

**St. Luke Ev. Lutheran Church-WELS  
Sermon by Pastor Anthony E. Schultz  
Pentecost 3 July 3, 2011 Hosea 5:15-6:6**



Then I will go back to my place until they admit their guilt. And they will seek my face; in their misery they will earnestly seek me." "Come, let us return to the LORD. He has torn us to pieces but he will heal us; he has injured us but he will revive us; on the third day he will restore us, that we may live in his presence. Let us acknowledge the LORD; let us press on to acknowledge him. As surely as the sun rises, he will appear; he will come to us like the winter rains, like the spring rains that water the earth." "What can I do with you, Ephraim? What can I do with you, Judah? Your love is like the morning mist, like the early dew that disappears. Therefore I cut you in pieces with my mouth; my judgments flashed like lightning upon you. For I desire mercy, not sacrifice, and acknowledgment of God rather than burnt offerings."

People of God – rescued from the flaming lake of fire in hell by the innocent blood of the very Lamb of God:

Mr. Bulger is from Boston. The FBI was looking for him for 16 years! He was on *America's Most Wanted* some 10 times in the last few years! Mr. Bulger is how shall I say this – "not a good egg!" He is accused of murder and conspiracy to commit murder. He is accused of narcotics distribution. He is accused of extortion – give me your money – *lots* of money – or you know – accidents can happen! Terrible accidents to your business or your loved ones – even your children. And that would be very unfortunate – don't you think? He is accused of money laundering – that is taking literally hundreds of thousands of dollars – made from gambling and prostitution and drugs – and making it appear like it was legitimately earned! Before hiding from the FBI Mr. Bulger underwent multiple plastic surgeries to change his appearance. Mr. Bulger is a little grandpa now – 81 years old – hiding – it now appears in plain sight. His neighbors said he was a "nasty" little man with a "rage issue". It would again be very tempting for we who are sitting here in God's House on a Sunday morning to think – "I thank you LORD that I am not like some people – members of crime families – organized crime – murders, drug dealers – nasty angry people of the most terrible kind!" The fact is – as we heard last Sunday from Romans – there is no difference – for all have sinned and fall fatally short of the glory of God! This morning God's Word is a powerful call to repentance! This morning God's Word says:

**Come, Let Us Return to the LORD!**

- 1. Let us show mercy***
- 2. Let us acknowledge God***

The part of God's Word we are concentrating on this morning is from the scroll of the Prophet Hosea. Do you have a study Bible? Do you know what I mean? A study Bible – The Lutheran Study Bible or the Concordia Self-study Bible – or the People's Bible Commentary – where they have all sorts of notes to give background and help explain all sorts of things about God's Word! If you read from the Lutheran Study Bible about Hosea it says, "*Lamplight reached into the corners of the alley, revealing a woman's face beside a wretched pool. The watchman had seen her before. She used to pass through the streets at twilight, dressed in shimmering garments, strings of beads*

*clinking about her neck as she hurried to reach a man who held out a ring and a cup of wine. Later, the watchman had seen her with bloodshot eyes receiving a stranger who offered her a mere loaf of bread and a wink. Now no one noticed her stumble and fall in the darkness except the watchman who unpinned his wool cloak and covered her shame. The prophet Hosea recorded how excess and idolatrous feasts caused the shameless leaders of Israel to stumble. Assyria would descend upon them in their stupor and rob them of all the goods and land the Lord had given them. Thought the leaders knew of God's love and faithfulness, they failed to teach the people and so led them to destruction."* How sad is that? When you think of Hosea – think of his wife Gomer – and the children she had – born of adultery and unfaithfulness. Remember her children – the firstborn son named Jezreel. When Old Testament believers heard the name Jezreel – they would remember this was a place where much blood was shed. The blood of Naboth – remember Naboth's vineyard? Wicked King Ahab coveted Naboth's vineyard – and wicked Queen Jezebel conspired to commit murder to steal it! King Ahab also died in Jezreel – King Joram died in Jezreel and finally even wicked Queen Jezebel her self died in Jezreel. Remember? She was thrown from a tower – and the dogs came and licked her blood – only her head and her blood stained hands remained! Why would God's Word contain such gruesome details? Because such a terrible end – is not the ultimate terrible end. To be in the flaming lake of fire in Hell for eternity – is the ultimate terrible end. Here is a warning to all who think of sin but lightly nor suppose the evil great! Stand at the foot of Jesus' cross – and see the exceedingly high cost of sin! So – Hosea's firstborn son was named Jezreel. Adulterous Gomer had second child – a little baby girl named No Mercy! Every time her name was called – No Mercy – people would be reminded of God's fierce Judgment – **"Call her name No Mercy, for I will no more have mercy on the house of Israel, to forgive them at all. But I will have mercy on the house of Judah, and I will save them by the LORD their God. I will not save them by bow or by sword or by war or by horses or by horsemen."** Hosea 1:6b ESV. When Gomer was not nursing No Mercy any more she again had a baby boy – again born of adultery. And the LORD said, **"Call his name Not My People, for you are not my people, and I am not your God."** Hosea 1:8b ESV. In spite of her terrible unfaithfulness – still the LORD was faithful to his promise to redeem us. In a most powerful and literal and graphic way – God shows his love!

