

Sermon Series: *Hosea: A Divine Love Story*

Week 5

The Redeeming Love of God

Subtitle:

Hosea 3:1-5 (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." ² So I bought her for fifteen shekels of silver and a homer and a lethech of barley. ³ And I said to her, "You must dwell as mine for many days. You shall not play the whore, or belong to another man; so will I also be to you." ⁴ For the children of Israel shall dwell many days without king or prince, without sacrifice or pillar, without ephod or household gods. ⁵ Afterward the children of Israel shall return and seek the Lord their God, and David their king, and they shall come in fear to the Lord and to his goodness in the latter days.

Introduction

[Video: [The Hosea Love Story: Part 4](#)]

In chapter three we jump back into the life of Hosea & Gomer, who lived in the eighth century B.C. in the northern portion of Israel. For the past two weeks we've been in chapter 2 and the text has been about God's message to the nation of Israel. This morning, as we come to chapter 3, we return directly to the marriage of Hosea and Gomer and it gets very personal.

It's not a pretty picture. The Hosea household does not look the household of Ward and June Cleaver. I realize that most of you will not even know who that is. It's infinitely worse than the Cleaver household. It's actually even worse than the Simpson's, if that's even possible to imagine. At least, to my limited knowledge of the show, Marge never left Homer and sold herself into prostitution.

James Montgomery Boice said "The third chapter of Hosea is, in my judgment, the greatest chapter in the Bible, because it portrays the greatest story in the Bible—the death of the Lord Jesus Christ for his people—in the most concise and poignant form to be found anywhere."¹

¹ James Montgomery Boice, *The Minor Prophets: An Expository Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2002), 31.

The Command of God to Hosea

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."*

God spoke to Hosea. The word of the LORD comes again to Hosea and commands him to

"Go again and love a woman who is loved by another man and is an adulteress..."

Woman Not Wife

The **woman** in question is Hosea's wife, Gomer. You might be wondering why God would refer to her as 'woman' and not 'wife.' The term reflects the emotional and physical distance that stood between Hosea and his wife. The answer to why she is called 'woman' and not 'wife' lies in the fact that Gomer was not at the moment acting like a wife. She was acting like an adulteress. She was at present "loved by another man."

At some point after the birth of their third child, she had left Hosea and their children² and she had run off with another man. She was involved in an adulterous affair. She was presently unfaithful to Hosea. She had broken faith with her husband and smashed all her wedding vows. She was sleeping with another man and thus she was committing a crime that, if she was caught in the act, was punishable by death. She was acting like an unfaithful woman, but she was not acting as a faithful wife.

Go After Her Again

Yet the Lord is now commanding Hosea to go after his wayward wife. She is an adulteress and God is commanding Hosea to go after her **again**. The tiny little word 'again' is incredibly telling and emotionally devastating. It means this has happened before. This was not the first time Gomer had run off after other lovers. This was not the first time she had given her body to other men. This was not the first time she had abandoned her husband and her children and broken her wedding vows. Now, once **again**, as incredibly painful and emotionally heart-wrenching as that must have been, Hosea is to go after her *again*.

Would he obey this painful command? Would he obey his God?

Go Love Her

God not only commands Hosea to go after her *again*, but he commands him to find his wife and to **love** her. That is an emotional command. God is not commanding him to tolerate her, or merely find her, or endure her, or simply bear with her. God is commanding Hosea to **love** her. God is commanding a faithful man to love an unfaithful woman. He is commanding him

² Not to mention the illegitimate children she brought into the marriage whom Hosea had adopted (See 1:2).

to love an unlovely woman. God is commanding him to give her what she does not deserve. Legally, if caught in the act, she deserved to be stoned. And God was commanding him to love her? How could God command the deepest expression of human affection to be given to a person who was prone to wandering? How could God command Hosea to love **“a woman who is loved by another man.”** This woman is his wife and yet she had abandoned him and was loved by another man. Yet, God commands him to go after this woman and to **love** her.

Such a Strange Command

Why would God command such a thing? Because Hosea & Gomer’s relationship stood as a symbol of the relationship between God and Israel. The answer is because this has everything to do with how God loves the nation of Israel.

