

Bearded Men – The Minor Prophets – Hosea

The Minor Prophets

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Bible Text: Hosea 1:1-11

Preached On: Sunday, May 5, 2013

I do want to encourage you this morning to open your Bibles to the book of Hosea, chapter 1. In fact, Hosea is the first of the last twelve books of the Old Testament which are known as the Minor Prophets. And as we discussed last week they're not minor in the quality of their message but rather the quantity or the length of the message. And Hosea is the first in your Bible of these twelve Minor Prophets.

As you're turning to the book of Hosea, chapter 1, we want to update you on a little project, a little entertainment, some fun that we're doing. This summer some of the staff here and I are attempting to raise the missionary resources to build an actual physical church in Central America. I want you to know that currently John is in the lead and I believe I'm coming quickly in second place. One of the things that we're doing is with pocket change. Yes there we are, they're taking pictures of us every week in the stage in which you find us. Now, these pictures are going to get uglier as the weeks go by. I just want you to know that some of us are experiencing that it's coming back a lot lighter than it used to be. But that's a whole other story. But the purpose of this and realize you see the amounts that have been given. We were not even soliciting funds for the church last week but people decided to give anyway. The buckets are in the foyer, they are down here in the front of the worship center. The winner gets the privilege of the rest of us shaving him publicly on stage at the end of the summer. Now the reason that we're doing this, yes it's entertaining, yes it's fun is because what we want to do together as a church is to build a physical church for a congregation that already has a pastor and already has a group of people.

In like manner, as we turn to the Minor Prophets, as we begin this week specifically with the person of Hosea, I want you to hear that in the Minor Prophets the Lord himself, God is speaking to his people through his prophets. As we go through this course of study and even today in the book of Hosea there are so many different examples, so many different pictures, so many different angles that can be used to come to the text. Is today a story of Hosea and his wife Gomer? Absolutely. Is today a story of God and his people Israel? Absolutely. But also today, it is a picture of our relationship with him through Jesus Christ and what we're going to see very graphically today is how the church of Jesus Christ, how the children, the sons and daughters of Jesus Christ have a horrific tendency to become Gomers in relation to the Lord, who in this story is Hosea.

I want to invite you to turn to the book of Hosea, chapter 1 in your Old Testament. As we read chapter 1 verses 1-11 one of the most graphic portions of the Bible, it says,

“The word of the Lord that came unto 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.

The beginning of the word of the Lord by Hosea. And the Lord said to Hosea, Go, take unto thee a wife of whoredoms and children of whoredoms: for the land hath committed great whoredom, departing from the Lord. So he went and took Gomer the daughter of Diblaim; which conceived, and bare him a son.

And the Lord said unto him, Call his name Jezreel; for yet a little while, and I will avenge the blood of Jezreel upon the house of Jehu, and will cause to cease the kingdom of the house of Israel. And it shall come to pass at that day, that I will break the bow of Israel in the valley of Jezreel.

And she conceived again, and bare a daughter. And God said unto him, Call her name Loruhamah: for I will no more have mercy upon the house of Israel; but I will utterly take them away. But I will have mercy upon the house of Judah, and will save them by the Lord their God, and will not save them by bow, nor by sword, nor by battle, by horses, nor by horsemen.

Now when she had weaned Loruhamah, she conceived, and bare a son. Then said God, Call his name Loammi: for ye are not my people, and I will not be your God.

Yet the number of the children of Israel shall be as the sand of the sea, which cannot be measured nor numbered; and it shall come to pass, that in the place where it was said unto them, Ye are not my people, there it shall be said unto them, Ye are the sons of the living God. Then shall the children of Judah and the children of Israel be gathered together, and appoint themselves one head, and they shall come up out of the land: for great shall be the day of Jezreel.”¹

As we mentioned last week, the prophet Hosea is unique in this sense, this is not a sermon that Hosea gives, this is not a message that he gave, this is not a letter of writing for the story of Hosea spans some 60 years and the prophecy, the message, the truths, the principles that we need to gather are actually forthcoming out of his life and in particular his relationship with someone named Gomer.

In just a few moments we're going to discuss various principles or points or things that we can glean from this passage. I believe these are eternal principles that we can apply to our life. But before we do so, I want to set the stage for these principles through the lives of Hosea and Gomer by sharing with you my favorite modern day parable. Now the word parable is not exclusive to the Word of God. Did Jesus use parables? Absolutely. Over 30 different times in the New Testament Jesus spoke of leaven and a mustard seed and the sower and he was using a story of modern relevance to communicate an eternal truth.

