

July 14, 2002
AM Service
Patchogue Church of the Nazarene

“A Message from the Life of Hosea and Gomer”
Hos 6:1-6 NIV

"Come, let us return to the LORD.
He has torn us to pieces but he will heal us;
he has injured us but he will bind up our wounds.

2 After two days he will revive us; on the third day he will restore us,
that we may live in his presence.

3 Let us acknowledge the LORD;
let us press on to acknowledge him.
As surely as the sun rises, he will appear;
he will come to us like the winter rains, like the spring rains that water the earth."

4 "What can I do with you, Ephraim? What can I do with you, Judah?
Your love is like the morning mist, like the early dew that disappears.

5 Therefore I cut you in pieces with my prophets,
I killed you with the words of my mouth;
my judgments flashed like lightning upon you.

6 For I desire mercy, not sacrifice,
and acknowledgment of God rather than burnt offerings.

Hosea is one of the most unusual prophets of the Old Testament, since he was commanded by God to marry a prostitute (Hos 1:2-9). The name Hosea means “deliverance” or “salvation.” His name is a form of *Joshua*, which is an OT form of the name Jesus which means “God is Salvation.” This is significant to the message of Hosea.

Hosea met a beautiful girl named Gomer. God told him to marry her though Hosea knew she had been a prostitute. The reason for this is explained in Hos 1:2 NLT
When the LORD first began speaking to Israel through Hosea, he said to him, "Go and marry a prostitute, so some of her children will be born to you from other men. This will illustrate the way my people have been untrue to me, openly committing adultery against the LORD by worshiping other gods" (departing from the Lord).

Perhaps the early years were happy ones for Hosea and Gomer. Gomer became pregnant with her first born, a son. I'm sure Hosea was a proud father full of joy as any young father would be. As he held his first born in his arms he prayed about what name he should give the child. God instructed him to name the child Jezreel, “God scatters.” Hosea must have thought that name was an odd choice for his son. Yet, possible shortly

afterward he started to realize problems in his marriage. He started to notice and become more concerned with the increasing attention shown to his young, pretty wife by other men. Even more disturbing was noticing his wife's enjoyment of the attention. This was a snare to her.

After awhile she became pregnant a second time. Her second child was a girl. This time Hosea was not as enthused as he was with the first child (not because it was a girl. Rather it was the awful uncertainty whether or not the child was really his). There was little comfort to his fears when the Lord said, "Call her Lo Ruhamah" (pronounced: Lo – Ru - hay – mah) which meant "not my loved one."

Finally a third child was born, another son. This time Hosea's fears were confirmed. No more questions only horrible certainty. For God said, "Call him Lo – Ammi"(pronounced: Lo - Am – eye) it means "not my people" or "no kin of mine!"

These names symbolized God's anger and His rejection of the nation of Israel. Yet, as we see in Hos 2:1,23. The faithful remnant of Israel and those who through repentance and faith return to God are called Ruhamah, "My loved one" and Ammi, "My people."

2:1 "Say of your brothers, 'My people,' and of your sisters, 'My loved one.'
v23 I will plant her for myself in the land;
I will show my love to the one I called 'Not my loved one.'
I will say to those called 'Not my people,' 'You are my people';
and they will say, 'You are my God.'"

Can you imagine the pain Hosea felt as the reality of the terrible truth began to sink in? The child was not his. His wife, Gomer had been unfaithful to him. Then one day Gomer left. What hurt, loneliness and emptiness Hosea must have felt. How would he explain to the children who were sure to ask, "Where is mom going? Why did she leave?" Perhaps, some nights, Hosea, choking back tears would pray with the crying children, "Lord, take care of mom tonight and bring her home safe soon." And when he had put all the children to bed and they were asleep it was his turn to sob in bitter anguish and agony, grieving his loss. I can imagine Hosea crying out to God in deep despair, "Why God? O, why my Lord?"