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.”

God was commanding Hosea to love an unlovely woman because God loved an unlovely people. God was commanding Hosea to act toward his wayward wife the same way that He would act toward his wayward people, Israel. God commanded Hosea to love an adulteress because God himself loved an adulteress—the adulteress nation of Israel.

No Love of God, But Love of Raisin Cakes

Just as Gomer had turned aside to other lovers, so Israel had turned aside to other gods—which weren’t truly God at all. Israel was the one nation on the entire face of the earth whom God had personally gone after and rescued from the iron furnace³ of slavery, and yet instead of loving him, they chose to **love raisin cakes**.

These raisin cakes⁴ were possibly thought to be an aphrodisiac and were used in the cultic worship of the Baal.⁵ Israel enjoyed worshipping idols because they loved the food that went along with it. This is spiritually dangerous. In just a little while, we will celebrate communion together. The equivalent today would be taking communion only because you liked the taste of the wine or the bread. That kind of thinking is abominable in the sight of God.

Do You Really Want to Hear God's Voice?

We often have very false ideas about what it means to hear God’s voice. Sometimes we beg and plead for God to speak to us. But from Hosea’s story we learn that when God speaks, he

³ Dt 4:20; 1 Kgs 8:51; Jer 11:4.

⁴ These cakes may be similar to those offered to the “queen of heaven” (Jer 7:18; 44:19).

⁵ Robert B. Chisholm, Jr., “Hosea,” in *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures*, ed. J. F. Walvoord and R. B. Zuck, vol. 1 (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1985), 1387.

intends to be obeyed. His commands are not optional. Don't ask to hear him speak unless you are first ready to do whatever he commands.

The Response of Hosea to God

Hosea 3:2 (ESV)

² So I bought her for fifteen shekels of silver and a homer and a lethech of barley.

Hosea obeyed God's command. He did what God told him. Hosea went and sought out his wife and he found her and when he did, it was a horrible discovery. He discovered that she had sold herself into slavery.

Hosea Bought His Wife at Auction

The word translated 'bought' means 'to buy; to purchase by bartering.'⁶ It is this word that points us to an understanding that she had become a slave and that she was likely sold at auction. Some scholars think that she may have become a temple prostitute.⁷

However, when we combine this fact with the fact that she was called an adulteress, we are left with the picture that she had most likely sold herself into some form of sex slavery or prostitution. Another man now owned her. So the man whom she "loved" had enough of her and evidently had put her up for auction. The one to whom she sold herself to had decided he'd had enough of her and off she went to the auction block. She had been betrayed by her "lover," even though this, of course, is not love at all.

A Naked Slave

Slaves in antiquity were always stripped naked when they were sold.⁸ Imagine the humiliation of having the man to whom you sold your body, reject you and put you up for auction. And this was not a private auction, but a public auction. Add to that the shame of being publicly sold the shame of standing naked before a crowd of people.

Feel the stares of those who were deciding whether or not to purchase you or simply having a look. I cannot imagine that Gomer would even have been able to lift her head to meet their gaze. Imagine the thoughts that might have been running through her mind.

"I wish I'd never left Hosea. Who will buy me? Whose slave will I be. I should speak up and tell them that I'm married! But, no. Who would believe me. It doesn't matter. I

⁶ James Strong, *Enhanced Strong's Lexicon* (Bellingham, WA: Logos Bible Software, 2001).

⁷ D. A. Carson et al., eds., *New Bible Commentary: 21st Century Edition*, 4th ed. (Leicester, England; Downers Grove, IL: Inter-Varsity Press, 1994), 769.

⁸ James Montgomery Boice, *The Minor Prophets: An Expository Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2002), 34.

have no rights now. Oh how I wish I could once again hold my children. I wish I could just die right now. God please kill me now. Take my life. I don't deserve to live."

Then bidding begins.

Auctioneer: "Let's start the bidding of this fine looking slave with 15 shekels of silver. Who'll give me 15 shekels?"

How stunning it would have been to hear a sum of money shouted out as the value of your life!

