

A Word on Wednesday from Pastor Tonia

"Turn and Return" 10/4/23

I will heal their waywardness and love them freely,
for my anger has turned away from them. (Hosea 14:4)

Often God speaks harsh word, words which don't sound loving. In Judges we hear: "The People of Israel did evil in GOD's sight: they served Baal-gods; they deserted GOD, the God of their parents who had led them out of Egypt; they took up with other gods, gods of the peoples. They actually worshiped them! And oh, how they angered God. GOD's anger had been hot against Israel: He handed them off to plunderers who stripped them; He sold them cheap to enemies on all sides. They were helpless before their enemies. Every time they walked out the door GOD was with them - but for evil, just as GOD had said." (Judges 2:11-15)

Yikes. Not encouraging. If you ever feel like you're the only one who doesn't have it all figured out, listen closely: Life is not tidy, it's messy. We wanderer. God's people, first to receive His law, receivers of God's promised presence and protection, just couldn't color within the lines. They wandered from the God who loved them. Why should we think we've got it made in the shade? After hearing this account, do we have a chance? Will God forgive? Did we blow it? Is it all over? No.

The Prophets spoke God's word to God's people, how God loves them, what God asks of them, how they are to live, the promises of God for them, correction and compassion. And they turned and did what they wanted to. Hosea speaks words of encouragement to God's beloved. God will heal their wanderlust. He will turn away His anger. It sounds like God had a change of heart, but God's character never changes.

One thing we can never forget, as prone to wander as we are, the LORD is gracious and full of compassion, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love. (Psalm 145:8) This is not a contradiction, it is grace.

One often has wanderlust. I do, I love to travel, to take in a new place, new history, new culture, new foods. To rest, relax and renew. To enhance my life. This is not bad wandering – unless we're escaping where we need to be. But we also rebel, we run away; however, when we repent and return, God is there to greet us and to forgive us. God will heal our waywardness and love us, turning His anger from us. Praise God.

Please pray with me:

God of love and healing, Lord of our longings, thank You. Thank You for Your unfailing love. For Your forgiving heart, for drawing us back into Your arms when we are prone to wander. We see ourselves in the wanderings of Your Children, we see faith formed as we experience our Homecoming to You. Thank You for healing our waywardness and for loving us. Thank You for seeing us and turning away Your anger when we return to You.

Amen.