

June 7, 2026 – Hosea 5:15-6:6

There's an interesting scene near the end of C.S. Lewis' classic Christian allegory, *The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe*. Two of the children are talking to Mr. and Mrs. Beaver about Aslan, the huge lion who represents Jesus in Lewis' story. And one of them ask the beavers, "Is he quite safe?"

And, to their surprise, Mr. Beaver replies, "Safe? Who said anything about safe? Of course he isn't safe. But he's good."

It's an important distinction to make. One that makes a lot of sense when you think about it. Most of the powerful things in this world aren't especially safe in the wrong hands. A car isn't safe in the hands of a drunk driver. A knife isn't safe in the hands of a child. A gun isn't safe in the hands of a criminal.

But the same thing that makes them unsafe is also what makes them good and useful. A car is incredibly useful in the hands of a delivery driver. A knife is incredibly useful in the hands of a chef. A gun is incredibly useful in the hands of a hunter or a police officer or a soldier.

This is something that we often get wrong about God as well. When our culture talks about God, it tends to confuse "safe" and "good". In large part because, when our culture talks about God, it wants him to be safe. Completely safe. So safe that he's completely irrelevant to our lives. So safe that we can ignore him.

But in our Old Testament lesson today, Hosea reveals a very different God. A God who is not safe, at all. But also a God who is very, very good toward us.

The prophet begins with words that could sound terrifying: "*Come, let us return to the LORD; for he has torn us, that he may heal us; he has struck us down, and he will bind us up.*"

Notice that Hosea doesn't say God merely allowed these things to happen. He doesn't say God stood by helplessly while disaster struck. He says the Lord Himself has torn us. The Lord Himself has struck us down. That is not a safe God.

The people of Israel had spent generations wandering away from the Lord. They had trusted in idols. They had trusted in political alliances. They had trusted in military strength. They had trusted in themselves. Whenever God called them to repentance, they looked for ways around it.

Which is what the old Adam always wants. The old Adam wants God to be safe. The old Adam wants a God who never confronts sin. A God who never judges. A God who never says, "No." A God who never calls us to repentance. The old Adam wants a God who exists mainly to affirm us.

But that God doesn't exist. The true God is far too good to leave sinners comfortably settled in their sin. A surgeon isn't safe to the cancer growing inside a patient. A firefighter isn't safe to the flames consuming a house. A demolition crew isn't safe to a condemned building.

And God is not safe to the old Adam. He tears down pride. He exposes hypocrisy. He strips away perversion. He destroys idols. He shatters self-righteousness.

Every time God's Law confronts us, it's doing exactly that. The commandments expose what we really are. They show how often we have loved ourselves more than God. How often we have failed to love our neighbors. How often our thoughts, words, and deeds have fallen short of God's holiness.

In fact, Hosea tells us exactly how God does this. In verse 5 the Lord says, "*Therefore I have hewn them by the prophets; I have slain them by the words of my mouth.*"

God doesn't attack the old Adam through wars or disasters or hardships. He attack the old Adam through preaching. He slays through words. He sends His prophets to speak His Word, and that Word cuts us to the heart.

Which means the church itself is not a safe place for the old Adam. That's not usually how people talk about church today. We often hear that church should be comfortable. Welcoming. Affirming. Non-threatening. And certainly the church should welcome sinners. Christ Himself welcomes sinners. But welcoming sinners is not the same thing as protecting their sins.

If you come to church and never hear anything that makes you uncomfortable, something has gone wrong. If week after week you hear nothing that challenges you, rebukes you, convicts you, or calls you to repentance, then the old Adam has found a very safe place indeed.

But God never promised safety for the old Adam. He promised death. Through His Word He points out the idols we would rather keep hidden. Through His Word He exposes grudges we would rather justify. Through His Word He confronts lust, greed, pride, selfishness, and unbelief. Through His Word He tears away every excuse we make for ourselves.

And the old Adam hates every minute of it. He hated the prophets. He hated John the Baptist. He hated Jesus. And he still hates the preaching of God's Word today.

The old Adam hates hearing these things. But God says them anyway. The church says them anyway. Because God isn't safe, but He is good. Because God's ultimate goal is not simply to tear us down. *"He has torn us, that he may heal us. He has struck us down, and he will bind us up."*

The wounds have a purpose. God wounds in order to heal. He kills in order to make alive. He tears down in order to rebuild.

And that pattern runs throughout the entire Scriptures. Think of Noah's flood. God destroys the wicked world, yet preserves Noah and his family. Think of the Exodus. God brings judgment upon Egypt, yet delivers His people through the sea. Think of David. The shepherd boy defeats the giant only after appearing weak and insignificant. Again and again, God brings life out of death.

And all of it points us toward Christ. For nowhere do we see this pattern more clearly than at the cross. There, God's judgment against sin falls with full force. There, the innocent Son of God is wounded. There, He is torn. There, He is struck down. At Calvary we see the vivid truth that God is not safe. Sin will be judged. Justice will be done. The wages of sin is death.

Yet at the very same cross we discover that God is unimaginably good. Because the One who is wounded is wounded for us. The One who dies dies for us. The One who bears judgment bears our judgment. And because Christ has taken our place, God's tearing and striking no longer serve our condemnation. Instead, they serve our salvation.

*"After two days he will revive us; on the third day he will raise us up, that we may live before him."* For centuries Christians have heard in those words an echo of Easter morning. On the third day Christ rose from the dead. The grave could not hold Him. Death could not keep Him. The Father who struck Him down for our sins also raised Him for our justification.

And because Christ lives, we live also. In fact, His death and resurrection become the pattern of the entire Christian life. God kills the old Adam. God raises the new man.

And this happens first in Holy Baptism. There the old sinner is drowned with all his sins and evil desires. There a new creation emerges. There God joins us to Christ's death and resurrection.

But this isn't merely a one-time event buried somewhere in the past. The Christian life continues to follow this same pattern every day. The old Adam keeps trying to claw his way back into our lives. Like a zombie that just won't die.

He keeps clinging to pride. He keeps returning to selfishness. He keeps chasing after idols. And so God keeps putting him to death.

Through His Law, God continually exposes what must die in us. Through repentance, God continually buries what must be buried. And through His Gospel, God continually raises up faith, hope, and love.

The old Adam hates this process. It's painful for him. Hosea's language is vivid and it's supposed to be. The old Adam is torn apart. Struck down. Hewn, as if by an ax. Slain by the Word of God. But the new man? The new man knows that this is life. Because God's goal isn't destruction. His goal is resurrection.

The old Adam wants religion without repentance. He wants a safe God. But the new man delights in something far better. The new man delights in knowing the Lord. The new man trusts the God whose mercy is greater than our sin. The new man rejoices that the Lord will not leave us unchanged.

And that is exactly why you are here. Every Sunday the old Adam should leave the divine service a little poorer, a little weaker, a little closer to the grave. And every Sunday the new man should leave richer in Christ, stronger in faith, and more confident in God's mercy.

The church is not safe. But it is good. Because here the Lord still does exactly what Hosea describes. He tears down, that He may heal. He strikes down, that He may bind up. He kills, that He may make alive.

And on the Last Day, the God who raised His Son on the third day will raise us also. Then every trace of the old Adam will finally be gone forever. Sin will be no more. Death will be no more. Tears will be no more. And we shall live before Him. Not because He was safe. But because He was good. Amen.