

The Book of Hosea
January 28, 2018
Of Faith and Disobedience: Part 4

Sermon #4
Reading: Hosea 3:1-5
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Agape Love – Broken Hearted

Hosea's story begins with his marrying Gomer even though God has told him she will be unfaithful. Gomer marries a prophet of Yahweh, a man of respect, and a man who loves her without reservation, as God loves Israel. The story mirrors God's relationship with Israel. God brought Abraham out of Ur around 2100 B.C. and through the generations over 700 years the Hebrews become unfaithful until they found themselves in Egypt as slaves for 400 years. Gomer becomes unfaithful to Hosea and sinks lower and lower until she is sold into slavery. God miraculously brings Israel out of slavery and Egypt in about 1500 B.C. It took only another 700 years for Israel to again become slaves. This time they have become slaves of false idols and gods of Baal to the point they have given up their calling as children of the living God.

America has followed similar path. It was founded in reaction to the oppression of Britain. Many of the founding principles of America were taken from Scripture and gave a framework for the forming of our government and living. It has only been 242 years since its birth, how has America responded to the blessings of God? What took Israel twice, over about 700 years to turn their backs on God, America has accomplished in less than 250 years. America has always liked being first. As we observe how God has dealt with nations that turn from him throughout history it should be a wake up call to America who has become enslaved to its own sinful desires.

In chapter 3, God once again comes to Hosea reading verse 1, [“And the LORD said to me, ‘Go again, love a woman who is loved by another man and is an adulteress, even as the LORD loves the children of Israel, though they turn to other gods and](#)

love cakes of raisins.’ ” The mention of raisin cakes seems a little strange to be given this emphasis. Before we examine the first part of verse 1, let me deal with the end of verse 1, Israel’s “love cakes of raisins.”

The eating of raisin cakes was not of itself evil, even when eaten as part of a religious ceremony. According to 2 Samuel 6:19, at the end of King David’s celebration of the return of the ark to Jerusalem, he distributed raisin cakes to the people. Raisins were for the Israelites a form of high-energy food and were consumed by those who were faint with hunger as one reads in 1 Samuel 30:12 and in the Song of Solomon 2:5 we read, “Sustain me with raisins ...” We can hypothesis from these examples and from the context of Hosea chapter 3 the raisin cakes Hosea describes were used in pagan worship because he writes “they turn to other gods”, these raisin cakes may have been part of Baal ritual celebrations and may have played a role in the fertility cult. What we do know - is at this time raisin cakes were desired more than the one true God. Now we move on to the rest of verse one.

Both Hosea and God, at this point, would have been justified to walk away from Gomer and Israel. Hosea is aware of his wife’s downward spiral and I can hear him say, “I gave Gomer my love and she repaid me with being unfaithful. If I never see that woman again that would be just fine.” Hosea is raising 3 children, of which, only one is his. Reading between the lines, just as he loved Gomer deeply he loves the 3 children he calls his own. His reputation as a prophet of God had to have suffered by Gomer’s behavior, especially since he did not enforce the law and have her put to death. This unfaithful wife was a disaster in his life. God loved and provided everything for Israel; land, cities, crops, vineyards and trade routes to give Israel wealth and they have repaid him by prostituting themselves to gods of wood and metal that are deft and dumb.

Hosea's story demonstrates the deep love from him to Gomer and God to Israel. As the story of Hosea continues to unfold we see him as Gomer's redeemer just as God redeems unfaithful Israel. We know from the scriptures that God's love for his creation was not be limited to Israel and the greatest demonstration of agape love, unconditional love, and paying the ultimate price to redeem those who God calls - is Jesus on the cross. God's love has never waivered and he is the only hope of salvation in the world.

