

## The Unfaithful Wife Hosea 1:1-2:1; 3:1-4

**Intro:** Hosea prophesies at the same time as Isaiah. Isaiah is speaking mostly to the southern Kingdom of Judah, Hosea to the northern Kingdom of Israel. Hosea pronounced the end of God's mercy and the time of God's judgment on the northern Kingdom. He lived through the time when Samaria fell to the Assyrians and the northern Kingdom came to an end.

Hosea the prophet is instructed by God to marry a promiscuous woman. Hosea loves Gomer, and they have a family together. Their relationship is difficult, and she deserts him and their boys.

The heartbreak of Hosea illustrates the heartbreak of God.

Faithfulness is part of the character of God. It is a quality of his being that is highlighted throughout the Bible.

Because of God's faithfulness, we know that we can depend upon him. We know he will always be with us, that he is our friend. The faithfulness of God is his premier virtue in regard to the covenant that he has made with us.

As a virtue among his people, God considers faithfulness to be of the highest importance. Our faithfulness to God is shown to him through our loyalty, our honesty, and our true devotion.

We sin against God first any time we sin in any way. Our sin is a breach of the promise we have made to him when we called Jesus "Lord" and committed our lives to him. All of our sins are primarily violations of our relationship with God.

The way back always passes through the cross of Christ. At the cross we rediscover the reason we came to Christ. We find the grace to take the next step. And we discover that his grace is greater than all our sin. God's faithfulness trumps our unfaithfulness.

Three confessions that I think get at the heart of Hosea's teaching about God and the people of God.

**I. GOD is my LOVER**—*In that day, declares the Lord, you will call me 'my husband'; you will no longer call me 'my master' (2:16).* As strange as it may sound for us men, this is the confession God wants to hear from us: he is our husband.

**A. God is love.** The Apostle John tells us this. God is love in his own being. He needs no being outside of himself to know and experience love. Love is the power that binds together the Trinity. Love is the bond of unity in the heart of God. Love literally holds this universe together because it is the force which holds together the Divine Being. Nothing is more fundamental in all the universe.

**B. Jesus is Love Incarnate.** If you want to see what God looks like with hair, teeth, and fingernails, look at Jesus. This is the Divine Being translated into flesh. And the premier quality of the person of Jesus of Nazareth is love, particularly love for the lost.

**C. Marital Love is the primary illustration of the covenant with God.** It comes closer than any other human experience to the true nature of the God-man relationship. God chooses the most intimate of all human relationships as an illustration for his relationship with his people. God does this because his covenant with us is based on LOVE rather than law.

D. God's Love guarantees the covenant, not our love. We are desperately loved by God. He is not leading us into legalism where the rules are our primary guide. He is not leading us into traditionalism where religious duties are our primary activities. He is not leading us into efficiency where our productivity is the major measure of our faithfulness.

God is leading us into a love relationship with himself. This is the primary truth of the Book of Hosea—God's covenant love for his people. And ultimately, the message is not of judgment but of the triumph of love beyond all reckoning, pain, and loss.

## II. SIN is my ADULTERY—*The land is guilty of the vilest adultery in departing from the Lord*—(1:2).

\*\*\*When children begin to inquire about trusting the Lord, I generally ask them what sin is. Sometimes they have is right the opposite of its actual definition.

A. Adultery is the greatest pain. It strikes more deeply at the heart of a devoted lover than any other act. \*\*\*Have you ever heard the cry of a woman who has discovered that the husband of her youth, the father of her children, has crawled into bed with another woman? You will never forget that cry of anguish.

God has carried that pain and sorrow in his heart. Our sin is the act of unfaithfulness to him, and it breaks his heart every time.

B. Adultery aims at the very heart of the covenant. It is the most fundamental breach. \*\*\*When I recited the vows for Jennifer and Patrick just a few days ago, I emphasized the part where they promise, "And forsaking all others keep thee only unto her so long as you both shall live."

Our sin is the breach of the covenant, the decision to take another lover on the side in addition to the God who loves us. We do not intend to replace Jesus as Lord. We just want to have fun.

C. Adultery is a collection of disdain for the sacred promise. dishonesty. It is unfaithfulness. It is lust and greed and sloth and pride. It is an entire spectrum of ungodly attitudes, thoughts, and deeds rolled into one illicit defilement.

\*\*\*On the day of our 36<sup>th</sup> wedding anniversary we were with some family members when one of them got the call about a couple that they loved and had known before and after their marriage of several years. We saw the countenance of the man change, and we heard the terrible news of another unfaithful lover.

