

THE PROCLAMATION OF HOSEA

Day of Pentecost, 2013

On May 19, the Old Testament prophet Hosea visited the congregation of Christ Church with a message for our place and time. We thank Nadine Quehl for adapting Hosea's original message delivered to the ancient Northern Kingdom of Israel for 21st century Canada. Nadine gave a dramatic presentation of the manuscript, below. To fully appreciate the literary allusions in this sermon, please refer to the Book of Hosea in the Hebrew bible.

God told me to find a prostituting hustler and marry him and have children of a conning swindler. Why? Because all of Canada has become for sale, unfaithful to God. I obeyed God, and my husband brought me a son, and God told me to name him "Afghanistan," because God will make the Canadians pay for your role in the killings in Afghanistan. God will destroy all of our guns and fighter jets. My husband brought me a daughter, and God told me to name her "No-Mercy" because God is sick of us – there is no more forgiveness. He brought me another son, and God said to name him "Nobody" because we have all become nobody to God ... and God is nobody to us. To No-Mercy and Nobody God cried, "Plead with your father, that he put away his adultery or I will strip him naked and expose him and kill him with thirst. He did not know that it was I who gave him grain, wine and oil. Therefore I will take it all back.

God will make my husband pay for pigging out on promiscuous religion, for worshipping false gods. The priests are no better – they are pigging out on my people's sins. You can't tell the people from the priests, or the priests from the people – you will pay for walking out on God for a life of cheap satisfaction. Drunk or high, or wallowing in things, you look to the future by reading your newspapers, and expect answers from your stock reports. Drunk on sex, you get lost You make a picnic out of religion. It is religion customized to taste. Professionals see to it: anything you want in a god you can get. Canada is teeming with empty-headed religion. Now there's nothing left to you: hollow men and women, like scraps of paper blown down the street, like smoke in a gusty wind.

All Canadians are to blame: no one is faithful. No one loves. No one knows the first thing about God. Lying, theft, anarchy, rape, murder ... the very earth is crying... animals, birds and fish are dying – you are murdering people with your policies and your lack of compassion; and murdering the earth with your pollution and your oil pipelines.

You've ruined your own life, Canada. Don't go around saying "God bless you" and not mean it, taking God's name in vain. Listen up, priests, all Canadians, politicians – you're in charge of justice here, but what have you done? Stolen the land of the First Nations peoples, not to mention your horrific attacks on their culture and the people themselves. And that unspeakable, shocking sin: you did nothing while my native daughters were raped and murdered, one after another. Was your inaction because some of them were sex workers? Have you considered the reasons they may need to do such work? Shame! Words fail to describe how depraved you are. You are all molesters. You have exploited your migrant workers, their living conditions are horrid, not to mention your collusion in creating the conditions that have forced them to come here to be underpaid and undervalued. You have commercialized everything, from the water to the land ...and soon enough, the air you breathe. You have victimized those who are already the most vulnerable, those with addictions, with mental illnesses, the poor, by not providing homes, food and love.

Canada tells lies nonstop – soul-destroying lies. Lies like people are poor because they are lazy, and don't want to work. Lies like the "austerity" myth, that the government can't afford to deliver services, and the only way to deal with our sick economy is to cut environmental, economic, and social supports. Such lies justify your institutionalized poverty; you do not admit that you lowered tax rates for the wealthy and corporations and failed to collect the taxes owed. The only solution to the deficit, lies Canada, is to privatize the public sector, and in so doing, abandon the poor, weigh students down with debt, compromise health care, and tie aid for international development to corporate ventures. But we have "corporate social responsibility" lie Canadian mining executives, while they rape the earth and destroy the societies they claim to help. Lies like Canada is a nation of "peacekeepers"... while you make weapons and send them all over the world to fuel wars you pray will be won to quench your greed for fuel. Lies like "multiculturalism" and "equality" that belie the racism and sexism that are still rampant in this country. Your oppressive immigration policies tear families apart. Instead of demanding justice, you set up a

poverty industry of food banks and makeshift shelters and praise yourselves for your “good works” - for your “charity”God will punish all of you. All of Canada is thoroughly polluted.

Canadians wouldn't recognize God if they saw me. What am I to do with you, Canada? Your declarations of love last no longer than morning mist and the dew before the dawn. That's why I use prophets to shake you to attention. To wake you up ... I'm after love that lasts, not more religion. I want you to know God. You broke faith with me – you ungrateful wretches. Waterloo has become Crime City – there is blood on the sidewalks and blood on the streets ...it used to be robbers who mugged people. Now it's priests assaulting worshippers; it's bankers and politicians and even the academics who support the status quo, instead of demanding the radical transformation needed for a just society.

