

I Will Buy Thee Back Hosea 3:1-5

Slide 1

In the Bible, when God wanted to get His people's attention, He often did something demonstrative like speak from a burning bush, lead by a pillar of cloud, shake the ground or do a miracle in nature.

God also spoke through people we call prophets. Now, Old Testament prophets had many roles and many jobs. They would:

- Preach what God shared with them.
- Rebuke those in power who were misusing political or religious power.
- Ordain those who would be kings.
- Predict the future and reveal what God would do among His people.
- Heal diseases.
- Evangelize other nations, and
- Teach the people about God and His Law.

We know some of the names of these people whom God called to be His prophets: Moses, Miriam, Deborah, Nathan, Elijah, Elisha, Isaiah, Huldah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Amos, Anna, John the Baptist, and many more.

God spoke to people through His prophets, giving them directions in their relationship with Him.

God also used His prophets to encourage His people's faithfulness and warned them that faithlessness has dire consequences.

This morning, we begin a new series called *“Minor Prophets, Major Messages.”* This series will focus on specific minor prophets and their messages that God wanted to bring to His people.

Today, we’re looking at the prophet Hosea. He prophesized during the reigns of Uzziah, Ahaz, and Hezekiah in the Kingdom of Judah, the southern kingdom and to Jeroboam II in Israel, the northern kingdom.

Even though his message was mostly directed to the Northern kingdom, Hosea brought an important message to all God’s people.

But more than his preaching, he ministered to the people through his life. As we look at both his life and his message, we’ll see that God put Hosea in a difficult position.

He was to live out his message. A task that was extremely difficult but it showed how important God’s message was. Listen to what God asked Hosea to do:

Hosea 1:2-9, *“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.’ So he married Gomer daughter of Diblaim, and she conceived and bore him a son. 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. In that day I will break Israel’s bow in the Valley of Jezreel.’ 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. 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.”*

After she had weaned Lo-Ruhamah, Gomer had another son. Then the Lord said, “Call him Lo-Ammi (which means “not my people”), for you are not my people, and I am not your God.”

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The opening verses of the Book of Hosea reveals that God commanded Hosea to marry a woman of ill repute, a prostitute.

God uses her character flaws as a visible lesson for the people. So, Hosea obeyed God and married Gomer, a woman of adulterous character and loose sexual morals.

There's no mention of his feelings, doubts or prayers of complaint. There's no mention of a courtship or betrothal period.

Hosea simply obeyed the Lord and entered into a marriage with a woman who he knew wouldn't be faithful to him in marriage.

Now, I don't know what their life was like. I don't know if they had premarital counseling where she committed to leave her life of prostitution. Scripture doesn't say anything about that.

It does say in verse 3, after their marriage, that Gomer bore Hosea a son. The son was to be given a symbolic name.

Now, Hosea wasn't the first prophet to give their child a symbolic name. This happened in the life of Isaiah and to Joseph in the New Testament.

Matthew 1:21 records that an angel told Joseph to name the child born to Mary, Jesus, *“because he will save his people from their sins.”* The name “Jesus” or “Joshua” means “God saves.”

But notice, verse 3 says, “*she conceived and bore him a son.*” Verse 6 says, “*She conceived again and bore a daughter.*” Nowhere does it say that Hosea was the father.

Hosea’s first son was named Jezreel. The name Jezreel symbolizes both judgment on Israel’s unfaithfulness and eventual restoration.

To those he preached, this told the people that God was not pleased with them.

The second child born to Hosea was a daughter. The girl was named Lo-Ruhamah which means “not loved” or “no mercy.” God was saying that He wouldn’t show mercy to Israel.

Some time passes and in verse 8 we see that Gomer had another son. Again Hosea isn’t mentioned as being the father; only that Gomer had the child.

The boy was given the name Lo-Ammi which means “*not my people.*” God is telling the people of Israel that they had cut themselves off from Him and were not His people.

This prophet has now endured years of being married to a wife who wasn’t faithful to him.

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So, what was the point of all this? Why would God have his prophet marry an adulterous woman? Well, God has asked His prophets to do some strange things in the Old Testament.

