Series: Binge Reading the Bible

Message: 04 The Prophets Hosea 3\_1-5

Text: Proverbs 3:5–6

Theme:

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Through our series, Binge Reading the Bible, we are looking to see how each of the seven major sections of the Bible fit together as a whole and what each section teaches us about God’s will and desires for mankind.

The first major section of the Bible is the Pentateuch, which is the very beginning.

Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy, these five books form the foundation that the rest of the Bible is built upon.

If you start watching a series on TV in the middle of the season, you might feel a little lost, like you are missing something.

If you go back and start watching from the beginning of the series, you will get the foundation, the introduction of characters, the purpose, and the premise of what series is about.

The same is true for the Bible. The first five books of the Bible make up the foundation. It includes the creation story, how God created, why God created the interaction that God wants between Him and His creation.

Deuteronomy 6:4-5 “**Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one. 5 You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might.**”

There is a creator God and He has created us to be in a loving relationship with Him.

God’s laws are not to there to restrict us but to protect us and to show us how to live in this loving relationship with a holy God.

Then we go into the Historical Books, 12 of them; Joshua, Judges, Ruth, 1 & 2 Samuel, 1 & 2 Kings, 1 & 2 Chronicles, Ezra, Nehemiah, and Ester.

Together they tell the story of the people of Israel going into the Promised Land and their continued disobedience to God and their subsequent exile.

But we see this hope that God gives to those in exile.

2 Chronicles 7:14 “**if my people who are called by my name humble themselves, and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven and will forgive their sin and heal their land**.”

Even in our rebellion, God offers a way back.

Last week we looked at the Wisdom Literature, sometimes called the Poetical Books.

Wisdom is taking what we know about God and His truth and applying, acting on it. In the Wisdom books, we find the wisdom we need to go through suffering and wisdom we need for the day to day areas of life.

The Wisdom Literature includes Job, Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and Song of Solomon.

Proverbs 3:5-6 “**Trust in the LORD with all your heart, and do not lean on your own understanding. 6 In all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make straight your paths**.

This morning we will be looking at the next major section, the 17 books of the Bible that make up the Prophets.

The Prophets are divided into two groups. There are five Major Prophets and the 12 Minor Prophets.

Now don’t get hung up on this distinction between Major and Minor Prophets. It’s not like the major league versus the minor league.

The only difference is that the books called Major Prophets are longer than the Minor Prophets.

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The 5 Major Prophets are Isaiah, Jeremiah, Lamentations, Ezekiel, and Daniel.

The 12 Minor Prophets are Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Jonah, Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi.

Prophets were men who were raised up by God to speak on His behalf.

The prophets would be lifted up by God to speak truth, sometimes to kings, but other times to the nation as a whole.

As we read the prophets, we see how God dealt with his people in response to their obedience or their disobedience.

God did not want Israel to look like and behave like every other nation in the world. He wanted them to be set apart.

When you were to read through the laws found in Exodus and Leviticus and Numbers, you see that many of these rules, these laws directly connect with these other groups, these other nations.

Don’t offer your children as sacrifices as the people of Canaan do in the fires of Baal. Don’t be like this. Don’t live this way.

But what happened was, after they entered the Promised Land, they began to look around and they saw how these nations surrounding them lived and they got kind of envious.

They said we want to be like that. They have Kings. We want Kings.

We don’t want to have just one God over everything. Sure, we want our God, but we also want these other deities, even though this was in direct disobedience to God’s law.

So when we read the words of the prophets, we see that these books reveal God as being faithful to His word while His people were disobedient.

At Mount Sinai God and the people of Israel entered a covenant agreement. Now through their disobedience, the people were backing out of their agreement all the while, God remains faithful to his word, to His part of the agreement.

Now, here are a couple things you need to keep in mind. Being a prophet was a tough job.

I mean think about this. First of all, they had to be 100% accurate in what they said—no mistakes. After all, they were speaking in place of God, His message.

If they got something wrong, they were misrepresenting God Himself. So if they miss represented God they were taken out and killed.

Plus most people didn’t really like them or the message they had to give.

Look at it like this. A farmer and his wife invites the pastor over for dinner. The wife has warned the kids to be on their best behavior—the pastor’s coming.

She has given her husband one of those looks, “Don’t you tell that joke when the pastor gets here.

After a wonderful dinner the pastor say, oh by the way, God’s not real happy about the way you have doing things here lately and He wanted me to tell you that a drought is coming. It’s not going to rain again until you straighten things up around here….any cake?

You can see why people would like prophets much. They certainly didn’t like their message.

But here is something else you need to know about the prophets.

