

God's Redeeming Love ~ Hosea 2:14-3:1

Betrothed to the LORD Forever

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Introduction

The last time we studied Hosea was rough. The first 13 verses of chapter 2 are not for the faint of heart, but it is *essential* for us to understand God's jealousy and willingness to hold us in discipline and judgement if we continually run back to our harlotry.

Today, we are looking the necessary outcome of being returned to the wilderness—and I cannot wait to show you each how much your creator loves you. It is an unfathomable and unachievable love. But it is only experienced if we honestly come to terms with our own depravity and ugliness. A return, if you will, to the wilderness of our spiritual youth. We are, by nature, whores.

We can often be lured into thinking that we are a good *enough* person, or that the LORD likes us just the way we are. We must, however, endeavor to consider ourselves soberly. Today's message will not be able to break through the hardness of privilege and comfort to affect our heart of hearts if we do not.

If, however, we do have a sober understanding of our innate nature and truly believe that the LORD's purpose in sending Jesus to death was to enable us to die to this world, I know today's message will encourage each of us and build us up; grounding us in Christ and drawing our eyes upward to those most precious heavenly gifts.

Allured with Tenderness

Hosea 2:14 (ESV)

“Therefore, behold, I will allure her, and bring her into the wilderness, and speak tenderly to her.

To allure is to woo—to entice, flatter, or persuade¹ through affection. Once the LORD had sufficiently “broken” Israel, he was able to begin the courtship process anew.

The word “therefore,” in this case, isn't so much a demarcating conclusion of the previous passage (verse 13) as it is a indication of a change in Israel's heart because of God's justice.

“‘Therefore,’ a treatment not as we should expect, not after the manner of men, but according to Divine mercy. This is not an inference from the 13th verse, but from the whole section. Because Israel had been punished severely for sin and forgetfulness of

¹ Strong's Talking Greek & Hebrew Dictionary. <H6601>

God; because [she was] reduced to distress and longing to return to God—“I will go and return...” Hos 2:7—“therefore” God allures and restores the sinner to himself.²”

Therefore, it might more helpfully be rendered “nevertheless.” The first 13 verses were a brutal expression of God’s judgement of his unfaithful bride, *nevertheless* he would again draw her close with love and affection.

Trouble becomes Hope

15 And there I will give her her vineyards and make the Valley of Achor a door of hope. And there she shall answer as in the days of her youth, as at the time when she came out of the land of Egypt.

Vineyards indicate prosperity and blessing. Recall, in verse 12 the LORD promised the destruction of Israel’s vineyards and orchards because she saw them only as fair wages from her “lovers.”³”

The harlot’s return to the state of fear, submission, and trust that she had not experienced since her time wandering the wilderness is what would allow God to demonstrate his love and faithfulness. He first has to remove any idol from our eyes and hearts—no matter how painful—so that we can return to intimacy with him.

It is a profound paradox that through *only* our daily struggles and trials that the door to hope is found. Jesus’ message of grace, healing, and reconciliation is only accepted by the broken and downtrodden. After all, it is not the well but the sick who are in need of the physician⁴.

Husband and Lord

16 “And in that day, declares the LORD, you will call me ‘My Husband,’ and no longer will you call me ‘My Baal.’

17 For I will remove the names of the Baals from her mouth, and they shall be remembered by name no more.

Ishi vs Baali

This is a clever wordplay, because both “husband” (ishi) and “master” (baali) are references to husband, though their connotations are rather different.

² Preacher’s Complete Homiletical Commentary: Volume 25: The Minor Prophets.

³ Hosea 2:12a (ESV)

12 And I will lay waste her vines and her fig trees, of which she said, ‘These are my wages, which my lovers have given me.’

⁴ See Mark 2:17

“There are wordplays on the terms *אִישׁ* (‘ish) and *בַּעַל* (ba‘al) here. The term *אִישִׁי* (‘ishi, “my man, husband”) is a title of affection (Gen 2:23; 3:6, 16)... The term *בַּעְלִי* (ba‘li, “my lord”) emphasizes the husband’s legal position (Exod 21:3; Deut 22:22; 24:4). The relationship will no longer be conditioned on the outward legal commitment but on a new inward bond of mutual affection and love.⁵”

So it is that the LORD, through the fulfillment of his new covenant in Christ, has opened the door for us to not merely be *legally* married to himself, but *intimately* instead. See Pastor Paul’s studies on the Song of Songs for a deeper understanding into this profound but often misunderstood truth.

