

Hosea: The Love of God



We will be traveling through the Old Testament in the prophetic book of Hosea. This is exit 28 as we travel down Route 66. We are in the prophetic mountain range of the Old Testament. Hosea is the sixth book of the seventeen books of what we call the Old Testament prophets. In the English speaking world, Hosea is the first of what we call the Minor Prophets. If we pictured the Prophets as a mountain range, we would see seventeen peaks in this mountain range. Hosea is peak six. But if we divide the Prophets into Major and Minor Prophets, he is also peak one. When we say Hosea is the first one in the Minor Prophets, please do not think that his message was minor and that Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, or Daniel's messages were major. When we say minor, we are talking about the length of their messages, the length of their books, compared to the five Major Prophets. Hosea had a major message for the Northern Kingdom before it would fall to the Assyrians in 722 BC. He was a northerner, unlike Amos, who was called from the South to go to the North to preach a message of judgment. Hosea was a homegrown prophet from the northern kingdom.

When we travel, we like to point out to the other passengers what we know we will see because we don't want them to miss the main sites of the trip. When we know someone who has already been on a trip, one of the first questions we ask is what they did, and what they saw on their trip. My grandson just went on a field trip with his class in kindergarten, and those were the first questions we asked him. He starts telling us everything he saw. His brother got to hang out with his big brother on this trip, so of

course, he started telling us everything he had seen and done too. He told us everything his brother had just told us because little brothers always see what big brothers see.

Our goal in this lesson is that we all see the same thing when we go through the book of Hosea. As we go through Hosea, we are going to see two things:

1. The Sin of Israel

2. The Love of God

If you see these two things, then you get the book. Through the historical books and prophetic writings, we realize that Israel actually breaks the law of God. But in Hosea, we will discover that besides breaking the law of God, Israel also broke the heart of God. To Hosea, sin is not just about breaking a law God; it's about sinning against the love of God.

There are times when I am talking to someone that I can tell they don't really see what I am trying to get them to see. Sometimes, I have to say, "Would you like me to draw you a picture," because we have a saying that 'a picture is worth a thousand words.' Just the other day, a pastor from Illinois was visiting here while was on sabbatical. He was staying in the area where I preach the campground service, and one of the campers introduced him to me. He and his wife had planned to come to the 8 a.m. service at Hardin Baptist Church and he asked me how to get to the church. Now, I knew I could tell him the short cut that I take, but woo, dangerous! So I just proceeded to tell him to go out and turn left, go out to the highway, turn right at the end of the road, go to the town of Aurora, turn right at the gas station, and go about 8 miles, and then...on and on I went with turns and stops into and through the city of Hardin to the church. You could tell my brother didn't trust my words. I mean he trusted my words, but he didn't trust he would remember my words. So while I was saying, he was drawing a map. He did make it to the church. That picture was worth a thousand words! There have been many times

someone has told me how to get somewhere and I just stop them and ask them to draw me a picture or a map.

A Picture is Worth a Thousand Words

God wants to make sure that his people do not miss what they are to see in this book, and that is the sin of Israel and the love of God. So He draws them a picture. When you see this picture, you will never forget the sin of Israel and the love of God. The picture he draws is a picture of a husband and a wife and their relationship. In this picture, Hosea's wife, Gomer, will picture the sin of Israel, and Hosea, the prophet, will picture the love of God.

The two verses we are using for our Scripture will give us the big story of the book of Hosea as well as how it fits into the big story of the Bible. I think we will be amazed, because one of the most depressing books of the Bible paints a beautiful picture of how God still loves us despite our sins.

Scripture

"When the Lord first spoke through Hosea, the Lord said to Hosea, "Go, take to yourself a wife of whoredom and have children of whoredom, for the land commits great whoredom by forsaking the Lord." (Chapter 1:2)

"And the Lord said to me, "Go again, love a woman who is loved by another man and is an adulteress, even as the Lord loves the children of Israel, though they turn to other gods and love cakes of raisins." (Chapter 3:1)

God Chooses Hosea's Wife

Now you know the book of Hosea...it is about the sin of Israel and the love of God. And so that Israel wouldn't miss it, God painted them a picture. Verse 2 said, "...*the first words that God spoke through Hosea...*" God's first message through Hosea was a message in picture. The picture was the relationship he would have with his wife, and the children that would be born to him while she was his wife. With Jeremiah, it was so bad in the day he lived that God said he couldn't marry. It was so bad in Ezekiel's day that Ezekiel told the exiles in Babylon that God said he couldn't even mourn the death of his wife, as a sign to them. But God tells Hosea that he, his wife, and his kids are going to be a picture of Israel and God, so He handpicked his bride.

