**December 15th 2024 Third Sunday in Advent**

**Text: Hosea 9:10-17** 0754

**Theme: A Jealous God.**

May God grant that we be sanctified unto Him all our days and never sanctify ourselves to any other by God’s grace. Amen. Dear Christians: In the book of Exodus we hear God declare to the people of Israel and to all people who would live from that time forward: *I am the Lord thy God, which have brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage. Thou shalt have no other gods before me. Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness of any thing that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth: Thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them: for I the Lord thy God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate me; and showing mercy unto thousands of them that love me, and keep my commandments.” (Ex. 20:2-6)* These words of God are the giving of the First Commandment to Moses who would in turn write them on tablets, and later to be included in the text of Scripture, and taught by many throughout the generations. Whenever this passage is read or quoted, many stumble at the idea of God being jealous. After all, He is God; what does He have to be jealous of? And isn’t jealousy a fault, or even sinful? In some instances jealousy is indeed sinful, for being jealous or envious of someone is truly coveting, having a wicked heart that desires to take someone or something from another. Yet in God’s case this is not so, for if we remember the lesson from the beginning of Hosea, God’s jealousy is like that of a husband or wife for their spouse. This is a righteous type of jealousy, for a husband’s jealousy over his wife is good and proper for she is his and has promised herself to him for life. Thus he is within his rights to be jealous over her and to do what is necessary to keep her to himself. Likewise, all people are God’s people, for God created them. They are His creatures and therefore He owns them. By right they are to be and remain as His alone, never eyeing another, never giving themselves over to another.

Just think on what takes place every time a child is conceived and born. God has taken great care to make that person just as He wants them to be. He equips them to praise and worship His name. He creates them in His image, though that image is immediately lost due to original sin. Throughout His creative activity, God had simply spoken His creatures into existence, with the exception of man. Hear David’s description of the creation of each individual person: *“Thou hast possessed my reins: thou hast covered me in my mother’s womb. I will praise Thee; for I am fearfully and wonderfully made: marvelous are thy works; and that my soul knoweth right well. My substance was not hid from Thee, when I was made in secret, and curiously wrought in the lowest parts of the earth. Thine eyes did see my substance, yet being unperfect; and in Thy book all my members were written, which in continuance were fashioned when as yet there was none of them.” (Ps. 139:13-16)* David shows the great care God takes to make each and every person. He puts them together in a miraculous and mysterious way; He nurtures them in the womb, and cultivates what He has created. Now imagine that same loving Father being told by His creation that we will no longer recognize Him as the Creator, and further still that we will no longer worship His name, nor serve Him, but will give all the credit for our existence to something else: an idol of wood or stone, or the imagination of our heart, or even the very creation itself. That jealousy then would be good and right, and justly could God destroy His creation, for it is His, and yet He does just the opposite. Let us then see the jealous God along with man’s conduct toward Him. We will do so according to our text for today which is found in the ninth chapter of the book of the prophet Hosea beginning at verse ten.

**Quote text here.**

Let us pray, O most Holy Lord God in heaven, as we look into Thy Law we find only Thy wrath over our trespasses and sins. We confess that we have antagonized Thee daily, and have taken to ourselves gods of our making which have no power and can never do what Thou hast done for us. Grant us Thy grace, O Lord, do not consume us in Thy wrath, but in pity bring us out of the bondage of our sin and make us to be Thine own again. Keep us henceforth from sanctifying ourselves to another, but sanctify us to Thee alone, by the powerful working of Thy Spirit. Show unto us what things await those who turn away from Thee, and are swift to shed blood, to betray their neighbor, and who set themselves aside for evil. Show unto us what exactly is deserved because of our own turning away by our sin. However, like unto the Israelites of old, Thou hast purchased us to be Thine own by the giving of Thy Son into flesh, to pay with His own precious blood. Grant that we believe it until the moment of our death, that we may be Thine own for eternity. O Lord, grant these things unto us for Thine own name’s sake. Amen.

Guided then by the Spirit of God let us see the jealous God, learning first that He:

