

The Word Today
#882—Hosea
Pastor Doug Schroeder

Throughout the Bible the illustration of marriage between a man and woman has been used as an illustration of the relationship between God and His people. In the Old Testament one of these illustrations that was actually acted out in a life-like scenario was with the prophet Hosea and his wife that God actually ordered him to marry. In Hosea chapter 1, verse 2 it says when the Lord began to speak through Hosea, the Lord said to him go take to yourself an adulterous wife and children of unfaithfulness because the land is guilty of the vilest adultery in departing from the Lord.

What an amazing illustration; a life-like scenario where this prophet is commanded to marry a woman of unfaithfulness it said. In fact, some suggest that she was a prostitute and that she had gone off and found different lovers. In fact, in the book of Hosea she does that very thing after Hosea marries her. The children that were born to them were to be given symbolic names for the unfaithfulness of Israel. One child was named Not My People. Another one was named Not Loved. These were symbolic names to express God's displeasure, his frustration, at the waywardness of the people of Israel.

In fact, this is really nothing new. God's people have always had a tendency, a sinful nature that tends to turn away and tends to wander from him. God is constantly having to be like the good shepherd as Jesus indicated who goes after the wandering sheep; after the one who strays. That seems to be a repeated theme throughout the scriptures.

Now, Hosea the prophet was playing the role of God and his wife was playing the role of God's people. God has married himself so to speak to these people. The situation was very similar; it was a covenant, it was a divine agreement that had been established both in marriage for Hosea and his wife Gomer and between God and his people. There was a covenant, a promise, a commitment that had been made. And yet, just as Hosea's wife wandered and was unfaithful to him, so also sinful people. The people that were supposed to be committed to God, the ones that were supposed to be faithful, wandered in their allegiance and turned their backs of him and began worshiping other Gods.

Well, God would be absolutely within his rights then if he said this marriage, this agreement is null and void and therefore I reject you forever. But in fact, God is a God of life, not a God of death. And so, he demonstrates this a couple of different ways. One is through reviving relationships; saving and redeeming relationships just like he saved Israel in the Old Testament; so also he wants to save us and to be in a relationship with us. Even when we have strayed, even we have wandered he is still willing to buy us back and to win us back to himself in order that the relationship not die.

The other primary way that he shows his power to save and his power of life-giving in his nature is that he raises people from the dead. These are actually not as different as you might think. They are both cases of reviving, revitalizing people. In the one case it is a spiritual relationship way of

revitalizing people. In the other way it is the physical manifestation of giving of life once again.

The fact of the matter is that no one really deserves God's favor. No sinful being, you and I included can say that God is really privileged and God should be so grateful that we are his person or that we are in a relationship with him. In fact, it is more that we should be grateful. We are the ones who have been privileged and blessed to be in a relationship with God.

You know this idea of saving relationships; bringing them back from the dead. It is always a joy when a counselor or a pastor can help a person in a marriage find forgiveness and save the marriage—to redeem it from destruction. In the same way God finds some of his greatest pleasure in redeeming people. The word redeem means to buy back. In fact, Hosea had to do that very thing. When his wife Gomer had gone and had betrayed him he had to go after her and win her back. Now, you would think in our world today where people are so defensive and so many times their hearts are calloused and hard, if someone cheats on them their first thought is away with you, I never want to have anything else to do with you. Get out of my life.

Really, in the scriptures even though there is an instance where it is discussed according to the law it is acceptable to divorce someone; Jesus says this, if they have been unfaithful; if they have committed adultery. This is not really God's will. And this is something that Christians need to understand and that people in our world today who find a partner has cheated on them, this should be understood, that this is not the will of God, that we immediately

then go and condemn them and have an unforgiving spirit and send them away. We should be willing to forgive and willing to take them back if they are repentant. If this person is truly remorseful for their unfaithfulness then we are called upon to forgive them and to try to restore the relationship. There have been many marriages that have been saved even after one spouse has been unfaithful and those marriages can actually end up even stronger and more together in spirit after the persons have reconciled.

That is a demonstration of what God wants to do. He knows that you have been unfaithful, he knows that you have sinned against his will, but he is willing to try to mend the relationship; He is willing to redeem you from your sin. In fact in 1st Peter chapter 1 it says this, verse 17, since you call on a father who judges each mans work impartially live your lives as strangers here in reverent fear for you know it was not with perishable things such as silver or gold that you were redeemed from the empty way of life handed down to you from your forefathers, but with the precious blood of Christ; a Lamb without blemish or defect. God spend his most precious efforts, his most prized relationship in his Jesus. He gave up, he offered when he suffered on that cross in order to save our relationship with him. He was willing to sacrifice and give and suffer so that your connection with him could be maintained. So that even though you have sinned against him you can be forgiven. Even though you have wandered you could be found and come to him.

That is why in the New Testament the invitation of Jesus is to come to him, is to seek him. In this way you can have your life and your relationship

with God restored. No one is beyond this. No one is unredeemable. No one has sinned so greatly that they can't repent and come back to Jesus Christ and the love of God is such that he will take you back. He will receive you once again.

That was a large part of that message of the prophet Hosea is that even though his wife had sinned against him, even though she had wandered, he went and sought her. That is the love of God that wants us to be redeemed. And not just for the here and now, but redeemed for eternal life. You know, there is a beautiful passage in Hosea chapter 13 where God is talking about his people and he says this in Hosea 13, verse 14: I will ransom them from the power of the grave. I will redeem them from death. Where O death are your plagues, where O grave is your destruction. Well, that is a rhetorical questions. The expected answer is that death can do nothing against the almighty God. Death cannot stand in the way of God that wants to give life and to redeem, even from the grave.

We see this same thing said in the New Testament; that through Jesus Christ God is redeeming us from sin and death. He is not even going to let death stand in the way of his relationship between him and his people. In 1 Corinthians 15 it says this exact same phrase: where O death is your sting. And it concluded that praise to God through our Lord Jesus Christ, in other words death can't even separate us from God. That is how strongly, that is how deeply God feels passion and love and commitment to you as an individual.

Don't you want to give your life to this God? Don't you want a Savior like Jesus Christ who is willing to give his all in order to save you? I hope that motivates you so that you will not wander from God and stray from him but that you will love him deeply and stay faithful to him.