

The Unfaithful Bride
October 16, 2022
Allen Power

Hosea 1:2-9; 3:1-15

Sometimes we look back on a long-lasting marriage and say, “theirs was the ‘perfect’ love story.” We know there are no “perfect” relationships because there are no perfect people; but if you had to describe a “perfect” love story what would you say about it? How would you describe a beautiful love story between a husband and wife?

The prophet Hosea didn’t get to experience a perfect love story to say the least. Our text this morning begins with these words from Hosea 1:2:

2 When the Lord first began speaking to Israel through Hosea, he said to him, “Go and marry a prostitute, so that some of her children will be conceived in prostitution. This will illustrate how Israel has acted like a prostitute by turning against the Lord and worshiping other gods.”

On the surface, the story of God’s prophet Hosea is one of the more bizarre books in scripture. God tells his prophet: *“I’ve picked out a wife for you, Hosea.” “Great,”* said God’s prophet. *“No eHarmony for me, God has chosen my bride.”* God said, *“Yes, and she’s a prostitute.” “A what?” “And she will bear children some of which won’t be yours.” “Really?” “Really! And by chapter three, after she has cheated on you, abandoned you and the kids, and humiliated you in front of the whole town, you will take her back, pay her debts, and love her again.”*

“He loves her; she cheats; the kids may not be his; yet he has to take her back.” It sounds like the makings of a sad country song. At the very least it’s an extreme example of a marriage so dysfunctional no sane man would say, “I do” to begin with. We read it, shake our heads, and wonder why God put this in the Bible.

As messed up and tawdry as this situation was, it was actually a true love story. It’s not the Pinterest-perfect, shiny, boy meets girl and everything goes well love story. It’s a picture of God’s unfailing love for adulterous Israel. It’s also a picture of His unfailing love for all sinners who are wired to be unfaithful. Ultimately, it’s a picture of salvation, undeserved by mankind, yet paid for by Christ on the cross.

The point: We look at Hosea’s story and wonder how anyone could forgive being treated so shamefully. This story illustrates that no matter how bad we’ve been, we can never drift beyond the reach of God’s love and restoration.

3 So Hosea married Gomer, the daughter of Diblaim, and she became pregnant and gave Hosea a son. **4** And the Lord said, “Name the child Jezreel, for I am about to punish King Jehu’s dynasty to avenge the murders he committed at Jezreel. In fact, I will bring an end to Israel’s independence. **5** I will break its

military power in the Jezreel Valley.” **6** Soon Gomer became pregnant again and gave birth to a daughter. And the Lord said to Hosea, “Name your daughter Lo-ruhamah—‘Not loved’—for I will no longer show love to the people of Israel or forgive them. **7** But I will show love to the people of Judah. I will free them from their enemies—not with weapons and armies or horses and charioteers, but by my power as the Lord their God.” **8** After Gomer had weaned Lo-ruhamah, she again became pregnant and gave birth to a second son. **9** And the Lord said, “Name him Lo-ammi—‘Not my people’—for Israel is not my people, and I am not their God.

- Often in that culture children were given symbolic names.
- *Jezreel (1:4) means “scattered,” referring to the time when God would scatter Israel among the nations*
- *Lo-ruhamah (1:6) means “unpitied,” meaning that God would lift His mercy from the nation and permit her to suffer for her sins;*
- *Lo-ammi (1:9) means “not my people,” indicating this present time in God’s program when Israel is out of fellowship with God and its people are not His people as once they wereⁱ*
- Warren Wiersbe says in these verses, (and these three kids’ names) “we have a summary of Israel’s spiritual condition.”ⁱⁱ
- As a just God, He would have to punish Israel, but one day God will show mercy to that nation. Those bad names will be changed to new names:

10 “Yet the time will come when Israel’s people will be like the sands of the seashore—too many to count! Then, at the place where they were told, ‘You are not my people,’ it will be said, ‘You are children of the living God.’ **11** Then the people of Judah and Israel will unite together. They will choose one leader for themselves, and they will return from exile together. What a day that will be—the day of Jezreel—when God will again plant his people in his land.

- One day the nation of Israel will recognize Jesus as Messiah when He returns and receive God’s grace and the fulfillment of His promises.
- That’s what we learn from the children. What about unfaithful Gomer as a picture of unfaithful Israel?
- Chapter two reads like a testimony in divorce court as the charges of adultery are pronounced against unfaithful Israel. In this case the adultery was against God and made up of “idolatry, ingratitude, and hypocrisy.”ⁱⁱⁱ
- Before chapter two is over, God is already looking ahead to restoring Israel:

Hosea 2:16 (NLT) — 16 When that day comes,” says the Lord, “you will call me ‘my husband’ instead of ‘my master.’