In Isaiah 20, Isaiah was commanded to go barefoot and naked for three years in order for him to preach a particular message.

In Jeremiah 27, Jeremiah was given the task of wearing an ox's yoke every day as a way of preaching his message about the people and their sin.

In Ezekiel 3, 4 and 5, Ezekiel had to physically eat a scroll, lie on one side for 390 days, and shave his head and beard all in an effort to get the attention of the people to give God's message.

But what was the point of all this? Why would God have His prophet marry an adulterous woman?

It's because the message that Hosea had to give to God's people had to do with faithfulness and unfaithfulness. That's why the language in Hosea 1 is crude and intense.

The issue at hand was God's relationship with His people in which God felt deeply betrayed.

The entire Book of Hosea is flavored with the language of adultery, unfaithfulness, shame and anger because God's telling the people that they had betrayed Him as one spouse betrays another.

There's a book titled, *"The Theology of the Pain of God."* It's a book which looks at our relationship with God from the perspective of pain. Not our pain, but God's pain.

The author says at the beginning: *"We cannot believe the pain of God unless it is His revelation. Man's thought can never produce such a truth."*

The author explained that when we sin, we not only break our relationship with God, but we also cause God pain.

Because of that pain, God extended His wrath on us, those He has created, because we're sinful.

Not only that, but the only solution for our sin was for God to send His only Son to suffer and die on a cross for you and me. That's pain.

Through the pain of the Father, our sin was forgiven by the Son and sealed by the Holy Spirit.

In these passages in Hosea we find a great sense of betrayal. God's Holy and therefore must bring the full weight of His wrath upon sin and those who sin.

God created each one of us and He loves us boundlessly. Bringing wrath on His Creation pains Him, as did the price for our salvation.

Why bring up this theological book in relation to the Book of Hosea? We see in the Book of Hosea that God chose one prophet to live out the pain He felt by using an adulterous and faithless relationship.

The Truth about God, the God who made the world, the God who called Abraham to make a nation, the God who saved Israel from Egypt, and the God who's described in the Old Testament and the New Testament is a God who desires to have an abiding, exclusive and personal relationship with His people.

That's why He called Hosea to prophetic service, framing everything He says with a painful relationship and sexual terms.

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Hosea's job, as a prophet, was to describe the relationship that Israel was having with God.

The relationship wasn't going well in God's view because of sin. He had lost the devotion of His people.

The overall theme of Hosea's messages is found in Hosea 4 where God lays out three disputes or controversies He had with Israel.

Hosea 4:1, *“Hear the word of the Lord, you Israelites, because the Lord has a charge to bring against you who live in the land: “There is no faithfulness, no love, no acknowledgment of God in the land.”*

The first dispute against the people of God is that there was no faithfulness to God.

Hosea shared with the people that there was no consistency between their words and their deeds. They’re saying one thing with their mouths, but their actions betrayed their words.

The second quarrel against the people of God was that there was no steadfast love or loyalty for God.

HOSEA 8:2-5, *“Israel cries out to me, ‘Our God, we acknowledge you!’ But Israel has rejected what is good; an enemy will pursue him. They set up kings without my consent; they choose princes without my approval. With their silver and gold they make idols for themselves to their own destruction. Samaria, throw out your calf-idol! My anger burns against them. How long will they be incapable of purity?”*

The people of God loved other idols and festivals devoted to other gods more than they did God.

They loved cursing, lying, murdering, stealing, and adultery. They broke all bonds, and bloodshed followed bloodshed.

They loved to do evil and then asked God for forgiveness and expected Him to grant it.

They loved political corruption and followed corrupt leaders. They loved to depend on their own strength and their own armies.

But it’s the third dispute in Hosea 6 that shocks me the most.

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The third dispute against the people of God was that there was no acknowledgement of God in their land.

HOSEA 6:1-4, "Come, let us return to the Lord. He has torn us to pieces but he will heal us; he has injured us but he will bind up our wounds. After two days he will revive us; on the third day he will restore us, that we may live in his presence. Let us acknowledge the Lord; let us press on to acknowledge him. As surely as the sun rises, he will appear; he will come to us like the winter rains, like the spring rains that water the earth." "What can I do with you, Ephraim? What can I do with you, Judah? Your love is like the morning mist, like the early dew that disappears."

