

Intro: We know that the LORD speaks. The LORD reveals Himself to humanity, who are created in His image to hear His voice and respond. "The word of the LORD came to Hosea..." The voice that thundered through the Cosmos before there was even an atom in place speaks to you and to me. The God who is there before His creation and over His creation condescends to let you know Him. He is not inside us or within us, as if nature was simply an extension of His body or that He would be contained by it. He is before it and above it, transcendent in eternity and glorious in majesty. And He speaks to the image-bearers so that they might know Him.

We might think that God speaks mostly when things are going poorly. God does speak then, for He speaks at all kinds of times. But the message to Hosea came in the midst of economic stability and lavish success. Things seemed to be going well. Treaties were signed, the grapes were on the vine, the oil flowed freely. It was the best of times when God spoke these words to Hosea.

And the words were not contented words of peace and prosperity, but of judgment and warning, a stripping away of the façade of security to reveal the true impotence of wealth and wisdom. You see, though it was the LORD who gave the abundance the people credited other providers. Though it was the LORD who tended the land, the people turned to idols. Though it was the LORD who loved His people and carried them out of Egypt and blessed them, they instead turned to the things that they felt...would bring them security and blessing. They never fully left the LORD, returning "home" to give him the lip service of love, but their clothes bore the stench of Ashtoreth's altar and her lipstick was on their collar. They ran to other lovers, other providers, others to whom they would trust to provide them their blessing in due time. They sold themselves through their sacrifices and their worship, through the pursuit of their pleasures. Jeroboam built the high places higher and stocked them with idolatrous priests so that the gods might hear their empty pleas for "more, more, more!" as they crush the poor and stifle the cries of infants born in the image of God.

Israel did not stumble into another god's arms...they RAN to other gods for the vain gifts of their whoredom. It was the worst of times into which the LORD spoke to Hosea.

1. The Call of God Often Requires Redemptive Suffering

- a. A strange command from the Lord to go and marry a woman whose character is summarized by the word "whore"
 - i. different word than "adulteress" in ch.3
 - ii. This word indicates a woman who was either a prostitute, religious or "economic", or who simply had many, many "lovers"
 1. emphatic sexual promiscuity
 2. the word is literally "fornication" in the plural, "woman of multiple sexual immoralities"
 - iii. "adulteress" in chapter 3 indicates a woman who was married and slept with men other than her husband
 - iv. Hosea was called to take for himself a wife who would not love him exclusively, into a loveless marriage
- b. Have children who would be described as coming from a whore
 - i. Whether or not these are Hosea's children or the children of another man is not the point, nor is it very clear
 - ii. The point is that generational sin exists in Israel...look at the Kings listed above and see where they followed after their fathers
- c. God may ask us to do incredibly difficult things that will cause us much hardship and heartache in order to glorify Him and call His people back to Himself
 - i. You may say, "It isn't right that God would ask Hosea to marry a prostitute who does not love him in return" or even "It isn't right that God would ask me to suffer a loveless marriage"
 1. That's the point! It's really not "right", it's grace!
 2. if we don't accept this story for what it is, then we don't get the gospel when God betrothed Himself to a whoring and adulteress people
 3. And that at the expense of His own Son's life!
 - ii. the hope is that through this suffering many return to the LORD
 - iii. It is the same for us
 1. We are not necessarily outside of God's will because of our situation
 2. We can choose difficult things with joy and expectation of God's glory and the joy of restoration to His people because of it

3. This difficulty had a particular purpose of proclaiming/revealing God and Israel to Israel
 - a. It is redemptive suffering
 - b. This redemptive suffering is at the heart of the good news of Jesus the Christ for you and for me

