

God's Restoring Love

A Love Story Only God Could Inspire

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Bible Text: Hosea 2:2-3:5

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In our annual theme this year has been entitled “Loving Our Neighbors,” where we’re trying to grow in our understanding as well as in application of true biblical love to those around us and so we started the year asking the question, “Why should I care?” Why should I care about the poor? Why should I care about the needy? Why should I care about those who are suffering? And then we moved to a study of John chapter 13 through 17 emphasizing the love of Jesus Christ for his disciples right before his death on the cross. And then the series that we just finished was the the characteristics of love from 1 Corinthians chapter 13. And now what we have done is Pastor Aucoin kicked us off last week on a new series entitled “Love Only God Could Inspire,” which is the study of the book of Hosea. He explained in chapter 1 that God had a surprising love for his people that was going to be personified, demonstrated in the love that Hosea had for Gomer. And when we think about marriage, we have this glorious picture of two people coming together and having some wonderful ceremony, and by the way, were those pictures last week cool or what? I was sitting there thinking, man alive, we don’t have a picture of our wedding with a tornado behind us. How did we miss that in the wedding detail planning, like what in the world? I was so fired up thinking, man Stephanie, how in the world did we miss that? You know, it’s like we’re getting married, the Greens are coming, watch out world. I mean, that was the message I saw out of those tornado pictures

Well, you know, what we saw was something very different with Hosea and Gomer. God had orchestrated a marriage that was going to be built on unfaithfulness and heartache and can you imagine Hosea’s conversation with his dad, “Hey Dad, I met this girl that I’m going to marry.” “Oh really, that’s exciting, well tell me all about her.” “Yeah, she’s a prostitute and God told me to marry her.” “Oh okay, and why are you thinking this is a good idea?” You can just imagine the wrestling that would be going on in a situation like like that, and God did that, so that his people would see the depth of his covenant loyalty. So they would see the depth of his covenant love for them, and as we read Hosea, I hope that what brings out in your mind is praise and devotion for a God who would love like this. Well, that’s why one of the things we emphasized last week was Hosea 14:9. “Whoever is wise, let him understand these things; whoever is discerning, let him know them; for the ways of the LORD are right, and the righteous will walk in them, but transgressors will stumble in them.” What that’s a reminder to us is, we have to pay attention to this, this message is for us. In fact, it’s even interesting to look at the very first

verse of Hosea chapter 1, which said, "The word of the LORD which came to Hosea the son of Beeri, during the days of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz and Hezekiah, kings of Judah." After all, Pastor Brent described and explained to us last week that Hosea is actually a prophet to the northern kingdom, so why does the very first verse start off with the kings to the south? In order to help them see, and ultimately us see, that this message is for us too. God decided to put this one in the Bible because it was profitable.

Now I understand that Hosea is a hard book and it's a challenging book, and if you have been reading in preparation for this morning you probably read chapters 2 and 3 and went, "I have no idea what in the world this is talking about." So what we're going to do is kind of unpack that and help us understand what we're going to find, and so with that in mind I'd like you to turn to page 641 in the front section of the Bible in the chair in front of you, that is Hosea, chapter 2. I'm going to start reading in chapter 2, beginning in verse 1. It says,

