

Hosea the Prophet

When God Uses Your Life as a Lesson

Where we are in prophecies to Israel

- Just before Hosea appears, God sent the prophet Amos to condemn sins of Israel.
- He preached forceful, harsh messages for about 3 years. They were ignored.
- God then send Hosea gives his people a similar challenge, but in a very different way, where his overall message is of God's incredible love to His people, no matter how badly they treated him.
- The book is an excellent rebuttal to those who say that the Old Testament God is one of vengeance and hurtful actions.
- **We see the emotions of our God very deeply in this book—allow that to sink into your heart.**
- **God FEELS our sin and betrayal deeply—He is not unmoved by our wandering.**

The story begins

- Hosea's background is unknown, possibly he was a priest.
- God told him what to do and what would happen...
- Hos. 1:² *When the LORD began to speak through Hosea, the LORD said to him, "Go, marry a promiscuous woman and have children with her, for like an adulterous wife **this land is guilty of unfaithfulness to the LORD.**"*³ *So he married Gomer daughter of Diblaim, and she conceived and bore him a son.* ⁴ *Then the LORD said to Hosea, "Call him Jezreel, because I will soon punish the house of Jehu for the massacre at Jezreel, and I will put an end to the kingdom of Israel.* ⁵ *In that day I will break Israel's bow in the Valley of Jezreel."*
- **Children's names used as a picture of judgment—yet remained children of the family.**

Continues—an overview

- Hos 1:⁶ *Gomer conceived again and gave birth to a daughter. Then the LORD said to Hosea, "Call her Lo-Ruhamah (which means "not loved"), for I will no longer show love to Israel, that I should at all forgive them.* ⁷ **Yet I will show love to Judah; and I will save them—not by bow, sword or battle, or by horses and horsemen, but I, the LORD their God, will save them.**"⁸ *After she had weaned Lo-Ruhamah, Gomer had another son.* ⁹ *Then the LORD said, "Call him Lo-Amami (which means "not my people"), for you are not my people, and I am not your God.*
- **Children's names used as a picture of judgment—yet remained children of the family.**

A note about the children's names

- Seems kind of mean to give the kids such awful names.
- Much research and no comments on them other than the typical "God gives names for reasons....."
- HOWEVER, when something is not specifically addressed in the Bible, and we do not know what happened to them later, I think it is valid to look at how God worked in other events that we are told about.
- And what we see here is that one's name or description early on, did not become destiny:
- Sarai—becomes Sarah, the princess
- Rahab, the prostitute—becomes simply Rahab, the ancestor of Jesus
- Simon—becomes Peter—the Rock

The story goes on, Gomer leaves, and it does not go well for her

- Hosea's love extended even to the point of buying his wife out of slavery when her lovers discarded her.
- **3** *Then the Lord said to me, "Go and love your wife again, even though*

she commits adultery with another lover. This will illustrate that the Lord still loves Israel, even though the people have turned to other gods and love to worship them."

- ²*So I bought her back for fifteen pieces of silver and five bushels of barley and a measure of wine.* ³*Then I said to her, "You must live in my house for many days and stop your prostitution. During this time, you will not have sexual relations with anyone, not even with me."*
- ⁴*This shows that Israel will go a long time without a king or prince, and without sacrifices, sacred pillars, priests, or even idols!* ⁵*But afterward the people will return and devote themselves to the Lord their God and to David's descendant, their king. In the last days, they will tremble in awe of the Lord and of his goodness.*

Commentary on this early overview of the book and coming events

- It emphasizes the depths of God's love and how far He goes to rescue His people.
- And at the same time, it shows how they would suffer and there needed to be a time when they could not worship and enjoy His love as they had.
- But God never totally walks away or leaves Israel to die alone with her sins.
- And neither did Hosea.
- Separation can mean a time for restoration.
- But the book goes on to list the reasons for the judgement-----

