

**Hosea 5:15 – 6:3**

March 2, 2008 – 4<sup>th</sup> SUNDAY IN LENT

S#1175

CW 454

Pastor Mark A. Cordes

## **Return to the LORD**

✠ **Seek His face. (5:15)**

✠ **He will restore us. (6:1-3)**

In the name of Jesus, our Best Friend and faithful Savior, dear children of the heavenly Father:

It seemed gross when my children told me about their Catechism class at Christ Lutheran School. But actually, it was a pretty good lesson. The pastor took the students to a cemetery and had them lie on the grass next to a gravestone. Then he talked about how we need to live knowing we will all end up there someday. God says, **“Remember your Creator in the days of your youth, before the days of trouble come...”** (Ecclesiastes 12:1 NIV) This week a bomb threat at Saint Croix Lutheran High School made everyone evacuate. But just as one of the teachers and his wife were nearly killed last summer on a motorcycle, a student or teacher could have died in a car crash after that bomb scare. Tomorrow may not be on God’s calendar. The best Christian education teaches us: **Return to the LORD.** Today...

✠ **Seek His face. (5:15)**

On a gravestone behind Trinity Lutheran Church (LCMS), Hay Creek, Minnesota, I saw a reference to this text. Engraved as a memorial of the life and hopes of this pioneer woman, it said: “Hosea 6:1,2.” I had to look it up. Listen to the verse before: **“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.”** (Hosea 5:15 NIV)

You children can understand how the LORD felt. Something like this might have even happened to you. Let’s say you had a best friend who played with you for a long, long time. You shared toys, games, movies and even stayed over each other’s house. Then one day your friend took all your toys and games. She started telling everyone lies about you and your parents. Finally your mom and dad said you just couldn’t go over there anymore. You had to stay home. By yourself you wished she would come over and say she was sorry so you could forgive her and go back to playing and having fun again.

That’s how God felt about the Israelites. He gave them a beautiful land with rivers and hills, forests and fields, plenty of food and great festivals to celebrate with their families and friends. The LORD wanted them to be happy with Him and enjoy their wonderful country. But instead they worshiped other gods and said Baal gave them food and family. They loved idols so much that they even sacrificed their children in the fire to them. They said terrible things about the heavenly Father. They were unfaithful to Him even though He was their Best Friend. Finally all God could do was go away and let them suffer alone for a while to see that Baal and the false gods could not help them. In **“misery”** – hungry without food, dying of disease and losing many wars – they would realize there is no life without God.

We need to learn those hard lessons too. Even little children get sick. One little girl in my wife’s daycare had cancer most of the time we knew her. God says in the Bible that even though we did not necessarily do something bad to make us sick, there was no sickness or death in God’s world until Adam and Eve sinned. And because we keep on sinning, being bad to our friends, saying mean things about our parents and teachers, all this makes God very angry. Every day we give Him reason to leave us alone in our misery and finally let us go to hell.

But that is not what God wants. He feels as you would waiting for your friend to come over and say, “I’m sorry.” Every night when we put our head on our pillow, Jesus wants us to admit, “Dear Jesus, you were really good to me today. You gave me plenty of food and clothing. You let me go to school and learn and have fun with my friends. You were the Best Friend for me again, but I was not a good friend to you or anyone else. Please forgive me. Please take away my sins.”

But don't go to sleep yet. That was not the verses on the woman's gravestone. And you need something more to close your eyes in peace for the night. We don't go to sleep looking back at the bad. God also wants us to look ahead to the good He has prepared for us. **Return to the LORD**, for...

### ✠ **He will restore us. (6:1-3)**

"Hosea 6:1,2" the pioneer woman had engraved on her gravestone. Now God's people are talking to each other like friends saying: **"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."** (Hosea 6:1 NIV)

Sometimes God has to **"tear us to pieces"** and hurt us with His words because we think we're better than other people. We think because we have nicer clothes, or our parents have a better car or bigger house that maybe God loves us more than He loves someone else. So God will take something away to humble us. Maybe you wish you could be the best basketball player, but no matter how hard you try, you can't play the way you want. Maybe you wish other children would like you, but they seem to always be arguing and sometimes you do too. God has to let us see our sins. And that hurts.

Once Jesus said something that would really hurt your feelings. A woman had a little girl who was very, very sick because a devil was inside her. The woman begged Jesus to help her. But Jesus said, **"It is not right to take the children's bread and throw it to their dogs."** **"Yes, Lord," she said, "but even the dogs eat the crumbs that fall from their masters' table."** Jesus answered, **"Woman, you have great faith! Your request is granted."** **And her daughter was healed from that very hour.** (Matthew 15:26-28) Jesus wants us all so sure that He is our Best Friend, we never give up hoping in Him no matter what.

Hosea 6:2 says: **"After two days he will revive us; on the third day he will restore us, that we may live in his presence."** (Hosea 6:2 NIV) The **"third day"** reminds me of what Jesus did. He was beaten by the soldiers and nailed to the cross because of our sins. His disciples were too afraid to stay with Him. His mother Mary felt as if a sword had been shoved into her heart. But Jesus said He would come back and He did. He came to life and rose again **"on the third day."** Now He promises us and all His friends, **"Because I live, you also will live."** (John 14:19) While our souls are resting with Jesus in heaven, our bodies will lie in the grave. Then Jesus will come back to wake them up again. He will heal us so that our new body will be healthy and strong to live forever in heaven. We will dance like there's no tomorrow and run and jump and play and sing with our friends forever and ever.

So let's thank Jesus today! Or as it says in our last verse: **"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."** (Hosea 6:3 NIV) Because He died and rose again, we have so much to look forward to with Jesus in heaven. Now we dry our tears and live in hope. No matter how bad we've been, Jesus forgives us and will always take us back because He's the Best Friend.

Gravestones can say a lot about the person buried there. The man who wrote "Amazing Grace" was very evil. He kidnapped men, women and children as slaves. Imagine someone breaking into your house and taking you and your family to sell to masters who would beat you. Later John Newton was very sorry and asked Jesus to forgive him. He had this engraved on his headstone: **"Once an infidel and libertine A servant of slaves in Africa, Was, by the rich mercy of our Lord and Saviour JESUS CHRIST, restored, pardoned and appointed to preach the Gospel which he had long laboured to destroy."**

Today's the day. Now is the time. **Return to the LORD – Seek His face, and He will restore us.** Since Jesus loved us enough to die for us while we were still sinners, think how much He loves us now that we're Baptized in His Name. Play all day with Jesus, your Best Friend. And at night trust in His forgiveness. When I was in third grade, I had trouble falling asleep. Finally, my mother told me to read Psalm 4. These are beautiful words to close your eyes: **"I will lie down and sleep in peace, for you alone, O LORD, make me dwell in safety"** (Psalm 4:8 NIV). **"You alone, O LORD!"** Amen.

JOHN NEWTON, Clerk [preacher]

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He ministered,

Near sixteen years in Olney, in Bucks,  
And twenty eight years in this Church.