

February 2, 2025

Return: The Faithfulness of God

Hosea 1:1-3:5

Vernon Advent Christian Church

We will be continuing on in our theme Return: Realigning with God and will be now moving on to the Book of Hosea, having finished up Jonah last week. One of the reasons it was chosen to go through the minor prophets in chronological order is that Jonah sets the scene for the rest of the minor prophets. You see, Jonah reluctantly went to warn the Assyrians, a violent, pagan nation, of God's judgement and they listened to the warning, repented and turned from their evil. And yet, we will see time and time again, God's people, given the same warning of God's judgement, and yet they do not listen and do not turn from the wicked ways. And we see that on full display as we enter into Book of Hosea.

Hosea was a prophet of God who ministered to the Northern Kingdom of Israel from 750 to 714 BC, about 40 years after the events of Jonah. He ministered through the reigns of the last six kings of the Northern Kingdom known in those days as Israel, or Ephraim, and he was still around when they were invaded by, guess who, the Assyrians in 722 BC after they refused to listen to the Lord's warnings. The Book of Hosea breaks down into 4 sections and we are going to cover the first section, chapters 1-3, today. Now, we will be making our way through these chapters today a few verses at a time so you can remain seated. Please turn with in your bibles to the Book of Hosea as we start in ch. 1 vs. 1.

[Read Hosea 1:1-2] The word of the Lord that came to Hosea son of Beeri during the reigns of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz and Hezekiah, kings of Judah, and during the reign of Jeroboam son of Jehoash, king of Israel: When the Lord began to speak through Hosea, the Lord said to him, "Go, marry a promiscuous woman and have children with her, for like an adulterous wife this land is guilty of unfaithfulness to the Lord." [NIV]

The Strange message (1:1-2)

Right off the bat, we're introduced to the prophet and told that he ministered to the divided kingdom. (more background) And after this standard introduction for a prophetic book, we then see the strange message that God has for Hosea. You see, the people of Israel had become deaf to God's voice and were no longer paying attention to his covenant. And the Lord called his prophets to do some strange things in hopes that the people would wake up and listen to what they had to say. (Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel) Only then could the nation escape his discipline and judgment.

But no prophet preached a more painful "live action sermon" than Hosea. God's first message to Hosea is to go and marry a promiscuous woman and have children with her. Some translations read "a wife of harlotry" or "a prostitute." It's not exactly clear if she was a prostitute already or if she became unfaithful afterwards, but the meaning is the same.

Put yourself in Hosea's shoes. You get married knowing that your spouse is not going to be faithful to you. Why would God tell Hosea to do this? The rest of vs. 2 explains the reason. "for like an adulterous wife this land is guilty of unfaithfulness to the Lord." Israel is

guilty of being unfaithful to God. Hosea is going to be a picture of what God is experiencing in his relationship with Israel.

This picture tells us a lot about how God feels about our sins. Turning away from the Lord is as heart breaking and covenant breaking as a spouse that commits adultery. God had entered into a covenant relationship with the people of Israel at Mt. Sinai and they had continually left him to chase after other gods.

Strange Names (1:3-9)

The story continues in vs. 3 where we find the Lord's instructions to give some unusual names to Hosea's children. [Read vs. 3-9]

So, Hosea does what the Lord says and marries a woman named Gomer. We have no idea how long they are married, or what their early relationship is like, but soon enough their first child is born. And normally, when a child is conceived there is some discussion between the husband and wife about what to name the child. Maybe a family name or one that means something to the parents. (story of Anna's name, favor or grace)

We don't find that here in our text. God instructs the first son born to Hosea and Gomer to be named "Jezreel" and his name literally means "Scattered," and Israel would soon be scattered in exile by the Assyrians. In fact, as was already mentioned, before the prophetic ministry of Hosea was finished, Israel would be defeated, destroyed, and taken captive by the mighty Assyrian Empire.

But God also gets very specific here as well and mentions the House of Jehu. Not to take too much time, but we find the story of Jehu in 2 Kings and he was a wicked King, who in order to set up his son on the throne without any threats, murdered all the innocent family members of the previous King, Ahab. And that happened in a place known as the Valley of Jezreel. And so God is using this as an example of how far Israel had strayed from God and that, in the same way the House of Jehu would come to an end, so, to, would the entire Northern Kingdom.

Vs. 6 says that Gomer conceived again. It is worth noting that in vs. 3 the text tells us that a son was born to Hosea. But in vs. 6 the text simply says that Gomer conceived and bore a daughter. We are left to wonder if this is Hosea's child at all. Perhaps even Hosea was left to wonder if this daughter was his since, by this time, it seems to suggest, that Gomer had begun to be unfaithful. The Lord says that this daughter's name is to be "Lo-ruhama" which means "No Mercy." No more mercy would be given to Israel and God would remove his hand of protection and hand them over to their enemies. (example of counting before discipline) Mercy would still be shown to the Southern Kingdom, Judah (1:7), at least for a little while longer, but not for Israel. It is time for judgment and not mercy.

Finally, Gomer conceives again and bears a son and his name is "Lo-ammi" which means "Not My People." Which again, the text seems to indicate that the child is not Hosea's. And the message is clear. Israel is no longer God's people and he is no longer their God. Israel had made a mockery of being called God's people and had only paid him lip service for long enough. God is saying here to Israel, "You are completely disowned. You do not belong to me anymore and you cannot call me your God." As each child is born, and even time their names would be called out, it was a reminder to the people of the truth that mercy is over and judgment is coming against Israel for its wickedness. It sounds like it is over Israel.