Every time I gave Canada a fresh start, wiped the slate clean, soon, the slate was filled with new sins. It never crosses your mind that I keep account of your every crime. You're mud-spattered head to toe with the residue of sin. ... but I am not blaming the adulterous wives ... it is the men who pick up the whores that I will go after, the men who worship at the holy whorehouses. The men of Canada in positions of power are the whores....who lust after money and lust after war – the war on drugs, the war on terror, the war on the poor.

I'm the one who gave you good minds and healthy bodies, and how am I repaid? Instead of crying out to me in heartfelt prayer, you walk away from your God at the drop of a hat and sell yourself at every party on the street. All that party food won't fill you up ... you'll be starved for God. Doom's at the doorstep. Your rulers will be cut down, just desserts for their mocking blasphemies. And the final sentence? Ridicule in the court of world opinion.

You crown kings, and prime ministers...but without asking me. Instead, you make idols of silver and gold, and copper and asbestos ... The more money Canadians got, the more they squandered on gods in their own image. Canada is stubborn as a mule ... addicted to idols. Canada is swallowed up and spit out. Canadians have built lots of altars and then use them for sinning. Can you believe it? Altars for sinning! Canada has forgotten God and has been busy making palaces: spending over 700 million on a courthouse in Kitchener, while you cut social programs and cause homelessness. The poverty the cuts create may lead to crime, perhaps theft to feed a family ... the prisons will fill up and you will say the millions spent on the courthouse is justified! Altars for sinning!

I wanted to sow righteousness and reap love. Instead you plowed wicked ways, reaped a crop of evil and ate a salad of lies. You thought you could do it all on your own, with weapons; you have put your trust in your military build-up. So I'm sending fire on your cities to burn down your fortifications. Canada's favourite sin centers will all be torn down ... the military, the casinos, the courthouses, the government, ... Then you'll say to the mountains, “Bury us!” and to the hills “Fall on us!”

Long ago when I came upon Canada, it was like finding grapes out in the desert. Now Canadians take to sin like a pig to filth, wallowing in the mud with your newfound friends. Rather than denouncing the treatment of Palestinians, you wallow in the mud with Israel. You wallow in the mud with America and their war on terror, to make sure they stay dependent on the military products you produce. You compete to get an inside track with the oil-rich nations of the Middle East. You try to get an inside track with the French by providing Canadian military support in Mali ... where your leading mining company operates. Access to resources is valued above precious human lives ... as water supplies are already being polluted ... as child soldiers and environmental refugees are forgotten.

Meanwhile, bankers, businessmen and politicians engage in wholesale fraud and then boast, “Look, I'm rich! I've made it big! And look how well I've covered my tracks: not a hint of fraud, not a sign of sin!” But not so fast! I'm God, your God! I see how you have evaded the tax system and taken advantage of offshore havens. Canada is adulterous – idolatrous. I'll pounce on you like a sow grizzly robbed of her cubs. I'm going to destroy you, Canada. Who is going to stop me? Where are all the local leaders you wanted so badly? Your children will be dashed to pieces.

Yet ... when Canada was only a child, I loved him. I called out, “My son!” But when others called him, he ran off and left me. He worshiped the popular sex gods, he played at religion with toy gods. He never acknowledged my help, that I lifted him, like a baby, to my cheek, that I bent down to feed him. I taught him to walk. The murder rate skyrockets and every plan to improve things falls to pieces. But how can I give up on you, Canada. How can I leave you to be ruined. I can't bear to even think such thoughts. My

insides churn in protest. My compassion grows warm and tender. And so I'm not going to act on my anger. Why? Because I am God and I'm here, in your very midst. The people will end up following God. I will roar like a lion –my frightened children will come running.

What are you waiting for? Return to your God! Commit yourself in love, in justice! Wait for your God and don't give up on God – ever! Down the road,...in the very place where they were once named Nobody, they will be named God's Somebody. Everyone in Canada will be assembled as one people, based on compassion and radical egalitarianism. Rename your brothers "God's Somebody", rename your sisters "All Mercy"

I will heal your waywardness. I will love you lavishly. My anger is played out. I will make a fresh start with Canada. She will burst into bloom like a crocus in the spring. She'll become splendid – like a giant sequoia, her fragrance like a grove of cedars! God wants me to start all over and bring my husband gifts; and Heartbreak Valley will be turned into Acres of Hope. Love your husband again, says God, your husband who is in bed with his latest lover – love him, the way I, God, love the Canadians, even as they flirt with every god that takes their fancy. God will wash out your mouths to get rid of all the filthy names of false gods...God will get rid of all the weapons of war... and then will marry you in love and justice and tenderness... and you shall know the Lord.