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Hosea – The Children of the Promise, Pt 1

October 10, 2021

Sermon Text: Hosea 1

Scripture Reading: Romans 9

I wanted to begin this morning by preaching a short sermon to you, which is actually primarily for myself. It is an addition to last week's sermon in which we dealt with what we called "the gravity of sin." That is, this pull of evil that attacks a typical weak spot in our sinful flesh which is too easily drawn to the lies of the enemy and which is designed to draw us away from Christ.

Let me begin this way. When I was a teenager, I remember one time coming home from college on the weekend and being characteristically unthankful. I would bring all my dirty laundry and throw in in the hamper and of course it would magically reappear all clean and folded before I went back to school. That, among other issues, prompted my

dad to point out to me how ungrateful I was being and I don't remember the details of our interchange – he did not always deal very kindly with me either – and I spouted off at him a bit. And what I specifically remember is my dad saying this" *who have you been talking to?*" Well, he was correct. I had been talking to someone. I had been listening to a couple of my school mates who were telling me that my parents were doing wrong to me in many ways (I don't remember what they were!).

This is the common denominator I want to show you in scripture. Look at it:

Gen 3:4-5 But the serpent said to the woman, "You will not surely die. (5) For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil."

Act 15:24 Since we have heard that some persons have gone out from us and troubled you with words, unsettling your minds, although we gave them no instructions,

Gal 4:15-17 What then has become of

your blessedness? For I testify to you that, if possible, you would have gouged out your eyes and given them to me. (16) Have I then become your enemy by telling you the truth? (17) They make much of you, but for no good purpose. They want to shut you out, that you may make much of them.

2Co 11:1-4 I wish you would bear with me in a little foolishness. Do bear with me! (2) For I feel a divine jealousy for you, since I betrothed you to one husband, to present you as a pure virgin to Christ. (3) But I am afraid that as the serpent deceived Eve by his cunning, your thoughts will be led astray from a sincere and pure devotion to Christ. (4) For if someone comes and proclaims another Jesus than the one we proclaimed, or if you receive a different spirit from the one you received, or if you accept a different gospel from the one you accepted, you put up with it readily enough.

Col 2:8 See to it that no one takes you captive by philosophy and empty deceit, according to human tradition, according to the elemental spirits of the world, and not according to Christ.

Jud 1:4 For certain people have crept in unnoticed who long ago were designated for this condemnation, ungodly people, who pervert the grace of our God into sensuality and deny our

only Master and Lord, Jesus Christ.

Do you see the common denominator here? My dad's question is fitting for us all – *who have you been talking to?* In every one of these scriptures, God's people had been listening to the enemy's servants.

Do you remember that little kids Sunday school song that has something like this in it – *be careful little ears what you hear?* And as I said, I am preaching this mostly to myself. We are more susceptible to the cunning deceptions of the enemy than we might think.

How fast did the Fall happen? How much time did it take for Eden to become a foreign land and the earth be cursed and death to sweep onto the scene? I'm thinking – about one or two minutes. Because Adam and Eve listened. The Galatians *listened*:

Gal 4:20 I wish I could be present with you now and change my tone, for I am perplexed about you.

The Prophet Hosea

The book of God's Word given through the prophet Hosea stands at the beginning of that section of our Old Testament known as *the minor*

prophets. There are 12 books under this heading:

- Hosea
- Joel
- Amos
- Obadiah
- Jonah
- Micah
- Nahum
- Habakkuk
- Zephaniah
- Haggai
- Zechariah
- Malachi

The last three of these minor prophets ministered among the returned exiles, after the Babylonian captivity.

The minor prophets are not “minor” in the sense of being somehow less than the major prophets:

- Isaiah
- Jeremiah/Lamentations
- Ezekiel
- Daniel

But they are shorter in content, Hosea and Zechariah being the lengthiest with 14 chapters each.

These prophets were sent primarily to (though Jonah went to Nineveh) the sinning, rebellious, covenant-breaking

people of Israel and Judah. Hosea’s ministry was in the northern kingdom of Israel. Here is some background information about him:

1. His ministry extended from 756BC to 725BC. The northern kingdom fell to Assyria in 722BC.
2. He was called as a prophet during the reign of Jeroboam II and saw a succession of 6 more kings in the north and 4 in the southern kingdom of Judah (Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, Hezekiah).
3. Hosea then was a contemporary with Amos, Isaiah, and Micah.
4. His wife, Gomer, and he had 3 children.
5. The book of Hosea is probably a compilation of sermons given by Hosea over a period of some 25 years.

Let me read to you what Gleason Archer says about “the problem of Gomer” [A Survey of OT Introduction, 2007, Moody] –

Much discussion has been devoted to the difficulty created by God’s command to marry an adulterous woman. Would Jehovah have commanded a holy man to do that which was expressly forbidden to the

priests and frowned upon for Israel as a whole?

In an effort to relieve the moral problem, some conservatives, such as E.J. Young, have suggested that this experience was not real, but only a sort of extended parable....