God gets personal, describing His relationship as a marriage

- Chapter 2 "But now bring charges against Israel—your mother—
for she is no longer my wife,
and I am no longer her husband. . . . **And he goes on to list her sins...**
- I will punish her for all those times
when she burned incense to her images of Baal,
when she put on her earrings and jewels
and went out to look for her lovers but forgot all about me," says the Lord.
- **And then God says this---after naming her sins, from the start of judgment, the broken, loving heart of God revealed**
- ¹⁴ "But then I will win her back once again.
I will lead her into the desert
and speak tenderly to her there.
- ¹⁵ I will return her vineyards to her
and transform the Valley of Trouble into a gateway of hope.
- **(this valley was Achor, where Aachen sinned and was punished—description of the redemption of sad places for God's glory)**
- **See in all this the loving heart of God and how it pains Him when we sin—NT talks about grieving the Holy Spirit—our sins make God sad.**

An key reason for their failures

- Lack of teaching, failure of priests and prophets.
- **My people are destroyed from lack of knowledge.** "Because you have rejected knowledge, I also reject you as my priests; The more priests there were, the more they sinned against me; they exchanged their glorious God for something disgraceful. They feed on the sins of my people" Hosea 4: 6-7
- Application to all teachers (of Bible classes, family, in many settings).
- Our responsibility is immense, not only to study, but to share it well even when that isn't easy.
- Our lack of total dedication to teaching, preparation, sharing, can have a huge effect on others—God has given this work to teachers, and we must do it diligently.

What Hosea taught them, similar to previous messages

- **But you must return to your God;
maintain love and justice,**

- ***“Love and Justice” a reflection of God and the book emphasizes it.***
- Remember in Amos the expansive meaning of the term justice, that it is an all-expansive term for how we are to live including how to treat those less fortunate, a review quote:
- ***The Bible makes social justice a mandate of faith and a fundamental expression of Christian discipleship. Social justice has its biblical roots in a triune God who time and time again shows his love and compassion for the weak, the vulnerable, the marginalized, the disenfranchised, the disinherited .*** Quote from World Vision

Along with denying justice people often fall prey to the deceit of wealth

- ***Hosea 13: 6 When I fed them, they were satisfied; when they were satisfied, they became proud; then they forgot me. . .***
- Be careful when you have a lot, it’s easy to forget God, taking what was meant as a gift and using it for self only, which we are all prone to do, but when they did that, as he goes on to say—
- ***Hosea 14: Your sins have been your downfall***
- Money, possessions, prosperity are never the source of security or satisfaction they promise to be and they are never given for us alone.
- ***We are given so we can give—***

How to protect yourself from the lies of wealth

- ***And we, here in America, are all wealthy beyond the imagination of the rest of the world, so how should we respond?***
- What is your reference for wealth? For the good life?
- What sets the standard for you for what you think you deserve?
- Of course we want to think it is the Bible, and it should be, but is it?
- Most often it is our referent others, personally and nationally.
- Who are your referent others? So important—what do the people that you associate with consider important, significant?
- Do you follow along? Challenge or discuss?

There can definitely be a connection with

- Lack of justice and an inordinate view of what makes “the good life.”
- How to know, evaluate, what to keep and what to give?
- C.S. Lewis--***“I do not believe one can settle how much we ought to give. I am afraid the only safe rule is to give more than we can spare. In other words, if our expenditure on comforts, luxuries, amusements, etc., is up to the standard common among those with the same income as our own, we are probably giving away too little. If our charities do not at all pinch or hamper us, I should say they are too small. There ought to be things we should like to do and cannot do because our charitable expenditure excludes them.”***
- But of course, we will all make mistakes in this and many other parts of life and because of that....

Hosea, as all the prophets do, looks beyond judgement to restoration

- ***Hos. 2:16 “In that day,” declares the LORD,
“you will call me ‘my husband’;
you will no longer call me ‘my master.’
¹⁷ I will remove the names of the Baals from
her lips; no longer will their names be
invoked. . . .¹⁹ I will betroth you to me forever;
I will betroth you in righteousness and justice,
in love and compassion.
²⁰ I will betroth you in faithfulness,
and you will acknowledge the LORD.
... I will show my love to the one I called ‘Not my loved one.’***

*I will say to those called 'Not my people,' 'You are my people';
and they will say, 'You are my God.'"*

- **Ultimately by the end of the book we see how God uses pain, patience and redeeming love to demonstrate His love to Israel.**

Sooooo how does this apply to us, challenge, teach us?

