

Foundation of the sermon

Purpose

Show that sin is a trap. God is warning us of this all the time.

Principle Idea:

We sometimes wish we just hadn't entered into sin. It has trapped us. We see no way out. This should cause us to pause and count the cost of sin. Once we have gone down the road to sin, sometimes it's better just to cut our losses and change.

Type of Outline

Expository based on Hosea 5:1-7

I. Introduction

As we enter into the text for today, we are caused to think about sin. We are confronted with the idea that God is constantly calling out to us. God tells us to listen up. Sin is a bad idea. In fact we are faced with having to look at sin and its cost. We are faced with the fact that we sometimes get trapped in sin.

Sometimes we look up in the midst of situations and wish we just hadn't entered into sin. It has trapped us. We see no way out. This should cause us to pause and count the cost of sin. Once we have gone down the road to sin, sometimes it's better just to cut our losses and change.

Sin is a trap. God is warning us all the time of the cost of sin.

II. Body

A. God wants us to listen to His message and His call to repentance (verses 1-3)

The first point this passage God wants us to listen to Him. He calls to us. He is announcing to us His will concerning our lives. He is telling us when we are out of His will. He is warning us of the punishment that will come if we continue down the path we are going.

Let's look at Hosea 5:1-3

"Hear ye this, O priests; and hearken, ye house of Israel; and give ye ear, O house of the king; for judgment is toward you, because ye have been a snare on Mizpah, and a net spread upon Tabor. 2 And the revolvers are profound to make slaughter, though I have been a rebuker of them all. 3 I know Ephraim, and Israel is not hid from me: for now, O Ephraim, thou committest whoredom, and Israel is defiled. (Hosea 5:1 KJV)

1. Three times God tells Israel His message (verse 1

In this passage God used three different words dealing with listening to tell the priests and Israel of coming judgement.

- a) "Hear this" He says to the priests. The Hebrew word used here is often used in the Old Testament. It is used some 1085 times in the text. It is a call for obedience. It is a command to listen. It tells the reader or listener what is coming up is important. It is this word God uses in what Jews consider to be a very important passage in the Bible that they call "the shema" Deut. 6:4 "Hear, O Israel the Lord our God is one Lord." God is calling the priests to attention; He has an important announcement.
- b) He tells Israel to harken. The Hebrew hear means to "give attention." It still has to do with the process of hearing. Today we might say "Listen up." But because of the form in which this verb is found in this passage, it has a more intense meaning. A few years ago on television, there was a television program called "Star Trek: Second Generation" and Captain Picard on the show used to often say: "Make it so." That is what God is saying about the need for Israel "give attention with their ears". He is saying: "Cause [yourself] to pay attention to what I am going to say."
- c) God next tells the King and his family to "give ear" to what He is going to say. "The word hear has the same root as the word for a person's ear. It is like saying "Perk up your ears". My wife's dog, Gracie, does that when she wants to pay attention to something she is hearing. Her ears stand straight up.

The message is important; God tells them to hear what is being said and obey the message. He tells them to cause themselves to give attention to what is said, and lastly He tells them, "Perk up your ears; you need to hear this."

2. God announces the judgement of our sin. (end of verse 1 and verse 2)

Notice the last part of the verse says:

"... because ye have been a snare on Mizpah, and a net spread upon Tabor. 2) 2 And the revolvers are profound to make slaughter, though I have been a rebuker of them all."

The reason for coming judgement is the idolatrous practices in Israel that cause the destruction. God does this in this passage by the use of the Hebrew method of parallel ideas.

There is a picture here of the a hunt. First, there are two parallel pictures of methods of hunting. The bird trap called a "snare" here, and the second is a net laid on the ground to catch prey. There is a second parallel here in the place names where the hunt takes place. Mizpah in Gilliad is mountainous and was known as good hunting grounds, and the second is Tabor in Zebulon, also known as hunting grounds. The purpose of the hunt is to slaughter the prey.

The hunters in this poetic judgement are the priests and the family of the king who were told to listen up in verse 1. In verse 2, they are pictured as rebels. They are the ones who "fall away" according to the JPS version. They caused the people to swerve or deviate from God's ways. The prey which is slaughtered in verse 2 is made up of the people of Israel who are also condemned in verse 1.

Bottom line: the deviation from God's way is caused by the actions and conduct of the priests and the family of the King. They lead the people of Israel into error by promoting the idolatrous worship of the gods of the land. This is what causes the destruction of the people

God is the one who corrects, disciplines, chastens, and instructs both the hunter who entraps the prey, and the prey itself because they, all of them, have swerved from God's path.

3. God announces you can't hid your sin (verse 3)

Let's take a look at verses 3-4

3 "I know Ephraim, and Israel is not hid from me: for now, O Ephraim, thou committest whoredom, and Israel is defiled."

Here, God tells both Ephraim and all the northern tribes that their false worship, their spiritual whoredom, is not hidden. The Septuagint says that this sin will just not "go away." It's that ugly thing that is in the life of the sinner, that it is blatantly obvious.

