

Reclaiming our FAITH

hearing God through
the prophets

What Does God Desire of Us? A SERMON ON HOSEA 6:1-6

Pastor Megan Berry

Sunday, October 4, 2026

The answer to my sermon title sounds so simple, it's in the last couple verses of what we heard from Hosea: "For I desire steadfast love and not sacrifice, the knowledge of God rather than burnt offerings." But is it ever actually that simple?

Throughout the book of Hosea we see a key theme repeated over and over again. Israel has done something bad and God is sad or upset with them. We even start seeing their sacrifices and rituals brought up as being not pleasing to God.

But this is not because God no longer wants them to sacrifice burnt offerings or give up their rituals they've been practicing for years. It is because they are simply going through the motions, or only returning to the rituals when they've been reprimanded. The Israelites in Hosea are worshiping both God and Baal, they are sacrificing to whichever gods they believe will listen and bring about fruitful harvest or whatever else they are hoping for.

As we proclaimed in the 10 commandments earlier, we are not to worship any other gods or have any idols or false gods... God wants our steadfast love, God desires relationship with us and authentic rituals and actions.

When we get to our verse in chapter 6 that reminds us that God desires steadfast love and not sacrifice, the knowledge of God and not burnt offerings. It is not God suddenly refusing years and years of Jewish ritual and worship, it is God reminding the people that empty actions are useless. God is calling for the people to remember their promises, to remember their love for God and act justly and fairly, to worship authentically, and engage in the rituals without having the back-up plan to worship Baal if this ritual or action doesn't work immediately or to their liking.

We're not exactly worshipping Baal these days, but I don't think we're always worshipping God either...

I think we are worshipping convenience and a false peace, if we look nationally, we are certainly worshipping capitalism and our egos.

All over my social media feeds have been discussions, videos, pictures, and more about the Cornell 7. Here's my big content warning, if you don't know what Cornell 7 refers to, proceed with caution before googling. It refers to a truly horrifying incident on Cornell's campus at a fraternity house between one woman and seven men. I'm not going to talk about any details

here, but I want to dissect some of the responses I've seen to the horrifying actions.

I've seen several comments on posts saying various versions of "when I've heard my friends engage in locker room talk, I've stopped being friends with them." Or "when my friends have made inappropriate comments about someone else's body, I've simply stopped responding to them."

While these actions on the surface feel like they are the right move. You're cutting off ties, you're not engaging in the terrible conversations yourself, I believe these actions are actually some examples of the empty actions that displease God. They are actions that actually worship convenience or a false sense of peace, and I don't believe God calls us to worship those false idols.

Unfortunately, it is not just enough to silently back away from a stance that you don't believe in. Too often now, silence will read to many people as affirmation of a belief or topic, even if your silence is supposed to signal discontent.

In regards to these comments, I truly believe the actions that are rooted in God's steadfast love and knowledge are ones that take the risk to have the conversation that says "hey, that's absolutely not okay. Why are you saying those things? Or acting in those ways?"

This is just one example that is top of mind because of the news articles, but it extends to ALL sorts of conversations that we sit through uncomfortably or relationships that we slowly let fall apart without ever saying why and naming the hard truths for people.

There are conversations all the time that have racist undertones, or out-right racist statements, that dance around women's rights and whether we should have them, jokes that still poke hatred in the name of comedy at LGBTQIA+ people. And while it's convenient to take note and internally think "well I know who to avoid now." That's not what God wants us to do.

God wants us to act justly, to stand up for those without a voice, to love EVERYONE. And part of that love is reminding people that certain actions or comments are NOT tolerated. This will change relationships, this will be SUPER uncomfortable, and it will take intentional effort to practice responses that are grace-filled but firm. But this is the work that we are called to do, these are some of the actions that are not empty.

If this feels a little doom and gloomy or more than a little difficult. I do want to point to grace within our scriptures. Alongside MULTIPLE passages calling for Israel to do better, we also have this passage in chapter 11 titled "Divine Compassion" let's hear some compassion from God:

How can I give you up, Ephraim?

How can I hand you over, Israel?

How can I make you like Admah?

How can I treat you like Zeboiim?

*My heart winces within me;
my compassion grows warm and tender.*

Even though the calling is difficult, even though we really have to interrogate our motivations to see if we're serving a righteous peace or a false peace, our God or a false god, we are always met with compassion and love from our God. Our God will always weep with those who weep and be there with us through every trial and misstep.

And if that's not comfort enough to try a baby step in this incredibly hard calling of ours, here is a blessing from Sarah Bessey called "Bless our stubborn refusal to quit caring" Hear these words of blessing:

Bless our stubborn refusal to quit caring.
Bless our unreasonable hopes, our tenacious refusals
to cave to the powers and principalities of our age,
Let alone to be talked out of decency and resilience,
and our faith in Love, despite evidence to the contrary.
Maybe we were ridiculous to try
to move the needle for goodness in this old world
but we won't regret trying.
We won't regret throwing our hats in the ring.
We won't regret believing in your love,
your grace, your heart for the under-dogs.
May we carry on, stubborn and lovely,
unashamed and undeterred,
resilient and secure in love.
We know our efforts are seen,
even cherished, by you,
the God who never stops loving,
who never stops trying, too.

Amen.