

Series: Desperate
Memory Verse: *“My soul thirsts for God, for the living God. When can I go and meet with God?”* Psalm 42:2
Title: Desperate Hearts
Text(s): **Hosea 10:12**; Psalm 63:1; John 7:37-39a
Key Word: Habits
Proposition: Everyone can cultivate a desperate heart for God by removing obstructive habits and planting constructive habits.

Good Morning everyone. My name is Chris Farmer. I serve as one of the pastor's of our church. We're thrilled that you have chosen to worship with us today. Last week we completed our series on "Seven Simple Truths about Life." We explored the truth that God gives us a long life as we honor the generations. After having conversations with some during the week, I realize that the message stirred up some powerful emotions. Some may be worried about the ways that they have parented their children, some may not have good memories of their parents, and some may feel the loneliness that only those who have no children of their own can understand. Regardless of whether you find yourself in one of these categories or one not even voiced, it is my hope and prayer that you will grow to see this Church as your family. We experience "family" the best in our small groups which we call: Growth Groups." Let us all grow together in love and support of each other, as we DO LIFE together.

Today, we begin a new series entitled, "Desperate." It seems that many folks are desperate. Many are desperate to have a voice in determining our countries future. The recession has left many anxious about their personal finances. Teens are serious about relationships and finding meaning to life. Children feel the distress of anxious parents. Many feel hopeless as they witness the escalating threat of terrorism,

leadership scandals, and self-destructive habits that threatens families. We live in a desperate world. However, such desperation becomes the invitation to draw near to God. We hope that this series will draw you closer to God so that you know the power of His Spirit.

After a season of prosperity, our friend Hosea used agricultural metaphors to inspire the Hebrew people to examine their lives. Moral decline eroded this community. Israel had abandoned and betrayed their God by worshipping their neighbor's gods. They forged "illicit" relationships with Assyria and Egypt. This prolonged disobedience and rebellion dried up their souls. Like the hardened soil of the Kansas dust bowl, they were desperate for a fresh down pour of God's Spirit.

Admitting spiritual drought opens the way for a fresh work of God. In seasons where I have substituted prayer with activity my soul dries up. Abstaining from Scripture reading dehydrates my spirit. Neglecting personal worship leaves my heart parched. Apathy and complacency scorches my spirit. These leave my heart desperate for the rain of God's blessing and power. In seasons of drought, I long for a bountiful harvest of Spirit's fruit. Friends in the season of spiritual drought how desperate are we for God? Desperate hearts find nothing to fear because times of refreshing, healing, and power are ahead of them. Desperate hearts dare to break up the unplowed ground.

The Lord offers to us a word of hope in the midst of barrenness. Hope turns over the soil of the heart. Hope returns to the Lord God who longs for the desperate heart. Hosea's words indicate the boundless love, mercy, and patience of God, who always

offers fresh starts and new beginnings. Israel had sinned. God's repeated calls had gone unanswered. Israel is desperate, like a boat drifting down the Niagara, heading for rapids, with the plunge fearfully waiting. But there is yet time to turn the boat around and be delivered. God says, *"Sow for yourselves righteousness, reap the fruit of unfailing love, and break up your unplowed ground; for it is time to seek the LORD, until he comes and showers righteousness on you."* Hosea 10:12

The word "Break" comes from a Hebrew word called "Shaw bar" and means to crush, to burst, and to tear into pieces. The statement "unplowed ground" refers to the HEART that at one time was fruitful, but now it is hardened dirt.

When I was young my father and mother wanted to plant a garden in our back yard. I recall that dad hired a farmer to come with his small ford tractor to turn over the grass sod with a plow and disk. Afterward, Dad took a rotor-tiller and broke up the soil even more. I removed rocks and sod with a rake as we went. It was long, hard work. Finally, we planted rows of vegetables. Eventually the rain, sun, and the soil turned seed into small plants. Later that summer the vegetables produced their intended fruit: peas, green beans, corn, tomatoes, and many others. Fall put an end the harvest. The long winter killed the plants and hardened the soil. Spring revealed our once neat garden rows as dead, crumbled vegetation and hard soil. Weeds sprung up. Last years vegetable garden now was nothing but weeds and crabgrass.