Of course, the second implication of this passage (especially in verse 17) is that God is developing a new relationship with his bride that does not even resemble how other gods are worshiped. And we see this all too often today. In Islam, God is master and man mere servant. But through Jesus, we are offered something incomparable to what can ever be offered by Allah: a marriage built on love; a promise to become actual heirs of God himself.

Oh how beautiful that day will be. Can you see it? It’s just there over the horizon. But it is not only the LORD’s bride that so longs for that day; all of creation groans for it⁶.

A New Covenant with Creation

18 And I will make for them a covenant on that day with the beasts of the field, the birds of the heavens, and the creeping things of the ground. And I will abolish the bow, the sword, and war from the land, and I will make you lie down in safety.

God is foreshadowing a new covenant—one that fully conquers the depravity of sin and all its far-reaching effects throughout creation and makes it as though it never was. It is *The Day of the LORD* mentioned so often throughout scripture⁷.

Romans 8:21 (ESV) says “...creation itself will be set free from its bondage to corruption and obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God.” Oh, that we were at that day now! No more sin, no more death, no more pain, no more fear. It is a day that not only creation eagerly awaits, but even so, all the more us who are God’s bride.

But did you know that you can experience a taste of that promised day today⁸? It is a promise—a covenant—of grace upon grace, and it’s one that is made manifest in us each day

⁵ NET Bible. Hosea 2:16, Note #54tn

⁶ See Romans 8:19-23

⁷ See: Ps 46:9, Is 11:6-9, Ezk 36:26, etc

⁸ Philippians 4:6-7 (NET)

⁶ Do not be anxious about anything. Instead, in every situation, through prayer and petition with thanksgiving, tell your requests to God.

⁷ And the peace of God that surpasses all understanding will guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus.

we chose to set aside the old self and allow Christ to live in us and through us.

Betrothed Forever

19 And I will betroth you to me forever. I will betroth you to me in righteousness and in justice, in steadfast love and in mercy.

20 I will betroth you to me in faithfulness. And you shall know the LORD.

This is a promise and guarantee of God's unfailing love and willingness to reconcile us to himself. This betrothal is *forever*. It is an eternal renewal of his promised covenant blessings to Israel⁹, and God takes a moment to reveal five "methods of engagement," as well as the final result of the engagement. Each warrant deep consideration.

The first two methods are "righteousness" and "Judgement."

Righteousness: <H6664> *Sādaq*

"The basic meaning of *ṣādaq* is "to be righteous." It is a legal term which involves the whole process of justice. God "is righteous" in all of His relations, and in comparison with Him man is not righteous...¹⁰

In a derived sense, the case presented may be characterized as a just cause in that all facts indicate that the person is to be cleared of all charges...¹¹

Justice: <H4941> *Shepātîm*

"The noun *shepātîm* refers to "acts of judgment."¹²

But righteousness and judgement, alone, are not enough to "secure the lasting continuance of the covenant; and therefore God also promises to show [lovingkindness] and compassion."¹³

Lovingkindness: <H2617> *Hesed*

"In general, one may identify three basic meanings of [*hesed*], which always interact: "strength," "steadfastness," and "love." Any understanding of the word that fails to suggest all three inevitably loses some of its richness."¹⁴

⁹ So the promise overflows with generosity. It is all of grace, and it clothes the New Covenant in wedding garb. It makes three things very plain: the permanence of this union (19a), the intimacy of it (20b), and the fact that it owes everything to God.—The Bible Speaks Today - The Message of Hosea: Love to the Loveless.

¹⁰ "Shall mortal man be more just [righteous] than God?" (Job 4:17)

¹¹ Vine's Expository Dictionary of Old Testament and New Testament Words.

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Preacher's Complete Homiletical Commentary: Volume 25: The Minor Prophets.