The prophets didn’t always just speak the words of God’s message to the people. Many of these prophets were also called to live out God’s message as a living object lesson with their own lives.

Their lives became a type of drama, a living parable if you would because God knows that the people are not going to listen to just words.

They have to see it. There has to be some observable event that takes place, and it was on the shoulders of the prophet to live it out.

The passage that we’re going to look at this morning is one of those cases.

**If you would, please turn in your Bibles to Hosea 3:1-5. Page 752.**

The prophet Hosea was one of those prophets who not only spoke the words of God to His people, but his life became an object lesson that reflected the relationship between God and his people.

What has happened is Israel has abandoned God and his relationship with them. And they have experienced judgment as a result of this.

They are called to repent and be restored in that relationship with God.

The book of Hosea opens up with God calling Hosea to “take this woman [Gomer] as your wife.”

But, in verse two of chapter one, we learned that Gomer was a prostitute.

Now, there are some details left out of the story. We don’t know if Gomer had made that lifestyle choice before or after her married Hosea.

This story is told in retrospect and so it could be that Hosea married this woman, and then through the course of their marriage, he found out this about her.

Or it could be that she already was this way, and God called Hosea to marry her anyway as part of the life drama being played out.

The point of all of this is that God viewed Israel as unfaithful to him. God viewed the nation of Israel as an adulterous spouse, like Gomer.

And Hosea and his wife Gomer lived this out.

Think about this. When God brought the people out of Egypt and brought them to the foot of the mountain of Sinai, Moses went up and received the 10 Commandments, and a covenant agreement was made.

The words used in this agreement between God and the response of the people of Israel were very much like the words used in a marriage ceremony when a man and a woman make their vows before their audience.

It was as if God were the groom and the nation of Israel, his bride.

We have this unique relationship and that motif, this idea of a marriage relationship between God and his people is carried on into the New Testament where Jesus himself says in effect, I’m going to my father’s house, and where I go, I’m going to build a space for you.

That is what a groom would say to his betrothed.

Later, Paul uses the same imagery when referring to Jesus is the head of the church, saying Jesus is the groom and the church is the bride.

And so there’s this continuous imagery of husband and wife in this relationship with God and his people.

So from this Mount Sinai covenant, God proclaimed he would be essentially their spouse. He would provide for them. He would be faithful.

But, as the people of Israel lived in the Promised Land, they experienced the culture of the surrounding peoples, and they began to adopt their practices.

They began to worship other gods, different idols, and religious practices that God had forbidden.

He saw this as being unfaithful. The people of Israel had become adulterers. And this happened to Hosea.

After he and his wife Gomer had three children, we read that she left him and became an adulterer and we pick up the story in chapter three.

**Let’s read this, Hosea chapter 3:1-5**

This is God speaking to Hosea. Hosea is writing in the first person.

Hosea 3:1-5 “**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.”** [We’ll come back to this in a moment.]

**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** [prostitute]**, 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**.

So apparently, these people, they loved their sacred raisin cakes. This refers to a way that other nations would offer tribute or sacrifices to their deity.

They would bake these items of food and place them on an alter as if their deity would consume it.

And so this was just one specific way the people of Israel said, “Hey, that’s a great idea. Let’s do that and let’s incorporate that into our spiritual experience.”

If you are a prophet, people know it and your life was under a microscope. The people around Hosea would know what was going on with him and his wife Gomer. And they would talk about it.

They see Hosea live this out. They see Hosea make this choice, and they’re wondering, what in the world are you doing, Hosea?

All the while, it’s being lived out. It’s like a real-life parable right before their eyes.

I want to key in on a couple of things that we read that Hosea says to his wife, Gomer, which is almost as if God is speaking to the people of Israel.

Number one, God says to Hosea, go, and show your love to your wife again. Love her as the Lord loves the Israelites

At the beginning of chapter one, God tells Hosea, go and take Gomer as your wife. Now, here in chapter three, as God says, go love your wife.

In other words, go show your love to your wife, your unfaithful wife.

The people had essentially fallen in love with other deities. They had been enamored with them.

They had pursued them as if these other idols provided for them. As if they felt cared for by these false deities, the worship practices.

But God says to Hosea, go and show your love.

To me, this reflects back to the section of the Pentateuch where God speaks of his relation to the people, which is listen (hear) and love,

That command to love is not to just think about it, not just to ponder it, but to show it.

And immediately my mind goes to the most famous Bible verses of all, John 3:16, go and show your love to your people.

So if Hosea is acting on behalf of God, then how does God show his love for his people?

**For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only son, that whomever believes in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.**

Go and show your love to your spouse.

And then we come to the price.

Not only was Hosea called to go and show his love, but there was a price involved.