Once again, we plowed and tilled the land. We broke up the unplowed ground that last year produced abundant fruit. Spring required preparation for replanting for

new fruit to be produced. We believed that we had a garden. In fact we referred to it as our garden. We had the rows. But unless we broke up the unplowed ground there would be no fruit. Talking about it, planning for it wouldn't get it done. Seeing new crops of green beans and sweet corn wouldn't get it done. Desperation was not enough as well. We had to do the hard work of breaking up the soil for the living God to bless us with new fruit.

Friends, many believe they have a hunger for God because at one point they did. They believe that God is still working in their lives because at one point He did. They believe they are seeking God because at one point they did. Life though has moved on. Spiritually they are desperately stuck in the former glory and in old experiences of God. The soil has hardened. Weeds of self-destructive habits and unresolved hurts have taken offer. Neglect of the soul has settled into hang-ups and setbacks. Friends, God wants to do a new thing. It's time for a new season of new fruits. God desperately wants to do a new thing in us, but first we must break up that unplowed ground in our lives.

Now is the time to examine the garden of our lives. It's time to see if we are truly, earnestly walking with God every day or not. It's time to consider our actions, attitudes, priorities, habits, and learn the true condition of our heart. Now is the time to dig deep into our hearts and turn it inside out, breaking up the clumps of hardened soil so that God's Spirit can soften it. Now is the time to expose the stuff that is under the surface. Now is the time to remove all the habits that obstructs growth into

fruitfulness.

Like rocks in the garden habits obstruct the heart desperate for God? **First, neglect obstructs the desperate longing for God.** How would you feel if you someone you love would neglect you by lessening their affection toward you? Grief and hurt would flood your heart. Jealousy would be aroused if you saw someone you love or cared about in the arms of another. Hurt and even righteous anger would surface. God feels the same way when we neglect our relationship with him. God is a jealous God. Have you ever given your heart to other things? Like a hobby, an interest, a political view point, a person, a job, where it is all you think about, all you talk about, all you dream about. It receives your attention, money and the priority dates on your calendar. It's an obsession. Whatever has your attention is your god. But are those things truly satisfy you?

Only the living God offers true fulfillment. Giving Him your undivided attention by reading the Scriptures can quench your thirst. If other things have you, then no wonder your heart has become unplowed ground. He loves you and wants nothing more than your undivided love in return. He promises to give you a down pour of His Holy Spirit if you ask him. Do you believe this? He's ready and willing to quench your thirst and satisfy your hunger.

Next, neglect of others hinders the desperate heart. LaShanda Calloway saw people literally stepping over her as she grasped for every breath. One moment she was shopping in a convenience store; the next moment she felt the sever pain of a knife

penetrating her flesh. As she lay dying, a surveillance camera recorded several people stepping over her to continue down the store's aisles. One stopped briefly—to take a picture with a cell phone camera.

"It was tragic to watch," one policeman said. "The fact that people were more interested in taking a picture and shopping than helping this innocent young woman is, frankly, revolting." Another said, "That's crazy! What happened to our respect for life?"

What happened to LaShanda is revolting. I doubt that any of us would ever ignore someone lying on the floor dying. It's more challenging though to care for those who are dying of resentment, hurts, guilt, and sin. Neglecting others hardens the heart.

