

Foundation of the sermon

Purpose

Showing how the rejection of objective truth leads to sin and destroys mercy and knowledge.

Principle Idea:

Relativism will be the ruin of our country and our churches

Type of Outline

Expository based on Hosea 4:1-5

I. Introduction

As we move into chapter 4 of Hosea, we are moving from the metaphorical comparisons of the marriage of Hosea and Gomer to the real life complaint God has against Israel. The first thing God does is He shows why Israel must be punished. In the first part of chapter 4. His controversy is outlined against the priesthood. The condition of Israel reminds me of our world today. They had rejected God as the source of truth. Truth also became relative to the source community, not to moral absolutes from a sovereign God. One of the first places of this degradation was in the priesthood. The temple in Israel was not at the place where God had chosen to place His name. The ark of the temple had been replaced by the gods of Egypt

II. Body

God has a controversy with Israel -- in the first 5 verses of the text, the controversy is directly with the priesthood in Israel. In Israel, these were the ones who carried out the rituals, and led the worship services at the holy temple. These were the ones who made atonement for the sins of the people. God has a controversy with the priests.

Hosea 4:1 Hear the word of the LORD, ye children of Israel: for the LORD hath a controversy with the inhabitants of the land, because there is no truth, nor mercy, nor knowledge of God in the land.

A. Reason for the controversy with the priests - rejection of truth and kindness

We find this reason given in verse 1 where it says "because there is no truth, nor mercy, nor knowledge of God in the land."

1. Truth

As we all know, the Bible says: "Thy word is truth." There is a foundational principle upon which all understanding and knowledge is based. This principle is that objective and absolute truth exists, and the ultimate source of that truth is God. The rejection of absolute objective truth leads to all of these other errors.

We live in a culture called a "post-modern" society. Grenz, in a work called "A post-modern primer," says the following about the concept of truth by post-modern thinkers on page 8:

"[Postmodernism] affirms that whatever we accept as truth and even the way we envision truth are dependent on the community in which we participate . . . There is no absolute truth: rather truth is relative to the community in which we participate."

All truth is relative according to this mind set. It postulates that what is true for me is not necessarily true for you. Or to put it in broader terms, what is true for my tribe or culture may not be what is true for yours. Truth varies from person to person from society to society. There is no foundation upon which to build.

The priests had rejected the concept of objective absolute truth. This led them down a path to the destruction of all knowledge.

2. Kindness and Mercy

Once the idea of absolute truth has been rejected, and all truth is relative, then the concept of mercy goes out the door. If everything is okay under a given context, then nothing is wrong. An act deserves no punishment and therefore no mercy.

Words and ideas lose their meaning. What might be perceived as kindness by one, might be perceived as cruelty by another. In an article in "Essentials," an Evangelical Anglican on-line magazine, an article entitled: "Preaching to the postmodern in the pews" says the following concerning the concept of mercy in our society:

"... a postmodern who is told God is merciful will say "so what?" Neither will saying "God has been merciful to me" help, for the postmodern will say "whatever works for you."

<http://old.efac.org.au/essentials/postmoderns.htm>

The author of the article goes on to indicate that mercy has to be explained in particular ways to a postmodern person for them to accept the concept. You must personalize the concept to them by telling them that the words from Scripture are God directly showing them mercy, etc..

Bottom line: mercy is not something that is conceived and understood in a world in which truth has taken a back seat to self.

3. Knowledge

The passage we are looking at today is one of the classics when it comes to knowledge. In the next portion of of text, when we get down to verse 6, it says: my people are destroyed for a lack of knowledge. Of course, we all know the passage that says: "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge."

The priests had lost their knowledge because they had rejected the word of God as their source of truth. They had rejected the standard for truth, and the objective nature of absolute truth. Therefore, truth, mercy and knowledge had become relative.

In fact, if you reject the word of God as true, you then lose the basis for knowledge. Today, the discussion is whether we can really know anything. Human language is so flawed in the minds of some, that we can't express anything in valid language. Language is so flawed that it becomes ridiculous to communicate or to discuss and debate anything because we can not present an argument in terms that have meaning.

