

A fearful pause?

- Having got all the story so far, what would Hosea's hearers have been ready for next?
 - if God is like Hosea, and Hosea has taken on a prostitute, what does that make us?
- v.1, "There is no faithfulness, no love, no acknowledgment of God in the land.", is the absolute antithesis of a loving marriage
 - faithfulness - exclusive commitment, keeping of promises made...
 - love - love for, passion for, delight in, appreciation of the best in the one to whom married...
 - acknowledgement - not even pretending to be married, like taking wedding ring off, pretending he who is my husband is not my husband - in this context saying God isn't God...
- v.2, There is only cursing, lying and murder, stealing and adultery; they break all bounds, and bloodshed follows bloodshed.
 - instead of the "marriage relationship" between God and his people there is this - breakdown of all that is good in humanity, in treating other people with justice, truth, fairness... because they have deserted their first commitment to God
 - commentary, "a dark shadow of the 10 commandments on their manward side"
- v.3, Because of this the land mourns, and all who live in it waste away; the beasts of the field and the birds of the air and the fish of the sea are dying.
 - profound ecological consequences in prospect, judgement is coming...
- v.4-6, special "target" of God's anger is the priesthood, the clergy, those who should have led the people out of danger:
 - instead they have led them into danger...
 - and will face the same consequences, no special let-outs for priests (v.9)
- v.10-14, theme is unchastity
 - and the ones God's people have been unchaste with are the idols (image)
 - (revolution in sexual ethics of v.14, where men's sins are equally bad, and they are equally culpable, as women. Still see vestiges of that shameful attitude around the world today, not just in our horror of eg gang rapes in India, but also in the lingering "she was asking for it" in rape cases here in the UK)
 - the English translation of v.12, "and are answered by a stick of wood" (image) captures the absurdity of their unfaithfulness...
- v.15-19 is a warning to the southern kingdom of Judah:
 - beware, infectious disease (image)
 - and would have been as effective a warning to those in the northern kingdom - "you are infectious!"

Where are my idols?

- First note this passage addressed to God's people:
 - not to the outside threat...
 - for us, not to the secular world, nor even the theological liberals who would deny Scripture's authority
 - but to us, and challenging our idolatry
- *Three questions to help us identify our idols:*
- *Hard to see our own idols!*
- *When I've had a hard, stressful day, where do I turn for comfort and relief?*
 - wine, chocolate, TV, escapism, celebrity culture (the lives of the "famous" is social porn, intrusive interest in the private emotional lives of others), porn...
 - some of these aren't bad in themselves... unless they come before God!

- What do we find our minds occupied with all the time? What fills our thoughts?
 - how will I pay the bills?
 - will the kids be alright in the future?
 - what are we having for dinner?
 - how can I make sure things are done right (in church, in work, at home...); its about control, and a fear of what will happen otherwise
- If Jesus told us to leave everything, what would we find hardest to leave?
 - home, family, job, friends, internet, toilets, status....
- *Lord, show me my idols that you might teach me to be totally devoted to you*