1 Say to your brothers, "Ammi," and to your sisters, "Ruhamah." 2 Contend with your mother, contend, For she is not my wife, and I am not her husband; And let her put away her harlotry from her face And her adultery from between her breasts, 3 Or I will strip her naked And expose her as on the day when she was born. I will also make her like a wilderness, Make her like desert land And slay her with thirst. 4 Also, I will have no compassion on her children, Because they are children of harlotry. 5 For their mother has played the harlot; She who conceived them has acted shamefully. For she said, 'I will go after my lovers, Who give me my bread and my water, My wool and my flax, my oil and my drink.' 6 Therefore, behold, I will hedge up her way with thorns, And I will build a wall against her so that she cannot find her paths. 7 She will pursue her lovers, but she will not overtake them; And she will seek them, but will not find them. Then she will say, 'I will go back to my first husband, For it was better for me then than now!' 8 For she does not know that it was I who gave her the grain, the new wine and the oil, And lavished on her silver and gold, Which they used for Baal. 9 Therefore, I will take back My grain at harvest time And My new wine in its season. I will also take away My wool and My flax Given to cover her nakedness. 10 And then I will uncover her lewdness In the sight of her lovers, And no one will rescue her out of My hand. 11 I will also put an end to all her gaiety, Her feasts, her new moons, her sabbaths And all her festal assemblies. 12 I will destroy her vines and fig trees, Of which she said, 'These are my wages Which my lovers have given me.' And I will make them a forest, And the beasts of the field will devour them. 13 I will punish her for the days of the Baals When she used to offer sacrifices to them And adorn herself with her earrings and jewelry, And follow her lovers, so that she forgot Me," declares the LORD.

14 "Therefore, behold, I will allure her, Bring her into the wilderness And speak kindly to her. 15 Then I will give her her vineyards from there, And

the valley of Achor as a door of hope. And she will sing there as in the days of her youth, As in the day when she came up from the land of Egypt. 16 It will come about in that day," declares the LORD, "That you will call Me Ishi And will no longer call Me Baali. 17 For I will remove the names of the Baals from her mouth, So that they will be mentioned by their names no more. 18 In that day I will also make a covenant for them With the beasts of the field, The birds of the sky And the creeping things of the ground. And I will abolish the bow, the sword and war from the land, And will make them lie down in safety. 19 I will betroth you to Me forever; Yes, I will betroth you to Me in righteousness and in justice, In lovingkindness and in compassion, 20 And I will betroth you to Me in faithfulness. Then you will know the LORD. 21 It will come about in that day that I will respond," declares the LORD. "I will respond to the heavens, and they will respond to the earth, 22 And the earth will respond to the grain, to the new wine and to the oil, And they will respond to Jezreel. 23 I will sow her for Myself in the land. I will also have compassion on her who had not obtained compassion, And I will say to those who were not My people, 'You are My people!' And they will say, 'You are my God!'"

1 Then the LORD said to me, "Go again, love a woman who is loved by her husband, yet an adulteress, even as the LORD loves the sons of Israel, though they turn to other gods and love raisin cakes." 2 So I bought her for myself for fifteen shekels of silver and a homer and a half of barley. 3 Then I said to her, "You shall stay with me for many days. You shall not play the harlot, nor shall you have a man; so I will also be toward you." 4 For the sons of Israel will remain for many days without king or prince, without sacrifice or sacred pillar and without ephod or household idols. 5 Afterward the sons of Israel will return and seek the LORD their God and David their king; and they will come trembling to the LORD and to His goodness in the last days.

Now I realize at this point you're like, "All right, I got it. I don't even need the rest of the sermon because I understand exactly what's going on in this passage." Yeah, it's kind of confusing isn't it? Kind of challenging but I hope that one of the things you noticed in the broad picture is chapter 2, and chapter 3 actually sounded an awful lot like chapter 1. It started off with judgments: there were, "Here's some things I have against you. Here's some judgments that's coming," and then at the end of chapter 1 we saw a restoration. We saw a reversal of those judgments and now in chapter 2 we see this judgment section that goes through verse 13 and if you want to, you can actually draw a line in your Bible right there because at first 14, it turns to salvation, it turns to restoration, it turns to, "Here is a reversal of all of the judgments for which I have given in chapter 1." It was, Hey, marry a prostitute, have children, name them Jezreel because I'm going to crush you in the Valley of Jezreel and hey have another child and they name her, Ruhamah, because it means no compassion and another chance child and name them, Lo-Ammi, because you're not my people and then it refers to each one of those. "Great will be the day of Jezreel," chapter 1, verse 11. Chapter 2, verse 1, "Lo-Ammi and Ruhamah because you are my people and

I have compassion.” And now that exact same thing is what's going to happen in chapters 2 and 3, where there is a judgment section and then a salvation section. God reverses his judgments, showing not only his surprising love but his restoring love to an unfaithful people who continued to be unfaithful. And I hope one of the things that comes out of this is a picture of man alive, does God love for real or what? Does God love for real or what?

