***Hosea 12:6 So you, by the help of your God, return; Observe mercy and justice, And wait on your God continually.***

Today, we honored our veterans service to our country. Duty – duty to God, duty to family, and duty to country – each of these men and millions of men and women around this nation stand as veterans of duty done. When duty called, they left comfort and familiarity behind and answered. On more than one occasion at a funeral, I’ve seen a soldier kneel, present a folded flag to a grieving family, and quietly speak - *On behalf of the President of the United States, the military, and a grateful nation, please accept this flag as a symbol of our appreciation for your loved one’s honorable and faithful service.* Duty. We have more than a duty to self. We have a duty to country, family, church, and most critically, God.

Last week, we heard the conclusion of the whole matter, every matter that ever was and ever will be, in Ecclesiastes 12:13 - *Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God and keep His commandments, For this is man’s all.* Man’s all translated to a person’s whole duty, our whole purpose for being. The week prior, we studied Micah 6:8 where we learned that God has shown us what is good – *He has shown you, O man, what is good; And what does the Lord require of you But to do justly, To love mercy, And to walk humbly with your God?* It doesn’t say He suggests it – He requires it. Now, this morning, we are with Hosea, when he gives us this Biblical counsel that we are very, very wise to listen to – *So you, by the help of your God, return; Observe mercy and justice, And wait on your God continually.* Gosh, but that sounds familiar! We’ve heard something like this before! It reflects the same commands of Ecclesiastes 12 and Micah 6. We have a duty, we have a requirement, we will be held accountable when we pass from this life to our eternal home. Are we loving and reverencing God, keeping His commandments? Are we doing justly, loving mercy, and walking humbly with Him? Are we, by God’s help, and by holding the hand of Jesus, observing mercy and justice, and waiting continually on our God? This is our all – this is our call – this is our purpose - this is our duty – how are we doing?

Verse 6 starts *So you, by the help of your God, return.* Hosea is speaking to Israel and God is speaking to us. In Matthew 4:17, we read – *From that time Jesus began to preach and to say, “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.”* By the help of God, through His Son Jesus, the only Way, the only Truth, the only Life, we repent and we return to our God. The word return doesn’t just have the idea of returning along some wrong road we traveled to our starting point, but that of making a complete change in direction, a complete turning away of the old and embracing the new. By the help of your God, return. And it’s our duty to do the same. Remember, *You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind.’ This is the first and great commandment.* Return. Love God, fear God, walk in humble and awed reverence, with God. That is our all.

Verse 6 continues *Observe mercy and justice.* The verse started with a God-focus – Return. Now, the verse turns – Observe, meaning to keep, guard mercy and justice. Do justly. Love mercy. Keep mercy as the Father in Heaven, the very source of mercy, keeps it. Guard justice, as the very source of all justice, guards it. Keep mercy and justice toward our neighbor. This reminds us of the second commandment Jesus gave - *And the second is like it: ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’ On these two commandments hang all the Law and the Prophets.* We cannot claim we have returned to God if we haven’t wrapped our arms tightly around mercy and embraced justice.

Now we finish verse 6 - *And wait on your God continually.* Fear God, keep His commandments. Wait expectantly, joyfully, confidently on our Deliverer to return. He surely is coming back! Wait on Him continually, meaning no matter how long our time stretches out.

This week, let’s consider how we’re doing in our duty before God. Are we returning to Him daily in repentance, surrendering to His kingdom, submitting to His will, and serving Him by serving people? Are we keeping His commandments, loving mercy, doing justly, and walking humbly by His side? Are we watching expectantly, with awe and reverence, waking every morning thinking today may be the day that I see my Jesus face to face, but if it’s not, I will surrender, I will submit, and I will serve. Too many are living as though this broken down world is our permanent home. If you have returned to God, by way of belief in Jesus Christ, repented, and asked Him to save you, this world is not your home. You have a mansion waiting, as a child of the King. Let’s pursue the Kingdom as though the Kingdom is all we have, because my friends, in the end, that is all that will have any meaning.