From our 21st century mindset, this just seems so bizarre, almost perverse.

Hosea says in verse 2, **So I bought her** [talking about his wife] **for fifteen shekels of silver and a homer and a lethech of barley.**

Now, we don’t need to take into account inflation or the exchange rate between the US dollar and the Israeli shekel.

The point is he had to purchase her back. Let that soak in a minute. A husband had to buy his wife back.

For whatever reason, again, we don’t have the details, Hosea had to go and pay some kind of debt for his spouse.

We don’t know the reasons why. Had Gomer somehow gotten herself into some kind of debt?

Has she gotten herself into some kind of financial trouble?

Was there some decision that was made that landed her into some type of human servitude where there was an amount owed to break her out of that debt?

We don’t really know.

Or could it be that maybe that price was to show Gomer herself that it was to be Hosea who would be the one who would provided for her, not these others?

If you were to read chapter two, it’s almost like a courtroom drama played out where there are two people before a judge and they’re just laying their claim.

And the part of this claim was that this person, this adulterous had run after other lovers because she felt that they provided for her.

She ran after the promises and the hopes of riches and these things that they could provide.

Could it be that Hosea is showing Gomer I am your provider, not these other men, not these other deities?

If we look into the spiritual aspect of this, the pull of sin to rebel against God, the promise of the Deceiver says, hey, you know this is what you can have. It’s actually an empty promise.

And God himself is saying; I am your provider. I have provided this.

And ultimately, he goes on to show it by dying on a cross — the ultimate provision.

So we don’t know the reason for the cost for the debt, why Hosea had to buy his wife back.

But I believe the point of what was going on was the cost to Hosea, the cost that it took for him to buy her back.

The words in verse 2, show the value of what it cost him with the silver and the barley.

What this shows is that Hosea had to pull from all of these different resources that he had at his disposal.

As if to say, this is all that I have, this is all that I am, and I’m giving it so that we can have this relationship once again.

In other words, the cost to Hosea to pay whatever debt Gomer had was incredibly great.

It wasn’t some, okay, let me just pull out my wallet and see what I got.

No, this was a tremendous sacrifice on behalf of Hosea.

And so now, here we are today, this side of the cross, and I would hope that we are all aware of what it costs God to purchase us his people.

It was him giving of himself on a cross shedding his blood, saying, I will pay it. I am going to show my love for my people.

This is God’s love for us.

Hosea and Gomer lived that out so that the people could witness it.

We have the four gospels and the epistles that show us the length to which God went and at great He was willing to pay.

What we need to remember, to understand, is that this is not human love.

What Hosea was called to do, I believe wholeheartedly in response to Gomer, his wife, the three kids that they had, it was not a picture of human love.

This was so far beyond the boundaries of human love because too often, human love is conditional?

When we talk about loving someone, whether it’s our girlfriend, boyfriend, siblings, spouse, family members, if we talk about loving them, because in our sin nature, it’s often I love you if **or** I will love you when.

If our expectations aren’t met then our love for that person grows cold. Human love is conditional. I’ll love you when I feel loved by you, and until that happens, well, you can sleep on the couch.

This is not the love of God. The love of God says, go, and show your love to your spouse. Gomer.

I mean, come on, absolutely not deserving of this man’s love.

Humanity and our rebellion against God, absolutely undeserving of God’s love. And yet for God so loved the world, so loved humanity, he showed that love by dying on the cross.

God’s love is completely undeserved, and because of his mercy, because of his grace, because of the God that he is, he gave it to us, to you and me.

We’re going to close now with a time of reflection and response.

If you’re here this morning, do you hear this message? Do you hear this, the story of Hosea and Gomer?

If you’re here this morning and you’re aware of this love that God has given us undeserved love, I want to provide you an opportunity with no bells and whistles to come and receive forgiveness.

Maybe you would never identify as Gomer as an adulterous, but some of the things that we have done in the face of God and the face of his mercy and the face of His grace need of His grace and love.

When we read this story of Hosea and his wife Gomer and that situation, we think how unbelievable.

Yet, the love that Hosea showed to Gomer, the fact that it was undeserved and the fact that it came at such a cost as Hosea went to buy her back is a picture of how much the Father loves you.

As the worship team comes up I want to offer you an opportunity to respond to that love.

I hope you can see in Hosea and Gomer what length God is willing to go for you. He shows His love for you on the cross of Christ.

Father, may we live lives of forgiven people throughout our weeks, throughout our days. May your spirit guide us. May your spirit direct us. We thank you for salvation.

**Benediction**

**“Now may the God of peace himself sanctify you completely, and may your whole spirit and soul and body be kept blameless at the**