There's an arrogance that's presented in these verses. The people thought that they could come to God in faith when life was poor or when they suffered and God would just make everything right. They could go about their business.

God said their faith was like mist that vanishes and dew that disappears. God deserved more than that from them. He deserves more than that from us!

This is more than intellectual understanding about God, who He is and what He has done, but understanding that faith is reflected in values and lifestyle choices.

The people of God weren't acting like His in their personal lives. Throughout his book, Hosea described the activities the people were involved in and the prevalent attitudes they shared.

Attitudes like:

- Prostitution and idol worship (Hosea 4)
- Theft (Hosea 7)
- Drunkenness (Hosea 7)

- Intermarriage with foreign people who brought false gods to the land (Hosea 7)
- Belief that fortified cities (Hosea 8) and armies would keep them safe (Hosea 10)

The end result of all three of these complaints was that the people of God didn't look like the people of God but looked like the nations around them.

So, what about us? What does acknowledgment of God look like for us?

This is different for different people, but I have to tell you, many Christians today look and sound exactly like people who're not Christians.

We believe the same things. We vote the same way. We watch the same movies. We attend the same festivals. We divorce at the same rate, and we wonder why people can't tell what's a Christian and what isn't.

I wonder what would happen if we applied the same standards of loyalty to our relationship with God and our Christian walk that we expect from other areas of our lives?

- If our car starts once every three tries, is it reliable?
- If the post office skips delivery every Monday and Thursday, is it trustworthy?
- If we only go to work once or twice a month, are we a reliable employee?
- If our fridge stops working for a day or two every so often, do we say "It works most of the time?"
- If the water heater provides an icy cold shower every now and then, is it dependable?

- If you skipped a couple of electricity bill payments do you think your electricity provider would mind?
- If we only worshiped God two Sundays a month, would we expect to be called faithful?
- If we only prayed when we needed something, would we expect to be called consistent?
- If we attend church only when we have to, would we expect to be called steadfast?

God wants from us faithful believing loyalty and a persistent love to know about Him to make a difference in our daily lives. A big difference. A holy difference.

God wasn't getting that from the people of Israel and used Hosea and his messed-up family to make the point.

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Conclusion

The purpose of Hosea's message that we are meant to see is the grace-filled purchase which comes as a complete shock in Hosea 3.

Hosea 3:1-5, *"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 about a homer and a lethek [about 430 pounds] of barley. Then I told her, 'You are to live with me many days; you must not be a prostitute or be intimate with any man, and I will behave the same way toward you.'" For the Israelites will live many days without king or prince, without sacrifice or sacred stones, without ephod or household gods. Afterward the Israelites will return and seek the Lord their God and David their king. They will come trembling to the Lord and to his blessings in the last days."*

This is important! Note exactly what happened in the life of Hosea in chapter 3. What was Hosea commanded to do? Hosea was commanded to buy back his own wife from sexual slavery.

He was already married to her and yet he had to purchase her out of her life of sin and love her again!

He had to forgive the betrayal. He had to give grace to her sin. He had to buy back what was already his in the first place.

What happens in the life of Hosea in chapter 3 shows us so much about God's heart and His desire for our souls.

This is the major message from this minor prophet! So, how far is God willing to go for us?

John 3:16-17, *"For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him."*

Our Heavenly Father did EXACTLY what Hosea did for Gomer! He did the same for us through His Son Jesus Christ.

God forgave betrayal. God bought back what was already His in the first place. God bought us from sin, brokenness, guilt and condemnation and the price was the blood of Jesus Christ His Son.

God bought us with a grace-filled purchase.

The message for us this morning is that if you've never accepted Jesus as your Lord and Savior, He wants you! He paid for you! God wants you to be rid of brokenness, hopelessness and condemnation.

The message for those of us who are already believers is that we have a great responsibility in our relationship with God.

We are called to be faithful. We are called to have loyalty. We are called to acknowledge God in all aspects of our lives.