

Loathsome yet Loved ~ Hosea Chapter One

Despicable Me and A Merciful God

Luke Thorne ~ 9.25.19

Today, we are beginning an amazing new journey through the prophecies of Hosea. There is possibly no account more saturated with the truths of God's holiness as well as his mercy and grace. But many of these passages will not be easily borne in our complacent hearts. I promise, this series will challenge your deepest understanding about who you are and who God is. It will shake many of you to the core. However, I also promise the end result will be a magnificent and humbling and awe-inspiring understanding of God's personal love for you.

A Note on the Text

The Book of Hosea is a prophesy mainly for the northern kingdom of Israel. Unlike most other prophetic writings, however, God's revelation through Hosea is demonstrated through the direct real-life drama.

"...The births and naming of his children [are] the beginning of the entire prophesy....The children are themselves the oracles [of God] and the theological framework of Hosea's message... In a real sense, they are the prophesy and everything else is just exposition."¹

A Note on Hosea

The name Hosea (properly, Hoshea in Hebrew) is also "the name originally borne by Joshua. Like Joshua/Jesus, it is derived from the verb 'to save'.²" Where Jeshua literally means 'to save,' Hoshea is of the imperative sense. It is an exclamation—a plea—"Oh, save!"

How awesome is that? His very name describes the message of this book. Some might find it hard to see, especially when you read what we just read, but there it is: God saves! And like the fact of God's saving grace, we must first understand our true state. We are, outside of Jesus, loathsome creatures. We must understand this if grace is to have any impact on our hearts.

Historical Context

Hosea 1:1 (ESV)

1 The word of the LORD that came to Hosea, the son of Beerī, in the days of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah, kings of Judah, and in the days of Jeroboam the son of Joash, king of Israel."

It is important, before we go any further, to take a moment to consider the context of the time Hosea found himself in when the LORD chose him as prophet.

¹ Duane A. Garrett, New American Commentary — Hosea and Joel. Volume 19a

² Derek Kidner, The Message of Hosea: Love to the Loveless, (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 1984), WORDsearch CROSS e-book, 14.

The Setting

The once holy nation of Israel has long been divided in two. The Assyrians are growing in power and all of the surrounding nations are beginning to look to Judah and Israel with hungry eyes. In the north, Jeroboam II tenuously reigns in Israel fighting a civil war against King Amaziah of Judah (Uzziah's father). Jeroboam II "did what was evil in the sight of the LORD³." He would fatefully prove to be the last King of Israel of the house of Jehu and "Within a generation the kingdom of Israel would be extinct."⁴

In the south, Uzziah (Azariah) reigned for 52 years and "did what was right in the eyes of the LORD,⁵" at least for a time. However, he did not destroy the mountaintop worship sites of the Baals and so abominations continued to spread throughout the land. His son Jotham reigned after his father was struck down with leprosy and, for the next 16 years, prevailed against the Ammonites and "did what was right in the eyes of the LORD."⁶ His son, Ahaz, did not.

A screwed scholar will note that there were many other kings in the North during the aforementioned years. However it seems that, because of their murderous ways (many only reigning for months before being assassinated by another pretender) that Hosea did not mention them because they were just that: *pretenders*. "He regarded Jeroboam II as the last king of Israel with any shred of legitimacy."⁷ None of them were of the continuing lineage but usurpers from other families.

God's Command to Hosea

Hosea 1:2

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."

Wife of Whoredom

There is some debate as to whether Gomer was an active prostitute at the time of their marriage or merely known to be promiscuous. There is a third option, that she was a cult prostitute for one of the Canaanite fertility goddesses. Many have ascribed to this notion.

³ 2 Kings 14:24a (ESV)

⁴ Derek Kidner, *The Message of Hosea: Love to the Loveless*, (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 1984), WORDsearch CROSS e-book, 15.

⁵ 2 Kings 15:3; 2 Chronicles 26:4

⁶ 2 Chronicles 27:2

⁷ Duane A. Garrett, *New American Commentary — Hosea and Joel*. Volume 19a

However, I do not believe this was so because there is, in fact, a word in Hebrew to describe this particular kind of prostitution⁸.

No, I believe a plain reading of the text suggests that she was, in fact, a prostitute at the time of their betrothal. Moreso, this fits theologically with a full understanding of our fallen nature at the moment of saving grace.

Children of Whoredom

Children are the fruit of physical bonds between a man and his wife—nay, the fruit of physical intimacy of any kind. The three children born of Hosea and Gomer symbolized the fruit—the consequences—of Israel’s faithlessness... the same faithlessness we are all guilty of.