I know I am using my imagination in telling this story, but indulge be a little more and imagine one night while Hosea is sobbing he quiets down just long enough to hear a strange sound. Startled he looks around. No one is there. As he brings his head back into his hands he hears the sound again. What could it be? He waits, silently listening. Then he realizes what it is. It is the sound of someone else sobbing. He wonders who it could be and then he hears what we read in 6:4 - "What can I do with you, Ephraim? What can I do with you, Judah? Your love is like the morning mist, like the early dew that disappears." It was the LORD! The Lord grieves over His creation when they turn from Him or are not in a relationship with Him. Another example is found in Hos 11:8
NLT

8 "Oh, how can I give you up, Israel? How can I let you go? How can I destroy you like Admah and Zeboiim? My heart is torn within me, and my compassion overflows."

What Hosea heard was the broken hearted sobs of the Lord. And through this experience Hosea learned at in his sorrow he did not suffer alone. There was Someone else who felt and really understood the pain of loss. And, even more, he learned that at the heart of the universe was a God of love who has great sorrow over the sins of His people and all of His creation. For just as Gomer had been untrue to her husband, so the people of God, the bride of Christ, has been untrue to her God. Hosea got a taste of the pain in God's heart. And in the fellowship of suffering Hosea found not only a salvation to his personal problems but a message to share with God's people. Here is that message: Our greatest sin is that of rejecting, turning our backs on God's love. Just as Gomer left Hosea to go off and sin, by sin we separate ourselves from God and when we do we break God's heart. We are suppose to be faithful to Him but we commit spiritual adultery. We want something other than God and His will.

Let me return to the life of Hosea and further imagine that one night while praying the Lord says, Hos 3:1 NLT -Then the LORD said to me, "Go and get your wife again. Bring her back to you and love her, even though she loves adultery. For the LORD still loves Israel even though the people have turned to other gods, offering them choice gifts."

So the next morning Hosea starts out for the city. First he passes through the better part of the city (imagine all its sights and sounds – a place of business, luxury and affluence). Hosea keeps walking until he gets to the bad part of the city, a dangerous area; an area he was not use to being in and would never come except under this condition. He asks around about Gomer and is told to try the slave market. As he gets to the slave market his attention is drawn to one of the slaves. Something looks familiar about her – it's Gomer! She's dressed in filthy rags, not looking well at all. Just then she turns and for a moment their eyes meet, but she quickly looks away. It doesn't seem possible but it is true, Gomer has become a slave. She gave herself to sin and now found herself in slavery. Hosea, her husband she was unfaithful to, wants to redeem her so he begins to bargain with her owner. And in Hosea's own words he says: Hos 3:2a-3 NIV – "So I bought her...3 Then I told her, "You are to live with me many days; you must not be a prostitute or be intimate with any man, and I will live with you."

Hosea says to her what God would say: "I love you. I never stopped loving you. Everyday I have longed for you and have prayed for you. I never gave up on you. Now, come back to me. I will forgive you and not hold the past against you. Stay with me, live with me, be true to me this time and we will live joyfully together forever."

And so the prodigal wife comes home...to stay. And from this tragic story in Hosea's life we have one of the greatest stories of OT times - the story of God's redeeming love. God feels our pain and knows our sin. He seeks us, comes after us, no matter where we are. He comes to bring us back to Himself freeing us from slavery. He forgives, does not hold the past against us so that we can enjoy Him forever. Jesus suffered to make it possible. Hosea learned there is no real love without suffering.

When Hosea looked at his wayward wife in all her sin, shame and disgrace, yet felt within himself a great love for her welling up; when he felt a desire to relieve her of her slavery – willing to pay the price in money and suffering; when he took her back in all her filthy rags – back into his heart and home, then he understood the amazing grace and redeeming love of God. Hosea could preach like no one else – with tears I'm sure – to tell those who have wandered from God that the Lord still loved them and wants them to come back home.

This message may be for you this morning. No matter what your pain God understands what you feel and is hurting with you. No matter what you've done God still loves you and aches over you. Jesus intercedes for you. He comes to you where you are and offers comfort and offers to pay the price, no, He has paid the price that you might come back home.

The next time you are grieving know that Someone else is there with you and know that it is the LORD!

And if you have departed from the Lord hear Him say to you, "I love you. I never stopped loving you. Everyday I have longed for you and have prayed for you. I never gave up on you. Now, come back to me. I will forgive you and not hold the past against you. Stay with me, live with me, be true to me this time and we will live joyfully together forever."