Can you imagine Hosea going to his parents and telling them that God has revealed the person he is supposed to marry? Those parents would probably have been ecstatic! That is probably every parent's dream; that their children marry the person they have prayed that God handpicked for them! It doesn't get any better than that! I know we can't call Hosea an all American boy, but I just get this picture that Hosea is an all Israelite boy. He was from a small home town where everyone knew his character and who he was, and all of a sudden, God has picked a wife for him. I mean this is a marriage prearranged in Heaven! God says I want you to marry Gomer. Wow, Gomer is beautiful!

Now, God goes on to say you don't know this, but Hosea, I am God, and I picked her for you because she is going to picture Israel and the relationship Israel has with Me. Israel has sinned against Me, forsaken Me and has become a whore; she has not been faithful to Me. So I just want you to know that Gomer is also going to be unfaithful to you. Your children are also going to be a picture of relationship of Israel and their relationship with Me. Now this shocks the Church. My wife struggled with this book. This is tough. It is so tough that some pastors and scholars believe this is not a real story. They believe that God would not let one of his prophets

marry a woman like this; therefore, it is just an allegory. We are supposed to get the meaning, but realize there are no historical characters here; this marriage didn't happen. Then there are other Christians who cannot phantom the depths of this, so they say that Gomer just committed spiritual harlotry. Her heart got turned from worshipping God and it turned to these foreign gods, so she just committed spiritual adultery.

I personally can't go with those two. I think it defies the context. But we do have two options. The first option is that Gomer was the girl in class every class has. She was raised to be insecure and never had a good home environment. Therefore, she was promiscuous her whole life. She had slept with a lot of the boys in her class, and therefore, everyone knew Gomer. God said that is who I have picked for you. Therefore, when Hosea announced his marriage to her, the community said WHAT, a man of God marrying her!? I can't believe it!

Or, the second option, (and the Hebrew says we can interpret it this way) she was not that kind of girl when he married her, but would become unfaithful after he married her. Therefore, she was the good girl in class. She was faithful to God, a perfect companion for a prophet. But later in the marriage, she would become unfaithful many, many, times. This is the one I believe.

The Sin of Israel

But in His foreknowledge, God let Hosea know that the way it went in his marriage would picture how it would go with God, and his wife would present the sin of Israel. God said your wife is going to be unfaithful to you because my bride, Israel, has been unfaithful to Me. I redeemed her out of Egypt, took her through the wilderness, wed her at Mt Sinai, and gave her the honeymoon of her life. I gave her a new home, a land flowing with milk and honey, and she has been unfaithful to me from the very beginning! She has forsaken Me, the love of her life, for the false gods of this world.

How would you like to have been Hosea? God is going to use you and your family to show how bad it really is. You are going to live through H-E-L-L. Gomer conceives gives him a son. Now notice this, the Bible says she bore Hosea a son. God said to name him Jezreel, which means God scatters, or God sows. In the Hebrew, the word, Jezreel, and the word, Israel, has just a small variance. So I like to believe that Hosea probably said wait God, You want me to name my son Israel, not Jezreel, right. God said no, don't name him God strengthens, name him God scatters, because I am going to scatter the Northern Kingdom all over the Assyrian Empire! Can you imagine when Hosea gets up to show his little boy to the people of God, and says this is 'God scatters?' Every time you see him, you will be reminded that very soon you will no longer be living in the Northern Kingdom, you will be scattered all over the Assyrian Empire!

Then Gomer gave birth to a girl. Notice the Bible didn't say that she bore Hosea a girl. They named her Lo-ruhamah, which means no pity, no mercy. She weaned Lo-ruhamah, and then she got pregnant again. And again, the Bible didn't say it was Hosea's, it just says she bore a son. This time, Hosea named him Lo-Ammi, which means not mine.

How would you like to be the preacher where the whole the community knows the first son is yours, the daughter might not be yours, but the last one is definitely not yours, because your family is a picture of the sin of Israel? By the time we get to chapter 2, Hosea is telling the kids, you had better talk to your mom. We are not married anymore. She is not my wife and I am not her husband. Your mother is unfaithful, and if you are not careful, you will be just like her and will be unfaithful too. You had better talk to your momma, because your momma is having a profound influence on you.

We discover in chapter 2 that Momma is going from lover to lover because momma is using lovers to get something. She is not into lovers for the physical intimacy, but for what they can give her. This is not uncommon even in our day today. Lovers were giving Gomer wine, oil, flax, and wool.

She is just bouncing from lover to lover. Every time she bounces, she goes down, down, down. But we discover that these lovers aren't giving her this stuff at all, they are just using her. Hosea is keeping an eye on her even though he isn't married to her anymore. When he sees a need she has, he shows up at the door. When a man comes to the door, Hosea asks if he is with Gomer. When the man says yes, I am, Hosea asks him to give this to Gomer, and he presents wine, wool, flax; everything she needs. The lover slams the door and walks back into the bedroom yelling Honey, look what I have brought!