People of Whoredom

The land commits great whoredom by forsaking the LORD

“...denoting more than absence from God, signifies opposed to walking with him; the breaking of the marriage vow, cut off from loving relationship (Psa 73:27).⁹”

Hosea 1:3

3 So he went and took Gomer, the daughter of Diblaim, and she conceived and bore him a son.

Diblaim, in Hebrew, literally means “grape-cakes.” Thereby indicating Gomer as the daughter of “pleasure and sensuality¹⁰.”

“The sweetness of sins is the parent of destruction.¹¹” ~ Edward Bouverie Pusey (1800-1882)

Jezreel

Hosea 1:3b-5

“...and she conceived and bore him a son.

4 And the LORD said to him, “Call his name Jezreel, for in just a little while I will punish the house of Jehu for the blood of Jezreel, and I will put an end to the kingdom of the house of Israel.

5 And on that day I will break the bow of Israel in the Valley of Jezreel.

⁸ Even in the Book of Hosea, this term is used and is distinct from “prostitute”: **Hosea 4:14 (ESV)**
I will not punish your daughters when they play the whore, nor your brides when they commit adultery; for the men themselves go aside with prostitutes and sacrifice with cult prostitutes, and a people without understanding shall come to ruin.

⁹ James Wolfendale, Preacher's Complete Homiletical Commentary on the New Testament: Volume 25: The Minor Prophets, (Austin, Texas: WORDsearch, 2016), WORDsearch CROSS e-book, Under: "Chapter 1".

¹⁰ *ibid.*

¹¹ *ibid.*

Jezebel was a place the people of Israel would have been very familiar with. “[It] was the scene of many significant—and violent—events in Israel’s history.¹²”

- It was where the Israelites prepared for a disastrous battle with the Philistines (1 Sam 29:1).
- It was the capital of the insurrectionist kingdom of Ishbaal (2 Sam 2:8).
- It is where many battles were fought by Deborah (Judges 4-5) and Gideon (Judges 6-7)
- It was where Naboth was framed and murdered by Jezebel 1 Kings 21:1).
- It was where Jehu murdered all the supporters and household of Ahab (2 Kings 9:24-10:11).
- It is where Armageddon will be fought (Revelations 16:15-16).

More ominously, the name means “God Will Sow.¹³” While the valley had been originally named this because of its fertility, it points to the coming destruction God would sow in both the line of Jehu and Israel itself.

Galatians 6:7 warns us, “do not be deceived: God is not mocked, whatever one sows, that will he also reap.”

No Mercy

Hosea 1:6-7

6 She conceived again and bore a daughter. And the LORD said to him, “Call her name No Mercy, for I will no more have mercy on the house of Israel, to forgive them at all.

7 But I will have mercy on the house of Judah, and I will save them by the LORD their God. I will not save them by bow or by sword or by war or by horses or by horsemen.”

What a hard thing to name your daughter. Recalling that the children and their names *are* the oracle of God through Hosea, we must stop to consider this very carefully.

Isn’t the most common attribute of God in the O.T. Steadfast mercy (loving-kindness)? Has God changed his mind about the children of Abraham? No. Remember something, and

¹² Duane A. Garrett, New American Commentary — Hosea and Joel. Volume 19a

¹³ from <H2232> (zara`) and <H410> ('el); God will sow.

James Strong, **Strong's Talking Greek & Hebrew Dictionary**, (Austin, TX: WORDsearch Corp., 2007), WORDsearch CROSS e-book, Under: "3157".

never forget it. Our God is a Jealous God. The children of Israel had wholly rejected the LORD and gone after Baal.

Like Gomer, the children of Israel had become whores to other gods. Even while being wooed and shown kindness and forbearance from their LORD, they rejected him.

Like Gomer, we can become whores to other gods.

God has shown me something again lately that I had become calloused to. We talk often, in Christian circles, of God's amazing grace. About how fully the blood of Jesus covers our sins. About how much he loves and pursues us. The airwaves are filled with it. Our sermons and devotionals are filled with it.

But the deepness of the abomination that is sin is something I believe we all, if not carefully guarding for, becomes lessened. We begin to consider our transgressions as something more akin to a toddler's tantrums rather than see it through God's eyes. It is much easier for God to have mercy on a headstrong baby than on a whore.

I'm not suggesting that we all get to our knees and beg, as if standing in the promises of God were a bad thing. But grace and mercy are cheapened if we fail to see what is *deserved* in our lives.

Not My People

Hosea 1:8-9

8 When she had weaned No Mercy, she conceived and bore a son.
9 And the LORD said, "Call his name Not My People, for you are not my people, and I am not your God."