So were going to be thinking about this morning, God's restoring love and in particular I want us to think about four truths from the passage regarding this restoring love. The first one is that God's restoring love remains, it remains in the midst of incredible betrayal. We read the whole section so that we could get the context. And that was, yes there is judgment but there's also restoration and it's overshadowing everything. In the beginning we see the betrayal that the nation of Israel and Gomer have, in fact, it can be a bit confusing when you read Hosea chapter 2, who's doing the talking and who is that person talking to. Is it Gomer and Hosea? Is it Israel and is it Yahweh? Who is actually doing the talking? And who is doing the listening? And it's all sort of mixed up into one and so we're going to put those together and say it's kind of like, yes and yes and yes. Yes, it has to do with Hosea and Gomer and yes, it has to do with Yahweh and his people.

So here's two ways in which we see the betrayal particularly happening. Number one: Israel and Gomer run to other husbands with joy and satisfaction. They run to other husbands for joy and satisfaction. That was seen in the physical adultery of Gomer: two of the children Lo-Ammi and Lo-Ruhamah were not Hosea's, they were conceived in the midst of adultery. And the nation of Israel has been involved in spiritual adultery because they have been running away from the Lord and to the Baals. It's a picture of the fact that they have been running to other “husbands.” The people of Israel did this despite the fact that God chose them. Despite the fact that God made promises to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. Despite the fact that he had delivered them from the hands of Pharaoh, the Egyptians. Despite the fact he had made a covenant with them and gave them their current land. They nevertheless ran after the Baals.

Pastor Aucoin touched on that a little bit last week emphasizing that the Baals were so-called fertility gods; they were believed to grant agricultural prosperity which represented overall wealth but what they demanded in the process was loyalty and devotion. You needed to sacrifice to them, you needed to offer worship to them, you needed to be loyal to them. You see, both Gomer and Israel were not satisfied in their relationship with their true husband. It wasn't good enough. Instead they had to run somewhere else. It wasn't joyful it wasn't satisfactory and so therefore they found that satisfaction in another location.

Now before we move off this point, we said from the beginning that this was not only for the nation of Israel but it was for us too. We need to connect the dots. So just imagine for a minute, what if your spouse committed adultery? That would hurt and it would be painful in part because you would have to come to grips with the reality that your spouse wanted joy and satisfaction somewhere other than you. And that's hard to think through. It's hard to process that and the picture that God is giving us is that's exactly what we do to the Lord. We are the spiritual adulterers and it is God whom we've left because we

find our joy and satisfaction in so many other places and so God is the one who experienced the betrayal of our lack of loyalty, our unwillingness to find joy and satisfaction in him.

If that weren't bad enough, notice a second way in which this betrayal plays out. Israel and Gomer give credit for their prosperity to their adulterous sources. You see, it's one thing they did not find their joy and satisfaction in the Lord and in their proper true husband but now we actually have it moving to where they give credit to their adulterous sources. What an unbelievable slap in the face. Notice these words, "For she does not know that it was I who gave her the grain, the new wine and the oil and lavished on her silver and gold which they used for Baal." The picture of verse 8 is that God has provided the resources. He had given them all of these things. He had poured it out on them and here's what they did: they took them and they used them to worship Baal and then they said, "Man, Baal, you are awesome. You provided all of our wonderful stuff." Really? Seriously? What they did is they give credit for their prosperity to their adulterous sources? Kind of looks that way throughout this text when she describes the fact that it's her lovers who have provided all of these things for her when in reality it was the Lord. You know, you would think that kind of abusive treatment would be met with, "Um, I am done with you. It's time for you to find someone else. It's time for you to enjoy the spoils of having that new 'joy' and satisfaction that you wanted." But we know the rest of the story, don't we? Because God's restoring love remained. God's restoring love was not canceled out by the wicked acts of betrayal and it isn't today either because we know that a new day came when the person of Christ came and the person of Christ took on our punishment and then provided us resources. God's restoring love exists even in the middle of betrayal