Our sin is not simply the lie, the cheating, the pride or greed. It is the collective rebellion against the YOKE of MARRIAGE to the DIVINE LOVER.

D. Adultery is to be avoided at all costs. We must remember that we are betrothed to God. We have made our promise in our confession of faith and our baptism. We have expressed to God our undying devotion, our faithfulness unto death.

We ought to think about our sin—God wants us to think about sin—in terms of the pain in his faithful heart. He wants us to see our sin for what it is—a violation of our promise.

E. Adultery in our relationship with God takes many forms.

1. In Chapter Two it is forgetting that God gave us everything we have and using our gold and silver for false gods (2:8-9).

2. In Chapter Four “the Lord has a charge to bring against you” (4:1-2). “There is no faithfulness, no love, no acknowledgment of God in the land. There is only cursing, lying and murder, stealing and adultery; they break all bounds. These are the acts which wound our love relationship with God.

**III. MERCY is my only HOPE**—*Come, let us return to the Lord. He has torn us to pieces but he will heal us; he has injured us but he will bind up our wounds. After two days he will revive us; on the third day he will restore us, that we may live in his presence. Let us acknowledge the Lord; let us press on to acknowledge him. As surely as the sun rises, he will appear; he will come to us like the winter rains, like the spring rains that water the earth” (6:1-3).*

**A. The mercy of God is my only hope.**

1. I do not deserve this mercy. Hosea is commanded by the Lord to go and purchase his wife. He goes to the slave market and pays 15 shekels of silver for his unfaithful wife. Everyone in this room knows that Hosea has grounds for divorce just as God has grounds for divorce from us. We have been unfaithful. We have not kept our part of the covenant.

2. But God’s mercy transcends our understanding. Why should Hosea go to the slave market and buy his wife? Only one reason—because he loves her.

And that is the reason God goes to the slave market, the place where we have ended up after our prodigal journey away from his presence and into the world. He loves us so much that he buys us back out of the enslavements we have brought upon ourselves.

**B. Becoming merciful myself is my proper response.** *For I desire mercy, not sacrifice, and acknowledgment of God rather than burnt offerings (Hosea 6:6).*

1. God is looking for a change of heart, attitude, and action that will follow his own great heart. He wants us to become a people full of mercy.

2. Mercy means that people who do not deserve our favor will be given our favor. People who have not earned a second chance will be given it. Mercy means that we will see people who are suffering from their own sin, and we will love them. We will help them up from the ditch where they have fallen. Through our own mercy, we will give them an illustration of God’s amazing love.

3. God is much more interested in the mercy-building, *blessed are the merciful*, than he is in our religious exercises. Can we believe this? Can we imagine that God wants us to exercise mercy toward our wayward family members?

4. Our violation of the covenant with God is most evident in our lack of mercy toward others—our harsh judgments that indicate the enormity of our pride, the arrogance of our ego, and the depth of our perverted self-righteousness. We discard relationships one after another simply because of pride, greed, and sloth.

**CONCLUSION:** God buys us back. The prophecy of Hosea is not a prophecy without hope. It is full of hope. It is the surprising declaration of the depth and breadth and height of the love of God.

\*\*\*Sort of reminiscent of the story of the gingerbread man. For the little girl baked this gingerbread man and as she was taking it out of the oven, admiring how handsome he was, and she began to put on the raisins and all for his face and buttons and these things. And finally when she was all through,

he jumped out of the pan and began to run away. She began to chase him, and he cried, "Run, run, as fast as you can. You can't catch me. I'm the gingerbread man." And he was right, she couldn't catch him and she went home sad and crying for her gingerbread man had run away. But the next day, as she was walking down the street looking in the store windows as she passed the bakery shop, there looking and smiling at her through the window was her gingerbread man lying on a tray. So she went in to the proprietor and said, "I want my gingerbread man. He's there in the window." And he said, "He will cost you ten cents." She said, "Oh no, no, you don't understand. He's mine. That's my gingerbread man. I made him." The proprietor said, "He costs ten cents." So the little girl went home and she got her bank and she shook the coins until she got her ten pennies and she ran back to the bakery shop and put her pennies on the counter and she said, "Now I want my gingerbread man." And the man took the gingerbread man out of the window and handed it to the little girl and she began to clasp him close to her as she walked home and she said, "Now, you are really mine. First of all I made you and now I bought you." What a picture.