One of the characteristics that God has that no one else has is that He is omniscient. He is all knowing. In Numbers 32:23, He warns Israel that if they don't do His will "... be sure your sin will find you out." We can apply this to all our lives because God is all knowing. You can't hid your sin from God. The things you do that you think are done in private are manifest to God. This ought to cause us to pause, to stop. This knowledge of what we do, even the things we speak, and think are known to God. God warns in Luke 12:2-3: "2 For there is nothing covered, that shall not be revealed; neither hid, that shall not be known. 3 Therefore whatsoever ye have spoken in darkness shall be heard in the light; and that which ye have spoken in the ear in closets shall be proclaimed upon the housetops."

This is an awesome power. It is a humbling factor. We certainly need to be concerned about what we say and do. How many times have we said to someone: "Don't tell so and so I told you this but ...". We assume that it's private; it's personal. We are shocked when some of the things we have done in private, or said in private "come to light." We wished we hadn't done the thing in the first place. Perhaps we shouldn't do it in the first place, and perhaps we should keep our mouth shut if we don't want people to know what we said. But whether or not people find out in this life, we need to realize that God knows.

In this passage, God tells Ephraim, the leading tribe in the north, "I know all about your sin of false worship; you haven't successfully hidden it from me." He then provides a parallel thought when He says: "... and Israel is defiled." He judges them unclean. This uncleanness with regard to worship

disqualified them from being a qualified participant in the true worship. Their false worship has been weighed against their other acts and they have been found to be "unqualified."

B. Sometimes our habitual sin causes us to go to far.

Verse 4 says: "4 They will not frame their doings to turn unto their God: for the spirit of whoredoms is in the midst of them, and they have not known the LORD."

According to verse 4, Israel had gone so far down the road of sin that they would not "allow" themselves to change. It is like us when we tell a little lie to someone, so we lie to cover it up, and then we have to tell a bigger lie to keep the truth hidden. At some point, we have to decide to come clean, or decide that we are more worried that our lie will put us in worse light than the original indiscretion.

Have you ever been there? I knew one young man who was torn up because for years he had been for years taking a few cents out of a cash register at work. Over the years, he had taken a significant sum. He wanted to begin living right; he wanted so bad to be forgiven by God. He wanted to live a Christian life going forward. He was afraid that he must tell his company, that they might fire him, that they might put him in jail. He was so concerned that God could not forgive him. He could not forgive himself. He felt his sin was so bad not even God could forgive him.

Let me say it here -- don't use past sin to influence you that you should continue in sin, because there is no way out. Stop sinning. Deal with your sin with God; let Him guide you how to deal with that sin.

Stop whatever it is now; don't continue. This is what God tells the Ephesians in Ephesians 4:28: " Ephesians 4:28 Let him that stole steal no more: but rather let him labour, working with his hands the thing which is good, that he may have to give to him that needeth."

According to this verse of Hosea, they are in the midst of whoredom. Sometimes we continue our sin because it is all around us. Israel could not escape from the culture of sin. Sometimes we have placed ourselves in the midst of sin. We have chosen friends, and an environment which encourage our sinful tendencies.

At one point, Paul encourages the Corinthian church: I Corinthians 10:14 Wherefore, my dearly beloved, flee from idolatry."

This verse is in the midst of a group of verses in which Paul is telling them that their sins are common to men, and God will help them overcome if they will take His path. The admonition here is when you find yourself in the midst of sin, and that sin is so enticing that you can't help yourself but to sin, then get out. Leave that situation.

Lastly in this section of Hosea, He tells them that they had gone so far down the path of sin that they do not know the Lord. In verse 3, He tells them God knows; he ends in verse 4 with "they don't know".

C. Sin is a trap for you and others. (verse 5)

In verse 5, it states: "And the pride of Israel doth testify to his face: therefore shall Israel and Ephraim fall in their iniquity; Judah also shall fall with them."

Israel has done all its "spiritual whoredom" right in the face of God. They might have thought that no one knew; in fact, after a while, they may not have known themselves. Back in verse 1, Israel is pictured as setting traps and hunting prey by their actions. This verse pictures them as being captured in their own traps.

It is their own iniquity that has trapped them. The word translated "iniquity" here is found some 230 times in Scripture and of those 230 times, 220 of them are translated "iniquity". The word means: "perversity, depravity, iniquity, guilt or punishment of iniquity." Their own sin has entrapped them.

In Hosea 7:10, it says: "And the pride of Israel testifieth to his face: and they do not return to the LORD their God, nor seek him for all this." Israel has pride in their iniquity. It is like they are saying: "I am perverse and proud of it." I remember when I first moved to Arkansas. There were some people who called themselves "poor and proud". Now there is nothing evil about being proud, but these people shunned the middle-class, and those who had money. Somehow, they felt that they were better than others because of their lack. Israel had gone so far down the road in their iniquity, they were proud of their depravity.