### A Future Promise (1:10-2:1)

But then we see a flicker of hope. A promise from the Lord of future restoration. Look at what God says beginning in vs. 10 and going through vs. 1 of ch. 2. [Read]

The covenant God made to Abraham will be remembered. Unlike Israel, God would not break his promise, it was a promise God made to Abraham that his offspring would be innumerable. Yes, his judgement was coming, but it would be in the form of discipline in order to get his children back. God had declared Israel to no longer be his people, but they will be called children of the living God once again.

The people who deserve wrath will in the future receive mercy. The people who deserve to be cut off from God and scattered will be gathered again as God's people. Not only will they be called his people but they will even be called God's children. There is an amazing reversal that is coming.

Now as we look over the chapter. Did the people do anything to deserve this turnaround? Did the people change for this to come about? Did the people turn back to the Lord and that is why God promised hope for their future? No, but God loves his people and is going to restore them in spite of their sins. More on that when we get to ch. 3.

Then we come to ch. 2, which is sandwiched in between the real-life circumstances of Hosea and Gomer. For now, I'm going to summarize it for us, but I encourage you, when you get a chance this week, to go back and re-read Hosea 1-3. Ch.2 is the message that Hosea spoke to the people during this time and he uses the metaphor of a husband and an unfaithful wife to condemn Israel's idolatry and unfaithfulness to God, accusing them of abandoning their covenant with God to pursue other gods, and threatening severe consequences if they do not repent. So, not only was Hosea's life a message to the people, but just in case they missed the point, he delivered the message verbally as well.

But despite all of this, just like ch.1, the ch. 2 ends with a hopeful promise of future restoration and reconciliation where God will lovingly woo Israel back to him, restoring their relationship and providing for their needs. Which we see play out in Hosea's life as we pick back up in ch. 3

[Read Hosea 3]

### Love Again (3:1)

Again, we're not given a whole lot of details about their marriage itself, but vs. 1 reveals that there has been a lot of pain. Gomer, Hosea's wife, has left him. She not only has been unfaithful, but she has now left him for another man. There is some debate over if the woman here in ch. 3 is actually Gomer since she isn't identified here, but it wouldn't make much sense if it wasn't and so most scholars agree that this is, in fact, Gomer. And Hosea would have every right to divorce her for her unfaithfulness. But God tells Hosea to go and love her again.

Why? Look at vs. 1. God tells Hosea to love her "even as the Lord loves the children of Israel though they turn to other gods ..." God will love his people even though they do not love him. God has every right and every prerogative to divorce his people because they left him. They do not want God, but God says he will love them again. And we see this beautiful picture begin to play out here. God loves his people and is faithful to his promises and he desires to win their hearts back to him even though they have been unfaithful.

### Bought Back (3:2)

Then we are told something interesting in vs. 2. Hosea must buy back his wife. She has left him, and whether through prostitution or just becoming the property somehow of her lover, we don't know, but she has somehow enslaved herself and must be redeemed. Think about how crazy it is that Hosea would have to buy back his own wife! Yet he does it.

And this and it is a picture of what God has done for us. He created us and called us to himself. And yet we rejected him and went after all of our desires. There is not a person who has not done this, "for we all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God." We have sold ourselves into the power of sin. We gave into our flesh and chased after the pursuits of this world. But God bought us back. 1 Pet. 1:18-19 says, "For you know that you were redeemed from your empty way of life inherited from your fathers, not with perishable things like silver or gold, but with the precious blood of Christ, like that of an unblemished and spotless lamb." Praise the Lord for his faithfulness.

### The Call (3:3)

Now that Gomer has been bought back and returned as Hosea's wife, Hosea has an obvious, simple request. You must be faithful to me. This is what God tells us. God is always calling for us to be holy and pure because he redeemed us. Listen to how Paul taught this idea to the Corinthians. "You are not your own, for you were bought with a price. So glorify God in your body." (1 Corinthians 6:19-20 ESV)

### What This Looks Like (3:4-5)

The final verses of this chapter contain prophecy, again of a future restoration, where God's people are pictured as being cleansed from all their idols, gods, and desires during their time of exile where it's mentioned that they will have no king or prince, no sacrifice and so on. But it's foretold that the people will be gathered together and return to seek the Lord their God, and David their king.

This speaks to a messianic hope. A promises of a rescuer to come. And we know that Jesus is the descendant of David spoken of here, and he is the one who would come and redeem is people. This is what God says he will do and now we can see that this is what God has done through Jesus.

God used a marriage picture to see Israel's relationship with him. Israel was in a covenant relationship with God, but Israel broke the covenant. We need to see that God pictures our relationship with God as a marriage also. The church is pictured as the bride for Christ. Christ has loved us and given up himself for us. When you enter into a relationship with the Lord, you have entered into a marriage covenant, if you will, and this should change how we live. God chose us in spite of our sinfulness and he opens our hearts to love him, worship him, serve him, and obey him.

So we need to feel the weight of the picture God provides to us. We are in a marriage to God and we are responsible for making this a bad marriage. God is not the problem. We are unfaithful. We enslave ourselves. We wander from him. We love other people and other things more than God. We have run so far from God and have put ourselves in the arms of other lovers again and again.

Think about how many times you have loved something else more than God and have chosen sin instead of him. But God does not give up on you. This is the message of the cross and the cross is the demonstration of God's love and faithfulness to us. God was

faithful and loved us even when we were unfaithful and rejected him. God bought us back, redeemed us, with the blood of his Son. And he did this when we did not even want him.

So God has redeemed us. He paid the price to restore us. And he is only asking one thing from us: be faithful to him. Stop destroying yourself, giving yourself away to destructive desires and worldly pursuits, and love God because he is faithful to you. I can think of nothing better to think about, to ponder over, as we prepare our hearts for communion. May we all return to God, realigning with him by forsaking all the things we have given ourselves over to as we remember the price that he paid to buy us back. Let's pray.