

Sermon Series: *Hosea: A Divine Love Story*



Let Us Press On to Know the Lord

Hosea: A Divine Love Story

Hosea 1:1-11 (ESV)

¹ The word of the Lord that came to Hosea, the son of Beeri, 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.

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." ³ So he went and took Gomer, the daughter of Diblaim, 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."

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."

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."

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.

Introduction

This morning we begin a new sermon series through a short, often neglected Old Testament book call the book of Hosea. However, I believe a bit of introduction and background to this incredible story would serve us well. Jumping into a book in the middle of the Old Testament without any explanation of the historical context would be like trying to begin watching a TV series by jumping in at season two episode seven. It would be difficult to understand the flow of the story line. The same is true with the book of Hosea.

Verse one tells us that Hosea lived during the reign of four kings of Judah, Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah, and one king of Israel, Jereboam. You'll remember that the nation of Israel had been divided under the reign of king David's grandson, Rehoboam, who was the son of Solomon. His foolishness led the division between the northern and southern kingdom. The northern kingdom was made up of ten tribes, while the southern kingdom was made up of the remaining two tribes of Benjamin and Judah.

The mention of these kings enables us to date Hosea's life and ministry to the time between 753—687 B.C. "This period was the most turbulent and trying time in the history of Israel prior"¹ to the fall of the northern kingdom of Israel in 722 B.C. Hosea was called by God to be his voice to a perpetually rebellious nation that stood on the brink of national disaster because of their flagrant sin and idolatry against God. Hosea was sent to woo and warn Israel back to God at time when Israel wanted nothing to do with God. Yet, through Hosea, God was calling Israel home to his heart. That's the message of this little book.

The Goal of this Sermon Series in Hosea?

My aim this morning is to whet your appetite to **know** God more deeply through this book. Knowing God more deeply and experiencing God's presence more palpably are among the

¹ *ESV Study Bible*, Introduction to Hosea (Crossway, 2001), ??

reasons we come together each week to worship the Lord. My prayer this morning is that God will cause to awaken within your heart a new and fresh desire to seek the Lord with all your heart and know him in ways you've never known him before. That's my goal and that's my prayer and I think that's the purpose of this book. I get this from Hosea 6.

Hoses 6:1, 3 (ESV)

¹ *"Come, let us return to the Lord;*

³ *Let us know; let us press on to know the Lord;*

The Lord constantly invites his people to know him more deeply. Some of us may have stumbled a time or two on the path toward knowing God and we may be tempted to give up. Some of us may think it's too hard to get to know him and so we've wandered from away from him. Some of us may be discouraged by the fact that we do not know him as well as we expected we would by now, at this time in our lives, and so we have neglected to diligently seek him. Some of us are frustrated by our propensity toward the same sinful failings and so we feel unworthy. Some of us have simply turned our attention of our hearts toward other things. If any of this describes you, then please hear these words, which come to you personally,

Hoses 6:1, 3 (ESV)

¹ *"Come, let us return to the Lord;*

³ *Let us know; let us press on to know the Lord;*

The word 'know' is repeated twice in verse three. That word carries the emphasis. It's as if Hosea is saying, "Let us know, I mean *really know* the Lord, not just know about him." Hosea is not merely inviting us to gather additional information about God. He is inviting us into true spiritual intimacy with the Lord, because that is the desire of the Lord. These two words *tell us that God yearns that the information you know about him is to lead you into a deeper knowledge of him. Knowledge is meant to lead to love. He yearns to be truly known and deeply loved.* Do you remember what Jesus said was the greatest commandment in the all the Bible? It is that,

*"You shall **love** the Lord your God with **all** your heart and with **all** your soul and with **all** your might"* (Dt 6:4).

God yearns to be loved by you, not with just part of you, but with the entirety of your whole being. I'm praying that you will move to a new level of spiritual intimacy with the Lord. I'm praying that you will **know** him in such a way that will move your heart and cause the affections of your soul to soar upwards toward God through Jesus in a true, ever deepening love. This is

what I'm aiming at in my preaching² and I believe this is the invitation of the Lord to us during this season in this book.

Know Means Know!

And you know that know means *know*, right? I mean k-n-o-w, not n-o and yes, I'm talking about sex. The the word 'know' in the Bible can have a dual meaning depending upon the context. It can not only mean to be mentally aware of some fact or information, but it can also be a euphemism for sexual intimacy.