Wikipedia says the following concerning the possibility of objective knowledge (from a post-modern perspective) saying of postmodernism:

"It denies that we can have objective knowledge, because what we call knowledge has to be made with the linguistic and other meaning-making resources of a particular culture, and different cultures can see the world in very different ways, all of which "work" in their own terms."

These three ideas: truth, human kindness, and knowledge rise and fall together. They are interconnected together. They are based in objectivity. There are absolutes in them that make them useful and valuable. They provide the basis for moral living. They, when used properly, are what separate us from the animal kingdom. They define our values.

There was a time when we could discuss ideas with those outside of Christian thinking. We could reason with those outside our belief system. The reason we could do this was there was a common belief that there was absolute truth. Now it is much more difficult to reason with the world because people have gone so far down the path to destruction.

B. The rejection of truth, mercy and knowledge lead to grievous sin.

Verse 2 of our text shows the degenerative effects upon mankind once it has rejected truth mercy and knowledge from God. This happens when people have moved the basis for these to relativism.

It is important at this point to note that the discussion in this section is directed to the priests. As leaders of the people in worship, and therefore, in contact with God and His ways, their rejection of the truth caused them to become like society around them. Instead of Israel being a "holy people" as God wanted them to be, the sins of the nations became manifest in their actions. They now were no different than the rest of the world. I could point to studies that looked at the morals of people in churches today compared to the world and you would not find a dime's worth of difference.

Many institutions called seminaries do not teach the inerrancy of the "Word of God." They look to other religions as sources of great truth and knowledge. They teach the Bible is good literature, great poetry, good history, but the information about God is myth, legend and meta-narratives -- not the source of truth.

The word of God takes a back seat to cross-cultural ministries, and to marketing the church like it's a secular business. Many pastors and churches today shy away from the teaching of the nature of man, sin, and the need for the blood of Christ as a penalty from that sin. The Bible has taken a back seat in many churches today, all because of the sinful nature of its priesthood.

Verse 2 says:

2 By swearing, and lying, and killing, and stealing, and committing adultery, they break out, and blood toucheth blood.

1. Swearing:

Kiel and Delitzch, in their commentary, note that most of the items in the verse deal with violations of the ten commandments. The swearing here has to do directly with the 3rd commandment which says:

"You shall not take the name of the Lord your God in vain, for the Lord will not hold him guiltless who takes His name in vain."

The issue in the command has to do with taking an oath in the name of the LORD. When someone is accused of false swearing in the Bible, it has to do with invoking the authority of the Lord as proof of the validity of the statement. According to Jesus, in Matthew 5, this injunction must be taken seriously. He says: "But I say unto you, Swear not at all; neither by heaven; for it is God's throne:" (Mat 5:34 KJV)

Did you ever watch Court TV when it was Court TV? One would see people who would swear, and yet lie all the time in those trials? You knew they were lying because they disagreed with other witnesses, and with the facts. The word here can have that meaning. It can also mean "to curse". It is in this sense I would like to comment for a moment. I interact with people all the time. I use Facebook some and have discussion with some of the younger generations, let's say for me, those of 20 to 30 years old. I find some of the language they use to be atrocious. Some of these people are in our churches. Now let's look at a Scriptural basis for my view that we shouldn't talk like that. Let's look at Colossians 3:8 where it says:

"But now ye also put off all these; anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy communication out of your mouth."

Young people who are not married -- and even some who are -- talk freely and openly about their "sex" lives, or how sexy they are. They use words and phrases that have their source in "sexuality." They use words that should not now, nor should they ever have been used, in mixed company. This type of

language pervades our society everywhere -- in its music, and in its movies.

Now I am not saying that I am much better; I sometimes catch myself engaging in foul language. I have to correct myself, and catch myself at times. When I do, I try and ask for forgiveness from the person who heard those words coming from my mouth.

The rejection of absolutes leads to the devaluing of human language and the destruction of moral standards.

2. Lying

In a recent survey I found on MSNBC's web site, I found it interesting what people today think about lying. The majority of people in the survey said they hadn't told a lie in a week. I guess that is good news. I found that 42% of those surveyed said that it is sometimes justified to tell a lie. Another 5% answered that "it depends" (when asked if it was ever justified to tell a lie). When asked concerning specific situations if it would be okay to lie, 65% said that it was okay or sometimes okay to lie to others in these situations.