1. **Purchased His own creation.** We read verse ten of our text: **read verse here.** Having seen our own creation by God, and seeing that by virtue of that fact, that He owns us, we then realize, or at least should, that God’s own creation rebelled against Him, and that He then put into action a plan to make us His own again. Despite contrary modern ideas, sin is not some innocuous, meaningless act. Rather by sin we deny God and declare ourselves to be His enemies, and worse yet sin is the act by which we emancipate ourselves from God. Remember by our creation we are His, but by sin we sell ourselves into bondage to sin, death, and the devil. They become our masters. Notice how God, through Hosea, speaks of Israel like grapes in a wilderness and that He found them there. This is speaking of the time when Israel was in physical bondage in the land of Egypt. There God did the work necessary to deliver them from that bondage. Properly speaking Pharaoh did not own the people of Israel by right. In a similar way sin, death, and the devil do not own men by right, but through coercion and deception, seduced mankind to sell themselves into bondage. Now by right God could immediately have destroyed all of mankind, damning them in their pitiful condition, for they were His and they sold themselves by their own sinful action. And nyet He did not destroy, but instead did what was necessary to purchase us back again. That is actually what the term redemption means: ‘to buy back.’ Now what is the most amazing thing about this work of redemption is that its not as if God just desired to purchase something that was not His, but we were His, for we are His creation, and God loves us so much that He bought what was already His so that we could be His again. Hear the writer to the Hebrews: *“Neither by the blood of goats and of calves, but by His own blood he entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us.” (Heb. 9:12)* The blood of the eternal Son of God was the price of our redemption. Now notice the pleasure God takes in His purchased possession. They are like firstfruits after the long spring and summer of labor on the crop. God takes pleasure in those that are His. He favors them, blesses them, works for them, and grants them grace beyond measure. He indeed purchased all people to be His own, but those who are in His Church are His possession through the gift of faith. These He delights in and does all things necessary for their sustenance and their spiritual care that they may remain His own. Their lives, both spiritually and bodily are blessed and preserved unto eternal life. This is the reason why the season of Advent is so joyous to a Christian, because it was then that God put into action all that He had determined to do for His rebellious creation. And thus for those that have been purchased, God is jealous, for he has both created and purchased these souls as His own, but still:
2. **Many turn aside.** We read verse ten of our text: **read verse here.** Seeing the great and mighty things that God had done for Israel, should have induced them to serve Him for many generations to come. He had brought her out of intense bondage in Egypt, but like all sinful men, they complained, they murmured against Him, they turned away from Him and distrusted Him. They desired nothing more than to return to their bondage, for while it was unpleasant and difficult, painful even, it was a known. Being servants of God though, they were in an unknown. They had food and shelter in Egypt, but away from Egypt they did not know where those things might proceed from. Further down the line they rejected the reign of God over them, and chose rather to have an earthly king reign over them. Still they were God’s people. They would turn aside from His Law and follow after other gods; they would refuse to follow His commands; they would make idols of silver and gold; they would set up altars to these idols; they would despise the fruit of their own womb, and do all they could to prevent it. Do these things sound familiar? Though God has created mankind; though God has redeemed mankind; though He has shown great favor to our nation and people, we still desire to be unshackled from Him. If He gives us work, we despise it; if He takes work away from us we despise it; if He blesses us with children we desire that He wouldn’t; if He takes away bearing children we grumble and complain. He gives us His Law and we break it; He gives us His Gospel and we ignore it. He provides preaching and His Word and we don’t listen. Yet in all things that He does for us and instead of separating ourselves to Him, we rather separate ourselves to further sin, at least mankind in general.

Even as individuals, and Christians, we sin on a daily basis, and though we are indeed forgiven for them, we cannot think that sin is some light and harmless act. By it we are doing despite unto the Spirit of grace. We thereby spit in God’s face; the same God who created us and purchased us, and declare by our sin that we care not for His gracious work unto us. Dear Christians, we are His people, the fruit of His labor. Let us humble ourselves to Him, and become a people set aside, that is, sanctified to Him alone. When a person sins, at least temporarily, he sanctifies himself to that sin. In other words he becomes a servant to that sin. A Christian will despise all sin that proceeds from himself, and lives in a constant state of repentance, and therefore receives the forgiveness for those sins of weakness, but this is not permission to continue in sin, but rather God’s grace given, and we should not take it lightly but humble ourselves under His hand, and ask for mercy. Thus the jealous God has purchased His own creation which many turn aside from:

1. **And bring swift destruction.** We read verses eleven through seventeen: **read verses here.** For a Christian sin is not something to be played around with, for it is the devil’s tool to put us back into bondage again. To prevent this God has numerous times throughout Scripture given descriptions of the result of rejecting His mercy and grace, and in every case is swift and utter destruction both in this life and in the life to come. The description of God through Hosea focuses on bearing of children, and of the fruit of the womb. This is because the denial of God’s grace is the very act of withholding from God the rightful fruit of His labor. Thus likewise, He will withhold the fruit of man, which is the fruit of the womb. We hear in Psalms: *“Lo, children are an heritage of the Lord: and the fruit of the womb is His reward.” (Ps. 127:3)* When our text says that the children of Israel and the children of Ephraim, one of the twelve tribes of Israel, shall no more be found, this is the curse of God upon those who have received freely His grace and chose rather to return to bondage and to sin and idols. Despite correction they persisted; despite calls to repentance from God’s prophets they continued. Repentance is not found, and therefore God ceases to bless and rather curses them. This is a temporal picture of eternal things. God withholding fruit from man is symbolic of the spiritual fruit that will not be produced because faith is lacking. Where there is no faith, there is no fruit. Where faith is found, there fruit will be produced, that is sanctification of good. The destruction which is described is the removal of man’s ability to generate further unbelievers. Their wombs miscarry and their breasts no longer produce life sustaining food. The children that are born to them will be sent to the slaughter of the sword. In other words God sends His curse upon them, and uses these things to call them to repentance.

Now to us, dear Christians, this is a dire warning. We are not to turn again from whence we have been freed. Let us recognize what God has saved us from. Let us recognize the great work He performed for us. Let us recognize His blessings as blessings, and give thanks for them. The motions of our sinful hearts are like those of the people of Israel, and if let unchecked will bring us to swift and utter destruction. May the Lord protect us, may the Lord keep our hearts fixed on Him alone, and may we be set aside for only Him all our days unto life everlasting. Amen.