"Now Adam knew Eve his wife, and she conceived and bore a son" (Gn 4:1).³

The 'know' in Hosea 6 and the 'know' in Genesis 4 is the same word. Sexual intimacy between husband and wife rightly describes the level of love and nearness that God desires with his people. God's people, the church, is often described in the Bible as what? The **bride** of Christ.⁴ Speaking of the nation of Israel, God says this,

Isaiah 62:4-5 (ESV)

*but you shall be called My Delight Is in Her,
and your land Married;
for the Lord delights in you,
and your land shall be married.*

⁵ *For as a young man marries a young woman,
so shall your sons marry you,
and as the bridegroom rejoices over the bride,
so shall your God rejoice over you.*

And the coming together of Christ and his people at the end of the ages is celebrated as the "marriage supper of the Lamb,"⁵ and is described like this,

Revelation 21:2-4 (ESV)

² *And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband.* ³ *And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "Behold, the dwelling place of God is with man. He will dwell with them, and they will be his people, and God himself will be with them as their God.* ⁴ *He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall*

² Jonathan Edwards said it this way, "If it be so, that true religion lies much in the affections, hence we may infer, that such means are to be desired, as have much of a tendency to move the affections. Such books, and such a way of preaching the word, and administration of ordinances, and such a way of worshipping God in prayer, and singing praises, is much to be desired, as has a tendency deeply to affect the hearts of those who attend these means." Jonathan Edwards, *A Treatise Concerning Religious Affections: In Three Parts ...* (Oak Harbor, WA: Logos Research Systems, Inc., 1996).

³ See also Gn 4:17, 25; 19:5; Jud 19:22; 1 Sam 1:19.

⁴ Is 62:5; Eph 5:25-29, 32; Rev 19:7.

⁵ Rev 19:6,9.

there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away.

These are among the sweetest and most intimate words in the Bible. This is the essence of the covenant promises of God. It speaks of the removal of everything that would separate man from God. It speaks of the undoing of the curse of sin. These are the tender words of a lover whispering to his beloved.

This is what the book of Hosea is.

Hosea: A Divine Love Story

The book of Hosea is an intense love story. It is a tragic love story. It is a divine love story. It is a story of how much God loves his people and how much he yearns to be loved in return. It is a story that I pray will cause you to weep with amazement at the staggering depths of God's faithful love toward his covenant people, even when they have been disgustingly unfaithful to him and emotionally treacherous.

This book drips with unbelievable grace. If you think the God of the Old Testament is only a God of judgment and not a God of grace, then you've never read the book of Hosea. It begins with grace and it ends with grace, but the middle is filled with unthinkable rebellion and heart-rending sin.

This book is a story of the stubborn, sinful, God-ignoring, self-indulgent Israelites. But they are a parable of me and you. This book is the story of a loving God and it is the story of an unloving people. It is the story of a covenant-keeping God and a covenant-breaking people. I invite you to read this story with me and look for yourself in it. I'll bet you will be reminded of the grace of God toward you.

Will you pray with me that God, through this book, will meet us and move us?

Listen to the rest of the verse three.

Hoses 6:3 (ESV)

*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."*

If you are thirsty to truly know the Lord deeply and truly, then this series is for you. If you find yourself in need of spiritual refreshment, then this book is for you. If you feel neglected and unloved, then this book is for you. If you have any friends or neighbors who think God does not care about them or love them or isn't real, then invite them to come and see. Invite them to join us in this journey.

"He will come to us as the showers, and as the spring rains water the earth."

May the Lord come to us and rain down his Spirit upon us refresh our souls as the rain refreshes the dusty ground.

Why a sermon series in Hosea?

If you are like me, then you're wondering, "Lord, why this book?" One reason is that we desire to have a balanced spiritual diet. We just made our way through Colossians and as we elder prayed about which book to go through next, we sensed the Lord moving us to an Old Testament book. But then comes the question, "Why should we go through the book of Hosea? Why *that* OT book?" I asked him that question. I said, "Lord, am I crazy for wanting to preach this book? Is this what You want me to do? Can you please show me why you want me to spend time in this book?"

Certainly there is nothing flashy or trendy about Hosea—except maybe that one of the main characters may have been a prostitute. As I prayed about this, I came up with 11 reasons why it would be good for us to go through this book. I share these reasons with you because I'm praying that they will convince you that this book and this sermon series will be worth your time.

1. The first reason is that **this is the word of God and all of a God's word is good for us**. The opening words of this book read,

"The word of the Lord that came to Hosea, the son of Beeri..." (1:1)

This is not a fictional story some old Jewish grandmother dreamed up while trying to figure out what bedtime story she would tell her grandkids. At several levels, this is not a kid friendly story. This is **the word of God**.

This is the word of the Lord and **it is good for you**. Do not think lightly of Old Testament books as if they are merely dead recordings of ancient history. Oh that we would highly esteem the life-giving word of God. There is **life** to be had out of this old book. Listen to how Jesus talked about God's word. Jesus said,

"It is written, 'Man does not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God'" (Mt 4:4 quoting Dt 8:3⁶).

