

## Hosea 2v2-3v5: "If You Leave Me Now" (17-May-2017)

Opening Question:

room for suggestions...

Background:

In the first study, God told Hosea, his prophet, to marry an unfaithful woman, Gomer. This was a dramatic way of illustrating to Israel that sin is spiritual adultery. Gomer bore Hosea a son, and then another daughter and son who it seems may have been fathered by someone else.

Last time we learned what an "allegory" was. Anyone can explain what an allegory is?

Some of the parables Jesus told worked in a similar way - for example the parable of the sower: the seed represents the word of God, and the different things that happen to the seed represent the different responses that people have to it. The book "Animal Farm" is a story about animals who chase the farmer away and take control of the farm, but is an allegory for the Russian revolution

You can read an allegory just at the "surface level" - for example you could read the parable of the sower and just think it's about what happens to seeds. Or you could read Animal Farm and think it's a kind of fairy story about animals. But the true meaning of an allegory is revealed when you see how aspects of the story represent things in real life.

In last week's passage, and the passage tonight, we need to remember the aspects of Hosea's story that are allegorical.

This isn't the only place in the Bible where God instructs someone to do something that seems strange. E.g. one we looked at in a previous house group was Ezekiel:

Read Ezekiel 5:1-4

5 "Now, son of man, take a sharp sword and use it as a barber's razor to shave your head and your beard. Then take a set of scales and divide up the hair. 2 When the days of your siege come to an end, burn a third of the hair inside the city. Take a third and strike it with the sword all around the city. And scatter a third to the wind. For I will pursue them with drawn sword. 3 But take a few hairs and tuck them away in the folds of your garment. 4 Again, take a few of these and throw them into the fire and burn them up. A fire will spread from there to all Israel.

Q: What's happening here?

A: *God's telling Ezekiel to do something which may seem odd but acts as an image for the message that God wants to get across*

Hosea lives around 100 years before than Ezekiel. Hosea is in Israel (Northern Kingdom); Ezekiel in Judah (Southern Kingdom).

Q: Both Hosea and Ezekiel were prophets. What is a prophet?

A: *mouthpiece of God, not necessarily someone telling the future*

Q: What do you think God might have to say in Hosea's time?

A: *Disappointment at how things have gone wrong; warnings of problems to come; promise of redemption?*

### Someone Read Hosea 2:2-13

#### Israel Punished and Restored

2 "Rebuke your mother, rebuke her,  
for she is not my wife,  
and I am not her husband.  
Let her remove the adulterous look from her face  
and the unfaithfulness from between her breasts.  
3 Otherwise I will strip her naked  
and make her as bare as on the day she was born;  
I will make her like a desert,  
turn her into a parched land,  
and slay her with thirst.  
4 I will not show my love to her children,  
because they are the children of adultery.  
5 Their mother has been unfaithful  
and has conceived them in disgrace.  
She said, 'I will go after my lovers,  
who give me my food and my water,  
my wool and my linen, my olive oil and my drink.'  
6 Therefore I will block her path with thornbushes;  
I will wall her in so that she cannot find her way.  
7 She will chase after her lovers but not catch them;  
she will look for them but not find them.  
Then she will say,  
'I will go back to my husband as at first,  
for then I was better off than now.'  
8 She has not acknowledged that I was the one  
who gave her the grain, the new wine and oil,  
who lavished on her the silver and gold—  
which they used for Baal.  
9 "Therefore I will take away my grain when it ripens,  
and my new wine when it is ready.  
I will take back my wool and my linen,  
intended to cover her naked body.  
10 So now I will expose her lewdness  
before the eyes of her lovers;  
no one will take her out of my hands.  
11 I will stop all her celebrations:  
her yearly festivals, her New Moons,  
her Sabbath days—all her appointed festivals.  
12 I will ruin her vines and her fig trees,  
which she said were her pay from her lovers;  
I will make them a thicket,  
and wild animals will devour them.  
13 I will punish her for the days  
she burned incense to the Baals;  
she decked herself with rings and jewelry,  
and went after her lovers,  
but me she forgot,"  
declares the Lord.

Q: At the "surface level", what is Hosea saying about his wife?

A: *that she is to be rebuked for being unfaithful to her husband*

Q: What is the "deeper level" of meaning we should understand here?

A: *The people of Israel are to be rebuked for being unfaithful to their God*

Q: How was Hosea's wife unfaithful to her husband (v5, v8, v12, v13)?

A: - *had children by other men and pursued them for material things (v5)*  
- *didn't acknowledge/honour her husband (v8)*  
- *looks like she took money from her lovers (v12)*  
- *forgot about her husband while pursuing lovers (v13)*

Q: And how do these things relate to what God's people have done to God?

A: *Key thing is that Israel has praised and thanked other gods, notably Baal, for things which God has given to them. The people of God believed that their food, drink, linen, etc. had all come from Baal and not God (v5,v8). They even used the things to worship false Gods (v12-13)*  
- *assumed material things came from false gods*  
- *didn't acknowledge that good things from God*  
- *made sacrifices to false Gods*

Q: What is to be the consequence to Gomer of her unfaithfulness?

