



10 | HOSEA 11

GOD'S LOVE IN CHRIST

God's love for you never ends

Outline

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Songs

At the Cross (Love Ran Red)
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I Will Wait for You (Psalm 130)
He Will Hold Me Fast
I Stand Amazed (How Marvelous)

Call to Worship:

Romans 8:35, 37-39

Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or danger, or sword?...³⁷No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. ³⁸For I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, ³⁹nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Announcements

1. **Welcome** visitors.
2. Don't forget to fill out the volunteer service **questionnaires**. They are available at entrance.
3. Planning meeting: Feb 22
4. I'll be gone **this week** for classes in Lafayette, Indiana. If you need something, contact Pastor Mike or one of the elders.

Introduction

Our message today is from Hosea 10 on page 755 of your pew Bible. The title of our message today is "God's Love in Christ".

God's love cannot be exaggerated! You can express it with the highest superlatives, and it will never be described adequately. All eternity will not be sufficient to adequately speak of his everlasting love he has displayed through the priceless death of his Son for you. Oh, how good God is!

In theology proper, we often speak of the attributes of God. Hosea 11 is one of those chapters in the Bible where we see one of the most brilliant of his attributes: his love. When we speak of God's love, it is not worldly love in any way. Worldly love is self-serving. God's love is **sacrificial, generous, and indiscriminate**. No matter what your objection, Hosea 11 is clear that God is no respecter of persons in demonstrating his love. **The nation of Israel was the most unlovable and undeserving**, yet Yahweh loved them. He did this to prove that he desires to give his love to the most unworthy. This is good news for everyone. Beginning with this chapter and continuing to the end, a new emphasis on the sovereign and ultimately triumphant love of God can be found in this book of the Bible.

In this, the prophecy of Hosea comes full circle and parallels in its structure the story of the marriage on which it is built. The story of the marriage had three phases.

There was an **initial period of love** and happiness.

There was the period of Gomer's unfaithfulness in which the course of her life was continually downward. During this phase, Hosea continued to love his wife and provide for her, but her dissolute and promiscuous life led her into increasing poverty and eventually into slavery.

The third phase is seen in Hosea's act of redemption in which he purchased his wife in the slave market and thereby made her his forever. He said in that day,

"You are to live with me many days; you must not be a prostitute or be intimate with any man, and I will live with you" (3:3).

On the basis of that analysis, we may say that the last four chapters of Hosea correspond to stage three. The love of God has been present all along, but from chapters 4 to 10 the notes of discipline and judgment predominate. Now, although judgment is still present, the emphasis falls on God's prevailing and unquenchable love.

What an amazing love this is! In chapter 11 Hosea writes of the love of God in reference to Israel's past, present, and future. But in each case, there are surprises.¹

1. GOD'S LOVE IS FOUND IN CHRIST (11:1-4)

In the beginning after the fall of man, God promised a deliverer, a Savior of the human race. Who would it be? God chose Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. Jacob's people, the people of Israel, were enslaved in Egypt for 400 years. They started there favored under Joseph, one of Jacob's sons, who was the prime minister of Egypt. But after Joseph, the people were enslaved by the Egyptians. What began as a blessing became a terrible situation.

AN UNEXPECTED LOVE

11:1 | When Israel was a child, I loved him, and out of Egypt called my son.

Before Israel was a nation God, when they were just **a child**, God says, "**I loved him**" and **called his son out of Egypt**. God turned that terrible situation of slavery was then turned around. God raises up Moses. Through Moses God tells Pharaoh: "Let my people go." And out of Egypt came God's son, Israel.

Interestingly, the New Testament quotes this verse in Hosea and applies it to Jesus Christ. What we find is that Israel pre-figures the true promised Son. The hope of the world is not the nation of Israel, or the king of Israel, but the true Israel and the true King of all kings: Jesus, God's beloved Son.

Matthew makes a theological point by quoting this verse in Hosea.

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 Egypt¹⁵ 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" (Mt 2:13-15).

Here's the theological point: Our Savior, our King, our true Israel entered into our world, was incarnated and put on human flesh. He went into Egypt for us! If you want God's love, you get it through the one who came into this world to reconcile and restore your relationship with God.

AN UNDESERVED LOVE

11:2 | The more they were called, the more they went away; they kept sacrificing to the Baals and burning offerings to idols.

When the Lord says, "**When Israel was a child, I loved him,**" He is referring to a passage in Deuteronomy 7, where we read:

¹ Boice, 87.

The Lord did not set his affection on you and choose you because you were more numerous than other peoples, for you were the fewest of all peoples. But it was because the Lord loved you and kept the oath he swore to your forefathers that he brought you out with a mighty hand and redeemed you from the land of slavery, from the power of Pharaoh king of Egypt” (Deut 7:7-8).