Again Love

The word "again" leaps out from verse 1. "And the LORD said to me, 'Go again, love a woman who is loved by another man and is an adulteress, even as the LORD loves the children of Israel, though they turn to other gods and love cakes of raisins.' " The word "love" in its various forms is used 4 times in this verse. It is used for Yahweh's love for Israel, the love Hosea has for Gomer, the love Gomer has received from her lover, and the love Israel has for other gods and raisin cakes. Two are proper love and two are perverted love. Proper love is a decision not an emotion. God loves Israel whether they deserve it or return it. Hosea loves Gomer as a decision for she has demonstrated she does not deserve his love. God loves his children and made the decision to send himself as God the Son to pay with ultimate love, unconditional love the dearest price of his Son so that they would be saved and brought back those he has called into the marriage with himself through the Lamb. Apostle John wrote, "And the angel said to me, 'Write this: Blessed are those who are invited to the marriage supper of the Lamb.' And he said to me, 'These are the true words of God.'" (Revelation 19:9) Hosea was obedient to love Gomer who was unlovable. Let me ask, who is the Gomer in your life? Who has God called you to make a decision to love? For us to be faithful requires the decision to love the unlovable. The decision to love as God calls us to love begins

with prayer and submitting to the Holy Spirit, that changes our minds, hearts and behavior.

God's unending love for Israel is modeled by Hosea. Reading verse 2, "So I bought her for fifteen shekels of silver." A Shekel equals about 1/2 oz., so 15 shekels of silver equals about \$130.00 in today's value. Hosea also paid "a homer and a lethech (**leh**·theh) of barley." A Homer equals 50lbs and a Lethch is 1/2 Homer or 25 lbs. So Hosea added to the price he paid for Gomer 75 lbs. of Barley worth \$5.50 in today's grain futures market. Hosea paid a total of \$135.50 to buy Gomer back. At the time of Hosea's story of Gomer and Israel there were only three common ways to become a slave.

One could become a slave by conquest. As an example, the king of the Chaldeans "took into exile in Babylon those of Judah who had escaped from the sword, and they became servants slaves to him and to his sons until the establishment of the kingdom of Persia." (2 Chronicles 36:20) Soldiers taken in battle and people taken captive would become slaves. Secondly, if one's parents were slaves they were born a slave. The children born to the Hebrews who were slaves in Babylon were born into slavery. Finally, people also became slaves because of debt. Gomer became a slave because of the debt of her lover who sold her into slavery or debt she had taken on and could not repay. So, when it came time to pay back her debt and she was unable, Gomer was taken to the auction block in the city and God instructs Hosea to go and buy her.

We know a great deal about slavery at the time of Hosea's writing because so much can be found in historical records. Slaves that were to be sold were herded into square naked for their shame and so buyers could have a good look at what they were buying. I can imagine that morning the bidding had begun. An older man was placed on the auction block and no one wanted someone old who could

not do labor. He was removed and would be executed. A younger man is now on the block and the bidding starts with a bid of \$5. The bids work themselves up to \$20 and the young man is purchased. After the men are sold the women come for auction. Now the bidding no longer begins at \$5 or \$10 dollars. Gomer finds herself on the block naked and the bidding starts. Hosea is broken hearted by her shame. A man eyes Gomer and bids 10 Shekels or about \$87. God sent Hosea to buy Gomer back, so he says 11 Shekels. The other man responds 13. Another says 14. Hosea responds with 15. Another man bids 15 and a homer of barley. There is silence as no one ups the bid. Hosea speaks up saying, 15 shekels of silver and 1 1/2 homers of barley. The competition backs out - it is too much for a woman who has seen better days. Hosea pays the auctioneer and gives Gomer her clothes back. He now owns Gomer and can do as he pleases with her for she is property. People at the auction who recognized Hosea, the prophet of God, might have thought him a fool for buying back a wife he could have demanded to be put to death for her adultery, for a wife who had shown she did not love him because she left him for other men. If Hosea had desired, he could have struck her dead right there and no one who have stopped him. However, Hosea did not because his example of love was the love God had for adulterous Israel. Hosea gave her clothes back to hide her shame and led her away back to his house claiming her love as his right and told her she had his complete love. However, for a time they would not live as husband and wife in the fullest sense until Gomer was repentant.

Does God act in this manner towards his creation that has fallen into sin?