Now remember our discussion is about the effects of rejecting absolute truth as the basis for our moral values. What does the Scripture have to say about the relationship between lying and the truth? Let's look at I John 2:21:

"1 John 2:21 I have not written unto you because ye know not the truth, but because ye know it, and that no lie is of the truth."

And look at Colossians 3:9:

"Lie not one to another, seeing that ye have put off the old man with his deeds;"

We should not and must not buy into the idea that lying to one another is sometimes justified or okay. It is never "right to do wrong to do right" according to Bob Jones, who founded BJU.

Yet when you reject Biblical truth and knowledge, you have no basis for holding that standard. It becomes okay in certain situations.

3. Killing

The same word is used here as is found in the ten commandments. It doesn't just mean to end a life. Some have used the idea of "Thou shalt not kill" to justify an anti-death penalty stand or to argue against "carnal warfare," but the word itself has a deeper meaning than that it means to "murder."

In a legal sense, the word murder means: "The unlawful killing of another human being without justification or excuse." Now, of course, everyone who murders may claim an "excuse," so maybe we better clarify that to say without a valid excuse.

Later in this same verse, the acts of lying, stealing, committing adultery, and murder are shown to breed further acts of violence. Murder is multiplied because of all of these other acts. It comes from acts of retaliation for these other acts. The society breaks out into violent acts of murder -- blood touching blood.

Murderous acts are symptoms of a society with no moral standard. Hosea writes concerning a standard which the priests in Israel had rejected. Think about all the accusations that take place today in our society: murder, violence, adulteries, and other despicable acts against clergy. You will see the results of the rejection of absolutes in our society.

4. Committing Adultery

According to an article written by Doug and C. Young entitled "Reasons For Adultery - And How The Shocking Statistics Reveal Why No One Can Be Complacent," the current statistics concerning adultery are shocking. They state:

"Recent surveys have revealed that 45% of women and 55% of men have been guilty of committing adultery. Of course, these are just the ones who have admitted to it or have been caught, so the real numbers must be considerably higher."

Why do people commit adultery? Well, the reasons vary. Our society is built around sex and sexual innuendo. By modern reason, it is a natural human drive to have sex. Therefore, we

can't help ourselves. Our magazines promote sex. I saw a magazine at the 7-11 that advocates how to lie to your wife about adultery stating that "women tell you how." We are all wrapped up in the latest gossip about the sex lives of celebrities. I even heard a story on NPR this week that told a story about a female chimp held in captivity. The couple who owned her decided to purchase for her "Playgirl" magazines, so she could carry out her natural desires.

We are sick; we are deviate. We (all of us) are affected by our societies delving into the "sexual nature" of man.

Christ said this in Matthew 5:27-28: "Matthew 5:27 Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time, Thou shalt not commit adultery: 28 But I say unto you, That whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart."

We need to fall back on what we know and what we have heard concerning the truth -- and step away from the trap that our society (that has rejected the truth) has set for us concerning this matter.

C. The punishment is outlined.

Because of time we will not detail this section of the passage. We will merely close out this section by reading verses 3-5:

3 Therefore shall the land mourn, and every one that dwelleth therein shall languish, with the beasts of the field, and with the fowls of heaven; yea, the fishes of the sea also shall be taken away.

4 Yet let no man strive, nor reprove another: for thy people are as they that strive with the priest.

5 Therefore shalt thou fall in the day, and the prophet also shall fall with thee in the night, and I will destroy thy mother.

III. Conclusion

The application of these passages has been outlined throughout today's sermon. The bottom line is this: Our nation will eventually pay for its rejection of God as the source of truth. It may not happen in my lifetime, and it may take several hundred years, but, be assured, if we continue to follow post-modern thought in our country, our country will fail.

My concern today is our churches. If we don't reject the postmodern mindset -- if we don't reject the concept that truth is relative, our churches will no longer be scriptural. Our church must base its teachings and its practice on the Bible and the Bible alone for its source of truth. If we don't, we will reject the mercy of God, and the knowledge of God. This will lead us down the path to sin and destruction. Our pastors should be selected on the basis of their adherence to the truth in the Bible, not on the scholarly nature of the seminary they attend.

Title: Bad Priests and Bad Theology