

"HOSEA, WALK THRU THE BIBLE."

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First Christian Reformed Church, Lynden, WA

July 20, 2025, 6:00 pm

Text for Sermon: Hosea 1:1-9; 2:23; 3:1-2; 6:4-7; 14:4-7

Minor Prophets

This evening we turn to the final twelve books of our English OT, called the Minor Prophets. When we hear minor we might be tempted to think of minor league baseball, vs. major league baseball. The only thing minor about the Minor Prophets is how much attention they are given.

The Major Prophets, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel and Daniel, are listed first not because of importance but because of the length of their books. The Minor Prophets are minor only because their books are shorter, and all fit on one manuscript or papyrus scroll (sort of like how they all fit on our reading schedule in the month of December).

There are *three major historical events around which all the writing prophets prophesied*. Each of these three events have a group of prophets who addressed these key events.

Hosea and Amos are the only two to prophecy to the northern kingdom of Israel before northern Israel was led into exile by the Assyrians. This would be from around 760 to 722 BC.

All the rest of the Minor Prophets prophesied to Judah, the southern kingdom of Israel. Six prophecy before Judah goes into exile in 587BC, *Joel, Obadiah, Micah, Nahum, Zephaniah, Habakkuk*; and the last three, *Haggai, Zechariah and Malachi* are prophets in Judah after Judah returns from exile under Ezra and Nehemiah from around 536 to 430 BC.

Hosea.

In the library of books in God's Word, how many times have we said this is a unique book in the Bible. So it is true. There is no book like Job or Psalms or Ecclesiastes or Song of Solomon. And now we say it again. There is no other prophecy quite so raw in its treatment of sin and God's judgment.

Hosea is the longest of the Minor Prophets at fourteen chapters. Hosea is one of earliest. Hosea has been called Elisha's successor, and "The Jeremiah of Israel." He is also called the death-bed prophet as he prophesied the judgment of God up to the fall of Israel to the Assyrians in 722 BC.

Hosea has a very simple outline:

1-3 personal history, all we know about Hosea

4-14 collection of prophecies, or oracles from God.

Message, purpose, theme

From the very second verse reading Hosea is a shock to our sensitivities. “God told you to do What?!? Right, God told you to marry a prostitute. Have you lost your mind? You need to go back and listen again. God hates adultery, God hates sexual immorality. There’s no way He told you to marry a prostitute.”

There are all kinds of adjectives we use to describe a bride. Beautiful, lovely, stunning, but adulterous isn’t one of them, adulterous bride sounds harsh in our ears. Something in us recoils, that’s not nice, that’s not pretty. Something is very wrong.

That’s the point of Hosea’s prophecy. Something is very wrong. God wants us to be gripped by the sheer horror of our sin and the magnitude of our unfaithfulness in our idolatry.

Hosea is a truly great love story, but it starts out with love gone bad, toxic, disordered.

God called Hosea not only to proclaim His message in words, but also to embody that message in actions, in deeds. Hosea became a living breathing parable. He showed God’s pain incarnate.

God makes Hosea live out in person the terrible tragedy of Israel’s unfaithfulness to God by marrying a prostitute. This is shocking to us, which is the point. It is meant to show Israel and us how offensive is the nature of our sin against our God. It is idolatry which is also adultery.

From the time of the Law of Moses, marriage was a metaphor for God’s covenant relationship with Israel, and adultery was a metaphor for idolatry. When Israel worshipped idols, she was cheating on her covenant husband.

Of all the kinds of pain we can experience in our human relationships, the deepest and most hurtful of all is the betrayal of a spouse. God wants Israel to see and feel it first hand, in their midst as it happens to one of their prophets.

Hosea 1:2 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.”

The seriousness of Israel's unfaithfulness is seen in how God thinks about it and portrays it in Hosea. What Israel did is given vivid description in Hosea.

God personalizes Himself as Hosea. God says to Hosea, "I am going to make you know what it's like to be married to an unfaithful wife. Go, marry a harlot!" Hosea experienced the tragedy and heartbreak of an unfaithful wife, not just an adulteress, which is bad enough, but an adulteress turned prostitute. Hosea was able to penetrate to the very heart of sin.

Is there any stronger language in the Bible about sin? This is saying that in God's eyes anyone who is unfaithful to God, anyone who commits sin against God is an adulterer, a harlot, a prostitute, a whore, a Gomer.

This illustration is especially poignant given Israel's idolatry involved falling into the sexual immorality of the cult of Baal which brought the perversion of cult prostitution into the life of Israel.

What happens when a people or a nation give themselves over rejecting God and go whoring after other gods?

Hosea 4:1b-2 There is no faithfulness or steadfast love, and no knowledge of God in the land;

2 there is swearing, lying, murder, stealing, and committing adultery; they break all bounds, and bloodshed follows bloodshed.

Israel was unfaithful in religion and worship, loving other gods of other nations. Israel was unfaithful in politics, trusting other nations and kings rather than the God of Israel.

Israel was unfaithful in ethics and morality, falling into sexual immorality and violence.

