

God, the Mother Bear

Scripture Reading — Hosea 13

“Like a bear robbed of her cubs, I will attack them and rip them open.”

Hosea 13:8 —

In our Bible reading, we rarely turn to chapters like Hosea 13. We prefer the parts of Scripture that we can read to young children without fear of worrying them. But when we seek to imagine God faithfully, we need all the images of the Bible.

The text pictures God as a ferocious mother bear who has lost her children because they have chosen to worship cleverly made idols. They have devised a form of religion out of their own ideas rather than listening to God’s Word. They are in a pattern of self-destructive behavior that God cannot tolerate.

Part of the take-home message is this (and we can do justice to only part of the message here): the God we worship loves us with a love as ferocious as that of a mother bear. This God is not inclined to stand idly by while we ignore the truth and worship idols. This God is not interested in avoiding conflict.

Why is there such shocking imagery in the Bible? When thinking about this text, John Calvin mused that we are often so spirituality sluggish that we sometimes need spiritual shock therapy. This passage by its imagery stuns us with the fierce love of our God.

May all of us who cling to self-destructive ways of life be shocked enough to run as fast as we possibly can toward the God who loves us fiercely.

Prayer

Strong, loving God, we cannot fathom the depths of your protecting love for all your children. Help us to see how your ferocious love overcomes the death we so fear. Amen.

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Printed on March 20, 2019