- Our modern message—Hosea's love and mercy to Gomer is used as a picture of God's love for Israel and for us—obvious lessons, but there is more....
- It seems the more I study the Bible that God has ***some basic messages, that He keeps repeating in various ways.***
- And this book is a primary example of this because Hosea's life is not unusual in that in addition to teaching us about God's love, the book clearly illustrates—

God often uses people to teach His lessons

- This is shown clearly in Job, (earliest book of the Bible, see lessons on Genesis and Job).
- God used the life of Job as a demonstration to Satan and the hosts of heaven that God could be trusted in the most difficult of circumstances.
- The Children of Israel were a witness to God's power to their world as God brought them out of Egypt.
- The pagan inhabitants of the land knew throughout their history that it was God who gave them their victories.
- As Rahab told them, they were afraid for 40 years while Israel was wandering in circles from not trusting God.

And He may use you in this way also

- It is fair to assume that though your life may not have the influence of the characters in the Bible,
- At the same time, **you have an audience watching, observing**, evaluating how you trust God, especially how will you believe in Him when things become difficult.
- And most likely the audience is both human and angelic—how and why we don't know, but it seems important.
- ***When the hard times come, remember, you don't know the whole story of why this particular thing is happening, but you can know some foundational truths.***

An eternal perspective is essential

- This life is not all there is.
- Your best life, your greatest joys, your most complete love and fulfillment are coming.
- And all that happens to you here is preparation, refining for it; you may see it in this life; you may not.
- Things may happen for a reason known only to God, but important to Him.
- I cannot imagine the agony of Hosea's life, but he trusted God throughout it all, and no matter what was going on at home, he kept preaching his message—for 25 years.

Not just as a witness to individuals—we never know the extent of possible witness

- Paul uses Hosea (who I'm sure had no idea that his life would be used in this way) to show God's ultimate love and mercy to Gentiles, when he says,
- *Romans 9:22* ***What if God, although choosing to show his wrath and make his power known, bore with great patience the objects of his wrath—prepared for destruction? ²³ What if he did this to make the riches of his glory known to the objects of his mercy, whom he prepared in advance for glory—²⁴ even us, whom he also called, not only from the Jews but also from the Gentiles? ²⁵ As he says in Hosea:***
- *"I will call them 'my people' who are not my people;
and I will call her 'my loved one' who is not my loved one,"*
- ²⁶ *and, "In the very place where it was said to them,
'You are not my people,'*

there they will be called 'children of the living God.'"

Paul continues the idea of God using our lives to teach others on a more personal level

- *Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of compassion and the God of all comfort, ⁴ who comforts us in all our troubles, so that we can comfort those in any trouble with the comfort we ourselves receive from God. ⁵ For just as we share abundantly in the sufferings of Christ, so also our comfort abounds through Christ. ⁶ If we are distressed, it is for your comfort and salvation; if we are comforted, it is for your comfort, which produces in you patient endurance of the same sufferings we suffer. 2 Corinthians 1:3-11*
- **As difficult as it is for the person who is the living lesson—**
- **People who have suffered have far more credibility than those who haven't in sharing how God helps them.**

God may use you in difficult ways, one of which may be to primarily benefit YOU

- I Peter 4:12, *Beloved, think it not strange when you are tried by fire (which is done to prove you) as though some strange thing happened unto you. (NIV)* or in another translation—
- *Friends, when life gets really difficult, don't jump to the conclusion that God isn't on the job. Instead, be glad that you are in the very thick of what Christ experienced. **This is a spiritual refining process, with glory just around the corner.** Life will often be unjustly hard. (MSG)*
- This talks about trials being a way for God to refine us, as James 1 also talks about² *Dear brothers and sisters, when troubles of any kind come your way, consider it an opportunity for great joy. ³ For you know that when your faith is tested, your endurance has a chance to grow. ⁴ So let it grow, for when your endurance is fully developed, you will be perfect and complete, needing nothing. NLT*
- **APPLICATION: it's always good to pause and ask, "Lord what do you want to teach me in this?" First consider how He may be using the challenge to refine you.....BUT.....**

Which is all good advice....but.....