That is what the world does. It takes credit for what God gives. Doesn't this happen even in the lives of believers? We credit our innate business ability to provide for our family. Some of us credit the union, or we credit the corporation. Some of you credit Wall Street for being able to live in retirement. God is waving His arms saying, yoo-hoo, up here! I provided all that for you, and yet, you don't recognize Me at all...

The Love of God

Then, God appeared to Hosea and said I want to show Israel how much I love them despite their sin. You don't know this because you have lost touch with Gomer, but she is being auctioned off at the slave market. Yes, she is being loved by another man at this very moment; she is an adulteress, but I want you to go down there and buy her. Redeem her and restore your relationship to her, because that is how much I love Israel.

Her wrong choice has taken her to a place where she is wanted by no one. No man wants her now. No man will provide for her, so she is now being sold as a slave. In the biblical world, the price of a slave was 30 shekels of silver. Hosea goes down to the slave market and there is Gomer, his wife, naked on that auction block. I just have to believe that when he sees her his mind goes back to when she was a beautiful virgin presenting herself to him. Look at her now, and what sin has done to her.

Every once in a while, I run into people that I haven't seen in a long time. Some of them didn't make the right choice in life, so even though they were in my class, they now look like they are 80 years old. They have had a hard life. It zapped everything out of them. Sin offers so much and ultimately delivers nothing! Sin kills!

Now I don't know for sure, but I am using my sanctified imagination when I imagine the humiliation that Gomer must be feeling, so I don't think she ever looks up. I think she is looking down, and then the auction starts. Her price is 15 shekels and a few bushels of barley. Ladies, do you hear this? You go to the mall and see the new fashions sitting on the shelves at full price. Then, over there is a rack that says clearance. It is a special rack in the middle of the store that says 50% off! But we are not talking about a shirt or a blouse; we are talking about a human being!

When the gavel falls and Hosea buys her, she didn't even bring half price! I can imagine what it would have been like if some of Hosea's friends had gone down to the slave auction and seen him bidding on her. They must have said what are you doing, have you lose your mind!? But Hosea loves her. He buys her. I personally believe he puts his cloak on her to cover her nakedness, and it is not until after he clothes her that she realize it is Hosea. Now, I've been in the counseling room too many times, nothing like this, but there has been an affair, and the one being forgiven is ready for the one forgiving to unload. Now until you have been there, you just can't imagine.

I can only imagine that as Hosea leads Gomer out of the slave block, she is wondering what he is going to do. He owns me; I'm his slave. I believe it could have went through her mind that he is going to kill me! He will never get over this. I'll hear about this the rest of my life. He will bring it up every opportunity he can. I don't know how far out of the city they got when, according to the Bible, he said, Gomer, we are going to give this some time. You are going to be my wife and I'm going to be your husband. You will be faithful to me and I am going to be faithful to you.

The purpose of God's redemption through Hosea for Gomer was not just to redeem her and remind her of her past, but also to restore her to full privileges of being a faithful wife, despite her past. What shines through when we see the sin of Israel is the love of God! The greatest verse in the Bible for most Christians is John 3:16, "For God so loved the world he gave his only begotten Son..." But perhaps the greatest chapter in the Bible is Hosea chapter 3, because it reveals God's love for his people.

He didn't give half price for us. You know there was no one else bidding. You know God could have given whatever He wanted to give for us; He is God! But in order for us to know how much He loves us, in spite of our sins, in spite of us messing around on Him, He paid with the blood of His Son. He paid the price, not only redeem us, but to restore us, to forgive us fully, and to have a glorious future so that we may have a relationship with Him, despite our past! You and I had a debt we could not pay. He could have reduced it, but He didn't, and He wouldn't. By not reducing it, He not only reveals to us His holiness and His justice, but He reveals His love. You sinner, by nature and by choice, you got yourself in the mess you are in! In order to get you out and back with Him, God killed His Son in your place.

Many of you would have looked at Gomer and said I don't want to have anything to do with you! God could have looked at us and said the same thing. But He didn't. Our sin against Him did not cause Him to quit loving us. He created us knowing we were going to do what we did. To redeem us and restore us, He knew what it was going to cost Him, and that was the life of His Son.

May we never look at Hosea the same again! Against the background of our sin, we see our God's love for us. He loves you. He will be faithful to you and you will be faithful to Him. You will live happily ever after with Him. Oh, there will be troubles, but He will never forsake you and He will never leave you. There will be a joy that will never be taken away.