Next, self-centered attitudes get in the way of the desperate heart. Take a brief look at your prayer life. Has our prayer life been without passion, simply consistently mundane, an ought-to rather than a passionate conversation with the God who loves us? How is it with your prayer life? What about your attitude toward self-surrender? Many want to do things for the church or for people, but only those things that require little sacrifice. Some believe that if what is asked of them is inconvenient or costly, if it requires a realignment of priorities, then that is too much. Some think they are doing a lot for God, as long as it is reasonable. But they will not give Christ their all. Christ does not want our time and a certain percentage of our income and so much of our work: He wants all of us. God says, "I have not come to torment your natural self, but to kill it. No half-measures are any good. I don't want to cut off a branch here and a branch there. I want to have the whole tree down. I don't want to drill

the tooth, or crown it, or stop it, but to have it out. Hand over your whole natural self, all the desires which you think are innocent as well as the ones you think are wicked—the whole outfit. God says, I will give you a new self instead. In fact, I will give you myself: my own will shall become yours." Any other attitude gets in the way of the desperate heart.

Finally, self-centered habits undermine the desperate heart. What kind of habits do you have regarding your tongue? Do you have a habit of speaking critically of others, speaking words that create discord, division, and suspicion? The way of love calls us to see the best in all persons. Do you have a habit of robbing God, misusing your time on the things that have no eternal value? Do you have a habit of criticizing institutions on reckless spending while you have spent much on your own desires or on things you did not need? Self-destructive habits hinder a desperate heart for God.

Such self-examination is like taking a plow to the heart. We don't like the plow because it digs deep into the heart and roots unwanted stuff. It up roots jealousy, envy, malice, strife. It crushes backbiting, favoritism, and cliques. It turns over hatred, self-reliance, and pride. It disrupts complacency and turns over mediocrity. The plow exposes disunity and inconsistency. The plow takes the comfort zone and turns it into discomfort. We don't like the plow. But there is Power after the plow.

The plow prepares the heart for the new seed. New plants grow and produce new and more fruit. Breaking up the unplowed ground makes the heart ready for new life. How is the soil of your heart? Unplowed or broken up, ready for new seed,

desperate for a fresh down-pour of the Holy Spirit?

The Lord says, ‘Sow FOR yourself...’ In other words, no one can do it for you! Pastors can’t do it Spouse cannot do it. Parents can train and instruct, but they can not do it for their children. We must sow for ourselves righteousness.

We have to determine for ourselves that we will be right with God! We have to choose to stand upright before God! Upright is more than a position or stature – it describes our character as standing in a right relationship with Him.

Evangelist Mordecai Ham was struggling with the call of God on his life. As he sat in a service, he heard the preacher say, “If you’re not willing to do the will of God, are you willing to be made willing?” Ham decided he was willing for God to make him willing, and thus he became a radiant follower of Jesus the Christ.

No one can bring the rain of God’s glorious Spirit. Not even you! But we can prepare for it, and God will bring it! We can prepare for it by constructing habits of a desperate heart.

A desperate heart confesses failure. If the Holy Spirit has aroused your heart, revealing some sin that you have committed against another and also against God, then go confess it immediately and uproot this sin. Keep the weed of bitterness from growing. Prohibit the devil from getting a stronghold into your life. Confess your sin. Don’t put it off. Procrastination will only make the matter worse. Confession removes the obstacle and establishes the desire to make things right. Only then the Lord will send a down pour of His Holy Spirit. God fills the desperate confessing heart.

Next, celebrate God's forgiveness. The Lord said to Solomon, "*If my people who are called by name, will humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven and will forgive their sin and heal their land.*" (2Chronicles 7:14) What a glorious promise! What a precious gift to be received. We must extend the hand to receive the gift. Forgiveness is an extended hand. It may be clasped. Ignored, it becomes the judgment of God. Open the hand in faith and received His glorious forgiveness. Celebrate the reception of the gift.

Forgiveness leads to changing our ways. Without this repentance forgiveness has no meaning at all. Like the man who turned back from the far country and set his face homeward, celebrate the glory of forgiveness with a changed life. **Now is the time of the desperate heart.** Israel had a desperate heart. Will you? 2449