We might be tempted to think Gomer was beautiful or maybe even slightly seductive. I don't think so. I think she was weak, weary, and utterly without hope. And hopelessness will steal life and light and make even Miss America look like the withered face of a octogenarian.

Auctioneer: "No one? How about 10 shekels?"

Person 1: "10"

Auctioneer: "Thank you sir, who'll give me twelve?"

Person 2: "12"

Auctioneer: "Yes sir, a fine offer. Do I hear 15?"

Hosea: "15"

Gomer looks up instinctively. She recognized that voice. But it couldn't be.

Auctioneer: "15 it is. Do I hear 16?"

Person 2: "15 and homer of barley."

Auctioneer: "15 shekels of silver and a homer of barley. Going once."

Hosea: "15 shekels of silver and a homer and a half of barley."

Auctioneer: "15 shekels of silver and a homer and a half of barley."
Going once.
Going twice.
Sold to the prophet.

The Cost of a Slave

A shekel of silver today would be approximately \$10.⁹ So 15 shekels equals about \$150. It is also estimated that the barley would have equalled about \$150 also.¹⁰ That means, in today's money, Hosea bought Gomer for about \$300.

This sum, evidently, was a stretch for Hosea. Old Testament scholars tell us that it would have been unusual to mix payment of silver and produce, so apparently Hosea gave all the money he had and so had to throw in some of his crops as well. He used all his cash to buy back his wife, even though she was already his, from a legal point of view. Now, not only was she his wife, she was also his property. She was twice his now.

Hosea gave her back her clothes and then took her home. Gomer must have gotten dizzy trying to figure out what he would say to her. When he did speak, I'm sure she was astounded.

The Response of Hosea to Gomer

Hosea 3:3 (ESV)

³ *And I said to her, "You must dwell as mine for many days. You shall not play the whore, or belong to another man; so will I also be to you."*

In essence, Hosea renews his vows to her. He offers a command and a promise of faithfulness.

I will not allow you to leave me again. You are not a whore anymore. You are my wife. You do not belong to another man. You belong to me. You will live faithfully with me and I will live faithfully with you.

Hosea Promised Faithfulness

He owned her. He could have responded anyway he wished. She was his property. He could have punished her. He could have had her beaten, whipped, scourged, or even killed. But he didn't do any of those things. Instead he invited her home and promised to be faithful to her.

No More Whoring

But he would no longer tolerate her limping along between two worlds. He would not allow her to continue her whoring. He would not turn her from a pathway that would destroy her. He would not allow her to continue in her sin. His faithfulness to her and his relationship with her would satisfy her soul and secure her wandering heart. His faithful love would overcome her rebellious wandering. His faithful love would overcome her sinful propensities. He would keep her so close to him that she would never yearn for another. That is the faithfulness of God.

⁹ See http://www.chabad.org/library/article_cdo/aid/673063/jewish/Whats-the-value-of-the-biblical-half-shekel.htm.

¹⁰ Carson, 769.

Why? Why did he do this? Because God promised to be faithful to Israel.

The Application to Israel

Hosea 3:4-5 (ESV)

⁴ For the children of Israel shall dwell many days without king or prince, without sacrifice or pillar, without ephod or household gods. ⁵ Afterward the children of Israel shall return and seek the Lord their God, and David their king, and they shall come in fear to the Lord and to his goodness in the latter days.

No Monarchy, Priesthood, or Temple

Israel had already sinned to such an extent that they had forfeited the right to retain possession of the Promised Land. The nation would be punished by having the monarchy, the priesthood, and the Temple removed. They would dwell for many days without king, prince, sacrifice, or religious system. Because of their idolatry the monarchy, the priesthood, and the Temple would all be destroyed. Everything in which they had formerly trusted would be destroyed.

However, in the latter days the children of Israel will return and seek the LORD their God and David their king and they will come in fear to the Lord and to his goodness. These northern tribes who had rejected David, and his sons, would only find hope in a future son of David. Restoration would be found only in reconciliation with the house of David.