Another aspect of the sin of Israel was that they felt trapped. Can you think of situations you have found yourself in of which you're now in the midst, and you see no way out? It wasn't caused by anyone else. You did it; you have been caught, and you will pay the price. You are wishing you had not done it, in hindsight, but you can't change it, now you have to live with the consequence. The only thing you can do is pray for mercy. You have a choice -- stop doing it -- but you won't because that would mean you have to admit that you were wrong.

In some aspects of our lives, and at some times in our lives, God is calling us to change -- change our attitudes, and change our hearts in these situations. When you find yourself in these situations, please assess your situation. God wants you to seek God's will, and change your situation. Repent.

There is another aspect to Israel's sin, and their pride in sin. They affect others. Judah, too, according to this verse, has been affected by the sin of Israel. They have been entrapped. I remember a time when someone had joined a church that I was pastoring at the time. Later, the person revealed living together with a person outside a married relationship and spoke positively about living in sin in public meetings in the church as well as in the women's meetings. This one presented this situation as normal, as okay and wore sin like a badge. She wanted the approval of church people for what they were doing. This placed the church in a bad situation. They wanted to love this person despite the sin. They wanted to look on themselves as tolerant. They did not want confrontation. In essence, some in the church did not want to deal with it. But this situation, if not dealt with, could have caused other weak Christians to follow suit. They could have thought to themselves, "Well "so-and-so" lives this way and is a church member, maybe I can do this." I went and talked with the person and convinced them that if she didn't resign her membership, I would ask that the church practice church discipline and kick her out. Fortunately, she resigned. Now, understand later, she resolved the situation by getting married. I understand she returned to church. I don't know that they rejoined, but now that the situation is resolved, I hope they did.

Our sin not only affects us; it affects others as well. Please remember this when you find yourself in sin, and be careful not to let your sin lead others to condemnation.

D. Sin causes us to lose our ability to have relationship with God. (verses 6 and 7).

Let's finish today in verses 6 and 7. They state:

"6 They shall go with their flocks and with their herds to seek the LORD; but they shall not find him; he hath withdrawn himself from them. 7 They have dealt treacherously against the LORD: for they have begotten strange children: now shall a month devour them with their portions."

This passage tells us one of the most horrible aspects of sin. At some point in the depths of a sinful situation, we can not find the truth because of the series of lies we and others have given us to get us where we are.

This portion of Scripture ends with the sad results of a lifetime of sin. Israel wants God's approval, and God's protection, so they seek Him. They go to find Him. They have gone so far from Him, their sin has hidden Him from their eyes. They are still deeply lost in sin. They hunt for Him in darkness. They can't find their way out. Sin blinds their eyes. They have not repented, but they still desire to find God. Remember their sin in false worship. They have wrapped themselves deeply in it. They believe this false worship is the truth, yet they still want God and God's approval. They have lied to themselves so long, they can't correct their course.

This is a sad situation. I have witnessed to people wrapped up in false religious ideas. They were lied to by some authority in some religious organization. The Scripture speaks of people who in the last days follow the error of a strong religious leader. They follow him so far that their final condition is that they believe a lie rather than the truth.

We find this in II Thessalonians 2:8 - 11 where it says:

"8 And then shall that Wicked be revealed, whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of his mouth, and shall destroy with the brightness of his coming: 9 Even him, whose coming is after the working of Satan with all power and signs and lying wonders, 10 And with all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish; because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved. 11 And for this cause God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie:"

When you witness to someone like this, you see a look in their eyes; you can hear it in the words they say. They want God's will, but they have been lied to so long, and believe it so strong, that they can not and will not listen to reason. The thing they believe is so far from the truth, but it is something they believe and they can not allow themselves to think differently. They are under strong delusion. What you need to do when you find yourselves in this situation is to pray that God will "open" their hearts and minds.

The fact that people are like this ought to make us pause. Are there things you believe that are based in delusion? Is there something that the Scripture teaches that you will not allow yourself believe because you have been lied to, or that you find yourself lying to yourself? We should humbly understand that as Christians the world, Satan is seeking to destroy us. We should seek to be in the center of God's will in all aspects of our lives. We should be constant in our seeking the will of God in the Scripture, and be praying that God will keep us in His will.

III. Conclusion

Sin is a trap. It surrounds us. It engulfs us. Sometimes we wake up in the middle of a situation. We realize we got there because of our own sinful actions. We wonder: "How can I extract myself?" It is then we realize the cost of sin. It is then we realize that the path we have taken seemed easy to get where we are, but we can't find our way out. We either continue down the path of lies and deceit, piling up sin after sin to hid our sinfulness, or we stop and face the music.

The thing we need to realize is it doesn't really get any better. We are there in its midst. We have lost relationship with God, and we can't hid it. We need to cut our losses. We need to stop and admit our sin. We need to seek God's face, admitting our error. We need to spend time in prayer, and in the Scripture. We need God's help to get out of the trap.

Even more than that, the next time we are at the crossroads of sin, we need to remember that sin is a trap, and not go down that road.

We need to stop and listen to God's message.

Title: Sin is a Trap