**God’s Desire (Hosea 6:4-6)**

 Greetings to you dear brothers and sisters in this beautiful moment; I hope that your week has been good and you are here joyfully in God’s house today. We send greetings to you from Boston, where we are participating in the 100th anniversary celebrations of the AMAA. Therefore, though I cannot personally deliver this message to you, I ask that you listen carefully to its reading by our dear brother Elder Harout Darakdjian. Having said this, today’s Scripture reading is taken from the Prophet Hosea, chapter 6:4-6. (Reading of Scripture)

 Our Christian character is more important to God than any form of religious ceremonialism. What a difficult situation it was for the prophet Hosea! The people were very comfortable with their religious customs, religious activities, celebrations and superficial worship ceremonies. People had organized their external lives extremely well. Business was good, political ties were being made to keep the country safe, but their internal spiritual life, which was connected to their identity, was completely devoid of faith toward God. Despite the fact that people went to the Temple in Jerusalem to offer their animal sacrifices and that they kept their traditions going, their hearts were far from God’s desired path for them. Externally, they were God’s people, but they were pagans, just like the nations around them, internally.

 A doctor once said, “"The symptoms of spiritual decline are like those which attend the decline of bodily health. It generally commences with the loss of appetite, and a dislike for wholesome food, prayer, reading the Scriptures and devotional books. Whenever you perceive these symptoms, be alarmed! Your spiritual health is in danger. Apply immediately to the Great Physician for a cure."

 Today we find ourselves as Christians in the same predicament. We all attend church, we give our offerings, accomplishing our duty, but we are always being called to a deeper spiritual life than just the above. If our private spiritual life and character do not correspond to our external public life in the church (or anywhere), then what we are doing is simply pretending to be a Christian. God has called us to be His people, to have His character both internally and externally (both privately and publicly). If we desire that our spiritual lives grow, then we must fulfill God’s desire. Let’s examine ourselves, then: does our private life match up with our public life in our speech and behavior toward others? God expects an honestly lived life from us.

 Come and let us decide together to live an authentic spiritual life. Be a person with genuine Christian character! For God considers having a right character more important than any one form of worship or tradition. Our Christian character is more important to God than any form of religious ceremonialism. May God Bless You. Amen.