



Hosea: God of Love

Memory Verse: Hosea 14:9 "Who is wise? Let them realize these things. Who is discerning? Let them understand. The ways of the Lord are right; the righteous walk in them, but the rebellious stumble in them."

Background

Hosea is the 28th book of the Bible and the first book of the minor prophets. The prophet Hosea ministered from approximately 755 to 715 BC to the Northern Kingdom of Israel (also referred to in the book of Hosea as Ephraim). His ministry began under the reign of King Jeroboam II of Israel at a time when Israel was experiencing economic and political prosperity. Israel soon weakens and Hosea's ministry to the Israelites continues into their declining final days before the Assyrian captivity in 722 BC. Hosea's name in Hebrew means "salvation" and illustrates the hope offered to those he ministered to if only they would repent and turn back to God. However, the hearts of the Israelites remained stubborn and steeped in sin and idolatry rejecting God's last gracious appeal to turn from their evil ways.

The Short Story

Hosea's faithfulness to an adulterous wife illustrates God's faithfulness to an adulterous nation.

What's the Big Idea?

The first three chapters of the book of Hosea focus on Hosea's personal life which illustrates well the relationship between God and Israel. God told Hosea to marry a harlot/promiscuous woman (1:2). Hosea's love for his wife Gomer did not stop her from seeking other lovers. Just as Gomer commits physical adultery against Hosea, God's beloved Israel seeks other gods and commits spiritual adultery against the Lord. Hosea is faithful to Gomer and out of his love, he buys her back from the slave market and redeems and restores her (3:1-5). The remainder of the book parallels the first three chapters as Hosea preaches against an adulterous Israel, calling her to return to the faithful Lord. Hosea preaches against Israel's sins which include lying, murder, insincerity, ingratitude, jealousy, and especially idolatry. Hosea also preaches about the character of God, reminding the people of Israel that God is a holy God. He also preaches that God is just. Therefore, judgment is coming to Israel because of their sin. The names of Hosea's three children, Jezreel, Lo-Ruhamah, and Lo-Ammi, were also used to by God as signs to Israel. Jezreel was named after a massacre to show that God's punishment was coming. Lo-Ruhamah means "not loved" while Lo-Ammi means "not my people" or "no longer my people."

While Hosea revealed God's character as holy and just, He also preached about God's loving and gracious nature. Just as Hosea bought back his wife from the slave market, God in His faithfulness, would redeem and restore His people to Himself. "How can I give you up, Ephraim?...My heart is changed within me; all my compassion is aroused...I will heal their waywardness and love them freely, for my anger has turned away from them" (Hosea 11:8 and 14:4). Although judgment was coming, there was hope for God's people.

So What? Why is this book so important? What was God's purpose for the book?

The book of Hosea shows what an amazing love God has for His people. Even though Israel had become an adulterous nation chasing after idols and entrenched in sin, God still loved Israel and offered them hope. The cycle of rejection of God and His ways, followed by God's judgment and discipline, and finally, redemption and restoration is something that we still see in the lives of people today. We all seek other things and want to live life our own way at times rather than follow God and His ways. Our holy, just, and loving God is calling us back to Him and nobody is beyond His offer of forgiveness. Just as Hosea bought Gomer back from the slave market, God sent His son Jesus to buy His people out of the slavery of sin with His own sinless blood. All who repent and accept His offer of grace can be redeemed and restored to a right relationship with God. God is love. Although discipline and judgment may come, God will always call us back to Him.

Teaching Text

Hosea 3:1-3 “The Lord said to me, ‘Go, show your love to your wife again, though she is loved by another man and is an adulteress. Love her as the Lord loves the Israelites, though they turn to other gods and love the sacred raisin cakes.’ So I bought her for fifteen shekels of silver and ... letheke of barley. Then I told her, ‘You are to live with me many days; I will behave the same way toward you.’”

Sermon-Based Discussion Questions

- Why did the Lord ask Hosea to “Show your love to your wife Gomer”? What does it represent?
- How do you define “love” according to our text? What does it mean to receive the all consuming love of God?
- Why did Hosea buy back his wife Gomer? What does it mean for us? How did he measure her worth?
- What is Hosea’s heart and mindset in verse three? How do you respond to being fully restored?
- What does this passage reveal about the nature and character of God? What does that mean to you?

Practical Application

- What is the Lord asking you to do that is beyond your comfort zone? How hard is it to be obedient?
- How do you feel when you repeatedly keep blowing it over and over in the same area?
- Why is it so easy to get caught up in the wrong thinking and activities of life like Gomer did?
- To whom do you need to be loving & forgiving in your life? Where do you need to give what you receive?
- Where do you need to receive and feel the true love, acceptance and forgiveness of God?

Hitting the Highpoints

- Hos 1:2 “When the Lord first began to speak.....he said to him, “Go and marry a prostitute....”
- Hos 2:19-20 “I will make you my wife forever, showing you righteousness and justice, unfailing love”
- Hos 3:1 “Then the Lord said... “Go and love your wife again, even though she commits adultery..”
- Hos 4:1-2, 5-6 ““There is no faithfulness, no kindness, no knowledge of God in your land.
- Hos 8:7 “They have planted the wind and will harvest the whirlwind.”
- Hos 9:17 “My God will reject the people of Israel because they will not listen or obey.”

Bonus Features

The book of Hosea shows what an amazing love God has for His people. Even though Israel had become an adulterous nation chasing after idols and entrenched in sin, God still loved Israel and offered them hope. The cycle of rejection of God and His ways, followed by God’s judgment and discipline, and finally, redemption and restoration is something that we still see in the lives of people today. Jesus Christ is God’s “final answer” with respect to redemption and restoration. *“For no matter how many promises God has made, they are “Yes” in Christ. And so through him the “Amen” is spoken by us to the glory of God.”* 2 Corinthians 1:20

Personal Takeaways and Notes