

SOUTH GEORGIA ADVOCATE – MAY 19 EDITION

Coronavirus changes how life events are celebrated

By Kara Witherow, *Editor*

Instead of just one lavish wedding, newlyweds Rebecca and David Bell will, eventually, have two weddings to remember.

Two weddings weren't part of their original plan, but the coronavirus pandemic forced the couple to rethink and reschedule their dream wedding just weeks before the big day.

Married April 25 in an intimate, outdoor "elopement" at Indian Springs State Park in Flovilla, the ceremony included only Rebecca, David, their parents, two officiants, and a photographer.

"We realized that coronavirus was going to really impact people who were planning to come to the wedding," said Rebecca, daughter of Dr. Derek McAleer, South Georgia's Director of Administrative Services. "It became very clear very quickly that we weren't going to be able to stick with our original plan."

The couple's original wedding and reception at Forest Hills United Methodist Church in Macon wasn't cancelled, Bell said, but has been rescheduled to August when they expect it will be safer for their 150 plus guests to travel.

While the decision to postpone his daughter's large, traditional wedding and reception wasn't easy, it was necessary, said Dr. McAleer. It's important that they celebrate the day with friends and family, he said.

"You really become so aware of how important it is to mark the passages in our lives with the people around us and how hard it is to do it without people," he said.

High school rites of passage have also been put on hold or cancelled and kids' social lives have been paused because of coronavirus.

On the evening their son's prom was scheduled, Rhonda and Rev. Mark Addington cooked a special dinner for their son, Berrien High School senior Wesley Addington, and his girlfriend, Natalie Nix.

Rhonda decorated the dining room, cooked Nix's favorite dinner of chicken alfredo, and the young couple dressed up and took photos together.

While it wasn't quite the same, "it was a neat way to recreate their prom," said Rev. Addington, who pastors Nashville United Methodist Church.

The church is also planning to host a prom for students sometime later this summer when they're able to safely gather.

"We want to be able to let them have that experience," Rev. Addington said. "These kids are not experiencing what we would call 'normal life' for a senior, and this is just a way of letting them

know we love them and want to help celebrate who they are and what they've done. Hopefully we'll be able to do that later in the summer."

In a normal time, Rev. Tony Crosby's father-in-law's funeral would have had drawn a huge crowd and his visitation would have had folks lined up around the block, Rev. Crosby said.

But COVID-19 has changed everything, even the way folks mourn and pay their last respects.

Instead of being a large gathering of family, friends, and members of his Primitive Baptist church, Elder Jimmy Chapman's funeral was a small, private family affair officiated by Rev. Crosby. It was recorded, streamed, and posted on YouTube so those not able to attend could view the service.

"It was somewhat unfulfilling in a way, but we did the best we could. We livestreamed and recorded and we know a lot of people watched," said Rev. Crosby, pastor of Epworth United Methodist Church in Columbus. "I count it a great honor to get to do his service; I looked up to him greatly. He was a giant."

The first of his siblings to die, Chapman had family who, because of the pandemic, weren't able to be with him in his final moments or attend his funeral.

"We took pictures and did FaceTime to help them feel like they were there. The idea of streaming somebody dying would seem crazy in another time, yet it's the only way they could feel like they were there," Rev. Crosby said. "Some of us took turns holding the phone so those folks who couldn't be there were there. It was odd and awkward, but it's where we are."

It's easier to share joy remotely than grief, said Dr. McAleer, who, in addition to celebrating a wedding, on May 6 welcomed grandson Avery James McAleer.

The entire family – from Macon to Savannah to Atlanta – was able to video conference via Zoom to the Washington, D.C.-area hospital room to visit with Avery, Sarah, and Jeff McAleer in the moments after Avery was born.

"I have watched my son hold his baby and it's a big deal," Dr. McAleer said. "We figure out ways to be together. While it's not as good, it's also not nothing."

Oldest South Georgia Conference clergy member turns 100

By Kara Witherow, *Editor*

Rev. Henry Erwin's Methodist roots run deep.

He's the 17th Methodist minister in a family that traces their faith heritage all the way back to Francis Asbury.

"The first (pastor) in our family was ordained by Francis Asbury, the first Methodist bishop in the New World," said Angela Mobley, one of Rev. Erwin's daughters.

Rev. Erwin's father and uncle were both Methodist ministers, so it was no shock when, as a teenager, Rev. Erwin felt the call to ministry.

"Daddy has just always had God in his heart," said daughter Michele Erwin. "I think when he was probably 16 the Lord started tugging on him, and when he was about 18 he gave up and said okay."

In the years that followed, Rev. Erwin received an associate's degree from Young Harris College, served with the Merchant Marine during World War II, graduated from Georgia Southern University, and, at 22, joined the South Georgia Conference. Along the way, he married Lila Skinner and the couple had five daughters.

In a life full of milestones and achievements, on May 2, Rev. Erwin – the oldest living pastor in the Conference – marked another big one by celebrating his 100th birthday.

His caregivers at the Georgia War Veterans Nursing Home in Augusta marked the special occasion with a party, balloons, cake, and ice cream. Rev. Erwin was also able to celebrate with his daughters via Zoom.

"It was great," said Michele Erwin, who had cared for her father for the past 10 years until a bad fall necessitated the move to the nursing home. "He had a big day. He enjoyed it."

In a pastoral ministry career that spanned nearly five decades, Rev. Erwin, known throughout the Conference for his love of the outdoors, mentored hundreds of young people and camp leaders.

"He was a great leader in camping," said Rev. Dave Hanson, who hiked the Appalachian Trail and canoed the Suwannee River and Okefenokee Swamp with Rev. Erwin. "He mentored many, many people in the outdoors and in working with young people."

An avid outdoorsman, fisherman, and woodworker, Rev. Erwin was a skilled craftsman who built furniture and made bowls, plant stands, lamps, candlesticks, and more on his lathe.

Rev. Jim Rush has known Rev. Erwin since 1964. He fondly remembers Rev. Erwin as a superb pastor and the best fisherman he's ever known.

