

**7/3/18**

**Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,**

*“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. After two days 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 prophets, I killed you with the words of my mouth; my judgments flashed like lightning upon you. For I desire mercy, not sacrifice, and acknowledgement of God rather than burnt offerings.” Hosea 6:1-6*

The Israelites thought they had God all figured out. “How we live and what we believe doesn’t really matter,” they thought. “We can live in sin; we can freely follow the desires of our sinful nature; we can worship false gods; we can put our trust in heathen kings. As long as we return to the Lord at the end of the day and offer him sacrifices upon our altars just as he has commanded us to do, he will heal us. He will bind up our wounds. He will restore us and allow us to live in his presence.”

But the Israelites didn’t have God all figured out. He saw their faith and their life for what it truly was. It was like “the morning mist”—here for a minute, and then gone. Their worship was empty. Their faith was insincere. Their lives were a reflection of love, not for him, but of love for themselves and for sin.

So what did the Lord really want from them? “I desire mercy, not sacrifice,” he says, “and acknowledgement of God rather than burnt offerings.”

God didn't want their mere outward deeds of piety and their hollow acts of worship. He wanted their hearts. He wanted hearts of faith that trusted in him for forgiveness of sins and for deliverance from death. And he wanted their lives. He wanted lives of obedience that flowed from their faith.

That's exactly what our God wants from us too. It's why he rebukes us in his Word for our sinfulness, that we might acknowledge our disobedience and then turn to him in confession. It's why he reveals Jesus in his Word, that we might trust him as our only source of forgiveness and salvation. It's why he calls us in his Word to live for him in obedience that flows from a heart filled with faith in him.

God grant us all such hearts of faith and such lives of obedience today and always!

***Prayer:** Lord God, help me see myself for who I am—a sinner in need of your forgiveness—that I might then see you for who you are—my Savior-God who forgives. Grant me a heart of faith in your forgiveness and a life of thanksgiving to follow. Amen.*

(WELS E-Devotion, Adapted)

...See you in worship.

Keep looking up because the Lord is always looking down – Psalm 121

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