This is a promise that has yet to be fulfilled. Today Israel is still dwelling without king or prince or sacrifice or Temple. Yet there will come a day when ethnic Israel will return to the Lord and they will see his glory and seek his face with fear and trembling. God is not yet finished with ethnic Israel. There will one day be a massive revival among the people of Israel (Rom 11:23-27).

Application to Us

1. *God's love is a redeeming love.* What we see in this passage is a foreshadowing of what Jesus would do. Just as Hosea redeemed Gomer from the marketplace of sin, so Jesus would redeem us from slavery to sin. Jesus would redeem us from the dominion of Satan and set us free from the fear of death.

The basic meaning of redemption is "to purchase back something that had been lost, by the payment of a ransom."¹¹ This is exactly what Jesus has done. We were lost because of our

¹¹ Easton's Bible Dictionary (

sin and we were alienated and separated from God. Jesus has come personally and himself paid the ransom for our freedom.

Mark 10:45 (ESV)

Even the Son of Man came not to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.

The price of that ransom was not \$300 or \$3,000,000 or \$3 quintillion-million. The ransom price was the infinitely precious blood of Jesus.

1 Peter 1:18-19 (ESV)

¹⁸ knowing that you were ransomed from the futile ways inherited from your forefathers, not with perishable things such as silver or gold, ¹⁹ but with the precious blood of Christ, like that of a lamb without blemish or spot.

Jesus, by offering his blood on the cross, paid the price that redeemed us from the dominion of sin.

Galatians 3:13 (ESV)

¹³ Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us—for it is written, “Cursed is everyone who is hanged on a tree”—

Since he paid the price that set us free from the curse of sin, he now owns our lives. He owns all of us body and soul.

1 Corinthians 6:19-20 (ESV)

¹⁹ Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, whom you have from God? You are not your own, ²⁰ for you were bought with a price. So glorify God in your body.

Your body is no longer yours. It now belongs to Jesus. If you give your life to Christ, then he becomes the owner of all of you. You cannot be a Christian and say, “Jesus has my heart, but he cannot have my hands or my head.” He will have all of you or he will have none of you. No one partially belongs to the Lord. He is LORD of lords and KING of kings. He purchased you by his blood, so now glorify God in your body—this includes your sex life (see 1 Cor 6:12-20).

2. *God's redeeming love is a representative love.* God represents his redeeming love to the world through the arena of marriage. Paul said the love relationship between husband and wife stands as a mysterious representation to the world of Christ's love for his people (Eph 5:31-32). God chose to give Israel an illustration of his divine love for his people through the living parable of the marriage between Hosea and Gomer. The depth of his love for his people is best expressed through relationship of husband and wife.

We are Gomer in the story. We have all wandered off after other lovers. We have each gone astray after our own lusts have been deceived into thinking that they will satisfy us. All they do is lead us into spiritual slavery. All sin does is land us in a pit of slavery from which we cannot climb out by ourselves.

Marriage between husband and wife and the promises given to each other best expresses the depth of love that God has for his people. The promises given stand in place "until we are parted by death." And they remain in place through "better or worse, richer or poorer, in sickness and in health." There is no other relationship on the planet where those kind of promises are made. And when we break them, we shatter confidence in God's ability to keep his promises because the covenant faithfulness of the marriage bond is intended to mirror God's covenant faithfulness with his people.

On behalf of God, I implore you who are married, keep your wedding vows. For Christ's sake, do not abandon your spouse, even when he or she may deserve to be abandoned. Husbands, love and cherish your wife just as Christ loves and cherish his bride, the church. Husbands, lay down your lives for your wives just as Christ laid down his life for his bride, the church.

3. *God's redeeming love is a rescuing love.* Hosea went after Gomer, who evidently was not looking to be found. Will we go after the Gomer's of this world? Will you go after any Gomer's who are wandering? Or are her and her problems too much of a hassle?

Jesus came to seek and save that which was lost.¹² Are you seeking anyone who is lost?

If Gomer walked in this morning and sat down among us, would she be welcomed or conveniently ignored while secretly we hope she and all her messy problems moves on?

¹² Lk 19:10.