What claim did Israel have on God? None at all! That is what these verses teach. Israel was not more numerous and therefore useful. He was not more moral or devoted. There was nothing in Israel that in any way made his superior or more desirable to God than the other nations round about. So the explanation of God's electing love is to be found in the love itself and in no other place. He loved them because he loved them. That is all.²

The passage before us is remarkable. The portrayal of God as a Father calling and caring for his Son is so tender in its detail that it is hard to imagine anyone (particularly a Jew) reading this and not personally feeling great joy being the object of such divine compassion when they deserved divine retribution. God's love is an unimaginable, shocking love. Look at the relentlessness of God's love in the midst of their rebellion:

11:2 | The more they were called, the more they went away; they kept sacrificing to the Baals and burning offerings to idols.

God says: In spite of my deep kindness to them, they kept loving **idols**. Yet God's love for Israel is not based on their worthiness or behavior. God's election of Israel as a nation is based on God's kindness alone.

This is sovereign love based on his own patient and forgiving character. The more the prophets called the people to the Lord, the more they went astray. God's love is personal. St. Augustine said, “God loves each one of us as if there were only one of us to love.” God elected you based on his free love. It is not because we chose him that he loves us.

St. Augustine also said, “God chooses us, not because we believe, but that we may believe.”

Paul describes this undeserving sovereign choice.

But we ought always to give thanks to God for you, brothers beloved by the Lord, because God chose you as the first fruits to be saved, through sanctification by the Spirit and belief in the truth (2 Thess 2:13).

We don't know why he chose us. Yet he did. Ephesians 1:4-6, says:

...he chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before him. In love he predestined us for adoption as sons through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of his will, to the praise of his glorious grace, with which he has blessed us in the Beloved (Eph 1:4-6).

Israel was called to come to Christ. Some in Israel were chosen. How do you know you are chosen? Those who trust in Christ and call on him in repentant faith will be saved.

Don't trample on his love. Don't take his grace for granted. Turn to him! And if you have turned to him, cut off the world, and walk with God as your Father. You are

² Ibid., 87-88.

reconciled. Walk moment by moment in prayerful fellowship with him. Grow understanding your good Father in heaven.

A TENDER LOVE

We see again the tender love of God for Israel (and us!) where the father-son picture continues to be painted.

11:3 | Yet it was I who taught Ephraim to walk; I took them up by their arms, but they did not know that I healed them.

The metaphor of teaching to walk appears to relate to Israel's walking out of Egypt.³ The picture is of a father teaching his child to walk; the father does this by bending over and holding the child's arms, not by picking up the child. God's election is displayed in great tenderness. He took up his child by the hands with the simple trust of a child learning to walk. Israel trusted God, and because of that, they walked right out of Egypt. Indeed, God has taught each one of us to walk out of Egypt. We are to have nothing to do with loving the world "or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him" (1 Jn 2:15).

The great tragedy is that though God **healed them**, they were blind to who supplied their strength. God brought them out of Egypt and healed them from the disease of slavery, **but they did not know that God healed them**. God's electing love guided them even though they were unaware of it.

Now we see another illustration of love, not of a father, but of a human deliverer. This brings us back to when God's people were four hundred years in Egypt, and God sent his human deliverer to rescue them: Moses. Moses did not elect Israel. He was merely the human instrument that led them out of slavery. Notice how God lovingly talks to his people:

11:4a | I led them with cords of kindness, with the bands of love.

The cords of kindness or literally "a man" are such as those with which men, especially children, would be led, as opposed to ropes, with which animals are tied. In this illustration, gentle treatment is sweetly implied. God treats us like a mother who ties a cord around her child's arm, so that he or she does not get lost. He never straps us in like an animal. He takes off the horrible bands of the slave master (as in Egypt) and he gives us loving leaders (like Moses) to lead us with **cords of kindness, with the bands of love**. Where in your life are you resisting the Spirit's **bands of love**?

Now we see the illustration of a farmer who eases the harness on the jaws of his ox. He loves his people like a compassionate farmer loves his animals. He takes the harness off and feeds that animal gently by his own hand.

11:4b | And I became to them as one who eases the yoke on their jaws, and I bent down to them and fed them.

When the world straps us in like an animal, even in our suffering, God will open up our jaws like that of an animal so that we may eat conveniently. God does not give us what we deserve. We deserve ropes of condemnation, but God gives us cords of kindness. God throws over us the cords of love even today, when he calls us through the preaching of his

³ Garrett, 223.

word, gives us his sacraments, promises and supplies us with every good thing, and visits us with precious afflictions: so we would pray that God would draw us further still after himself.⁴ This is the love that we are called to receive from God as Christians. This is also the love we are to display. Much of the time our love is unrequited. Our love as Christians is not based on whether or not a person loves us in return. Our love, like God's love, is selfless.

GOD'S LOVE FOUND IN CHRIST ALONE

Look at the love of God! It can only be truly demonstrated in his beloved Son was incarnated and had to flee to Egypt as a child.

God called him into and out of Egypt. He came to our Egypt. Lived in our Egypt. And God calls him out of Egypt to die: not in Egypt. It wasn't the world that crucified the Savior. Sure there were Romans involved, but the Roman magistrate Pontius Pilate washed his hands of Jesus' death.

His people killed him. You killed him. I killed him. Our sins put him there. What love that Christ would willingly, lovingly give his life for us.

That's why God's love can only be found in Christ.

2. GOD'S LOVE IS EXPERIENCED IN THE HEART (11:5-7)

The Bible teaches us in the New Testament book of Romans 8:28-30 that in the full salvation that God gives us, all who are justified will be conformed to the image of God's dear Son. In this next section of Hosea (11:5-7), we see that the bliss of Israel's infant years will now be replaced with brokenness and emptiness. There is a price of rejecting God. Instead of God as King, their greatest hope is Assyria's king.⁵ God sends pain and suffering to his beloved people to grow them and conform them to his image.

THE PRICE OF NOT KNOWING GOD

11:5-6 | They shall not return to the land of Egypt, but Assyria shall be their king, because they have refused to return to me. ⁶The sword shall rage against their cities, consume the bars of their gates, and devour them because of their own counsels.

They don't go back to Egypt, but to a new kind of slavery. Theologically this is a prophecy of the Assyrian captivity for northern Israel. But on a more practical level, this is also a principle of blessing or loss. The people of Israel will not trust God with their heart. **"They have refused to return to me"** (vs 5). They reject God and lose everything.

A life without Christ is so vain, superficial, and meaningless. Now we need to support each other in this dear saints. We

The northern people of Israel lose their country and king. Why? Because they refused to return to the Lord. Simple right? They could have had it all. They wanted protection, pleasure, and provision. They trusted in themselves and forsook the Lord. Bad choice, right? What was their problem?

⁴ Lange & Schaff, et. el, *Hosea*, 88.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 89.

THE BLESSING OF KNOWING GOD

God says:

11:7 | My people are bent on turning away from me, and though they call out to the Most High, he shall not raise them up at all.

Blessing can only come when you turn your heart to God. Israel refused to turn. So God refuses to help them or hear them. Whoa, wait a minute. They call to God, but he won't hear them? He won't answer them? That doesn't sound like our loving and merciful God. I thought we were learning about the unrelenting love of God in Hosea. The principle here is simple: God will not help Israel or anyone if your heart is turned away from him. Had they turned to him, he would have delivered them.

Is your heart turned to the Lord? Is your heart bent on turning to God in all your trials and tribulations? Who do you turn to when you are wronged? Do you gossip. Put off gossip and turn to Christ.

The people of Israel were **bent on turning away from God**, but we are bent toward serving God.

But now that you have been set free from sin and have become slaves of God, the fruit you get leads to sanctification and its end, eternal life. (Rom 6:22)

3. GOD'S LOVE IS RELENTLESS (11:8-12)

Tim Keller says: "You get down to Hosea 11:8, and suddenly we hear the most amazing noise in the Bible. God crying."⁶

11:8-9 | How can I give you up, O Ephraim? How can I hand you over, O Israel? How can I make you like Admah? How can I treat you like Zeboiim? My heart recoils within me; my compassion grows warm and tender.⁹ I will not execute my burning anger; I will not again destroy Ephraim; for I am God and not a man, the Holy One in your midst, and I will not come in wrath.

GOD'S COMPASSION (11:8)

God has been comparing himself to a man, a human father. He has spoken of his love and the ingratitude and irony of having Israel go her own way rather than remain with him. It is a striking image, but in the back of our minds we are always thinking that it is, after all, an image and not to be pressed too far. God loves us, yes! But surely not with the full emotions that a human father would have at the rebellion of his son! No? Yet that is what God says in verses 8 and 9. And not only this, he also portrays himself as being inwardly divided—uncertain what to do, vacillating.⁷ Can this be God saying:

⁶ Timothy J. Keller. "A Strong Love in the Same Direction" (October 18, 1992), sermon. *The Timothy Keller Sermon Archive*. New York City: Redeemer Presbyterian Church.

⁷ Boice, 89.

11:8 | How can I give you up, O Ephraim? How can I hand you over, O Israel? How can I make you like Admah? How can I treat you like Zeboiim?

God is relentlessly loving, and his love won't let his people go. Although, because he is Holy, God does have to judge and punish us – he also, by the power of his Holy Spirit, lovingly works in our hearts and patiently waits for us to humbly turn back to him. He speaks to us and gently persuades us to come back to him, promising us his hope and his safety and renewing his promise to us to enter into a new intimate relationship with him - by his relentless love, time and time again.

We deserve wrath. Israel's sin has brought her to the brink of irrevocable judgment, the very theme that has occupied the center section of the book (chs. 4–10). “**Giving them up**” and “**handing them over**” refer to total destruction. **Admah** and **Zeboiim** were two of the cities of the plain destroyed when Sodom and Gomorrah were also destroyed (*cf* Gen 14:2, 8; 19:19; Deut 29:23). Their names stand for swift annihilation. But on the brink of such judgment it is God rather than Israel who hesitates. “How can I do it?” he says, as wrath against sin and love for the people do battle within him.

Then comes God's tender tears:

11:8b | My heart recoils within me; my compassion grows warm and tender.

This is the most amazing noise, as Keller says, in all the Bible! God's heart is wrenched. His **heart is warm and tender**. Our Lord would later weep over Jerusalem, but here weeps over Israel.

When the hearts of God's people are hard, God's heart remains soft. When our actions and guilt cry out for hell, God in grace cries for mercy and compassion. The warmth and tenderness of God's tears will be the atmosphere of heaven.

GOD'S MERCY (11:9)

At last the answer comes:

11:9 | I will not execute my burning anger; I will not again destroy Ephraim; for I am God and not a man, the Holy One in your midst, and I will not come in wrath.

God is not a man. He is not capricious. He is not impulsive or out of control. He is not a tyrant. He is compassionate. God will never give up on you. He says, “I will never leave you nor forsake you” (Heb 13:5). The author of Hebrews is quoting Deuteronomy 31:5, “Be strong and courageous. Do not fear or be in dread of them, for it is the Lord your God who goes with you. He will not leave you or forsake you.”

GOD'S ROAR (11:10-11)

God's love is compared to a lion's roar.

11:10-11 | They shall go after the LORD; he will roar like a lion; when he roars, his children shall come trembling from the west;¹¹ they shall come trembling like birds from Egypt, and like doves from the land of Assyria, and I will return them to their homes, declares the LORD.

For both those who are faithful, and those who are going astray, God has a promise. He will conform them ultimately to “their homes.” He will bring peace. Here Yahweh takes

upon himself the ferocity of the lion, not to destroy Israel but to restore it. The image, like many in the prophets, is disorienting: a lion roars, but birds come to it rather than flee.

Hosea's point here is that there is to be a new exodus in which God will again play the part of the lion and deliver his people from their enemies and into a new Promised Land.⁸ Let me say that the New Promised Land is not fulfilled in the time of Ezra or in the time of King Herod. All the building back of their homes and of the Temple did not restore the peace of God.

His children come "from the west." Without trying to stretch this text too far, I am reminded of the words of Jesus – that this is not just referring to ethnic Jews, but also to his people among the Gentiles. We read in Luke:

You will see Abraham and Isaac and Jacob and all the prophets in the kingdom of God but you yourselves cast out. ²⁹ And people will come from east and west, and from north and south, and recline at table in the kingdom of God. ³⁰ And behold, some are last who will be first, and some are first who will be last (Lk 12:28-30).

GOD'S VIEW (11:12)

11:12 | Ephraim has surrounded me with lies, and the house of Israel with deceit, but Judah still walks with God and is faithful to the Holy One.

How does God see you? What does he see in your heart right now?

Though the northern kingdom is being judged, Judah (southern Israel) at the time of Hosea's writing is seeing fidelity to God through the rule of King Hezekiah. God sees Judah trying to be faithful. That's important. Under Jeroboam II, northern Israel was prosperous and very committed to their pagan idols like Baal and Asherah mixed with worship to Yahweh. God says that kind of syncretism is filled with **lies** and **deceit**. How refreshing it is to know that God sees us. He sees the true reality. The north believes they are ok, but they are not. They are wretched, and God sees their wretchedness. The south is trying to walk with God in humility, and God sees! That's encouraging.

Search me, O God, and know my heart! Try me and know my thoughts! ²⁴ And see if there be any grievous way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting! (Psalm 139:23-24)

Conclusion

This week I was in Mexico with a bunch of people training to give their lives away and be sent to the hardest places in the world. Fifty young people with college degrees in every profession were enrolled in cross-cultural training, ready to give the rest of their lives to people in the hardest, most difficult and unreached places in the world.

They were there purposely without internet or a lot of modern conveniences, training themselves for hardship. They were training themselves to be uncomfortable in this world, but so so comfortable in the love of Jesus.

Why would they do this? Because the love of Jesus is worth laying your life down for. It's the deep, infinite love of Jesus.

What a powerful, unrelenting love God has. Let's share it with the world.

⁸ Garrett, 229.

Message: God's love prophesied in Christ
Series: Hosea (God's Unrelenting Love)

Hallelujah!