Here is the second point: that God's restoring love includes the concept of discipline. Later on in the series in Hosea, we're actually going to have a message specifically geared toward understanding the discipline of the Lord more carefully but because it's so obvious in this chapter, I just couldn't ignore it. God's restoring love is seen in chapter 1, 2 and 3 as well as in others to come because God chooses to be faithful but his faithfulness and his commitment to his restoring covenant love, does not make his love soft or mushy. Instead it was designed to be helpful and beneficial for his people. That's why D. A. Carson, I think so helpfully described that he wasn't writing on this passage but the concept is true: cheap grace preaches forgiveness without repentance; church membership without rigorous church discipline; discipleship without obedience; blessing without persecution; joy without righteousness results without obedience. And in the entire history of the church, has there ever been another generation with so many nominal Christians and so few real obedient ones?

See, God's discipline and his restoring love actually fit together and in this case there are couple of ways in which we see it play out in the text. The first one is: Israel as well as Gomer's adulterous ways would be exposed. Notice the words that are put in here. In verse 2, it says, "Contend with your mother, contend, For she is not my wife, and I am not her husband; And let her put away her harlotry from her face And her adultery from between her breasts." It is highlighting the two sides: the heart side and the body side of adultery. Then in verse 10, "And then I will uncover her lewdness In the sight of her

lovers, And no one will rescue her out of My hand. Now in prophetic and poetic language like we have here, one of the things we have to wrestle with is, “Alright, am I supposed to picture this at face value or am I supposed to understand that this is a metaphorical or figurative language describing a greater reality? Or is it both?” And there are arguments on all sides but it seems to me the best is to highlight the reality that both Gomer and the nation's adultery would not be kept secret. It's not going to be kept secret anymore and the shame and humiliation that is going to come with such wicked behavior will be their experience.

Many of you know that I have the privilege of serving around here in the counseling ministry and over the years I have been amazed at how God brings hidden things out into the open. There is no way you could orchestrate it. It wasn't like, oh you asked the right question and out came the information. Instead, what happens is God just amazingly reveals a set of circumstances so that what was hidden before is no longer hidden and then people have to deal with the reality of all that has happened or is happening. It would be impossible to script that kind of revealing and that's the picture that we have in Hosea, that what God is going to do is he's not going to allow that sinfulness to remain hidden forever. It's not going to remain hidden where everybody just acts like it's all okay. It's not all okay and God is going to bring it out into the light so that it can be handled and that kind of exposure is part of God's restoring love.

We also see his discipline and his restoring covenant love working together and that God withholds additional blessings and brings about sorrow instead. You see, verse 5 says this, “For their mother has played the harlot; She who conceived them has acted shamefully. For she said, 'I will go after my lovers, Who give me my bread and my water, My wool and my flax, my oil and my drink,'” and then here's God's response to that, “So you want to go after your lovers who you think are providing all of these wonderful things for you, here's what I'm going to do, I will hedge her away with the thorns and build a wall against her so that she cannot find her paths she would pursue her lovers but she will not overtake, then she will seek them but she will not find them, then she will say I will go back to my first husband for it was better for me than then it is now.” You see, he's designed a protective wall and said, “I'm not going to let you go any further.” In verse 9 he says, “Therefore, I will take back My grain at harvest time And My new wine in its season. I will also take away My wool and My flax Given to cover her nakedness.” “I'm not going to provide that anymore. I'm not going to offer the blessing anymore.”

