounts; the greed of Jacob against his brother Esau. Lots and lots of stories about dirty money. *This is not one of those stories.*

This guy is simply either a very good farmer, or, in this particular season, a very lucky one. But he apparently lives – or so he thinks – in isolation. Like Ephraim & Israel the character in this parable is living only for the day, ignoring his heritage. Forsaking the opportunity to live into a more full, complete relationship with his God and his neighbor.

Given the good fortune – some might even say the blessing from God – of a bumper crop one year, what does he do? Let's see – does he give his laborers a bonus? Does he invite the widows and orphans to glean the left over residue from the harvest? Does he give a tithe

of his income to the temple? Does he offer to pay for the installation of air conditioning at his local house of worship? Does he gather his children and grandchildren and make an early distribution of his wealth? Does he acknowledge that all things come from God?

All it seems that he can do is talk to himself. All he can do is come up with a plan to store all of his stuff, put his feet up, relax, and eat, drink, and be merry

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There is surely a desire deep in the heart of God that the children of Adam & Eve, the heirs of Abraham, Jacob Isaac, should read, mark, and inwardly digest the stories of their faith.

To remember that we are called to do justice, to love mercy, and to walk humbly before God.

To avoid the sword that can rage with violence in our cities.

To remember when we give a thirsty child a drink of water; or visit someone in prison; or clothe someone who is naked; or when we stop along the side of the road to Jericho to help a stranger, that we are likely to see the face of God.

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# IT'S NOT ABOUT WHAT WE POSSESS IT'S ABOUT WHO POSSESSES US

Pentecost 10 – Year C – August 1, 2010

Hosea 11:1-11 Psalm 107:1-9 Colossians 3:1-11 Luke 12:13-21

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# IT'S NOT ABOUT WHAT WE POSSESS IT'S ABOUT WHO POSSESSES US

Pentecost 10 – Year C – August 1, 2010

Hosea 11:1-11 Psalm 107:1-9 Colossians 3:1-11 Luke 12:13-21

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