

SOW THE WIND AND REAP THE WHIRLWIND!

Today's Text: Hosea Chaps. 8-10

Extracts:

“They sow the wind, and reap the whirlwind; the stalk has no bud; it shall never produce meal, if it should produce.” ...Sow for yourselves righteousness; reap in mercy; break up your fallow ground, for it is time to seek the Lord till He comes and rains righteousness on you. You have plowed wickedness; you have reaped iniquity; you have eaten the fruit of lies, because you trusted in your own way, in the multitude of your mighty men. Therefore tumult shall arise among your people, and all your fortresses shall be plundered [Hos. 8: 7; 10: 12-14a]

In Hickman County, Kentucky, USA, a man bought an exotic Chevrolet car for which he obtained a vanity license plate number, “IAM4UK.” Before he knew it, he started to receive parking violation tickets from all over the country, even places that he had never visited! Mischievous people simply put the “IAM4UK” plate number in front of their cars while hiding away their own true plates. They then parked without regard to parking rules. Now, every week, the man receives tickets and even delinquent notices that have run into thousands of dollars!¹

I doubt if that man bargained for what he has now got. He sowed the wind and now he is reaping the whirlwind. How many of us have found ourselves in similar situations? We only did what we had thought was harmless. A one-night fling with a respectable and consenting stranger years ago has now put you in a hospital where you are fighting for your dear life for HIV/AIDS. Your decision some years back not to complete your university education is now haunting you as you have reached a position on your job where only college graduates can aspire higher. In those and such-like cases, you are reaping what you have sown. Are you currently in a hole that other people merely helped you to deepen?

In today's bible verse, God told the Israelites that having sown the wind, they should expect to reap the whirlwind. Like the people of old, we have the choice to sow a bad wind or a good one. What would you prefer? Let us find out from today's lesson.

¹ Todd Faulkner, “IAM4UK license plate woes,” www.cnn.com/video/#/video/US/2007/11/09/iam4uk.license.plate.trouble.wpst/

1. From a simple wind to a whirlwind

Every year between April and October, the Caribbean and the Eastern coast of North America face a series of hurricanes. The one that we are most familiar with is *Katrina* which a few years ago almost wiped out New Orleans in Louisiana, USA. There are similar storms in other parts of the world bearing such names as tornadoes or typhoons.

Where do hurricanes that ravage the Atlantic coast of America come from? Simply put, a little wind develops around the coast of West Africa. As it blows over the hot zone, it gathers strength and ferocity. Then, it begins to spin and form a column of turbulent air with a funnel-like centre. At that stage, the small wind of West Africa has become the whirlwind of the Caribbean. By the time it gets to land, anything in its way is in danger. Whirlwinds also develop on land. For example, the sand storms in deserts are whirlwinds.

In nature, whirlwinds are random occurrences unless, of course, God wants to use them for His purposes for “the Lord has His way in the whirlwind and in the storm, and the clouds are the dust of His feet” [**Nahum 1: 3**]. However, in today’s bible verse, God was referring to people who sow the winds of evil that later become whirlwinds of undesired consequences. For example, the word of God refers to the human tongue as a fire that can destroy the same way a little fire destroys a whole forest [**Jam. 3: 5-6**]. The early returnees to Jerusalem from exile under the amnesty granted them by King Darius neglected God’s house while they built pent houses for themselves. What followed? Their earnings could not catch up with the cost of living [**Hagg. 1: 1-6**]. In each case, the sowing is a deliberate act out of offenders’ free will. Therefore, it is a bigger challenge to us as believers.

People who sow ill winds may not initially set out to do harm to themselves or others. For example, they may simply be looking for new ways of doing old things (innovation). A church may introduce rap music in order to attract young worshippers only to find down the line a high degree of immorality among the congregation. Another example may be people’s attempt to go back to old ways when going forward is getting too hard (backsliding). When Moses went up into the mountain to receive the Ten Commandments and the people were tired of waiting for him, they prevailed on Aaron to make them a golden calf to worship, thereby going back to Egypt in their hearts [**Ex. 32: 1-4**]. Yet another example may be outright rebellion when people reject old or current ways and want to replace them with their own. For example, Korah and his group completely rejected the leadership of Moses and wanted to replace it with theirs [**Num.16: 1-3**]. In all cases, the people have no control over how the whirlwind will turn out. An African proverb summarizes it so well as follows: ‘trouble was fast asleep and arrogance went to wake him up!’