Hosea chapter 3. **And the LORD said to me, "Go again, love a woman who is loved by another man and is an adulteress, even as the LORD loves the children of Israel, though they turn to other gods and love cakes of raisins."** So I bought her for fifteen shekels of silver and a homer and a lethech of barley. **And I said to her, "You must dwell as mine for many days..."** Hosea 3:1-3a ESV. The point is painfully obvious. In spite of our spiritual adultery – our spiritual unfaithfulness – still the LORD is faithful to His Gospel promises! We have sinned and the LORD is faithful to redeem us – to buy us back!

Back and forth it goes. Chapter 5 – the verses we are concentrating on. **The LORD says, "Then I will go back to my place until they admit their guilt. And they will seek my face; in their misery they will earnestly seek me."** Again the LORD calls his people to repentance. **And the answer at first sounds good till you think it through. "Come, let us return to the LORD. He has torn us to pieces but he will heal us; he has injured us but he will bind up our wounds..."** God's Judgment has been fierce! Only he can heal us and restore us. But then it all begins to unravel. **"After two days he will revive us; on the third day he will restore us, that we may live in his presence."** Think about it. A marriage has been ruined – adultery and unfaithfulness – betrayal and heartache of the most painful kind. **"After two days he will revive us... on the third day he will restore us..."** a three day weekend and everything will be back to normal. You'll see – we will just put this behind us – not talk about it ever again – don't

look back. It's not that big a deal! Really?! Oh, the people say all the right things, **"Let us acknowledge the LORD; let us press on to acknowledge him. As surely as the sun rises, he will appear; he will come to us like the winter rains, like the spring rains that water the earth." Only the LORD can see into our hearts. And what he sees in these hearts isn't good! "What can I do with you, Ephraim? What can I do with you, Judah? The people of the north and the people of the south! You love is like the morning mist, like the early dew that disappears. Therefore I cut you in pieces with my prophets, I killed you with the words of my mouth; my judgments flashed like lightning upon you.**

**"For I desire mercy, not sacrifice..."** Sometimes you hear people complain – all the Church wants is my money. You hear that. But it's not true! You can come to Church and hear God's Word – and not pay a penny. It's true! If you go to the Star Cinema to see the Green Lantern – you must buy a ticket first. If you go to the UW Health Partners Watertown Regional Medical Center – and can walk into the Emergency Room – the first thing they will ask you – after they ask you your name – and before they ask you where does it hurt – they will ask to see your insurance card! Go to McDonald's – go to the drive through – and the first window is for you to pay – the second window is to pick up your food! Put your money in the soda machine – push the button – and the soda falls out! Only in Church – can you call the pastor at 2 in the morning and say, "Come and see me in the ER" – and we will come – no questions asked. And we will not send you a bill. You may bring your children to confirmation class – and we will not charge you. We will baptize you – preach to you – confirm you – marry you and even bury you and never send you a bill! We need to remember Jesus is not in Heaven – desperate for our sacrifices. Psalm 50 says, **"I do not rebuke you for your sacrifices or your burnt offerings, which are ever before me. I have no need of a bull from your stall or of goats from your pens, for every animal of the forest is mine, and the cattle on a thousand hills. I know every bird in the mountains and the creatures of the field are mine. If I were hungry I would not tell you, for the world is mine, and all that is in it. Do I eat the flesh of bulls or drink the blood of goats? Sacrifice thank offerings to God, fulfill your vows to the Most high," and call upon me in the day of trouble; I will deliver you, and you will honor me."** Psalm 50:8-15

The LORD says, **"For I desire mercy, not sacrifice, and acknowledgment of God rather than burnt offerings."** I read the other day about William Henry McCarty. William was about two maybe 3 inches taller than I am – with blue eyes and a nice complexion and prominent front teeth. They say he was friendly and personable – nice to be around. They say he was fluent in Spanish – and a very good dancer! He was a nice dresser, too. What everyone agreed upon – he was lithe – that is very quick and fluid in motion – like a cat! You know what I mean? William was only 21 years old when he died. Someone took McCarty's picture – what's called a ferrotype – a picture on a very small piece of metal – just 2 inches by three inches – a picture of William Henry McCarty – Billy the Kid – cattle rustler, outlaw, gunslinger – killer. Billy the Kid's picture was sold the other day – this 2 inch by 3 inch photograph sold for some \$2 million! Billy the Kid is said to have killed maybe 4 – maybe 9 – maybe 21 – maybe 26 people before he himself was gunned down. The very last day of last year – the Governor of New Mexico – Governor Bill Richardson was asked to pardon Billy the Kid – because Governor Lew Wallace had promised – promised to pardon him. Well Governor Richardson said Governor Wallace's promise was a little iffy – so he decided not to pardon him. You know who did pardon Billy the Kid – knows for a fact how many people Billy the Kid killed – how many were murders and how many were actually cases of self defense? You know who suffered for not only his crimes – but every single mistake he ever made. Jesus died for William Henry McCarty. And Jesus died for you and for me. Jesus took all our sins away. This morning God's Word is again a

call to genuine heartfelt repentance. That's sincere sorrow for all our sins – and a child like confidence in Jesus' blood bought complete forgiveness! Because Jesus died and rose again to save us we are but strangers here. Heaven is our home. Amen!

*To God alone all glory!*

*Rev. Anthony E. Schultz*