In verses 11 and 12, “I will also put an end to all her gaiety, Her feasts, her new moons, her sabbaths And all her festal assemblies. I will destroy her vines and fig trees, Of which she said, 'These are my wages Which my lovers have given me.' And I will make them a forest.” You see, one of the things that God's restoring love does is help people understand, help us understand where blessing really comes from. And sometimes he decides to withhold that blessing so that individuals could see the natural consequences of where their finding their joy and satisfaction and just what they provide. So he says to his people, “Fine, you want to pursue others? I'm going to get in the way. I'm not going to let you do that forever. You want to ask the Baals to bless you? Fine, I will remove my blessing and you will find out just how much the Baals bless you. You want to find your joy and satisfaction somewhere else? Then I'm going to remove the joy and satisfaction

that I so graciously give you so that you can see just how much joy and satisfaction you're getting from somewhere else."

I think there's some applications to us right there. God's restoring love is set within the boundaries of discipline. Think about this: how often does someone just say, "Lord, you just have to give this to me. You have to give this to me." You see, one of the answers that God gives to prayer in the Bible is actually, "Yes, I'll give it to you but it's not good. I'm going to give it to you to show you just how worthless a request you're making." 1 Samuel 8, the people say, "We have to have a king. Please give us a king so we can be just like all the other nations." And so God says, "No, you really don't want a king." And they're like, "Yeah, yeah we do. We do. We understand that if we get a king then we'll be happy." And God gives them a king in order to show them the depth of what having a king really means. What about finding our joy and prosperity? As if that's the most important thing in life. Sometimes God will say, "Alright, you want it to be your god, I'll give it to you so that you can find just how much it really gives you." Some find their joy in exciting adventures, it's kind of how adultery works, on an adventure. Sometimes God gives it to them so they can taste the bitterness that follows.

Now within that discipline, of course, is the over arching commitment to restoring covenant love and that's the third point we see, that God's restoring love at some point actually reverses every aspect of discipline and judgment. So yes, it exists' yes it exists in the midst of incredible betrayal, but it also reverses every aspect of discipline and judgment. We actually saw that in chapter 1 where what God said, he said, "Hey, you're going to have three kids, ones going to be named Jezreel because what I'm going to do is I'm going to destroy you in the Valley of Jezreel. Then I want you to name one Lo-Ruhamah because I'm not going to have compassion, and Lo-Ammi because I'm you're not going to be my people." And then he reverses those things. The exact same thing happens in chapter 2. The first point, God will allure his bride back to him and you see in verse 2, "She is not my wife and I am not her husband," and now comes the reversal in verse 14, it says, "Therefore behold I will allure her and bring her into the wilderness and speak kindly to her." And I just love this: the word "allure" is significant. It has a very personal connotation to it. It could be used for like "flirting" or "wooing" or "coaxing," maybe even "seducing." God says what he is going to do is he is going to win his bride back. He's going to send her text messages and flowers, right? Because he's going to woo her back. He's going to show her just how much he cares for her and he loves her and her heart is going to be drawn back to him. The picture is really affectionate and caring and who's he doing this to? His unfaithful adulterous people. That's who he's alluring. That's who he's wooing. That's who he's coaxing. That's who he's seducing. And our tendency is this, to say, "Look, come back in sackcloth and ashes. Worship the ground that I walk on and maybe, just maybe, we'll think about getting back together." Aren't you glad that's not how God is? That's not how he asks us to come? He comes after us. He pursues us. He coaxes us. He woos us. He wins us back.

That reminds me of one of those times in my life where I just remember especially the Lord working. It was when I was in college and God brought about some circumstances to help me understand I was pretty fake and frankly I was a spiritual adulterer and I can remember just being broken over that. And instead of the Lord like sticking it to me like,

Yeah, that's right dude. It's about time you came to the knowledge of this." I can remember being reminded of things like his blessings, Christ's work on the cross, all that I had in him and instead of making me do penance he was alluring me back.

Verse 16 describes the end process of that. "It will come about in that day declares the Lord that you will call me Ishi and will no longer call me Baali." Now you're thinking, "What? Who am I calling Ishi? What in the world is that?" Well, these at two words that are transliterations from the Hebrew Bible, they are Hebrew words not English words. And "Ishi" means "my husband." "Baali" means "my veil." You see, what God is saying here is that at that process of wooing her back and alluring her what's going to happen is she is going to call him "my husband" again instead of my Baal. Affectionate, passionate and what God does is he wins his bride back.