2. This Redemptive Suffering Exemplifies God
 - a. Hosea's marriage to Gomer and fathering of children amidst her whoring is an historical living parable of God's relationship with whoring Israel and her children
 - b. With "whom" did Israel whore?
 - i. Money, nations of power/influence (Egypt), materialism
 - ii. Idols of "nature" on the high places
 - c. Even Hosea's children's names bore out the discipline of God
 - i. Name your children horrible names of impending judgment like;
 1. Jezreel (scattered) to commemorate my judgment upon the house of Jehu for his treachery
 - a. Jehu was used by God to judge Ahab and Jezebel, but he went much farther than God called Him to and took matters into his own plans and according to his own wisdom (2 Kings 9-10; 2 Kings 10:29ff)
 - b. Interestingly, Jehu was praised by God *for carrying out God's vengeance upon Ahab and Jezebel*, and yet it would seem that Jehu's motives were not for the LORD, but were for the throne (2 Kings 10:29ff) for he was idolatrous immediately afterwards
 - c. For this self-centered pretense he is judged by God and his lineage, though promised the throne for four generations spiraled into decay that eventually destroyed the nation of Israel and scattered them through exile
 - d. For Hosea to name his child Jezreel, then, would remind all the people of the bloodshed of that place, of judgment, of scattering, of destruction
 2. Lo-Ruhama (no mercy) to indicate that God would withhold his mercy from the house of Israel (but he would have mercy on Judah)
 - a. Israel was going to fall prey to God's judgment
 - b. He was going to withhold His mercy and protection from them
 3. Lo-Ammi (not my people) to indicate that they were not his people and he was not theirs
 - a. this is covenantal language from Ex 6:7, recalled again in Jeremiah 11:4 before Jerusalem fell (after Hosea)
 - b. God is basically saying that Israel had not kept her part of the covenant, so he was not obligated to keep His
 - d. In God's economy the Storm Precedes the Calm
 - i. The judgment of God upon His disobedient children is real and severe, even though not final
 1. The Israelites were killed in war, humiliated in captivity, abused in exile
 2. God led His people into a time where the nations sins against them ruled them
 3. God's discipline is usually very simple: He gives us what we have been chasing after and it enslaves us, abuses us, oppresses us, destroys us
 - a. We chase after pleasure: alcohol destroys, adultery disintegrates, money leaves us empty
 - b. We chase after power: more powerful kill us, we end up alone at the top, relationships destroyed by self-centered pursuit
 - c. We chase after popularity: people-pleasers are neurotic, anxious, slavish fearers of men's opinion, held captive by reputation failed or gained
 - ii. If we are to treat God with contempt by giving created things our love, affection, and not listening to His gracious words, then He is right and loving to bring a storm to awaken us

3. There is Yet a Promise!! (1:10-2:1)
 - a. Scattered, No-Mercy, and Not-My-People: where is the faithfulness of God? Where is His mercy?

- i. God tells us the end of the story at the beginning of the judgment
- ii. Hope prevails amidst the discipline, for God is not callous so as to remove all hope of restoration, but is desiring a move of repentance, of turning to Him again
 1. Jezreel in v11 is the same word which means not only “scattered” but “sown”, as in seed.
 - a. God will take the scattering of His people and sow them to great fruitfulness throughout the earth
 - b. Interestingly, this was the promise and the command of Genesis: Be fruitful and multiply, fill the earth
 2. Not-My-People will be called “My people!” again
 3. No-Mercy will be shown mercy
- b. God brings redemption to the broken-hearted and the repentant, promising to restore the unity and mercy of His people
 - i. You may be, today, No-Mercy or Not-My-People.
 1. Maybe all that you know is failure and judgment and you have never known the love of a God who graciously restores failing hearts
 2. Run to Jesus today, for He betrothes Himself to wayward hearts to turn us back to Himself in the joy of His love
 3. today is the day of salvation
 - ii. All of us come from these three lineages: scattered, without mercy, apart from God
 1. Eph 2:11-16
 2. We were separated from God’s covenant, strangers to His promise, not His people, but according to His great mercy He has brought us near through the blood of Jesus Christ!
 - iii. Behold the Faithful Love of God!
 1. From Scattered, No-Mercy, and Not-My-People
 2. to Planted, Shown Mercy, and My People!
 3. 1 Peter 1:1, 2:10

Conclusion: This external prosperity with the hollow “thud” of vain spirituality is the context into which God spoke to Hosea. Into a world of many faiths, none viewed as better and each having their place of esteem and included in the great pantheon of possible promises.

Oh, Church, we live here! This is our society, where we strain to gain more and more while stepping on the weak and the poor. Running to the goddess of food we try and dampen our spirit’s boredom and emptiness because we have not met with our Savior! Crying out “freedom” we sacrifice our children on the altar of our “reproductive rights” and “personal family matters.” We have run to the god of liberty and whored ourselves so that we could pretend control over our own destiny. We chase after a man or woman because we *have* to be loved by someone! We, O Church, have even cast these idols to those desperate and calling out for help. We have told them to seek happiness in a man’s arms, it’s OK. “You just need to find a good one.” We have told them that they have rights and it’s OK. “You got do what’s right for you.”

Do we not see that WE have done this! We have trusted in the god of independence and heard her wooing words of freedom! We have yielded our obligation to love those in poverty and weakness, those made in the image of their Creator, in order to claim our rights to hang a bigger shingle. In the name of the god capitalism we have trampled the broken-hearted instead of binding them up, we have shattered the bruised reeds instead of leading them to the hands of the Healing King, we have hopelessly ignored the chains of those enslaved to addiction and to sin, and we have extinguished the wicks of the unborn in our silent effort to remain neutrally appeasing.

The word of the LORD came to Hosea...you don’t sin...sin does you. Return to the LORD your God who brought you out of sin’s misery and enslavement. Return to your Husband who loves you, whom though He had a right to disown you and let you remain in the arms of your impotent deceiving hucksters instead pursued you from Heaven by becoming like you. Your husband who loves you poured out His life for you, to redeem you from the enslavement of those other lovers and to make you exclusively His own. He protects. He provides. He alone is worthy of love. Let us return to Him, listen to Him, follow Him, for His promise is full of grace and mercy to be true image-bearers, the people of God who reflect His glory by suffering for others so that they are protected, provided for, and loved.