These chapters of Hosea record some devastating words from God to the people. But none of the images capture me like this one:

“Pains as of a woman in childbirth come to him; 
but he is a child without wisdom; 
when the time arrives, 
he does not come to the opening of the womb.” (Hos. 13:13)

Why is God angry? Because the child won’t be born. The pain of labor is there, but it’s fruitless. He’s been growing for nine months inside his mother, but when the time comes—he won’t come out.

You know, I’ve never thought of it in quite this way before. But it makes sense to me. God nurtured this people for hundreds of years, saved them from their enemies countless times. And God said “you will be a nation of priests” and “through you all the peoples of the earth will be blessed.” But the people couldn’t finish the job. They got sidetracked. They missed the point. They thought it was about them. The master plan was short-circuited. The baby was never born.

God is crying out to us through the prophet Hosea:
• Remember what I’ve done! I’ve always been faithful to you.
• I’ve promised to heal you and save you—even from death!
• All things are in my hands, you are safe in my care.
• Now won’t you join me in this project?? Be my people.

And yet I don’t join God. At least not all the time. I spin my wheels. I hunger for things that can’t quench my thirst. I want people to think well of me. I want to be beautiful or funny or successful or comfortable or blind to the pain of the world. And all this time, I’m blind to the bigger picture. I’m missing the point. I’m ignoring the fact that all these victories will pass away. They will be dust in a year or a century.

There is only one way to invest my life in what will endure: the kingdom of God that is coming and has now come. To use a Las Vegas metaphor, I’ve got to let it ride. All or nothing. Bet it all on the kingdom of God. And then the result is in God’s hands. That’s faith. And that’s freedom.

Questions:
— In my life today, how can I invest in the kingdom of God by investing in real relationships with people? Who is God calling me to befriend?
— The kingdom of God means justice for all. Where have I seen a person treated unjustly this week, and how can I intervene?
— Who have I hurt this week? (You may not even know unless you think outside the box.) What can I do about it?