"He really loves the Lord, the Church, his family, and his country," said Rev. Rush, who served as Rev. Erwin's superintendent while in the Statesboro District. "He and Lila have such a legacy in the Methodist Church."

For Rev. Erwin's daughters and family, his 100-year legacy is one of love, kindness, and deep faith.

"Daddy walked the talk. Daddy was the same man at home as he was in the pulpit," Mobley said. "Daddy is an incredible soul. He's been an unsung hero in a lot of instances. His is an exemplary life. He was a wonderful husband and is a wonderful father and he's a wonderful friend and minister. Daddy's never, ever, ever lost sight of his love of God."



Carrying our sanctuary wherever we go

OUR CONNECTION MATTERS

ALLISON LINDSEY

I must confess, I absolutely love a good quote! Quotes, scriptures, prayers, and profound nuggets of truth that I do not want to forget - or that I need more time to ponder - fill my journals. I often look through these journals and many times something jumps out at me in a new and relevant way. This week, for example, I stumbled upon this AW Tozer quote: “Worshippers never leave church ... we carry our sanctuary with us wherever we go.” During this pandemic, this certainly confronts me in a new way. Have there ever been truer words?

The coronavirus, the shelter-in-place order, and the desire to Do No Harm and be socially responsible in our communities may have closed the doors of our church buildings, but this new reality has in no way closed the church.

You may have seen the t-shirt that says “Church Can Happen Anywhere.” We first printed them right after Hurricane Michael as our disaster response teams and volunteers were embodying that phrase. What better time to wear the shirt than now as our churches are once again living this out? ([You can order yours here by May 31](#)).

Yes, church can absolutely happen anywhere! But as I think about the creativity and ministry of our local churches across South Georgia during this pandemic, I say church not only *can* happen anywhere, but that church **IS** happening everywhere!

- Our churches’ online presence shares the gospel message in ways we cannot begin to imagine. Bishop Bryan’s Sunday morning worship services have been watched from 19 different states and another country. Pastors are sharing evangelism testimonies that are taking place through worship, prayer time, daily devotions and Bible study - all virtually. (I personally love “visiting” different churches and these offerings online throughout the week!)
- Sewing ministries in local churches adapted quickly and have collectively made thousands of masks for frontline workers in their communities.
- Severe weather and tornadoes in April have called upon our Early Response Teams, using social distancing and wearing masks, to provide relief work in multiple communities impacted by the storms.
- Front porch visits are taking place in communities where the pastors check-in on members from the front porch of member’s homes while the pastor stays by their car.

I could fill pages upon pages highlighting the creative ministries I see happening daily across South Georgia. The Great Commandment and The Great Commission have not changed, even though the ways we might “normally” fulfill them look different. My questions for us are this: What are we, as Christians and collectively as the body of Christ, learning during this time to

carry with us into the future of discipleship and outreach ministries? How can we use what we are learning to shape our “new normal?” How can we continue to make sure that church IS happening everywhere?

As I continue to ponder the quote by AW Tozer, “Worshippers never leave church ... we carry our sanctuary with us wherever we go,” my prayer is, “Lord, prepare me to be a sanctuary and use me anywhere and everywhere I go.”

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Repent of Injustice

Spring Quarter: Justice and The Prophets

Unit 3: Called to God’s Work of Justice

Sunday school lesson for the week of May 24, 2020

By Dr. Hal Brady

Lesson Scripture: Jeremiah 22:1-10

Key Verse: Jeremiah 22:3

Lesson Aims

1. State promised results of obedience to God and promised consequences for disobedience.
2. Compare and contrast God’s statements regarding social justice and injustice with those in other lessons of this unit.
3. Evaluate our church’s ministries to the most vulnerable and participate in a plan for improving those.

It is recorded that on May 18, 1980, Mount St. Helena erupted in the state of Washington. Reportedly, it was the deadliest eruption ever in the United States. The estimated power of the blast was 1,600 times the size of the atomic bomb dropped on Hiroshima. Miles of forest were leveled by the direct blast, and the very earth was scorched by its power. Fifty-seven people and thousands of animals died as a result. What had previously been lush forest and vacation area looked like moonscape. The ash cloud turned the sky dark as far away as Montana. As we are told, the blast was a violent reminder of nature’s potential for destruction.

The terrible devastation that was to follow the destruction of Jerusalem probably looked equally shocking. A once thriving city would be reduced to wilderness and wasteland. A key thing to keep in mind, however, is that the devastation of Jerusalem was definitely supernatural in origin.

Lesson Context

Since the historical context of this lesson is the same as last week’s lesson, we can move along and say a word about Jeremiah himself.

God called Jeremiah as a young man to be his prophet to Judah, however, Jeremiah thought that he was too young and not qualified to speak (Jeremiah 1:6). The forthcoming confrontations would seem, at times, to be just two against everyone else. But since one of those two was God (1:17-19), the outcome would never be in doubt.

At times in Jeremiah's lengthy ministry, the stress was so great that it seemed as if he were at the psychological breaking point. Nothing Jeremiah did seemed to persuade people. An example of his extreme frustration is his series of complaints in Jeremiah 12:1-4 (also 20:7-18).

At any rate, God's response would be something like, "Get with the program!" Whatever! Jeremiah's early years of prophetic ministry under King Josiah were easy compared to what was to come.

For Judah (Jeremiah 22:1-5)

The populaces of Judah were convinced that the presence among them of a king of the royal house of David was an assured sign of God's favor and protection. More than 300 years of history appeared to prove this belief, especially when contrasted with the fate of the short-lived dynasties of the Northern Kingdom. It is remembered that the Northern Kingdom seceded from the Davidic kingship in Jerusalem after Solomon's death (I Kings 12:16,20). And the succumbing of this rebellious Northern Kingdom to Assyrian domination had been popularly interpreted as a consequence of this abandonment of the divinely appointed Davidic royal house. So there was this widespread conviction that God had in the past blessed and protected Judah "for the sake of his servant David" and that he would continue to do so in the future.