The identification of Gomer has been a debated point from the earliest times. Even the ancient commentators in the early Christian period differed as to whether Gomer was really a person whom Hosea married, or whether she was simply a parable to illustrate the alienation between disobedient Israel and her faithful God. It was argued that this could hardly have been a factual account, since it would be a disgrace for a man of Hosea's priestly and prophetic stature to marry a woman who as of ill repute. For that reason, Jerome and Calvin, from the time of the reformation, felt that this narrative was to be understood allegorically.

Others adhered to the literal interpretation that she was a woman whom Hosea actually married. In our own country we still have conflicting interpretations....

One very strong objection to a mere figurative type of interpretation is found in the fact that the story of

Hosea's marriage is given as a straight-forward narrative. There is no evidence in the text itself that it was to be understood as a parable or a purely fictional experience described in order to illustrate a theological teaching. If the transaction did not really take place, even though it is set forth in such a factual manner, then the possibility opens up of questioning the historicity of any number of other episodes narrated in Scripture as if they were sober history. A basic hermeneutical principle involved here is that:

The statements of Scripture are to be interpreted in their plain and obvious sense unless other Scripture bearing upon the same subject shows that these statements are to be interpreted in some other fashion.

The better solution to this problem is to be found in the supposition that at the time Hosea married Gomer, she was not a woman of overtly loose morals. If Hosea delivered his message in later years, he may well have looked back upon his own domestic tragedy and seen in it the guiding hand of God. Hence the Lord's encouragement to him to marry her in the first place, though her future infidelity was foreknown

to God, would have been tantamount to a command: “Go, marry an adulterous woman,” even if the command did not come to the prophet precisely in these words.

Here is a basic outline of Hosea taken from R.K. Harrison’s book, Introduction to the Old Testament,

- I. The relations of Israel with God, portrayed against the background of Hosea’s Marital Experience chs 1-3
- II. Denunciations of Pride, Idolatry, and Corruption chs 4-8
- III. The Certainty of Approaching Punishment for the Northern Kingdom chs 9-10
- IV. A Parenthetical Utterance dealing with the Triumph of Divine Love and Mercy ch 11:1-11
- V. Destruction as the result of Israel’s infidelity and Rebellion chs 11:12 – 13:16
- VI. Future mercies for a penitent people ch 14

These are scriptures in the New Testament which quote or allude to Hosea:

Mat 2:13-15 Now when they had departed, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream and said, “Rise, take the child and his mother, and flee to Egypt, and remain there until I tell you, for Herod is about to search for the child, to destroy him.” (14) And he rose and took the child and his mother by night and departed to Egypt (15) and remained there until the death of Herod. **This was to fulfill what the Lord had spoken by the prophet, “Out of Egypt I called my son.”**

Mat 9:11-13 And when the Pharisees saw this, they said to his disciples, “Why does your teacher eat with tax collectors and sinners?” (12) But when he heard it, he said, “Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick. (13) Go and learn what this means: **‘I desire mercy, and not sacrifice.’** For I came not to call the righteous, but sinners.”

Mat 12:5-8 Or have you not read in the Law how on the Sabbath the priests in the temple profane the Sabbath and are guiltless? (6) I tell you, something greater than the temple is here. (7) And if you had known what this means, **‘I desire mercy, and not sacrifice,’** you would not have condemned the

guiltless. (8) For the Son of Man is lord of the Sabbath.”

Rom 9:24-26 even us whom he has called, not from the Jews only but also from the Gentiles? (25) **As indeed he says in Hosea, “Those who were not my people I will call ‘my people,’ and her who was not beloved I will call ‘beloved.’”** (26) **“And in the very place where it was said to them, ‘You are not my people,’ there they will be called ‘sons of the living God.’”**

1Pe 2:9-10 But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light. (10) **Once you were not a people, but now you are God's people; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy.**

We could say that these NT verses show us the backstory theme of Hosea. I don't know if that is exactly the right word, but this presentation of what true religion is, what the New Covenant would be, lies in the background of Hosea. The true Israel consisting of people from all nations, people whose hearts have been changed so that they practice mercy and not mere outward, external motions of religion, God's election, the remnant, and other vital

qualities of New Covenant religion are presented in Hosea. This was still another prophet send by God to point the Jews to their need for Christ, to call them to repentance, and to pronounce judgment upon all who refuse.

Israel, God, and a Broken Covenant – A Picture

Hos 1:1-11 The word of the LORD that came to Hosea, the son of Beeri, in the days of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah, kings of Judah, and in the days of Jeroboam the son of Joash, king of Israel.

(2) 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.”

(3) So he went and took Gomer, the daughter of Diblaim, and she conceived and bore him a son. (4) And the LORD said to him, “Call his name Jezreel, for in just a little while I will punish the house of Jehu for the blood of Jezreel, and I will put an end to the kingdom of the house of Israel. (5) And on that day I will break the bow of Israel in the Valley of Jezreel.” (6) She conceived again and bore a daughter. And the LORD said to him, “Call her name No Mercy, for I will no more have mercy on the house of Israel, to forgive them

at all. (7) But I will have mercy on the house of Judah, and I will save them by the LORD their God. I will not save them by bow or by sword or by war or by horses or by horsemen.” (8) When she had weaned No Mercy, she conceived and bore a son. (9) And the LORD said, “Call his name Not My People, for you are not my people, and I am not your God.” (10) Yet the number of the children of Israel shall be like the sand of the sea, which cannot be measured or numbered. And in the place where it was said to them, “You are not my people,” it shall be said to them, “Children of the living God.” (11) And the children of Judah and the children of Israel shall be gathered together, and they shall appoint for themselves one head. And they shall go up from the land, for great shall be the day of Jezreel.