Sowing involves more than the act of planting. You have to have good seeds, fertile land, the right implements and the season. If any of these co-operant factors are missing, sowing may not produce the desired result. Even when the desired results come, they may be in different measures, some hundredfold, some thirty fold [**Matt. 13: 8**]. In general, however, we reap what we sow “for he who sows to his flesh will of the flesh reap corruption, but he who sows to the Spirit will of the Spirit reap everlasting life” [**Gal. 6: 7-8**]. That is the import of today’s study.

2. The wind sowed by the children of Israel

God told the prophet Hosea that the people claimed to know Him but all that they kept doing was transgressing His covenant and rebelling against His law [**Hos. 8: 1**]. Here are examples of the kinds of wind that they were sowing:

a) *Idolatry*

They cried to God that they knew Him, yet they had set up kings and made princes without seeking God’s consent or approval. Instead, “from their silver and gold they made idols for themselves” [**vv. 2-4**].

Some people may argue that if something makes logical sense, you do not need to go to God about it. Well, that could be bothering on presumption, not faith. For example, David had the desire and the means to build God’s house. When he asked the prophet Nathan, he agreed with the king saying, “Go, do all that is in your heart, *for the Lord is with you.*” That night, God told the prophet to inform David that he was not the one to build His house but his son, Solomon [**2 Sam. 7: 1-13**]. How often have we taken decisions that will affect our future without first asking God? How often have we placed more confidence on the size of our bank accounts than on our faith in God’s abundant supply? Is He not the one who has given us power to get wealth so that we can use it for His glory and purpose [**Deut. 8: 17-18**]?

Therefore, when we put our material possessions ahead of God, we are sowing the wind of idolatry. We predispose ourselves to the kind of whirlwind that followed the children of Israel, namely, God rejected their call and their enemy pursued them [**Hos. 8: 3, 5**].

b) *Altars for sin*

God said, “Because Ephraim has made many *altars for sin*, they have become for him *altars for sinning*” [**v. 11**]. In other words, the people placed more emphasis on rituals than true worship. They drew near God with their lips but their hearts were far away from Him [**Is. 29: 13**].

In many places of worship today, the emphasis is more on how to make them user-friendly than God-fearing. You hardly hear any more sermons on repentance and fear of the Lord. Instead, the emphasis is on blessing, especially in material possessions, and manifestation of the gifts of the Holy Spirit, especially prophecy or speaking in tongues. Speaking of such people, Jesus said, “Many will say to Me in that day, ‘Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name, cast out demons in Your name, and done many wonders in Your name?’ and I will declare to them, ‘I never knew you; depart from Me, *you who practise lawlessness*’” [Matt. 7: 22]. So, why are we surprised when we hear of major scandals in the church today? The wind of sin sown by the children of Israel invited the enemy’s fire that burned their cities [Hos. 8: 14]. Do you know how many ministers of repute have been burnt by the shame of disclosures, dismissals and court appearances? When you make an altar for sin offering, it soon becomes the altar for sinning.

c) *Wickedness*

Through the prophet Hosea, God told the children of Israel, “You have ploughed wickedness; you have reaped iniquity” [Hos. 10: 13]. Usually, a farmer ploughs the land before he plants the seed. Therefore, if the people of Israel ploughed wickedness, it suggests that no matter how good the seed might be, it had no chance to make it because the land was very wicked. There was no enabling environment for success because the people were generally lawless.

In the Parable of the Sower, Jesus talked of the seed that fell [Matt. 13: 4-7]:

- by the wayside which the fowls of the air devoured
- on stony ground which could not take root for lack of earth; and
- on thorns which choked up the sprouts.

Are we different from those people? We are as lawless in that we are two different sets of people on Sunday and for the rest of the week. Those who swear by the name of God in public steal the most public funds in private! Those who are not stealing are pursuing wealth by hook or crook, including joining cults. So, when they sow seeds, the spirits of the air masquerading as birds of the air consume them. Those who even try to be honest and work hard are too greedy or too impatient to await God’s time of harvest. As a result, their seeds have no roots because they have been planted on hearts of stone. The rest who get carried away by the cares of this world do not have enough time for God. Therefore, their seeds are choked up and cannot produce fruits. In the end, all we reap is iniquity [Hos. 10: 13], that is, offend God the more!

If you were to audit your relationship with God right now, you might find that you are struggling in a whirlwind, the wind of which you sowed way back. For example, of Ephraim, God said, “their glory will fly away like a bird-no birth, no

pregnancy, and no conception” [Hos. 9: 14]. In their teenage years, some girls took to sexual promiscuity and succumbed to multiple abortions. Now, they are respectably married and anxiously looking for babies. Nothing is happening because either the womb or other vital parts of the reproductive system are all gone! Their poor husbands may have been misled to blame other sources for their barrenness but the wind of sexual recklessness has come home in a whirlwind of barrenness. There has to be a better way!