¹⁴ "'Love' by itself easily becomes sentimentalized or universalized apart from the covenant. Yet 'strength' or 'steadfastness' suggests only the fulfillment of a legal or other obligation."—Vine's Expository Dictionary of Old Testament and New Testament Words.

Compassion: <H7356> *Racham*

“from <H7355> (*racham*); compassion (in the plural¹⁵); by extension the womb (as cherishing the fetus); by implication a maiden :- bowels, compassion, damsel, tender love, (great, tender) mercy, pity, womb¹⁶.”

“But even the love and compassion of God have their limits; the Lord still further adds, “in faithfulness or constancy,” and thereby gives the promise that he will no more withdraw his mercy from her” [Keil].¹⁷”

Faithfulness: <H530> *'Emûnâ*

“The basic meaning of *'emûnâ* is "certainty" and "faithfulness".¹⁸”

It is in God’s faithfulness—his inability and unwillingness to renege on his covenant promises—that secures us our eternal betrothal to him. The final result—the crowning achievement¹⁹—of this betrothal is laid out clearly at the end of verse 20, but the fullness of its meaning is somewhat lost in translation into English.

You Shall Know the LORD

“To know’ God is to have an intimate experiential knowledge of Him.²⁰” It’s not enough to merely know *of* him, or to acknowledge him. Knowing God is having a personal relationship with him based on fear, submission, and trust; this is what has been made available to each and every one of us through Christ.

On That Day

21 “And in that day I will answer, declares the LORD, I will answer the heavens, and they shall answer the earth,
22 and the earth shall answer the grain, the wine, and the oil, and they shall answer Jezreel,

At first glance, the answer, “Jezreel” seems somewhat confusing. In order to understand it, we must look back to Hosea 1:4-5. Recall that Jezreel (and by extension, the Valley of Jezreel) means “God Sows.”

¹⁵ “Always used in the plural intensive”—Ibid.

¹⁶ Strong's Talking Greek & Hebrew Dictionary.

¹⁷ Preacher's Complete Homiletical Commentary: Volume 25: The Minor Prophets.

¹⁸ “Man may show himself "faithful" in his relations with his fellow men (1 Sam. 26:23). But generally, the Person to whom one is "faithful" is the Lord Himself.” —Vine's Expository Dictionary of Old Testament and New Testament Words.

¹⁹ See Jer 31:34

²⁰ Ibid. “So Pharaoh denies that he knows Jehovah (Exod. 5:2) or that he recognizes His authority over him. Positively "to know" God is paralleled to fear Him (1 Kings 8:43), to serve (1 Chron. 28:9), and to trust (Isa. 43:10).”

In that previous passage, this alluded to the promised destruction God would sow into Israel himself. In 2:22, God (through creation) will reverse this judgement by sowing peace, plenty, and mercy into the land.

“Jezreel **לַעֲרֵאֵל** meaning, “God sows/plants,” which fits well into the agricultural fertility imagery in 2:23-25. (3) This positive connotation of **לַעֲרֵאֵל** (“Jezreel”) in 23-25 reverses the negative connotation of **לַעֲרֵאֵל** (“Jezreel”) in 1:4-5 (bloodshed of Jehu in the Jezreel Valley).²¹”

Promise of Mercy & Belonging, Thrice

23 and I will sow her for myself in the land. And I will have mercy on No Mercy, and I will say to Not My People, ‘You are my people’; and he shall say, ‘You are my God.’”

This is the third time the LORD has promised mercy to those who deserve no mercy and belonging to those who are, by their actions, enemies of God. As mentioned before, it is vital that we believe two distinct facts about ourselves in order to take hold of God’s offered grace: 1) that we are, by our nature, undeserving of mercy or belonging to a Holy God, and 2) that is exactly what he offers to *every* person at the cross. Perhaps, we should take the time to ensure we see all those around us in the same light.

In Romans 9:22, Paul notes a difference in the text: Specifically that those who are not loved will be called “[God’s] beloved.”

A Promise Applied

Hosea 3:1 (ESV)

1 And the LORD said to me, “Go again, love a woman who is loved by another man and is an adulteress, even as the LORD loves the children of Israel, though they turn to other gods and love cakes of raisins.”