Look again now:

Hos 1:1 The word of the LORD that came to Hosea, the son of Beer, in the days of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah, kings of Judah, and in the days of Jeroboam the son of Joash, king of Israel.

(2) 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.”

In these opening words the prophet identifies his words as the word of God. You have the same very plain signature by Matthew in chapter 2, referring to Hosea 11 -

This was to fulfill what the Lord had spoken by the prophet, “Out of Egypt I called my son.

And we saw it very plainly affirmed as God’s Word by the Apostle Paul in Romans 9 –

(25) *As indeed he says in Hosea, “Those who were not my people I will call ‘my people,’ and her who was not beloved I will call ‘beloved.’”*

As who says? Who is “he”? Just back up a few verses in Romans 9 and you have the answer – God! God says in Hosea.

Therefore as we approach this book we must embrace it as God’s Word given to us to be believed and obeyed. Anyone who refuses to confess this is on a flight of fancy, a fool’s errand if he continues to read and toy with Hosea.

God’s command to Hosea in verse 2 – this business of taking an adulterous wife, we have already commented on to

some extent. But let's think about this further.

Whatever God commands is right. And what He is doing here through Hosea and Gomer and their children is giving the wicked people of Israel a divine picture of their own covenant unfaithfulness to the Lord.

God did some pretty strange things through the OT prophets in respect to providing images to get attention to His Word. For example:

Isa 20:2-4 at that time the LORD spoke by Isaiah the son of Amoz, saying, "Go, and loose the sackcloth from your waist and take off your sandals from your feet," and he did so, walking naked and barefoot. (3) Then the LORD said, "As my servant Isaiah has walked naked and barefoot for three years as a sign and a portent against Egypt and Cush, (4) so shall the king of Assyria lead away the Egyptian captives and the Cushite exiles, both the young and the old, naked and barefoot, with buttocks uncovered, the nakedness of Egypt.

Eze 4:5-6 For I assign to you a number of days, 390 days, equal to the number of the years of their punishment. So long shall you bear the punishment of the house of Israel. (6) And when you have completed these, you shall lie down a second time, but on your right

side, and bear the punishment of the house of Judah. Forty days I assign you, a day for each year.

So if God commands something, it is right and good. I don't think we need fret over whether Hosea really married an adulterous woman or if it was just a parable and not historical. I approach it as historical.

for the land commits great whoredom by forsaking the LORD

Here is the reason for the command. The people of Israel had long been idolatrous and wicked. They were betrothed by covenant to the Lord, yet they chased after idols, which is spiritual adultery. They passed their evil down to their children, who followed the previous generation's evil. Spiritual adultery, by the way – that is, idolatry – very typically involves literal sexual fornication as well. You see this over and over in scripture – as in the letters to the churches in Revelation – that "Jezebel" in the church who taught the Lord's people to worship idols and engage in immorality in the idol temples.

So Hosea is called by God to preach God's Word, and the cost of doing so is going to be very high. His marriage is going to be botched. His children will be – well, some commentators believe

that only the first son (Jezreel) was actually Hosea's son while the next two were the product of Gomer's adultery.

Now, this is a command by the Lord given clearly and plainly to Hosea. It is not given as a general rule for all of us. I have no doubt (because if a scripture can be twisted, it will be) that Hosea's marriage is used as an argument for making people remain in an adulterous, wicked marriage. "Look at Hosea. He served as a picture of patience and forgiveness and you need to do that too." That would be a terrible perversion of the purpose of this text.

Let's state it this way:

Hosea's marriage to Gomer and her subsequent unfaithfulness is not a picture primarily of God's forgiveness, it is fundamentally (as stated here in verse 2) a picture of Israel's wicked unfaithfulness to God. Evil marriages are not a snapshot of Christ in other words and it is very damaging and wrong to try to argue that they are from Hosea's marriage to Gomer. There are texts in Hosea that do show the longsuffering and mercy of God, but that is not the primary message of Hosea's marriage to Gomer.

We will plan to look at the imagery of *Jezreel*, Hosea's firstborn son, next time –

(3) So he went and took Gomer, the daughter of Diblaim, and she conceived and bore him a son. (4) And the LORD said to him, "Call his name Jezreel, for in just a little while I will punish the house of Jehu for the blood of Jezreel, and I will put an end to the kingdom of the house of Israel. (5) And on that day I will break the bow of Israel in the Valley of Jezreel."

To sort this out, we will need to go back to 2 Kings, to the days of Jehu, Jezebel, and Elijah. "Jezreel" means "to disperse." That is to say, the spiritual fornication of Hosea's countrymen has produced God's judgment upon them. They will be conquered. They will be scattered. They will be, Jezreel.