¹ Hosea 1:1-11.

I want to share with you my favorite modern-day parable. It sets the stage for what we're going to deal with in Gomer's life and in Hosea. It's entitled "The Parable of the Sheik." It's a story of a young man who grew up in the Middle East. He was a young man who was born to a family that was beyond wealthy, they were multi-billionaires, they had a huge conglomerate oil company. He was an only child and because he was an only child his parents took great care to protect him. They knew that the world was bad, they knew there were all kinds of temptations. They knew because he was the only heir to this multi-billion dollar oil company that there would come a day when someone would want to take advantage of him, there would come a day when people would want to take from rather than give to. So he lived this very sheltered life, he didn't get to travel much. He was educated and grew-up in a very small geographical area.

But then the time came in his late 20s when his father, his dad, unexpectedly died. Upon his death, the son took over the company. He had been educated, he had been taught, he had learned the business from his early days; but he was now actually thrust into the mix and what came with that were all the things that he had never experienced: travel and networking and interaction and the handling of the resources. A couple of months later he found himself in the heart of the economic forum of the world in New York City. He was there for a conference involving his industry. He was going to be there about two weeks and about a week into his experience it finally dawned on him what his eyes were seeing. He was experiencing sights he'd never seen before, hearing things he'd never heard before and in particular what caught his eye was the beauty of those young ladies in New York City. He finally got the gumption and the courage to talk to one of the men whom he was doing business with and asked, "Do you think one of these particular ladies would go out on the town, go out on a date with me." This is something he never got to experience growing up because his parents were so sheltering. Arrangements were made and there was a young lady who said, "I'd love to go out and just show you New York City."

His limousine picked her up where she was residing, they went to an early appetizer at a restaurant, then they went to a Broadway show, they went to a different restaurant for the main course and finally another one for the dessert and coffee. Why? Because he was filled with all these financial resources, he could show her the world. They were eating dessert, sharing a cup of coffee when this young man turned to this young lady and said, "Ma'am, can I ask you a simple question?" She said, "Sure." He said, "Tomorrow I'm going to go back to my home country. If I gave you a million dollars would you come back to my hotel room with me tonight?" She thought about it for a moment and then she agreed and said, "Sure, I would."

Another cup of coffee, another bite of dessert and he said, "Ma'am, let me ask you another question. If I gave you 20 dollars would you come back to my hotel room with me tonight?" She took her napkin, she threw it on the table, she became flushed in the face, pointed her finger at him and said, "What kind of woman do you think I am!" He said, "Ma'am, we've already established that, we're just negotiating the price."

That's what we see in the story of Hosea particularly in the person of Gomer. We see an individual by the name of Gomer who already has an identity and yet we see in this story that when the right price is given, she decides to step out, she decides that the world is more pleasing and pleasurable than her own home. It's a picture to us as believers, as James 4:4 says, "You adulterers and adulteresses, do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God."

So what are the points that we can gather from her rebellion in Hosea's love? The first of the principles, the first point is this, the fruit reveals the root. If you were to go and plant a seed today, it might be years before you would actually see the fruit on that tree, apple tree, pear tree, apricot, peach tree it doesn't matter. But eventually over the course of time with watering and nurturing, that which is embedded deep down in the ground will eventually manifest itself to the outside world.

Have you ever struggled with this call of God? Why is it that a holy God would call a holy man to marry such an unholy woman? And we struggle with this and it bothers us and we say why this picture? Why this analogy? I want you to notice something in verse 3, he went, this is Hosea, he took Gomer, the daughter of Diblaim, who conceived and bore him a son. Now go down to verse 6, she conceived again and bore a daughter. Go down to verse 8, now when she had weaned Loruhamah she conceived and bore a son. Now do you notice something missing from child 2 and child 3? The personal pronoun "him." You see that when the first child is born it says that Gomer and Hosea had a child together. On the second and the third child, there's no mentioning of Hosea, just the mentioning that a child is born.