As we are told, against such a popular conviction, it requires a Jeremiah to recognize and expose such a dangerous fallacy. Only God, not a person or an institution, could be the true author and ground of faith.

It is this point that lies at the heart of Jeremiah's concern. To be sure, God had in the past given Israel kings to lead them in the pursuit of a national life of peace and justice. However, the relationship of the kingship to God – even that of the kingship of David's line – did not guarantee Israel or Judah, which had remained loyal to the Davidic dynasty, a guaranteed assurance of God's protection. In Jeremiah's understanding, the kingship might even become an obstacle between the people and God.

These verses before us repeat the exhortation to the king to execute justice that is the subject of 21:11,12. Like 21:11,12, the threat of judgment hangs over the king who does not do justice. The demand for royal justice, however, is elaborated even more in these verses. Not only is there the positive call for justice and righteousness and the deliverance of those oppressed, but there is also a negative word of warning to the kings not to be agents of oppression against the marginalized, the powerless, and the poor of the land.

In verse 3, Jeremiah again emphasizes that "the Lord" is speaking. Jeremiah himself is only the messenger.

“Do what is just and right.” This is the point of leadership failure (compare Ezekiel 45:9; Amos 5:24). Doing “what is just” is to ensure fair treatment but is not limited to that. It also includes developing and maintaining healthy, honest, and respectful relationship at all levels. To “do...right” is to create and maintain those kinds of relationships. Even so, we should not see too much of a distinction between being just and right, given their many uses as parallel terms in Hebrew posting (example Isaiah 32:1).

Important to note! It is God’s character that sets the standard for what is just and right (examples Isaiah 56:1; Psalm 89:14). Both must be expressed toward everyone at all times. And it is the leaders who are to set the example.

Continuing in verse 3, oppression flourishes where justice and righteousness are absent. In such circumstances, “the oppressor” can cheat and steal without consequence. The three kinds of victims mentioned are the most vulnerable in the ancient world. We are informed that three were mentioned together 16 times in the Hebrew Old Testament (compare Jeremiah 7:6). The “foreigner” (that is, a non-Israelite living among the covenant people) should have legal recourse for righting “violence” done to himself and his family. The “fatherless” and the “widow” are most susceptible to poverty, lacking a family breadwinner.

Now, God frequently sets his commands in the contest of consequence and blessings (example: Deuteronomy 11:26-28). Here in verse 4, God promises again to extend David’s legacy to David’s royal descendants if they will “carry out these commands” – namely, practice justice and righteousness.

The main question is simple: Do those “who sit on David’s throne” desire to keep their positions, or do they not?

Verse 5 says, “but if you do not obey these commands, declares the Lord, I swear by myself that this palace will become a ruin.”

To swear is a particular weighty way of making a promise (compare Genesis 22:16). The more significant permanent or powerful the thing sworn on, the more definite and absolute the promise. There is nothing and no one more significant, permanent, or powerful than God (Hebrews 6:13). Thus, God will make sure he fulfills this promise if Judah refuses to respond obediently.

The consequences God describes are both symbolic and literal. The phrase “this palace” refers both to David’s descendants and to the physical structure of their dwelling. If Judah’s leaders disregard God, they will not only be dethroned, they will also be without a physical residence in Jerusalem (compare Jeremiah 39:4-8).

The late Paul Harvey told about a man named Gary Tindle who was charged with robbery. While standing in the California courtroom of Judge Armando Rodriguez, he asked permission to go to the bathroom. He was escorted upstairs to the bathroom, and the door was guarded while he was inside. But Tindle, determined to escape, climbed up the plumbing, opened a panel in the ceiling and started slithering through the crawl space, heading south.

He had traveled some 30 feet when the ceiling panels broke under him, and he dropped to the floor – right back in Judge Rodriguez’s courtroom!

When the guilty seem to have escaped judgment, it’s only for a short while. In due time, they will find themselves back before the Judge.

At any rate, this is the predicament of the kings and court of Judah if they fail to adhere to God’s commands. They will not escape God’s judgment.

In verses 6 and 7, God uses imagery to affirm how precious his people are to him. Like Gilead, like Lebanon, is the land of Judah to the Lord. Gilead is an area just east of the Jordan River. Lebanon is located along the seacoast north of Israel. Those areas were known for their forests. Both David and Solomon used expensive wood from the areas in building projects. And Gilead was also known for its balm (Genesis 37:25; Jeremiah 8:22; 46:11).

So the reference to Gilead and Lebanon is probably reminding us that the palace was built of fine cedars. It was also built with a “hall of justice,” where the king was “to pronounce judgment” (I Kings 7:7). This text suggests that the “hall of justice” had decayed. Therefore, the magnificent cedar timbers of the royal palace will fall.

Though Judah is to God like the land of the choicest cedars, it will be made like a desert, and travelers from many nations passing by will pause and wonder “why?” (Deuteronomy 27:24,25).

The destroyers of verse 7 refer to the Babylonians (2 Chronicles 36:17-19). Those magnificent cedar timbers of the royal palace will fall under their siege. Then the besieging army will cut down the trees to build its siege ramps and towers (Jeremiah 6:6).

The Babylonians will burn everything of significance before leaving for home (Jeremiah 52:13). Simply put, Judah will be a deconstruction zone. As we are reminded, the sense of the verse is of priceless things destroyed that need not have been.

We now come to verse 8 and 9. People of the ancient Near East general linked the rise and fall of “nations” to the power of a nation’s deities (see I Kings 20:23). Jerusalem’s status as a “great city” has earned Judah a reputation for following a very powerful deity. This is what God intended (Genesis 12:1-3).

However, the injustice that infects Jerusalem and Judah does not draw the nations toward the just and holy God – the only God there is. Instead, the nations around Jerusalem see no difference between Judah’s way of life and theirs, between their gods and Judah’s God. And when those nations see the defeat and captivity of God’s people, they will link it to God’s activity. Consequently, the devastation Judah is to undergo will be so immense that everyone will conclude that it was a God-driven action. The extent of the destruction will accomplish what Jerusalem and her injustice had not. The nations will acknowledge God in at least one sense.