Absolutely, Yes! This is exactly how God acts. God steps into the marketplace of sin, the fallen world and buys us out of sin by the death of his Son, Jesus Christ.

Jesus made it clear, **“For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life. ¹⁷ For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world**

might be saved through him.” (John 3:16-17) Do you see? We are Gomer; we are the fallen person sold on the auction block of sin. The world makes its bid for us. The world bids; fame, lust, materialism, wealth and power. These are the things of the world’s currency. When all was lost and we realize we are naked before the world and we sit ashamed on the auction block, God sends his Son, Jesus Christ and Jesus bids his life. God is the auctioneer and asks, “What am I bid for these poor, hopeless and enslaved sinners. Satan responds with the wealth of the world. Jesus offers his blood and there is no greater price than this. God speaks out a resounding “Sold to Christ!”

Jesus says to the world I have purchased these and they are mine, they are my lambs and I will care for them as their shepherd. As recorded in the Gospel According to John, Jesus states, **“My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me. ²⁸ I give them eternal life, and they will never perish, and no one will snatch them out of my hand. ²⁹ My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all, and no one is able to snatch them out of the Father’s hand. ³⁰ I and the Father are one.”** (John 10:27-30) When we become the slaves of Christ, we are glad to no longer belong to the world and have a master and a husband who loves us with agape or unconditional love. Agape love was the love Hosea loved Gomer with, and is the love God loves Israel and all gentiles with who he calls to be his own.

Applied Love

As we close this morning I want you to see how Hosea’s story of God’s love applies to Israel, Marriage and each of Us.

Israel

What we can glean from this chapter of Hosea is Israel has never been a nation fully committed to God. Nowhere in the scriptures do we find the entire nation faithfully worshipping Yahweh. There has always been a remnant of believers and there will continue to be a remnant and Christ will return and the remnant will represent the true Israel. This is what Hosea meant in verses 3 to 5, “**And I said to her, ‘You must dwell as mine for many days. You shall not play the whore, or belong to another man; so will I also be to you.’**” *This is the “Church Age” the time from Christ’s resurrection and his return, his second coming – God continues calling the remnant to him through Christ. Both Jew and Gentile will be united to God through Christ. Jews that come to God through Christ are the remnant Israel. Continuing in verse 4, “**For the children of Israel shall dwell many days without king or prince, without sacrifice or pillar, without ephod or household gods.**” *This is also during the “Church Age,” for the nation of Israel is living without their true king or prince – Jesus Christ.* ⁵“**Afterward the children of Israel shall return and seek the LORD their God, and David their king, and they shall come in fear to the LORD and to his goodness in the latter days.**” In the latter days, the end times, God will bring the remnant nation, the true nation of Israel back to him. Here we find God’s promise for gentiles and Israel and it will be fulfilled, God always keeps his promises.*

Paul in writing to the Romans made clear that God had not abandoned Israel during the “Church Age.” Reading Romans chapter 11, verses 1 to 6, “**I ask, then, has God rejected his people? By no means! For I myself am an Israelite, a descendant of Abraham, a member of the tribe of Benjamin.**” ² **God has not rejected his people whom he foreknew. Do you not know what the Scripture says of Elijah, how he appeals to God against Israel?** ³ **‘Lord, they have killed your prophets, they have demolished your altars, and I alone am left, and they seek my life.’** ⁴ **But what**

is God's reply to him? *Listen up, hear God's reply for this is important for the Romans and it is important for this day.* God's reply, 'I have kept for myself seven thousand men who have not bowed the knee to Baal.' (*Only 7000 men out of the whole nation of Israel! They are the remnant*) ⁵ **So too at the present time there is a remnant, chosen by grace.** ⁶ But if it is by grace, it is no longer on the basis of works; otherwise grace would no longer be grace." Just as God removed the nation of Israel from his blessing and kept a remnant to be blessed, so too, it is with the gentiles. Not everyone will come to worship God, but a remnant will worship him and bring him glory. The salvation of Israel will come through Jesus Christ and it is mystery as we see, continuing in Romans chapter 11, verses 25 and 26, Paul tells the Roman gentile believers, "Lest you be wise in your own sight, I do not want you to be unaware of this mystery, brothers: **a partial hardening has come upon Israel, until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in.** *Again in this present time of the Church Age - God has harden the hearts of the nation of Israel, but their remains the remnant Israel, the true Israel, those who worship God by believing in Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior. Paul ends making clear this is the plan of God,* ²⁶ **And in this way all Israel will be saved, as it is written...**" Here Paul refers to the Old Testament prophecies concerning of the future blessing of Israel towards the end of history.