I want you to fast-forward to chapter 2 of Hosea. In chapter 2 the Lord speaks to Jezreel, the oldest son and it's a message to his sister and to his brother. He says,

"Say ye unto your brethren, Ammi; and to your sisters, Ruhamah. Plead with your mother, plead: for she is not my wife, neither am I her husband: let her therefore put away her whoredoms out of her sight, and her adulteries from between her breasts; Lest I strip her naked, and set her as in the day that she was born, and make her as a wilderness, and set her like a dry land, and slay her with thirst. And I will not have mercy upon her children; for they be the children of whoredoms. For their mother hath played the harlot: she that conceived them hath done shamefully: for she said, I will go after my lovers, that give me my bread and my water, my wool and my flax, mine oil and my drink."²

The picture that you've got here is the picture of what happens oftentimes in your life. You enter into a relationship with Jesus Christ, you come to a point in understanding that you're a sinner in need of saving, you realize that he lived for you, he died for you, he rose from the dead and you've confessed that you're a sinner in need of saving. The Bible pictures that in Ephesians 5 as a husband to a wife. It's not a religion, it's a relationship. Everything's going fine, everything's going wonderfully, you're living life and relating

² Hosea 2:1-5.

but then all of a sudden, as pictured here, the world begins to tempt and the world begins to try and the world begins to say, “Hey, what about this?”

And what we see in the life of Gomer is oftentimes what you see in your life. It’s that which is embedded, that which is planted way down, that which is an afterthought today becomes manifested years down the line. The fruit will reveal one day the root.

And in the story of Gomer and Hosea, the first child evidently was theirs but according to chapter 2, number 2 and 3, she has stepped out, she has said I’d rather be with somebody else, some other time.

Principle number 1 is the fruit reveals the root. Let me give you Principle number 2, you get to choose your sin, you don’t get to choose your consequences. In other words, when you decide to “step out on God,” when you decide to play with the world, when you decide I’d rather have what the world offers me than what God can provide for me, you choose your rebellion or your sin, you do not have the privilege of choosing the consequences.

Do we not want to choose our consequences, though? Do we not want to give our own parameters to our own rebellion? I want to take you back to chapter 1. You go back to chapter 1, verse 6, she conceived again, she bore a daughter. God said unto who? Him, Hosea, call her name Loruhamah, I will have no mercy upon them. Verse 8, When she had weaned Loruhamah, she conceived and bore a son and then God said call his name Loammi for you are not my people.

Now ladies, let me ask you a question, “What woman in her right mind names her children ‘not pitied’ and ‘not my people?’” But she didn’t have the opportunity. What we see in this story is that she chose to rebel against God, she chose to sin and God intervened and said this is the consequence. You do not get to choose your consequences.

Let me give you some biblical examples and then I’ll make it more culturally relevant. Starting with the book of Genesis, chapter 9, Noah and Mrs. Noah and his three sons and their wives get off the boat. It’s been 14-15 months and they’re finally on dry land. The Lord says that Noah there provides and builds an altar and they have a little worship service, but then Noah finds himself kind of, you know, distracted by other things. The Bible says in Genesis 9 that there was a night where his son Ham entered into his tent and the exact quote is “he uncovered his father’s nakedness.” Now there’s a whole other sermon in that one phrase and we’re not going there today. But do you know what the Bible says? The Bible says that when Noah awoke and saw what Ham had done, he cursed Canaan, his son. Can you imagine that? The consequence of Ham’s sin, can you imagine any earthly dad would’ve said, “No, no, no, not him, take me!” God said, “I’m sorry, the curse is on your son.”

You go to Abraham just a couple of chapters later, you remember the story, Abraham and Sarah are too old to have a child physically, biologically speaking. God says, “You’re going to have a child.” They laughed at the idea, it’s why Isaac is named Isaac. But

before then, they conjure up this plan, this idea, God doesn't know what he's doing, we do so, let's have a relationship with Hagar and what happened there? To this very day the consequences of Abraham's sin, the descendants of Ishmael and the descendants of Isaac are still fighting and killing each other today. Abraham got to choose his sin, he did not get to choose his consequences.

You go to Judges 11. You have a man by the name of Jephthah, a judge, a ruler, a swordsman for the Lord. He sins, he doubts that God can provide for him and so he says, "Okay, God just to ensure victory whoever comes in the door next I will slay them and cut them into pieces if you promise me the victory." He did not get to choose that the person who walked through the door was his only daughter.