Hosea 2:20 (NLT) — 20 I will be faithful to you and make you mine, and you will finally know me as the Lord.

Hosea 2:23 (NLT) — 23 At that time I will plant a crop of Israelites and raise them for myself. I will show love to those I called ‘Not loved.’ And to those I called ‘Not my people,’ I will say, ‘Now you are my people.’ And they will reply, ‘You are our God!’ ”

- God had to punish unfaithful Israel, yet He already has a plan for their redemption. It's a plan that is still unfolding.
- Part of Israel's problem was they wouldn't just pay attention to words so God made Hosea's marriage a living, breathing, object lesson.

Hosea 3:1–5 (NLT) — 1 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.” **[The next verse seems to imply Gomer was being sold as a slave]** **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.

- Here we not only see a picture of Israel, we see a picture of all mankind.
- Gomer's sin had broken Hosea's heart and humiliated him; it had also literally enslaved her. Any self-respecting jilted husband might say, “*You got what you deserved*” but God is using Hosea to illustrate His grace.
- I forgot to mention, the name “Hosea” means means “Salvation”.^{iv}
- God sent Hosea to bail out and redeem his unfaithful wife. He did more than just buy her freedom. He took her back again to be his bride.

1 Peter 1:18–20 (NLT) — 18 For you know that God paid a ransom to save you from the empty life you inherited from your ancestors. And it was not paid with mere gold or silver, which lose their value. **19** It was the precious blood of Christ, the sinless, spotless Lamb of God. **20** God chose him as your ransom long before the world began, but now in these last days he has been revealed for your sake.

- Hosea's story points to Christ on the cross paying the ransom for anyone who will trust him, no matter what sin lies in our past.
- It's also a reminder for those of us who have followed Christ that even if we drift, we are not out of reach of God's forgiveness and love.
- I thought of a song from more than twenty years ago called “No Place So Far.” Listen to some of the lyrics,

*“I never thought I'd get so far from where I started out
I must have left You one day at a time
And thinking of the things I've done and longing for what's lost
I can't believe You'd want me as I am*

*And even though it feels like I'm the smallest one on earth
Somehow Your quiet voice inside is heard*

*No height, no depth
Could keep you from my love
No thing that you could ever do
There's no place so far
That you are out of reach
No matter what you feel this still is true
No thing can keep my love from you"^v*

So, What's the Takeaway?

- The dysfunctional story of Hosea and Gomer is really a love story.
- It's bizarre yet beautiful. It's raw yet redemptive.
- It illustrates that no matter how bad we've been, we can never drift beyond the reach of God's love and restoration.
- In Hosea chapter fourteen God said to Israel (and to us), "² *Bring your confessions, and return to the Lord.*^{vi} *Then I will heal you of your faithlessness; my love will know no bounds, for my anger will be gone forever.*"^{vii}
- Why would God be willing to forgive like that?
- **2 Timothy 2:13 (NLT) — 13** If we are unfaithful, he remains faithful, for he cannot deny who he is.
- God is just and sin must be punished, but He is also merciful and that's why He sacrificed His own Son to pay our ransom.
- He's a God of both justice and mercy --- that's Who He is --- and though we are unfaithful, He remains faithful.
- No matter what's in the past, there's "no place so far" to keep us from His love and redemption.

ⁱ Wiersbe, W. W. (1993). [*Wiersbe's Expository Outlines on the Old Testament*](#) (Ho 1–3). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

ⁱⁱ Wiersbe, W. W. (1993). [*Wiersbe's Expository Outlines on the Old Testament*](#) (Ho 1–3). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

ⁱⁱⁱ THE WIERSBE BIBLE COMMENTARY: OLD TESTAMENT © 2007 Warren W. Wiersbe

^{iv} Easley, K. H. (2002). [*Holman QuickSource guide to understanding the Bible*](#) (p. 171). Nashville, TN: Holman Bible Publishers.

^v Songwriters: Don Black / Gerald Presgurvic
No Place So Far lyrics © Sony/ATV Music Publishing LLC

^{vi} Tyndale House Publishers. (2015). [*Holy Bible: New Living Translation*](#) (Ho 14:2). Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House Publishers.

^{vii} Tyndale House Publishers. (2015). [*Holy Bible: New Living Translation*](#) (Ho 14:4). Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House Publishers.