Here's a second one: that God is going to give blessing upon blessing. You remember earlier he said, "I'm going to remove it. I'm going to take it back. I'm not going to bless you. You want to act like, this I am going to remove my blessing from you." Now he reverses that and he says, "I'm going to pour it out. I will give her vineyards from their and the Valley of Achor as a door of hope." The Valley of Achor was called the Valley of Trouble because that was the place where Achan and his family were executed after Jericho and he says, "And you will sing there as in the days of your youth, as in the days when she came out from the land of Egypt." In another words, it was a reminder, "Hey, do you remember after Jericho fell? Do you remember that? Wasn't that cool?" They were like, "Yeah, we remember it. We sang songs and it was exciting, yet you were in the Valley of Achor and guess what? What I'm going to do is I'm going to turn it from the Valley of Troubles like it was and I am going to make it the Valley of Rejoicing like it was before that." It's a picture of hope, a picture of blessing.

And then he says, "On that day I will make a covenant with them with the beasts of the field the birds of the sky and the creeping things of the ground and I will abolish the bow and the sword and war from the land and I will make them lie down in safety." I'm giving you a picture of security here, "I will betroth you to me," what's the text say? "Forever forever. Yes, I will betroth you to me in righteousness and justice in loving kindness and compassion. I will betroth you to me in faithfulness then you will know the Lord." When God restores, he restores it completely, huh? His covenant love restores completely. He betroths himself for ever with the characteristics of righteousness and justice and lovingkindness and compassion.

And then we see this: that God will show Jezreel compassion and Ruhamah and they will be his people, Ammi, going back to the names of the children all over again. It's almost like, wow, chapter 1 and chapter 2 say the exact same thing. Yeah, that's exactly what's going on. Chapter 1, judgment, salvation. Chapter 2, judgment, salvation. Same picture and in this restoration God says, "I'm going to remove the names of the Baals from her mouth so that they will not be mentioned by their names anymore. There is no going back so now you and me baby, we're in this for the long haul together. No more intermingling, no more mixing. We are in this together for the long haul." Then he says, "it will come about in that day I will respond declares the Lord. I will respond to the heavens and they

will respond to the earth and the earth will respond to the grain and the new wine and the oil and they will respond to Jezreel,” a picture of blessing again. “I will sow for her myself in the land and I will also have Ruhamah on her who had not obtained compassion. And I will say to those who are not my people, you are my people, Ammi, and they will say you are my God.”

Just like we've seen before, God restores and he restores completely even using the names of the children as a picture of that. Then we also see God's restoring love displayed by Hosea's marriage to Gomer. Here is again, another picture of this judgment salvation. God calls Hosea to go win his wife back and, you know, we don't know whether there was a formal divorce or not but here's what we do know, that Hosea had to pay a price for her. Now remember, just for a second, Hosea has three kids, one of them is his, two of them are hers through another person or persons and now she has left and apparently whatever decision she made resulted in her being owned by someone else. He actually has to go buy her back. Who is she owned by? We don't know, maybe another husband, maybe a pimp but she is owned by someone and now he has to go buy her back. He has to go win her back and the amount that he describes in the text is 15 shekels of silver and a homer and a half of barley that is roughly the price of a slave. He paid the slave price for his wife to come back.

Now when I read the text, verse 1 at the end, it says, “Here's what I want you to do, Hosea, go love her,” and as the Lord loves the sons of Israel though they turn to other gods and love raisin cakes. And you're sitting here going, What in the world does raisin cakes have to do with anything?” I like ice cream, you might like cake, somebody else might like brownies, they liked raisin cakes. Why do I give a rip about their favorite delicacy, right? That's one of the questions. Well, here's the truth: raisin cake was not just a delicacy, it was considered an aphrodisiac and was likely part of the “worship” celebrations for Baal. It was a tool for adultery. And so when he says they loved to other gods and their raisin cakes he's referring to the fact that they are loving their adultery and Hosea is called to go and win her back, go buy her back. Can you imagine that? So here's your wife, has two kids with other men and has made choices that are so bad she ends up in slavery and now God says, “I want you to go win her back. I want you to go buy her back.” You're thinking like, What? What? What are you talking about? I'm thinking about being done, that's what I'm talking about. I mean if she was that dumb why in the world would I trust her anymore?” And God says, “I want you to go and I want you to win her back and I don't care if it costs you 15 shekels of silver and a homer and a half of barley, I want you to go buy her back. Because that's the picture that I have for my people. I win my people back always.”

One more point about God's restoring love it's ultimately seen in the person of Jesus the King. Now you might be thinking, “Where in the world did you get Jesus the King in Hosea?” Checkout first 5, the very last verse of chapter 3, it says, “Afterwards the sons of Israel will return and seek the Lord their God and David their king and they will come trembling to the Lord and to his goodness in the last days.” Well, here is where the history lesson that Pastor Aucoin gave us last week that really comes in handy because David the king has been dead for 300 years. You're thinking, “Well, wait a minute, Rob.

Isn't it true that whenever you find David in the Old Testament it could refer to David or his kids? So isn't this really just going back to the Davidic dynasty." Well, good question. But normally in the Old Testament when you have that kind of thinking going on, you find the phrase "the house of David," the house of David referring to his lineage but when you find the phrase "David the king," this is not just any reference to any kid, this is a reference to the Davidic King, the one who will rule on the throne of David for ever, that is Jesus Christ.

We also see in the text this little phrase "in the last days" and in the New Testament when we find "in the last days," we normally think, "Oh, in the last days, that's here now. That is the time between when Jesus was raised until the Second Coming," so the last 2,000 years have been in the last days. But in the Old Testament when you find "in the last days" it's not referring to that intervening time between Jesus' resurrection and the Second Coming it's pointing to the Second Coming. This is a picture of the Messianic kingdom when Jesus, the Davidic King, will return and make it all right. Now you might be thinking, "Alright, this is cool. I get some of it but I need some like takeaways. I need to understand exactly what it is that this passage is calling me to do." I've got four: first of all, if you placed your faith and trust in Christ, you are loved by God with this kind of restoring love and so you need to be like really excited about that, like really praising him about that, like this is super cool, that kind of excitement. Not like, "This is okay. Yeah. Great." This is awesome. And if you have never come to the place where you have trusted Jesus Christ as your personal Lord and Savior, then this is the kind of restoring love that he can have for you and I would encourage you to do one of two things, either where you are to repent of your sins and trust Jesus Christ as your personal Lord and Savior or take out that little connection card and fill it out and say, "I need to talk to somebody about how to become a Christian."

Number two, you are the bride of Christ and Christ promises to love you with his covenant love even in the midst of your unfaithfulness. Here's what that reminds you of: security. Security. We can praise him, we can thank him and part of the reason we can do that is because we have security in Christ. Then your unfaithfulness is not a license to sin in other ways for God's restoring love includes discipline too. That's actually the argument of Romans 6 where it says, "Well, if grace abounds, well shouldn't I just sin all the more?" And the text says, "Absolutely not and here's why, because as a New Testament Christian, we are dead to sin and alive to God." We are dead to sin and alive to God and so the next time you are faced with that temptation, you just look at that temptation and you say, "I am so dead to that. I'm so dead to that because I am alive to God."

Then last there is an inherent call in the passage. In chapter 1 we saw it, in chapter 2 we see it, chapter 3 we see it, an inherent call to devotion and loyalty and commitment and this side of the cross, those belong to Jesus as your King, Master and Ruler. And I want to encourage you, if the King wants you to change something, that you would lean into him, you would bow before him and evaluate everything you do in light of whether it honors him because Hosea 14:9 made it clear, "The one who is wise will listen."