See folks, we get to choose our sins; we don't get to choose our consequence. You can go to the New Testament, Acts 5, there's a couple by the name of Ananias and Sapphira. They sell a piece of property to give to that early church that was forming and they lied about the value. They didn't get to say, "Oh, oh can we be like Zacheus and just pay back four times?" What does the Bible say? It says that God struck them dead.

In all four of those illustrations you see different consequences but one common thread, every single one of those biblical characters decided to do something contrary to God's will and way for their life and they did not have the privilege of choosing the consequence to their sin.

Now let me take it to modern days. We live in a world much like the stories I've shared and much like the story of Hosea and Gomer that is obsessed, and I'm just going to use the word, just obsessed with sexuality. Everywhere we turn, every show we watch, every article we read, it seems like that's all we hear about. Did you know that last year in this country alone we spent 16 billion dollars treating sexually transmitted diseases. Now I realize that there are anomalies and outliers and odd situations but primarily those issues came up because people decided "I want to be with people, when I want, where I want and I don't care what God says about it." We've chosen our sin, we don't get to choose the consequence. Sixteen billion dollars a year trying to somehow control the consequences when we stepped out of God's provision of what human sexuality looks like. Look we get to choose the sin, we don't get to choose the consequences.

But there's a third thing we learn from Gomer, that forgiveness does not necessarily necessitate restoration. Now I want you to hear me very clearly, when you realize that you have gone against God's ways, when you realize you've gone against his word, when you realize you have "sinned," the Bible is very emphatic. 1st John 1:9: If you confess your sins he is faithful to forgive them. God is faithful. It doesn't matter where you've been, who you've been with, what you've done or what you think you've done, what you've said, what you've thought, the Bible makes it very clear that there is no sin, there is no item that he is not willing to forgive. Listen, the power of the cross is that much. The problem is we think that forgiveness necessarily means restoration. In other words, as if it never happened.

I want you to fast-forward in the story of Hosea to chapter 3. Gomer has gone about her ways, she has been “with her lover,” she has conceived these two children, and she finds herself literally at the bottom of the socioeconomic scale. When we come to chapter 3, she is being sold as a human slave. In chapter 3 of Hosea, Hosea comes to buy her back. Beginning in verse 1 of chapter 3, it says,

“Then said the Lord unto me, Go yet, love a woman beloved of her friend, yet an adulteress, according to the love of the Lord toward the children of Israel, who look to other gods, and love flagons of wine. So I bought her to me for fifteen pieces of silver, and for an homer of barley, and an half homer of barley: And I said unto her, Thou shalt abide for me many days; thou shalt not play the harlot, and thou shalt not be for another man: so will I also be for thee. For the children of Israel shall abide many days without a king, and without a prince, and without a sacrifice, and without an image, and without an ephod, and without teraphim: Afterward shall the children of Israel return, and seek the Lord their God, and David their king; and shall fear the Lord and his goodness in the latter days.”³

In this story the picture you get is that Hosea has redeemed Gomer, that he has gone and he has bought her for 15 pieces of silver. But the Bible makes it very clear that this is a picture of God’s relationship with Israel and even though he’s forgiving them, even though he’s buying them, he is not going to give them a king immediately. They’re going to have to wait, they’re going to have to suffer the consequences. Listen, forgiveness does not necessitate restoration.

Let me give you a vivid example of this. Some years ago, as many of you know, my Dad and I had the privilege of taking a 1965 Mustang literally out of the junkyard and over the course of a year, piece-by-piece and part-by-part establishing to rebuild that car. When we began our journey we had grand plans. I mean, we had the idea of a complete restoration. By the way, if you’re not into the car world, let me give you a couple of words. The first word we like to use is called a “survivor.” That’s a car that was made in 1965 or whatever year, still has the same paint job, same seat, same carpet, it has survived so many miles and still looks like it rolled off the showroom floor. That’s a survivor. Those cars are worth a ton of money.

Then there’s a restored car. That’s a car like mine that you take out of the junkyard much like the life of Gomer and you begin piece-by-piece and moment-by-moment placing it back to where it used to be.

As I mentioned, my dad and I began this journey, it was laborious and it was expensive but we also learned after a few months that it was futile. Why? Because the numbers didn’t match. The engine had been swapped, parts had been changed and there was no physical way to actually restore it to its original condition. So what does that declare that car I drove? It’s called modified. Taking what we’ve got and doing all with it that we can. And that’s exactly what you see in the life of Gomer and that’s also sometimes what we

³ Hosea 3:1-5.

have to deal with in this life. Listen - when we rebel and sin against God, things happen, relationships occur, consequences happen and we're not guaranteed that they can completely be undone.