The question of verses 8 and 9 implies puzzlement on the part of the nations. Why in the world would the Lord want to destroy or allow to be destroyed such a magnificent city as Jerusalem – indeed the place of the Lord’s own dwelling? There is one reason alone, and it has been indicated again and again in the book: The people have forsaken the covenant. The city and its ruling class

–indeed, its citizens more generally – have failed to live by the commandments and the requirements of justice and righteousness that were set forth in the covenant, recorded in the Torah. Abandonment of the covenant referred to in verse 9 includes both justice for the oppressed and loyalty to the Lord.

Now, God’s plan from the beginning has involved inviting others to experience and follow him. We see this in God’s promise to Abraham, that Abraham will be a blessing to the nations (Genesis 12:1-3). It is seen again in Zechariah 8:20-23, as God’s restoration of Judah draws the nations to seek him. And we see it again in the New Testament, when Peter challenges his readers to live lives that draw questions – all so that we may respond with Jesus as our answer (1 Peter 3:8-15).

But in our text we see the opposite occurring. Jerusalem’s injustice does not draw the nations to seek God, since they see no difference between Judah’s actions and their own. So God plans to draw their attention to his ways of justice and righteousness by disciplining Judah for her failure to model God’s character. That would invite others to see God for who he is (example, Ezekiel 39:23). The forthcoming devastation will be seen as divine in origin. Nations will acknowledge God one way or the other.

The point of the oracle in verse 10 is that the people who had pinned their hopes so thoroughly on Josiah as the king who would restore the Davidic kingdom and overthrow all foreign domination should not keep on lamenting over those lost hopes. It is now time to mourn over the next king (Shallum, son of Josiah), who is about to go into exile and will never come back.

The force of Jeremiah’s prophecy has been God’s warning of destruction and exile if Judah’s leaders refuse to practice justice. Jeremiah holds him up as a warning of his hero’s own possible future.

Conclusion

The word from God to the house of David features two promises. (1) If David’s descendants would renounce injustice, then God would bless them, but (2) if not, they would suffer punishment. Judah would experience the full and recognizable consequence of disobeying God. God would therefore exhibit his character to the world and draw people to himself in one of those two ways.

And God calls us to the same challenge he presented through Jeremiah. Either we will represent the character of God as expressed in Jesus, and in our actions expose and eliminate injustice to the oppressed, or we will risk experiencing God in ways we will not like or imagine.

The late Dr. John Brokhoff, preacher and professor, spoke of a little girl who came home from church one Sunday. She had just heard a sermon on the subject, “Let your light shine,” and she asked her mother for an explanation. The mother explained that the light shone when we were kind and good. The next Sunday in the nursery, the child caused an uproar, and the teacher had to get her mother. Her mother asked her why she acted so badly. Remembering what she was told the previous Sunday the little girl blurted out, “I have blown myself out.”

God forbid that would happen to any of us!

Action Plan

1. What stance(s) should Christians take regarding governmental policies and procedures that the Word of God says are wrong? How does Acts 4:18-20; 5:27-29; and Romans 13:1-7 help shape your answers?
2. Which sins of injustice are most in need of correcting today: those of commission (doing wrong) or those of omission (failing to do right)? Why?

Resources for this lesson

1. “2019-2020 Standard Lesson NIV Commentary, Uniform Series, International Bible Lessons for Christian Teaching,” pages 323-329.
2. “The New Interpreter’s Bible, Volume VI,” pages 739-741.
3. “Interpretation Bible Commentary Jeremiah” by R.E. Clements, pages 130-132.
4. “Commentary on Jeremiah” by Andrew Blackwood, Jr. pages 166-168.

Dr. Hal Brady is a retired pastor who continues to present the Good News of Jesus Christ and offer encouragement in a fresh and vital way through [Hal Brady Ministries](http://halbradyministries.com) (halbradyministries.com).

Pursue Love and Justice

Spring Quarter: Justice and The Prophets

Unit 3: Called to God’s Work of Justice

Sunday school lesson for the week of May 31, 2020

By Dr. Hal Brady

Lesson Scripture: Hosea 11:1,2,7-10; 12:1,2,6-14

Key Verse: Hosea 12:6

Lesson Aims

1. Identify Israel’s problem.
2. Explain whether the predicted consequences of that problem better fit the concept of “restorative” justice or that of “retributive” justice.

The writer of the lesson described a hot summer day when he and others were excitedly preparing to eat a cool green watermelon. It was so appealing – yet, a swift stroke of a knife later, and everybody gathered around the table winced in disgust. The watermelon had rotted from the inside out. The rind was perfect, but the dead white insides reeked of decay.

Disappointment quickly gave way to revulsion as they tried to escape the nauseating stench. The beautiful fruit was rotten at the core.

That was also true of the northern kingdom of Israel of the mid-eighth century BC. Though it looked beautiful on the surface, like the nation had it all together, it too was rotten at the core. And God had had enough of Israel's revolting behavior

Lesson Context

A general time line for Hosea's prophetic ministry is 755-725 BC. This is understood with reference to the reigns listed in Hosea 1:1 as well as the fact that the northern kingdom of Israel, Hosea's primary focus, ceased to exist in 722 BC.

Israel's King Jeroboam II, listed in Hosea 1:1, reigned from about 793 to 753 BC. He was a strong ruler politically. He also expanded Israel's borders and made Israel the leading nation in Palestine and Syria (see 2 Kings 14:23-29). Consequently, Israel was wealthy and proud of its success.

Turning their backs on God, the people found it all too easy to shift allegiances to the fictitious deity known as Baal (Hosea 2:8,13). And this went hand in hand with injustice (Hosea 4:1,2). So, in confronting this idolatry, God called Hosea to live out a unique and difficult parable of God's love for Israel (see chapters 1-3).

Note that Hosea's style of prophecy did not involve pronouncing what we might call highly directed prophecies – those beginning with the command "Hear," followed by named addressees – the way other prophets did (contrast Jeremiah 10:1; 22:2). The two exceptions are found in Hosea 4:1 and 5:1. Following those pronouncements, however, Hosea simply continued his generalized prophetic pronouncements on wayward Israel. For this reason, the organization of the book can be difficult to discern.

Father's Faithfulness (Hosea 11:1,2,7-10)

With the imagery of the husband and wife, chapters 1-3 of Hosea presented an unforgettable picture of God's forgiving love. Now, after a long series of accusations and announcements of punishment in chapters 4-10, we now see in Chapter 11 and beyond an equally memorable picture of God's nurturing love, with the image of God the parent and the people as child and children.

Hosea tells the story of God's interactions with "Israel" beginning with the exodus "out of Egypt." That event and the giving of the law at Sinai launched Israel as a nation. Calling Israel "child" reinforces that this was a formative experience. God is determined that the leadership and people of Israel understand the coming prophecy first and foremost in terms of his love.

And the writer of Matthew uses this text to describe the return of young Jesus from Egypt (Matthew 2:15). That story too should be read in light of God's love. Jesus is the ultimate expression of that love.

In verse 2, the designation “Baal” refers to the fictitious god of other nations, particularly the Canaanites. This is a term that generally has the sense of “lord” or “master.” But no matter how persistently God has “called” Israel to him, the people insist on doing the opposite and embracing idolatry (examples: 2 Kings 17:15,16; Hosea 11:7, 13:1).

Though the people may still be offering sacrifices to the Lord and celebrating his festivals, they also burn “incense to idols. The hearts of the people are untrue to the very God who gave birth to their nation by bringing them from Egypt and giving them a land of their own.

What is an idol anyway? Timothy Keller, well-known Presbyterian minister, says it is anything more important to you than God, anything that absorbs your heart and imagination more than God.

Likely the people are worshiping Canaanite deities even as they continue to say the right things about “God Most High.” Because of their utter refusal to abandon idolatry, God will not exalt them by delivering them (verse 7).

In verse 8, the parallel structure of Hebrew poetry is clear as the second question creatively rephrases the first. “Ephraim” is another way of referring to the northern kingdom of Israel (example: Hosea 5:3; 6:10).

This is also true as the fourth question rephrases the third: “Admah” and “Zeboyim” were sister cities destroyed like Sodom and Gomorrah (Deuteronomy 29:23). The thought, however, of punishing Israel as he did those cities breaks God’s heart. God is one who takes “no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but rather that they turn from their ways and live” (Ezekiel 33:11).

We are informed that “changed” and “aroused” does not mean that God repented of his actions as though he has done or is planning to do wrong. Rather, the sense is that “compassion” tempers his anger; see the next verse, verse 9.

This is not the first time that God’s compassion tempers his anger (see 2 Samuel 24:15-25). While numerous people tend to overreact in their anger, God is always thoughtful and measured in his action. Perhaps this is one of the things Isaiah had in mind when he said of God, “For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways,” declares the Lord (Isaiah 55:8).

For God to refer to himself as “the Holy One among you” reminds his covenant people that although he is present with them, he also is entirely different from them.

Verse 9 in its context is valuable for glimpsing God’s two overarching characteristics of holiness (compare Isaiah 6:3; Revelation 4:8) and love (compare 1 John 4:8, 16). Neither one is subordinate to the other. God’s holiness calls forth retributive expressions of his wrath (example Genesis 6:5-7), while God’s love calls for restorative expression of his wrath (examples: Deuteronomy 8:5; Hebrews 12:5-7).

As we are reminded, centuries after the time of Hosea, the self-sacrifice of Jesus on the cross will satisfy the requirements of both God’s holiness and love. As sin is punished to satisfy the requirements of God’s holiness, the path to eternal life is thereby opened in satisfying the

requirements of God's love. Life in the presence of our holy God becomes possible as sin's price is paid (Romans 3:21-26).

The final section of Hosea 11 describes a homecoming, when God's children will come home from all over the world (vv.10-11). The figurative "roar like a lion" by God will be the sign for Israel to return home.

Now, the movement of this chapter (11) as a whole suggests comparison with the parable of the Prodigal Son. That father, in the parable, knew the risks of parenting, as he allowed his son to take what he had coming to him and set off on his own. The father must have known the pain of parenting as well; we can imagine him having reports about his son who was squandering his inheritance and wasting his time and money with prostitutes (Luke 15).

But that father's love would not let the rebelling son go. When he saw him in the distance one day, he ran down the road to meet him, embraced him, and threw a homecoming party. So it is with God, says the text, when God's rebelling children come home.

Lord's Resolution (Hosea 12:1,2,6-14)

Speaking through the prophet (11:12), God begins an indictment of Ephraim/Israel by accusing it of lies and deceit. The futility of Ephraim's deeds become evident in 12:1, where Ephraim attempts to "herd the wind" and "pursue" the east wind. This can be another way of referring to "a treaty with Assyria" and an economic treaty with "Egypt" that involves "olive oil." Rather than seeking God as an ally, the king of Israel has turned to world powers for security (compare Hosea 5:13; 7:11).

Verse 2 is the formal language of a lawsuit (compare Isaiah 3:13; Amos 3:13; Micah 6:2). Like any legal arrangement, there are consequences for breaking the contract. These consequences are agreed on before signing (example: Deuteronomy 11:16,17,28). As the name Ephraim in our scripture lesson refers to the entire northern kingdom of Israel, so also "Jacob" here represents all of "Judah" (or even both kingdoms in totality). Judah would do well to see how God judges the north and repent while there is still time.

In verse 6, we see that the language of "return to your God" is language of repentance from sin. But this turn of the heart must be matched by a turn in behavior. Any turn of the heart must be accompanied by practicing the "love and justice" that mirrors God's own character.

And to "wait for your God always" is not simply a suggestion of passive patience. Rather, this imperative implies an active and complete trust in God's plans and timing (examples Psalm 130:5; Isaiah 8:17; Micah 7:7). This will demonstrate repentance from relying on earthly powers instead of God.

Verse 7 portrays the nation as a greedy shopkeeper who delights in using "dishonest scales" to defraud or cheat customers. These "dishonest scales" are false weights on a balance scale (example: Leviticus 19:36).

Then it is that ill-gotten gain breeds arrogance (compare Ezekiel 28:5). If unchecked, this arrogance will eventually result in a self-deluding sense of invincibility (“they will not find in me any iniquity or sin”). But all his riches can never offset the guilt he has incurred.

However, mention of the exodus from “out of Egypt” again brings the prophecy back to Hosea 11:1. To “live in tents again” refers to the annual Festival of Tabernacles. During this week-long observance, Israelites live in temporary huts, or booths (tabernacles), to remember their days of God’s protection in the wilderness (Leviticus 23:33-36, 39-43). But to bring the people back to him this time, God will send them through a wilderness experience again in the form of exile.

By this time, God has spoken “to the prophets” plainly. He has also communicated through “visions” and “parables.” Since the time of Morea, God has sent a succession of prophets to call Israel to conversion. When the nation refuses to repent, God destroys it. The agents of God’s revelation then became the agents of God’s just punishment.

We are informed that in verse 11 we have a good example of a prophetic parable in the form of a riddle God poses to Israel. Earlier in Hosea’s prophecies, he had introduced “Gilgal” as the site of a major pagan shrine. The location of the city of “Gilead” is unknown, but it parallels Gilgal in wickedness. God speaks of the people’s pride in both the shrine and their agricultural wealth. But Gilead’s “altars” to other gods make it unfruitful as if its fields were sown with rocks instead of fertile soil.

In verse 12 God continues the riddle by noting Jacob’s experiences with Laban. Although “Jacob” initially “fled” to Laban for safety (Genesis 27:42-45), Jacob did not find the haven he hoped for. Jacob (later renamed “Israel;” Genesis 32:28) was deceived in marriage and ultimately sensed the need to flee. Similarly, Israel is looking to Egypt and Assyria for safety but will eventually find Egypt to be powerless and Assyria to be a deadly enemy.

Without the riddle, God now speaks plainly. Listening to Hosea is the same as listening to the “prophet” Moses of long ago. Both speak God’s words. Just as God “led Israel” up from slavery under Moses, God can lead the Israelites away from a second captivity and exile if they listen to Hosea.

In verse 14 God repeats his warning: “Ephraim” (Israel) will face the consequences of its actions (compare Ezekiel 18:13). God’s protection will be withdrawn. Arrogant Israel’s injustice and idolatry will cause national destruction.

Thus the key message of this lesson is found in verse 6: “But you must return to your God; maintain love and justice, and wait for your God always.” As we look at Israel, we see something of our own reflection in the mirror. Therefore, God calls us to repent of our sins, do away with injustice and idolatry and follow Him only.

There was a Sunday school lesson on the word “repentance.” “What does repentance mean?” The teachers asked. “Being sorry for your sins,” was the answer. Not bad, but better still was, “Being sorry enough to quit.” “You must return to your God...,” Hosea said.

Action Plan

1. How can we guard against allowing our trust in earthly covenants to supersede the new covenant we have in Christ?
2. What techniques can we pass onto others to help them wait for God?
3. How can we allow love and justice to characterize our lives?

Resources for this lesson

1. “2019-2020 Standard Lesson NIV Commentary, Uniform Series, International Bible Lessons for Christian Teaching,” pages 330-336.
2. “The New Interpreter’s Bible, Volume VII,” pages 276-287.
3. “Interpretation Hosea-Micah” by James Timburg, pages 38-42.
4. “The Interpreter’s Bible Volume 6” pages 680-682.

Dr. Hal Brady is a retired pastor who continues to present the Good News of Jesus Christ and offer encouragement in a fresh and vital way through [Hal Brady Ministries](http://halbradyministries.com) (halbradyministries.com).

A new sense of patriotism

By Dr. Hal Brady

The late Dr. John Claypool, noted minister, tells about going to make pastoral calls at a large hospital. He visited two women both approaching 90 and both with physical difficulties. When John entered the first woman’s room, he felt this incredible cloud of despair. The woman was quick to list all her complaints.

Dr. Claypool said he tried to cheer her up but to no avail.

Two floors down, he saw the other woman who was facing some serious physical ailments, but the atmosphere in her room was totally different. The woman bragged on everything – doctors, nurses, food – everything.

Commenting on the food, she said, “Why, they bring it to me on a tray, and I love the variety of the menus.” Then she added, “Now, John, eating under my circumstances is not easy. Because of age I only have two teeth left, but thank the good Lord, they hit!”

Dr. Claypool said that at that moment he felt like stepping back and giving her a full military salute! Because all the heroism in the world is not confined to the battlefield. That woman was adding something good and joyful to the world.

For emphasis, let me repeat Dr. Claypool’s statement: “Because all the heroism in the world is not confined to the battlefield.

My, oh my, how we are recognizing the truth of that statement anew during the COVID-19 pandemic of today.

No doubt our concept of what it means to be patriotic in the past has largely centered in celebrating the military. The idea has been to celebrate and honor people who have agreed to risk their lives to protect the nation and the nation's interests. And certainly, we will continue to celebrate and honor those valiant defenders of the sacred freedoms we hold so dear.

However, today, during this COVID-19 pandemic we are seeing our understanding of what it means to be patriotic increase and include numbers of others who are risking their lives and well-being for the benefit of the rest of us – doctors, nurses, hospital orderlies, postal workers, teachers, police officers, fire fighters, UPS drivers, EMTs, agricultural laborers, grocery store employees, truck drivers, pharmacists, pharmacy attendants, National Guard, active duty soldiers, election monitors, trash collectors, and others.