Marriage

Hosea's story directly applies to Christian marriage. The love Hosea has committed towards Gomer is the standard for Christian marriages. Complete commitment of love to ones spouse and this can only happen if one has made a complete commitment of love to God by believing in Jesus as their Lord and Savior. Paul made this clear in his letter to the Ephesians. Reading the highlights from chapter 5 verses 22-32, "**Wives, submit to your own husbands ...**

²⁵ **Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for**

her, ²⁶ that he might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word ... *In case we have missed the point Paul ends with.* ³² This mystery is profound, and I am saying that it refers to Christ and the church.” As we look at how this applies to us the problem is we feel that as sinners we cannot achieve this kind of deep love for we are haunted by the world and our sins. However this is the standard God gave Hosea and is the standard he gives us. It is not a completely impossible standard if one submits to the Holy Spirit for strength that is beyond human. It is not an impossible standard to love deeply and completely when we dedicate ourselves to taking the Word of God into our hearts and minds and feeding upon it to give spiritual nourishment and strength that is more than human. It is not an impossible standard when we pray for our unconditional love, even when our spouse at that moment, may not be loveable, as Hosea loved Gomer.

One may say to God this is not fair. God, are you telling me that if my wife or my husband runs away, as Gomer did, and commits adultery I am to remain faithful? God, are you asking me to love someone who has deeply wounded me and violated our marriage? Some may see this as not fair! They are right it is not fair, but God through Hosea is teaching us it is not about fairness. God answers, “Is this not what I have done for you, you who have sinned against me?” This is the expression of true love as we receive from God through Christ. My beloved this is the standard God places before us this morning and we need to strive with everything within us to fulfill this standard. We are to love our spouse unconditionally.

Beyond marriage, who are the Gomers in our lives we are to love? Is it our children, our parents, our siblings? We need to begin with praying for these people so that God will change our hearts and we can begin to make the decision, the commitment to love, as Hosea loved Gomer and as God loves remnant Israel and all gentiles he calls to himself.

Us

The final application to take away this morning is for us personally. God calls us to be faithful. We are but saved sinners and yes, we do still fail at times. God does not want us to be discouraged but to continue moving closer to Him, ever closer, for he enables us to sin less and live for his glory more and more. He has given us a Savior. He gives himself as the Holy Spirit to dwell in our souls to give us the strength to overcome weakness and temptation. He has given us his Word, the Bible, to build in us faith as we gain wisdom of who God is and how he loves us. As we read in Ephesians chapter 5, Jesus is the groom and we are his brides. Knowing that we are fallen and sinful Jesus comes into the wedding ceremony and says, “I Jesus, take you sinner, to be my wedded wife. I promise and covenant, before God my Father and these witnesses to be your Savior, Lord and Bridegroom. I make this promise for times of your plenty and times of want, in your joy and sadness, in your sickness and health and I make this covenant promise for your life here on earth and for eternity.

Each of us comes to salvation through Christ the Bridegroom and each becomes his bride. Once married to Christ, we no longer have the title of Miss. Sinner, but we are now known as Mrs. Christian. Christian means we are one in Christ or in union with Christ or in Hosea’s story married to Christ. We have become one with Christ just as a husband and wife become one. If you have done anything to dishonor your husband Jesus Christ – repent for he loves you. When we repent He forgives and his love never fails. We are also commanded to forgive others as Christ forgives us. My beloved, let us live in such a way we bring honor to our husband, our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ before this broken and fallen world. Be encouraged for God loves us always. Amen!