3. Can you hide from the whirlwind you have created?

Hosea prophesied that the people of Samaria (capital of the Northern Kingdom of Israel) would certainly reap the whirlwind of their disobedience when they would go into captivity. At that time, they would say to the mountains, “Cover us and to the hills, ‘Fall on us’ [Hos. 10: 8]. You may also remember that on the way to His crucifixion, a group of women came weeping and lamenting for Jesus. He said to them, “Daughters of Jerusalem, do not weep for me, but weep for yourselves and for your children. For the days are coming in which they will say, ‘Blessed are the barren wombs that never bore, and breasts which never nursed.’ *Then they will begin to say to the mountains, ‘Fall on us,’ and to the hills, ‘Cover us’* [Lk 23: 28-30]. Jesus quoted Hosea’s prophecy, indicating that the whirlwind of sin sowed by Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden had produced the whirlwind of human wickedness that was getting worse from generation to generation. Thank God for offering the atoning death of Jesus on the cross as the full and final antidote!

4. Conclusion: Sow righteousness and reap mercy!

Hosea admonished his people [Hos. 10: 12]:

Sow for yourselves righteousness; reap in mercy; break up your fallow ground, for it is time to seek the Lord till He comes and rains righteousness on you.

Here, we get the clear message that God is the beginning and the end of the matter. We have no righteousness to sow because human righteousness is as filthy rags [Is. 64: 6]. But when we seek God and He accepts us, then He pours His righteousness on us. So, then, what righteousness are we required to sow?

When the ground is fallow, it means it is lying unused. It could be bare. It may not be fertile. It could be hard. However, we can do something about it. We can break it up. That is, *it is our choice* whether to cultivate the fallow land or not. That we have the good seed to plant is not enough. The ground has to also be prepared. However, in doing so, are you ready to seek God in your heart or do it your way? To seek Him is to sincerely want to obey God in all His ways? Are you ready to

give up your heart of stone for a heart of flesh? Once you have done that, then, you have broken your fallow ground. You are predisposed to plant righteousness. Remember, we may know how to plant. We may also know how to water it. But only God can give the increase [**1 Cor. 3: 6**].

The word of God says that without faith, it is impossible to please Him, and that those who come to Him must believe that He is and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him [**Heb. 11: 6**]. The word of God also says that Abraham believed and it was imputed to him for righteousness [**Gen. 15: 6; Rom. 4: 3**]. So, *those who believe are the ones that God calls righteous*. It is by grace, not of works. That is why when you sow righteousness (faith), you reap mercy! Having received His mercy, God will rain His righteousness (holiness) on you. That is how you become perfect because God is perfect [**Matt. 5: 48**].

The key to sowing a good wind then is faith. That is why in the faith ‘Hall of Fame,’ we are told [**Heb. 11: 8, 11**]:

By faith, Abraham obeyed when he was called to go out to the place which he would receive as an inheritance. And he went out, not knowing where he was going...Therefore, from one man, and him as good as dead, were born as many as the stars of the sky in multitude- innumerable as the sand which is by the seashore.

Abraham obeyed by faith (sowed the good wind) and became the father of all nations (reaped the whirlwind).

We can have faith *as a gift of the Holy Spirit* [**1 Cor. 12:9**]. That is why some of us have great faith [**Matt. 8: 10**], or little faith [**Matt. 8: 26**], or no faith [**Mk 4: 40**]. Nevertheless, faith is also the *fruit of the Holy Spirit* [**Gal 5: 12**], meaning that it can be cultivated. Faith comes by hearing, by hearing the word of God [**Rom. 10: 17**]. That means that we must study the word of God *as a matter of duty*, know what He is telling us there and obey it completely at all times. The Psalmist says, “I was young, and now I am old; yet I have not seen the *righteous* forsaken, nor his descendants begging bread” [**Ps. 37: 25**]. That only applies to people of faith!

Why don’t you begin with taming the fire of your tongue? What we say reflects the state of our hearts [**Matt. 15: 18-20**]. With the heart we believe unto righteousness and with our mouths, confession is made unto salvation [**Rom. 10: 10**]. Therefore, you can sow righteousness with your tongue by:

- Watching what you say because death and life are in the power of the tongue [**Prov. 18: 21**];
- Talking less and listening more; and
- Speaking the truth of God *at all times*.