

June 17

Hosea 1-3

Hello everyone, this is Lori Eccleston, Executive Admin at Christ Community Church welcoming you to another day of Project 4:4. Today is June 17 and we read Hosea 1-3.

I'd like you to think about something for a moment. How would you feel if God asked you to leave your family, friends, and your job and move across the United States? How would you feel if God told you He wanted you to marry someone who was thoroughly immoral and untrustworthy? What if God asks you to give money to someone who is completely undeserving and who has emotionally hurt you deeply? What if you wanted something for a long time and then you got it, you were able to touch it and then God said "NO!". What if God asks you to surrender your disobedient child to him? When God asks us to do something, He expects us to be obedient, even if it is at a great sacrifice and extremely painful to us. It may not always be what we are comfortable with or what we want to do. We may not see the fruits of God's commands for a long time, but God calls us to a life of obedience.

At the command of God, Hosea marries a woman he doesn't love – a woman who probably has been very promiscuous already, and who will be unfaithful. Why would God require such a thing of His servant Hosea? The answer was right there at the beginning of today's reading. God said, "Do this," because Israel is guilty of the vilest adultery in departing from the Lord. So God gets His man to marry Gomer, the adulterous wife, to demonstrate the relationship between Himself and His chosen people who He likens to an adulterous bride. God made an object lesson out of Hosea. Now that is pretty tough but it is not out of character for God to do that. Do you remember Genesis 22 -- the story of Abraham and Isaac on a trip to Mount Moriah where God said to Abraham, I want you to sacrifice your much loved son to Me. That was another story that was pretty hard to understand but which was an object lesson. It was that kind of experience. Do this, Abraham, because I want you to understand how I feel and I want the people who encounter your situation to better understand what I am going to do.

Hosea is going to be publicly humiliated by this woman. "Hosea, I will make a fool out of you, but when I have done so you will understand Me better than anyone else in Israel -- better than anyone else alive." I hope that as you read these chapters today your heart went out to Hosea but I hope something else happened too -- I hope you realized that sometimes God, in His sovereign wisdom, uses His servants in ways that seem awfully hard. He does it to create object lessons and in doing so, His servants quite often look very foolish. They are even sometimes humiliated. But if God ever chooses to use you that way, remember this. It is the Hoseas, Abrahams and Jeremiahs of this world who come to best understand the mind and heart of God. In the end they are not the losers but the greatest winners of all. It may be very painful, but being made a fool for the sake of Christ is never a losing proposition.

The second thing we need to note together today are the names of Hosea's children. His firstborn son is named Jezreel which means judgment. The next child to be born to Hosea and Gomer was a daughter named Lo-Ruhamah. It means not loved. The third child was a son named Lo-Ammi which means not my people. The nation knew that Hosea was a prophet. Every time his children walked down the street, they must have shuddered at the object lessons before them.

The third and most important thing we need to think about as we contemplate the strange story of Hosea and Gomer, his adulterous wife, is the wonderful picture that it paints for us of the divine miracle of redemption. There were several ways you could fall into slavery in Hosea's world. You could be born a slave, you could become a prisoner of war and therefore a slave, or you could incur a debt so large that your freedom was forfeited because of your inability to pay. It is apparent that Gomer, after leaving Hosea in quest of her adulterous relationships, must have fallen into a debt so large that she could not pay it and then one day found herself being auctioned off as a slave.

Whether Hosea had to outbid other would be buyers, we do not know. The scripture doesn't tell us that, but Hosea went to the slave market and "redeemed" his adulterous wife. He bought again that which once had been his. "Redemption" is of course a key New Testament word. It describes the work of Jesus on the cross. He "redeemed" us. We were born into sin, we were held as prisoners of war under the bondage of Satan, and by our own actions have incurred a debt that we could never pay. When Jesus died, the Bible says He paid the ransom price for our sin and bought us back, just like Hosea bought Gomer.

If you would like to dig a bit deeper into this text, Lead Pastor Mark Ashton has a sermon series on the Christ Community Church website entitled "Scandalous". I encourage you to check it out.

One last thing. After he paid the price, Hosea did not "invite" Gomer to come home. He commanded her to do so. Do you see the parallel? Jesus doesn't "invite" sinners to repent any more than Hosea did. He commands repentance! I hope you give that some thought today.

Please join me again tomorrow as we look into Hosea 4-9. Praying God's richest blessing on you until then.