- Sometimes you are doing well, and are honestly as refined as you need to be, not sinning and then—
- BAM! a tragedy strikes, large or small, quickly over or long lasting and yes, we do want to examine our hearts, but at the same time,
- There is often very much a temptation to blame self, but there may not be a reason to do that—there wasn't for Job.
- Here is a comforting thought from Roy Godwin from the book, *Grace Outpouring*, Jesus speaking here:
- ***"You didn't deserve the wounds that you have in your heart, and I didn't deserve the wounds that I carried in my body, but I volunteered to have them so that your pain could be dealt with in my pain."***
- Of course, we aren't Jesus, but great encouragement can come from knowing much pain is NOT DESERVED; yet it can still serve a greater purpose.

Deserving or not, Jesus reminds us

- *"In this world you will have tribulations...."* He told us.
- Hosea reminds us that they may not a result of sin on your part, you may not have deserved them at all.
- Quite the contrary, God may be using you as a lesson of trusting Him to those around you and to the hosts of heaven as He did with Job.
- It may not get better in this life.
- But someday it will.
- And all the troubles here will seem like, "one night spent in a bad hotel."
- Not knowing why, remember people are watching and....

This little poem is a good reminder....

**You are writing a gospel, A chapter each day,
By things that you do and the words that you say.
People read what you write, Distorted or true.**

What is the gospel, according to you?

- Your life is a message—not just to invite people to salvation.
- But how do you get through hard times?
- When you complain and camp out in a hard time, when **that** is your identity and focus, you are telling the world your God isn't enough. Harsh perhaps, but true.

Final applications, when we are called to be Hosea

- *1 Peter 2:11* **Dear friends, I urge you, . . .it is commendable if someone bears up under the pain of unjust suffering because they are conscious of God. . . . Christ suffered for you, leaving you an example, that you should follow in his steps.**
- **Pray you are “commendable” to God when you suffer during a time of refining or even more when you don't deserve it.**
- A great example of this was the final prayers and witness of those early Christians dying in the arena—
- **“Lord Jesus Christ, let me not cause you shame.”**
- And because of how they died, many (Justin Martyr a famous example) came to the Christian faith when it could not be shared openly.

Back to Hosea and Gomer, The end of their story

- **Overwhelming historical consensus is that their relationship was restored and continued or the book would make no sense.**
- St. Augustine interprets it this way:
- Hosea's buying back Gomer = God redeeming His people from sin.
- The restoration of the marriage = God restoring the covenant.
- The humiliation of the prophet = Christ humbling Himself to save the Church.
- For Augustine, the *“entire point of the narrative is God's willingness to restore the unfaithful and ultimately a picture of God's forgiveness, a foreshadowing of Christ's redemption of the Church, and a demonstration that divine love overcomes human betrayal.”* **A.I. summary**

Restoration and peace

- This is all so like our God, a clear pattern of His dealings with people, though we sin, His love is always there, healing and restoration takes place, in many ways, now and forever.
- In Judges, great sins, but always longer times of peace.
- David, sinned greatly with Bathsheba, but later years of incredible productivity as he prepared for the Temple, collected and finalized the Psalms, and scored the music for them.
- After Peter's betrayal, Jesus again goes to find him when he'd gone fishing, make him breakfast on the beach, and commissions him before the disciples.

One last thing about Hosea

- Names are important and Hosea—the meaning of his name is “salvation.”
- From the same root word, come the name Joshua, and also--
- **Yeshua, Jesus.**
- Jesus is our Savior, the true lover of our souls, our God who loves us more than we can imagine, who hurts more intensely than we can imagine when we stray, and who will one day—
- Welcome us home with a deep love we struggle to comprehend now, but where our hearts can never wander again, and where we will truly live happily ever after.