Life doesn't come from eating breakfast, lunch, and dinner. Life comes from **every word that comes out of the mouth of God**. We need the word of God 10,000 times more than we need breakfast, lunch, or dinner. Job said,

"I have treasured the words of his mouth more than my necessary food"

⁶ The context of the original quote is that Moses is explaining why God allowed them to hunger. The reason was so that he could teach them that spiritual food, i.e. word of God, was more important than physical food. God wanted them to know that true life does not come from filling ones belly, but from filling one's heart with God's word.

Job 23:12 (NASB).

The book of Hosea begins by telling us that what is here written is the word of the Lord. The first reason for reading this seeming old dusty story is because it is *the word of the Lord* and there is *life in it for you* if you will expect life from it and receive its message.

2 Timothy 3:16 (ESV)

¹⁶ *All Scripture is breathed out by God and **profitable** for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness,* ¹⁷ *that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work.*

You need to hear and know this story in order to be complete and equipped for every good work. **All** Scripture comes from God and is all of it **profitable** for us. *All* Scripture is breathed out by God. All of it. Even the long genealogies, the endless begets, and the incredibly detailed lists of sacrifices. Every word of Scripture is breathed out by God and it is **profitable** for us. Hosea is God's word and it will be profitable for us to spend time in it.

Belief in the truthfulness and reliability of all Scripture is the cornerstone of this church. Biblical truth is the foundation of all we teach and do in this church. You need the words of this book more than you need lunch.

2. The second reason for preaching through Hosea is that **it emphasizes God's unshakable intention to keep his promises to his covenant people despite their wickedness in breaking their promises to him.** This is the kind of God he is. You need to know this about him. The book of Hosea has something to say about this.
3. It demonstrates **God's unfailing love as he pursues and woos his covenant people while they were running from him.** God persistently goes after his wandering children and woos them back to himself. He does not leave them alone in the wilderness. He goes after them and speaks tenderly to them. You need to know this about God. The book of Hosea has something to say about this.
4. **It upholds marriage—between a man and a woman—as the wonderfully good and intimate metaphor through which God's gloriously loving heart is displayed to a broken world.** This is a message the entire world needs to hear today. The book of Hosea has something to say about this.
5. It **exposes the emptiness of worshiping sex.** Our culture clearly and unashamedly bows down daily before the false god of erotic liberty. Spiritual fulfillment is not found in unbridled sexual expression. Sex does not satisfy the thirst of our souls. Augustine was right when he said, "My soul is forever restless until it finds its rest in God." The book of Hosea has something to say about this.
6. It also makes **horribly clear the dire consequences that will come to those who ignore the call of God by refusing to repent and return to God the Father.** There are

loud warnings against such fatal spiritual stubbornness. The book of Hosea has something to say about this.

7. It also **offers incredibly precious and tender encouragement for how husbands are to love their wives.** There is a famine of godly men in this land. We men, today, need admirable examples of how to love our wives. The book of Hosea has something to say about this.
8. It also contains **a living example of how to die to self and joyfully surrender to the sovereignty of God over our lives.** Within this book is an incredibly powerful living illustration of what it means to surrender your will to God's will. If you would like to more deeply understand how to die to yourself, then join us on this journey, because the book of Hosea has something to say about this.
9. It also **illustrates that our lives are living parables on display before the watching world.** How we live our lives makes a difference. The choices we make every day, at home at work, are being watched by all of those around us and those choices matter. It matters how we choose to live our lives. The book of Hosea has something to say about this.
10. Finally, preaching a sermon series through the ancient book of Hosea is an **illustration of my trust and confidence in the Holy Spirit to feed our souls through his word.** I can't feed your souls. But I know God can and I believe he will continue to do a good work in us by using the message of Hosea to mold and shape us more clearly into the image of Christ.
11. Hosea opens a living window on **Jesus because he himself steps into the world and offers us living proof that enjoying a loving relationship with God the Father is far better than life itself.** And he loves us so much that he takes upon himself all the just punishment of our godless idolatry in order that by his righteousness we might be given the ability to truly love God from the heart—because he gives us a new heart by giving us his own Holy Spirit.

Conclusion

Are you hungry to know the Lord? Is there a restlessness within your soul? If there is a stirring within you, then perhaps it is the tender voice of a loving God whispering to your heart,

"Return to me. Press on that you might truly know me. Let nothing stop you. Seek me with all of your heart and you will find how sweet is my unfailing love toward you."

Join us as we press on to know the Lord.