Ouch. Spurgeon once preached, "To be forsaken of God implies utter loneliness, utter helplessness, utter friendlessness, utter hopelessness, and unutterable agony.¹⁴" Can you imagine? Perhaps some of you can when you remember that desperate moment when you assessed yourself fully for the first time and fell to the feet of Jesus. This is the state of our flesh. This is where we are left if we leave God.

It is an existential agony relieved only by the loving acceptance of God when you surrender all to Jesus Christ. And so, we must not stop here, but rush onward to the promised mercy and grace!

¹⁴ James Wolfendale, Preacher's Complete Homiletical Commentary on the New Testament: Volume 25: The Minor Prophets, (Austin, Texas: WORDsearch, 2016), WORDsearch CROSS e-book, Under: "Chapter 1".

Promises of Mercy

Hosea 1:10-11

10 Yet the number of the children of Israel shall be like the sand of the sea, which cannot be measured or numbered. And in the place where it was said to them, "You are not my people," it shall be said to them, "Children of the living God."

11 And the children of Judah and the children of Israel shall be gathered together, and they shall appoint for themselves one head. And they shall go up from the land, for great shall be the day of Jezreel.

God gave three disastrous Oracles to the Children of Israel. But in this stunning reversal, he hearkens back to that eternal covenant he made with Abraham.

Genesis 22:16-18

16 "By myself I have sworn, declares the LORD, because you have done this and have not withheld your son, your only son,

17 I will surely bless you, and I will surely multiply your offspring as the stars of heaven and as the sand that is on the seashore.

And your offspring shall possess the gate of his enemies,

18 and **in your offspring shall all the nations of the earth be blessed**, because you have obeyed my voice."

Galatians 3:16 tells us that Jesus is the *sole* offspring of Abraham and that through him *alone* we receive the blessings of God¹⁵.

You see, "no mercy" is not the end of the story. As promised in Ezekiel, there would be one head.

Ezekiel 34:23-24

23 And I will set up over them one shepherd, my servant David, and he shall feed them: he shall feed them and be their shepherd.

24 And I, the LORD, will be their God, and my servant David shall be prince among them. I am the LORD; I have spoken.

And that head is Jesus. "And [God] put all things under his feet and gave him as head over all things to the church, which is his body, the **fullness** of him who **fills all in all**.¹⁶" (Emphasis added). He is alive and he offers us to become his bride. We no longer have to play the harlot. You have been set free in Christ!

¹⁵ Galatians 3:16 (ESV)

Now the promises were made to Abraham and to his offspring. It does not say, "And to offsprings," referring to many, but referring to one, "And to your offspring," who is Christ.

¹⁶ Ephesians 1:22-23

Yes, you and I and everyone you have ever met deserve “no mercy.” We are all, by virtue of our nature, “Not God’s People.” But God has made a way for us to be reconciled with him forever. It is not an easy way—it involved a cross!—but it is the only way. We are, outside of Christ, whores to our lusts and desires and passions. They only lead us deeper into the darkness of separation from our loving creator.

2 Corinthians 1:20-22

20 For all the promises of God find their Yes in [Jesus]. That is why it is through him that we utter our Amen to God for his glory.

21 And it is God who establishes us with you in Christ, and has anointed us,

22 and who has also put his seal on us and given us his Spirit in our hearts as a guarantee.

Do you stand in the promises of God? I often struggle to, though the Holy Spirit has been abundantly gracious to me of late. Do you know how much the Father loves his son? Do you know that, by believing in him in faith, that same love is transferred to you?

Luke 15:18-24

18 I will arise and go to my father, and I will say to him, “Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you.

19 I am no longer worthy to be called your son. Treat me as one of your hired servants.”

20 And he arose and came to his father. But while he was still a long way off, his father saw him and felt compassion, and ran and embraced him and kissed him.

21 And the son said to him, ‘Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son.’

22 But the father said to his servants, ‘Bring quickly the best robe, and put it on him, and put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet.

23 And bring the fattened calf and kill it, and let us eat and celebrate.

24 For this my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found.’ And they began to celebrate.

You, once dead, are made alive as your heavenly Father’s son or daughter with *every* heavenly blessing heaped bountifully upon you. Perhaps you don’t know that. Or perhaps you understand it, but don’t truly believe it. Either way, I stand here before you today *only* because of the riches of God’s grace. There is no redeeming quality in Luke Thorne. But there is the power of the fullness of Christ who fills all in all in me... and in you. All of the promises of God find their fulfillment in Christ! Stand in him, and know and believe that you are redeemed from the bondage of sin and death.