Here we are talking about a whole range of patriots whose jobs require them to continue working even in the midst of staying in place orders. True heroes and heroines!

As I recently read in a magazine article, “Maybe grocery workers could be celebrated at the halftime of NFL games when the league restarts. Or perhaps nurses could lead the parades at some of our country's celebrations.”

At any rate, our best response to all these patriots is our deepest gratitude and our heartfelt prayers in their behalf. God bless and protect them, every one.

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Retired Clergy Birthdays – May 2020

- 5/01 – Jacque Asbel: 4116 Amberley Trail; Valdosta, GA 31602
- 5/01 – John Beck: 1210 Tribble Rd.; Ft. Valley, GA 31030
- 5/02 – Henry Erwin: 530 Liberty St.; Waynesboro, GA 30830
- 5/03 – Rick Turner: 798 Mallery St., Apt. 11; St. Simons Island, GA 31522
- 5/06 – Eddie Morrison: 1610 Kings Way; Savannah, GA 31406
- 5/12 – Reese Nelson: 2804 Willow Wood Circle; Valdosta, GA 31602
- 5/12 – William Willis, Jr.: 2021 Bernhurst Dr.; Knoxville, TN 37918
- 5/12 – Ron Womack: 4444 GA Highway 15, S.; Vidalia, GA 30474
- 5/14 – Donald Clark: 197 Cubbedge Dr.; Rincon, GA 31326
- 5/14 – Marshall Howell: PO Box 658; Midway, GA 31320
- 5/14 – Kenneth Watkins: 170 Sanford St.; Wadley, GA 30477
- 5/15 – Jack McCollough, Jr.: 100 Lindsey Barron Dr., Apt. 232; Newnan, GA 30263
- 5/15 – Tommy Roe: PO Box 56; Montrose, GA 31065

- 5/15 – Dan Smith: 7176 Standing Boy Rd.; Columbus, GA 31904
- 5/19 – Ronnie Howell: 32 Vanceville Co. Line Rd.; Tifton, GA 31794
- 5/20 – Franklin Pierce: 602 Ft. King George Dr.; Darien, GA 31305
- 5/22 – Jimmy Gilbert: 464 Penia Rd. N; Cordele, GA 31015
- 5/23 – Jeri Pruette: 2188 Peacock Rd.; Quitman, GA 31643
- 5/27 – Cecile Mitchell: 130 Hitchiti Ridge Rd.; Juliette, GA 31046
- 5/28 – Richard Newton: 1823 Kaufman Circle; The Villages, FL 32159
- 5/29 – Marsha Emery: 3855 Dennis Creek Road; Talbotton, GA 31827
- 5/30 – Marvin Goodman: 97 Maple Ridge Dr.; Ray City, GA 31645
- 5/30 – Luanne Kemper: 1412 Sapling Dr.; Orange Park, FL 32073

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OBITUARIES

Mrs. Kathleen Crenshaw Edwards

Kathleen Crenshaw Edwards died peacefully at her home on May 1, 2020 after an extended illness. Born in Salem, Kentucky on July 12, 1927, Kathleen was the daughter of Ira Patterson Crenshaw, a Methodist minister, and Alma McFarland Crenshaw, an accomplished musician and piano teacher. She attended Asbury College in Wilmore, Kentucky, where she met her future husband, William Russell Edwards, Jr., of Fort Valley, Georgia. They were married on June 2, 1951.

Like her mother, Kathy was an accomplished musician, and her love of music was one of her great joys and gift to others. Until illness made sitting at the piano difficult, she played the piano nearly every day, filling her home with the beautiful music that she loved. That love of music influenced her career as an educator, and over the course of her 30 year career she was a band teacher, kindergarten teacher, 3rd grade teacher, special education teacher and hospital homebound teacher of students of various ages. Because of her awareness of the healing power of music, in 1971 she completed a Master's of Education degree, and was one of the first graduates of the University of Georgia's Music Therapy program. Kathy was actively involved in her profession, and served in leadership roles in education at both the local and state levels. In her retirement she continued to serve the community, and volunteered at the State Botanical Gardens and St. Mary's Hospital. She and her husband were active members of Athens First United Methodist Church.

Friends consistently described Kathy as a gracious, kind, and deeply compassionate woman. Her home was a source of delight, and was the site of 50 years of happy gatherings of friends, her "walking buddies" and their annual St. Patrick's Day brunch, dinners with other members of the gourmet supper club, of which she and her husband, Russell, were members for over 30 years, and many years of Memorial and Labor Day barbeques. Her happiest times, however, were family gatherings around a table that was always ready to be expanded to include whomever showed up for a meal, for candles to be lit, and meals shared. Hers was a life well lived, and she was deeply loved by many.

Kathy is survived by her husband, William Russell Edwards, Jr., two daughters and their spouses, Marianne Edwards and E. Glenn Newsome of Tennille, GA, Patricia Edwards Jordan and James M. Jordan of Statham, GA, and grandchildren Kelsey Kathleen Jordan of Atlanta, James Russell (Jace) Jordan of Charlotte, NC, and Megan Elizabeth Gillis of New York City. Her family were truly the lights of her life.

The family is deeply indebted to care provided by the professional and compassionate staff from Christopher's Bridge and Inspiring Hospice. A private celebration of Kathy's life will be held at a later time. Any memorials may be made in her name to the NE Georgia Food Bank, 861 Newton Bridge Road, Athens, GA 30607, the Methodist Home for Children and Youth, 304 Pierce Avenue, Macon, GA, 31204, or to the philanthropy of the giver's choosing.

Lord and Stephens Funeral Home, WEST, 1211 Jimmy Daniel Road, Watkinsville, GA 30677 is in charge of arrangements. www.lordandstephens.com.