See we choose our sin but we don't get to choose the consequences. We ask God to forgive us and if restoration happens that's called grace and mercy but it's not promised. You know in this story of Gomer and Hosea, it's a graphic picture. I mean after all in the first chapter the Lord says go and marry a woman of whoredoms, go and marry a harlot.

People have gotten upset with that picture but people have also drawn that's very graphic. Can you imagine God asking this holy prophet to go to a place of ill repute and say I'd like to marry that individual. As we showed you a moment ago, I believe the first child was theirs, the second two were not and so most likely it's not that he took her out of that place, but you know what the picture is here? The picture is that he goes to that place of ill repute, he goes to that auction block and everybody's been bought but one and her name is Gomer. You know what he says, not "I want her," he says, "She's mine."

Now I want you to think about that image for just a moment. A life that's been wrecked, torn up, shattered, tattered and everything else in between and its even though she took off, even though she rebelled, the the picture of God in this story says, "She's mine. I want her." When you grasp that, you'll grasp this, that if restoration happens its great but forgiveness is really what we need. Forgiveness of our rebellion, forgiveness of our sin. That's why Romans 10:13 says, "Call upon the name of the Lord and you will be saved." Over and over in the Bible it says seek forgiveness. If restoration happens, great, but forgiveness is key. And I believe personally that a lot of people never experience the forgiveness of God because they're really seeking restoration. They just want the problem solved, they just want the issue gone, they want something erased when what we need addressed is our relationship to a holy God for our unholy actions.

So here's the last thing, the root demonstrates the fruit. We get to choose our sins, not our consequences, forgiveness does not necessitate restoration but here's the final thing that forgiveness and sometimes restoration always happens at the point of departure.

Now let me show you what I mean. Go back to Hosea 1, in verse 4 and 5 it says, "And the Lord said unto him," that's Hosea, "Call his name,' his first child "Jezreel" for yet a little while I will avenge the blood of Jezreel upon the house of Jehu, and will cause to cease the kingdom of the house of Israel. And it shall come to pass at that day, that I will break the bow of Israel in the valley of Jezreel." Fast-forward to verse 10, "Yet the number of the children of Israel shall be as the sand of the sea, which cannot be measured nor numbered; and it shall come to pass, that in the place where it was said unto them, Ye are not my people, there it shall be said unto them, Ye are the sons of the living God."

The valley of Jezreel. A piece of property in northern Israel literally named after the oldest son of Hosea. Maybe you've never heard of this great piece of land by its Hosea name so allow me to give you the name most of you know it by, the valley of Armageddon. This is that battlefield, this is that place in northern Israel where according

to the Bible in Revelation 19 one day Jesus Christ is going to step out of the clouds on a white horse with crowns on his head, a sword out of his mouth, clothes covered in blood, feet covered in brass and will declare once and for all that he is the victor and his enemies will be crushed. You find it interesting that in the story of Hosea the place where Israel departed is the place where he restores. So what's the lesson for us? It's real simple, where did you depart, what happened, where did you get off track?

To give you an automobile example, where did you get off the highway and exit? Where is it in your life, in your occupation, your finances, your relationship whatever it may be, where is it that you've decided I'd rather have what the world offers than what God guarantees? And you say, "Jeff, how do I get back on track? How do I seek forgiveness? How do I get this redeemed? And how possibly might I be restored?" Let me tell you what happens, you go back to where you got off, you go back to the fork in the road, you go back to the exit whatever analogy you want to use because he forgives us when we go back where we departed and say, "God I strayed from you."

See the story of Hosea and Gomer is simple. Hosea, the picture of God, Gomer the picture of us. He stays faithful, he stays true, he stays loving. It is Gomer that sought the world and yet he still loves her, redeems her, cares for her but she like us, has to be willing to go back to where you were.

Let me ask you a simple question as we prepare for our time of invitation, are you willing to do that? Because God is not going to forgive and God is not going to restore until you go back to where you departed and say, "God this is where I got off track, this is where I messed up, this is what I've been doing, this is what I've been involved in." I want to go back and say, "God forgive me, heal me and hopefully restore me." Here's the great news, 1st John 1:9, "If we confess he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins."