

# Morrison Zion Evangelical Lutheran Church

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June 5, 2005

Third Sunday After Pentecost

Hosea 5:15-6:6

Pastor Randy Ott

## God Tears Apart in Order to Heal

I have a series of books at home that I enjoy reading. They've got a page or two of interesting trivia, facts, and various things from throughout the ages. When I was reading one time I came across what the author had entitled "Dumb Predictions". Predictions of various things like the airplane will never be able to be used for mass transit because it just would cost too much. It will never surpass the railroad—things like that. One of them kind of caught my eye. It was a doctor and it was in the mid-1800s—six years before anesthesia was developed and began being used widespread—saying that we must get people to understand that whenever surgery is involved and the scalpel is involved, people will have to expect pain. The two go hand in hand and to expect anything else is only going to create problems. There will not come the healing of surgery without the pain of the scalpel.

I don't know about you, but when I have had surgery, I have been pretty thankful for anesthesia. I have no desire to feel the scalpel and its effect. I would much rather just deal with healing from the scalpel afterwards. I am pretty happy the Lord gave us the gift of anesthesia.

We have come to expect some of these things in a sense, haven't we? That things are going to keep going better and better and more and more of the hurts are going to be taken out of our lives so that we have less and less things that really hurt us. We know there is going to be pain involved with surgery, but we know it's nothing like back then and we are thankful for it.

This morning our God reminds us that when it comes to our spiritual life, there is a scalpel that at times is applied to us that is going to hurt. This is a hurt that we desperately need. If we try to avoid the hurt of the scalpel of God's Law and just try to go on our merry way without acknowledging that the Lord has every right to be upset with us because of the things that we do, we are in for an eternal world of hurt. Sometimes God reminds us that he has to go to rather lengthy means to get our attention.

Our attention span is not just down to what is in between commercial breaks on the television, but when it comes to spiritual things, God has always known our attention span can be diverted rather easily. So we are reminded this morning that at times God tears apart in order to heal. He allows difficulties into our lives because he wants to snap us out of our spiritual sleep. He wants to grab our attention and lead us to see that we need him, his love and his forgiveness. Left on our own, we aren't going to be

able to deal with the things of this world. God tears apart in order to heal. He reminds us that our problem is really not the pain that at times we have to undergo in this world, but our more basic problem that at times you and I want to ignore, deny or excuse, is sin. This morning our God also reminds us that the only answer to this problem is God's incredible grace.

God spoke these words through the prophet Hosea that we read this morning. Hosea was a prophet that ministered to the northern kingdom of Israel. If you remember from Bible history, David and Solomon ruled over all 12 tribes of the children of Israel. After Solomon's time, the tribes were split into two different kingdoms. The northern kingdom became known as the kingdom of Israel. The southern two tribes became known as the kingdom of Judah. It was from the kingdom of Judah that the Messiah would come.

Hosea ministered in the northern kingdom and one of the things that the northern kingdom had throughout its history is that they never had a king who worshipped the Triune God. They had kings that would, for political reasons, set up other altars to other gods on the different hilltops and the different shrines and the different places and for political reasons encourage the people not to go to Jerusalem to the Temple to worship the name of the Lord, but instead to worship these other gods that they set out. At times they incorporated worship of various false gods, Baal and Molech and Asherah and various things and with things that we would find reprehensible, even with human sacrifice. And the Lord, as a patient God, sent prophet after prophet to warn the people to turn back and not try to think that you can cover your bases by saying, "I'll worship the Lord in this way and I will worship this other god in this way, and that way, whichever one is the true God will be happy with me because I have done these things for them and I have got all the bases covered."

God also reminded his people that he is a jealous God. He would not give his glory to another. He would not put up with it forever. The history of God's people is one of people falling away and God allowing difficulties to come and invade an army or other things that would catch their attention, wake them out of their spiritual slumber until they would return to the Lord and say, "Lord we have sinned." But quite often they wouldn't get to that point, as he points out with Hosea, until the prophets had cut them to pieces or he had killed them with the words of his mouth or his judgments had flashed like lightening upon them.

When things were going well, they would forget their Lord and they would go their merry way and pull their shoulder out of their socket patting themselves on their back for all the things they had done. Of course, you and I would never do that, would we? We would never spend time patting ourselves on the back and say, "Look at all the things my hands have brought about." It's kind of easy to fall into that, isn't it? When things are going well, we attribute it to the fact that we must be doing something to make God bless us in the way he is blessing us.

You and I need to realize that God doesn't owe us anything and God never will owe us anything. God never could owe us anything, because you and I are born into this world sinful. And not only are we born sinful, we commit sins. We commit the sins of pride and arrogance of thinking God owes us something. Have you ever had that come into

your heart or into your mind? Maybe all your life you make sure you are in church every week or you serve the Lord faithfully in various offices in the church. You look at things that are going on in your life and you see a sickness that comes into your life that you just don't want right now and you don't want to deal with it right now and it is hard and it is difficult. Then you look at the person who never goes to church and has no use for God and they are building something new or adding on or getting another toy that they park in the yard. And you wonder, "God, how come you are letting them prosper and you have got me in all this kind of pain? What is wrong with you? Don't you see the things I do for you? Don't you see that you should be doing those things for me and sending my difficulty to them?"

Maybe the Lord is trying to get us to realize that he doesn't do these things because we have sacrificed and done things for him. God deals with us on the basis of grace, not on the basis of merit we earn from him. When we start thinking God owes us something in any way, shape or form in our minds, God has to snap us out of it. We need to rely completely and absolutely on God for salvation and for all things and for his love. The minute we start thinking we do something, we have lost our confidence. We have lost our comfort and we have brought pain into our lives, because when we lay our head on the pillow at night, how do you know that you have done enough? How do you know that you have done enough so that God will love you and give things to you? If that is the basis on which you want to approach God, you are in trouble.

God snaps us out of these things at times and allows misery into our lives so that we reexamine our lives and say, "Lord, I need your help. I can't do these things." We also look at our lives and say, "Lord, I have become too full of myself. Forgive me. Wash away my sin through the blood of Jesus Christ. Through his life and death, make me pure in your sight again. Give me the joy now Lord of living for you." This is the solution always and forever. **GOD'S MERCY IS ALWAYS THERE FOR US.** But sometimes he withholds his visible blessing to us so that we wake up.

What he really was telling the people of Hosea's day was that their life was going to be for awhile like calling 911 and getting put on hold and listening to elevator music for awhile. They were going to call on God and he wasn't going to answer. It would be as though he were not there. Maybe he does that in our lives at times. But in reality for the people of Hosea's day and in reality for us, he still is there and he is there for his purposes—for strengthening us and building us up so that we can serve him faithfully. After we realize that God does this all in mercy, then we don't approach God on the basis of sacrifice anymore. When we see the things we have done and how God so fully and freely forgives us for the sake of Jesus, now we want to be in church every week. We want to serve on boards. We want to serve God in whatever way he unfolds before us—not because we are earning something from God, not because we are going to get on his good side and have him owe us something and get a few points ahead with God, but because we want to thank him that his love is free, that his love is full, and that his love is forever. That is the grace that God has given us. That is the solution.

When we are experiencing things in this world that we don't like, rely on the grace of Jesus Christ. He is the Good Shepherd that will meet all of our needs. That is God's promise and that is what gives us purpose.