Rev. Clifford Wallace

Clifford "Cliff" K. Wallace, 87, of Macon, went to be with his Jesus Saturday, May 9, 2020. A private graveside service was held Friday, May 15, 2020 at Evergreen Cemetery in Fitzgerald, Georgia with the Reverend Jim Cowart officiating. Those wishing to honor Cliff's memory may do so with a contribution to Harvest Church, 3322 US-41, Byron, GA 31008; Rehoboth Appalachian Ministries, 744 Lake Joy Rd, Warner Robins, GA 31088; or to your local food bank or food kitchen, such as Mulberry United Methodist Church, 719 Mulberry St., Macon, GA 31201; or First United Methodist Church of Warner Robins, 205 N Davis Dr., Warner Robins, GA 31093. Caring for the poor, hungry, and needy was Cliff's passion.

Cliff was born December 9, 1932, in Memphis, Tennessee to the late Clifford G. and Evelyn K. Wallace. At an early age, his family moved to Laurel, Mississippi, which was his home until he left for college. He graduated from Mississippi State University with a degree in business management and spent the next 20 years moving about the southeast as a manager for JC Penny Corporation.

Cliff's life changed dramatically in 1971 when he answered God's call to a special ministry, the Church of the Exceptional, a non-denominational congregation consisting of those with mental and physical challenges. Attending Emory University in the summers he became a United Methodist pastor to this unique group of people. In 1974, the church received the Guideposts Church of the Year Award because of its remarkable outreach.

During the time, Cliff became a part of Macon Urban Ministries, a ministry of the United Methodist Church. He and pastor Bob Brenner started Good News TV, a Christian television station, and hosted a flagship program, Good News. While pastoring the Church of the Exceptional, Cliff and this church were instrumental in starting Goodwill Industries in Macon to fill a need for training and jobs for individuals with special needs. When members of The Church of the Exceptional began to express a need for a place to live and work, Cliff and his wife, Glenda, opened Agape Village in 1984, a residential community for dual diagnosed adults. Cliff retired in 1997, but his work was not complete. His skills as a backhoe operator led him to volunteer in disaster relief in Sri Lanka following the tsunami in Gulfport, Mississippi after

Hurricane Katrina and other disaster areas closer to home. He loved Jesus and the members of his larger family of God. He was always looking for opportunities to serve those in need. Having served in nearly every area of the church at one time or another. His final days were spent at Harvest Church.

Cliff was a modest, unassuming person who preferred to work with people one on one but was frequently pushed into the limelight because of the positions he held. He was happiest sitting on his porch with his two Basset Hounds, Daisy and Cody, visiting with people or working in his yard with his friends, Eddie Robinson and Randy Schofill.

Those left behind to cherish his memory include his wife of 45 years, Glenda; daughters, Cyndee Goodman and Sandie Jones; grandchildren, Corbin Jones (Katy), Chase Machamer (Clint), Kelsey Goodman, Kendall Goodman and Kylie Goodman; great grandchildren, Carson Jones and Willow Machamer.

The family wishes to express their gratitude to the team of doctors who worked tirelessly to make Cliff's last three years as comfortable and productive as possible. They are especially grateful to Dr. Ihab Zaggout, Dr. Anthony Quan Hong, and his nurse, Carol, whose compassionate care and concern in his last days will be forever remembered.

Please visit www.hartsmort.com to express condolences.

Hart's at the Cupola, Hart's Mortuary and Cremation Center, 6324 Peake Rd, Macon, GA 31210 has charge of the arrangements.

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Scripture Readings – May 19

May 24

Seventh Sunday of Easter

Acts 1:6-14

Psalm 68:1-10, 32-35 (UMH 792)

1 Peter 4:12-14; 5:6-11

John 17:1-11

May 31

Pentecost

Acts 2:1-21

Psalm 104:24-34, 35b (UMH 826)

1 Corinthians 12:3b-13

John 7:37-39

June 7

Trinity Sunday

Genesis 1:1-2:4a

Psalm 8 (UMH 743)

2 Corinthians 13:11-13
Matthew 28:16-20

Camp Connect update: no camps this summer

Last week, Suzanne Akins, [Camp Connect](#) director, announced that all 2020 [Camp Connect](#) summer camps have been canceled. Camp Connect is the camping ministry of the South Georgia Annual Conference.

“With heavy hearts, we have made the decision to not have camps this summer,” Akins said. “Through consultation and collaboration with conference leadership, Bishop Bryan, camp industry experts, and health officials, we are confident that closing camps for the 2020 summer is the wisest decision for us.

“The safety and well-being of your children and our staff have and always will be our main priority,” she said.

A full refund will be given to all who have already registered. Each registered family will be contacted within the next couple of weeks.

In a [video](#), Akins shares future plans: “We know that we will be back together again in 2021, and it’s going to be better than we can ever imagine.”

For more information and to watch a video from the camp director, visit www.campconnectumc.org/covid-19-update.

Events in the South Georgia Conference – 5/19/2020 edition

Zoom @ Noon: Moving Pastors (NC and SW) – May 19

North Central and Southwest Districts: This informal “zoom at noon” conversation is for pastors who are moving this year. We will reflect together about what an unusual time this is, discuss ways to connect with the pastor whom you are following and the pastor who is following you, and share some ideas about how to leave well and arrive well. For the Zoom link, please contact your district office. Moving pastors are asked to attend the Zoom meeting for their CURRENT district.

Zoom @ Noon: Moving Pastors (NE and NW) – May 20

Northeast and Northwest Districts: This informal “zoom at noon” conversation is for pastors who are moving this year. We will reflect together about what an unusual time this is, discuss ways to connect with the pastor whom you are following and the pastor who is following you, and share some ideas about how to leave well and arrive well. For the Zoom link, please contact your district office. Moving pastors are asked to attend the Zoom meeting for their CURRENT district.

Zoom @ Noon: Moving Pastors (Coastal and SC) – May 21

Coastal and South Central Districts: This informal “zoom at noon” conversation is for pastors who are moving this year. We will reflect together about what an unusual time this is, discuss ways to connect with the pastor whom you are following and the pastor who is following you, and share some ideas about how to leave well and arrive well. For the Zoom link, please contact your district office. Moving pastors are asked to attend the Zoom meeting for their CURRENT district.