Another way of saying this, is there are no religious or spiritual singles before God. Either you are faithfully married to God or you are unfaithfully a prostitute to God.

This sin is especially egregious in the light of God's infinite love and abounding grace and immeasurable mercy. It is meant to elicit a response like Isaiah, "Woe is me!" I am a man of unclean lips and unclean heart and unclean living, among a people who are the same.

After Hosea's love and kindness, Gomer runs off again and takes up with another lover. Unbelievable. By law Hosea would have been completely justified to have Gomer stoned to death. Or at the very least divorce her.

But once again, God makes Hosea be an illustration how God doesn't give up loving the unlovable, to symbolize God's undying love for His adulterous wife, Israel.

Hosea 3:1-3 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." 2 So I bought her for fifteen shekels of silver and a homer and a lethech of barley. 3 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."

Unbelievable. Not just go and get her back, not just go and get her and love her again, but go and get her and pay the other man whatever it cost. In this case, half in cash and half in barley, the cost of a female slave according to the law in Exodus.

What a picture of love, of forgiveness, of steadfast covenant kindness. What a picture of what God's love is like for a wretch like us.

This is what God does in Hosea 2:14–23, one of the most tender and most beautiful love songs in the Bible. It is sung by God to his unfaithful wife, Israel.

Hosea 2:14-16, 19, 23 "Therefore, behold, I will allure her, and bring her into the wilderness, and speak tenderly to her.

15 And there I will give her her vineyards and make the Valley of Achor a door of hope. And there she shall answer as in the days of her youth, as at the time when she came out of the land of Egypt. 16 "And in that day, declares the Lord, you will call me 'My Husband,' and no longer will you call me 'My Baal.'

19 And I will betroth you to me forever. I will betroth you to me in righteousness and in justice, in steadfast love and in mercy. 20 I will betroth you to me in faithfulness. And you shall know the Lord.

23 And I will have mercy on No Mercy, and I will say to Not My People, 'You are my people'; and he shall say, 'You are my God.'"

God depicts their future salvation like a new marriage ceremony at a new Sinai.

This is stunning, staggering love. God takes back His adulterous wife. He doesn't hold her at a distance, He doesn't treat her as her sins deserve. He withholds nothing from her, restores her to the profoundest union of intimacy, with that most daring statement of all, "And you shall know the Lord."

God is God and not a man (11:9b). There is no God like our God, a betrayed husband, who loves with a fierce love. This is the glory of God's amazing love. This is the Gospel in the OT.

Jesus

Hosea's marriage is a prophetic sign and message that reveals the length to which God will go to wake us up out of our sin and reveal His boundless love for us and save rebels like us. That prophetic sign is fulfilled in Christ.

Jesus came to redeem and reconcile the broken marriage between God and His people. Jesus is the bridegroom of God's people preparing a marriage feast of the Lamb. Jesus laid down His life for His bride, the church, He bought her back from her bondage and slavery to sin and wickedness. By His death and resurrection He justified her and made her righteous,

Ephesians 5:26-27 ... having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, 27 so that he might present the church to himself in splendor, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, that she might be holy and without blemish.

Those united to Christ by faith, are righteous and spotless in the eyes of God, who looks at us through Christ. Jesus' faithfulness makes us faithful again.

Through the cross we see the height and depth of our sin, and the height and depth of God's costly love for us. Until we see ourselves as Gomer, we won't know this depth and height.

Jesus gathers His scattered sheep from every nation, tribe, people and language. Instead of not loved and not my people Jesus show us how much God loves us and redeems and restores us.

I Peter 2:9-10 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.

I John 3:1 See what kind of love the Father has given to us, that we should be called children of God; and so we are.

People in every age argue with God and put Him on trial. If God is God, and if He is all powerful, all wise, and all loving, then why is there evil, and sin and wickedness and terrible tragedy in the world? Why doesn't He put an end to it?

What are they saying they want God to do? They want God to exercise power, brute force, to solve the problem. God chooses to solve the problem with love, pure, unadulterated, unchanging, unconditional, selfless, self-sacrificing love. We want a short cut, but there is no short cut to mending a fallen, broken world or heart.

John 3:16

The answer on a global scale is the cross. Or in Hosea the answer is, “Go marry a prostitute and love her. And when she is unfaithful again and runs off, go and buy her back and love her again.”

Jesus has and He is. The Cross is the answer, the solution. Love is the remedy for the sin and evil in our hearts and in our world.

Implications and application.

Romans 15:4 For whatever was written in former days was written for our instruction, that through endurance and through the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope.

We are confronted with how grievous and serious our sins are, and how great their consequences are. Can we humble ourselves to the point of saying to God, “You are right and just and justified to call us spiritual adulterers. We have gone whoring after other gods, other lovers, other love interests.” Can we be that honest to call ourselves spiritual adulterers?

When we can say that, then there is hope for us in the Gospel, in the blood of Jesus, in the love of God who pursues us and woos us and says:

Hosea 14:4-7 I will heal their apostasy; I will love them freely, for my anger has turned from them. 5 I will be like the dew to Israel; he shall blossom like the lily; he shall take root like the trees of Lebanon.