And so, we arrive back with Hosea. The LORD has just revealed his righteous fury and jealousy; his willingness to punish and forsake so that repentance might be grasped; as well as his plan to restore his bride to himself... And he says to Hosea, “go and find Gomer again. She has returned to whoredom and is at this moment entertaining her lovers. Go and bring her back to your home, just as I bring *you* back to me.”

This is where the sentimentality of the the last nine verses sucker punches us (or at least it should). Stop for a moment; search through your mind and find that person who you cannot forgive. Who has betrayed you? Your spouse? Your father or mother? Your child? Yourself? Who has done what *cannot* be forgiven? Got them in your mind?

²¹ NET Bible. Hosea 2:22, Note #73tn

God *commands* you to love them the same way he's telling Hosea to love Gomer. Go and get her and bring her back into your home. "What?! You mean I have to love *her*?!?! *Him*?!?! ...the same way you love *me*?!?! God, you don't know what you're asking. That's impossible!" Keep in mind, Gomer was not just promiscuous, she *sold her body* to other men for pleasure²².

Now, some of you might be thinking, "Well, okay then. I can love *them*, but there's no way I'm going to allow them into my life to cause more pain. I'll *forgive* them, but I'm not going to reconcile with them." I'm sorry to say, if that is your attitude—and you refuse even after today's message to be swayed from it—then you do not have the love of Christ²³ and you are living in darkness pretending it's light.

1 John 2:9-11 (ESV)

9 Whoever says he is in the light and hates his brother is still in darkness.

10 Whoever loves his brother abides in the light, and in him there is no cause for stumbling.

11 But whoever hates his brother is in the darkness and walks in the darkness, and does not know where he is going, because the darkness has blinded his eyes.

As we've just learned, God's love—the love we are to abide in—is a love of reconciliation. It is not free, it *costs*.

It is one thing to despise the ugliness of the world and the devil's wiles. That is good and commendable. But when you look at those who walk through life around you, do you see idolaters and whores or do you see lost sons and brides-to-be? Do you see sinners in need of a savior, or lost men and women made in the image of God?

Conclusion

One of the pastors who spoke at last year's Exponential conference shared a revelation God had given him while watching the news. The program was about a recently missing child. God asked him, "what would you do if your daughter went missing tomorrow?" The pastor said, "I would drop *everything*. I wouldn't sleep or eat. I would spend every waking moment trying to find her."

After a moment, God told him, "I have missing children all around you. What will you do

²² Ibid. Hosea 1:2, Note #9tn:

"Heb "a wife/woman of harlotries." The noun זְנוּנִים (znunim) means "fornication" (HALOT 275-76 s.v. זְנוּנִים). The term does not refer to mere adultery (cf. NIV; also NCV, TEV, CEV "unfaithful"), which is expressed by the root זָנָא (na'af, "adultery"; HALOT 658 s.v. זָנָא). The plural noun זְנוּנִים (znunim, literally, "harlotries") is an example of the plural of character or plural of repeated behavior. The phrase "wife of harlotries" (אִשֶּׁת זְנוּנִים, 'eshet znunim) probably refers to a woman who is a prostitute..."

²³ See John 15:10-12

to bring *them* home?"

Thank you for journeying through Hosea with me. I know that, so far, it has been intense, and I hope and pray that it has been convicting and edifying in equal measure. I would like to leave you with a prayer and blessing from Hosea 6.

Hosea 6:1-3 (ESV)

- ¹ "Come, let us return to the LORD; for he has torn us, that he may heal us; he has struck us down, and he will bind us up.
² After two days he will revive us; on the third day he will raise us up, that we may live before him.
³ Let us know; let us press on to know the LORD; his going out is sure as the dawn; he will come to us as the showers, as the spring rains that water the earth."

Questions:

1. What is the significance of the 'therefore' in verse 14?
2. What are the promises God declares in verses 14 & 15?
3. What is the first thing that happens "on *that* day?" Why is this so significant?
4. What is the second thing that happens? Have we experienced it yet?
5. The LORD will betroth us to Him forever. Consider the gravity of each adverb:
 - righteousness
 - justice
 - steadfast love
 - mercy
 - faithfulness
6. What does the is mean that the LORD will "sow her for [himself] within the land?"
7. What does knowledge of God's love demand of us here and now?