A: *She's going to be stopped from pursuing lovers and from enjoying the things that they gave her*

Q: And what does this tell us about how God plans to address the unfaithfulness of the people?

A: *God promises to take away the good things - food, drink, clothing - that he provided, leaving his people naked and thirsty, exposing their sin of trusting false gods.*

Q: What is this discipline intended to achieve?

A: *God's actions are not only punishment for the people's unfaithfulness, but are intended to draw them back to God in repentance (v7). The aim of all of God's actions is that Israel would "remove the adulterous look from her face" (v2)*

Q: What is the significance of "block her path" and "wall her in" (v6-v7)?

A: *The intention is that Israel would be unable to pursue other gods, and therefore return to God. Bit like grounding a teenager to stop them hanging out with friends who commit crimes.*

Q: What will removing grain, wine, wool and linen achieve? (v9)

A: *Aimed at enabling people to see that it was God, not Baal, who provided all these good things in the first place.*

### **Someone Read Luke 15:11-24**

#### **The Parable of the Lost Son**

11 Jesus continued: "There was a man who had two sons. 12 The younger one said to his father, 'Father, give me my share of the estate.' So he divided his property between them.

13 "Not long after that, the younger son got together all he had, set off for a distant country and there squandered his wealth in wild living. 14 After he had spent everything, there was a severe famine in that whole country, and he began to be in need. 15 So he went and hired himself out to a citizen of that country, who sent him to his fields to feed pigs. 16 He longed to fill his stomach with the pods that the pigs were eating, but no one gave him anything.

17 "When he came to his senses, he said, 'How many of my father's hired servants have food to spare, and here I am starving to death! 18 I will set out and go back to my father and say to him: Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. 19 I am no longer worthy to be called your son; make me like one of your hired servants.' 20 So he got up and went to his father.

"But while he was still a long way off, his father saw him and was filled with compassion for him; he ran to his son, threw his arms around him and kissed him.

21 "The son said to him, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son.'

22 "But the father said to his servants, 'Quick! Bring the best robe and put it on him. Put a ring on his finger and sandals on his feet. 23 Bring the fattened calf and kill it. Let's have a feast and celebrate.

24 For this son of mine was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found.' So they began to celebrate.

Q: What does this parable of Jesus, and the section of Hosea we've just read, tell us about a life lived without God?

A: *Both expose the folly of trusting in anything other than the living God. Life without God may seem*

*pleasurable and free on the surface, but leads to disappointment, disgrace and ruin. In both cases, the people involved came to their senses and recognised that they had been much better off before turning away.*

Q: Why is it good news that God disciplines his people?

A: *Discipline sounds unpleasant, but God's discipline is intended to bring his people back to him and stop them wandering away.*

### **Someone Read Hosea 2:13-23**

- 14 "Therefore I am now going to allure her;  
I will lead her into the wilderness  
and speak tenderly to her.
- 15 There I will give her back her vineyards,  
and will make the Valley of Achor[b] a door of hope.  
There she will respond[c] as in the days of her youth,  
as in the day she came up out of Egypt.
- 16 "In that day," declares the Lord,  
"you will call me 'my husband';  
you will no longer call me 'my master.[d]'
- 17 I will remove the names of the Baals from her lips;  
no longer will their names be invoked.
- 18 In that day I will make a covenant for them  
with the beasts of the field, the birds in the sky  
and the creatures that move along the ground.  
Bow and sword and battle  
I will abolish from the land,  
so that all may lie down in safety.
- 19 I will betroth you to me forever;  
I will betroth you in[e] righteousness and justice,  
in[f] love and compassion.
- 20 I will betroth you in[g] faithfulness,  
and you will acknowledge the Lord.
- 21 "In that day I will respond,"  
declares the Lord—  
"I will respond to the skies,  
and they will respond to the earth;  
22 and the earth will respond to the grain,  
the new wine and the olive oil,  
and they will respond to Jezreel.[h]
- 23 I will plant her for myself in the land;  
I will show my love to the one I called 'Not my loved one.[i]'  
I will say to those called 'Not my people,[j]'  
'You are my people';  
and they will say, 'You are my God.'"

Q: How is v14 a turning point?

A: *It shows that God intends to restore the relationship between him and his people ("you will call me 'my husband'" v16), with God wooing them and removing the adulterous worship of false gods.*

Q: How are Israel's problems turned around in these verses?

A: *Renewed relationship with God (v16); no more worshiping of false gods (v17); removing conflict (v18)*

Q: What would being led "into the wilderness" (v14) have reminded Israel of?

A: *It's the place of testing - Israelites spent 40 years in the wilderness. Also place where God brought his people after rescuing them from Egypt. The place where God taught Israel how to be his people. So in Hosea's day, the people of Israel would have understood v14 to be God telling them he will bring them back to the beginning of their relationship in order to start again. Exodus 19:1-6*

### **Someone Read Hosea 3:1-5**

#### **Hosea's Reconciliation With His Wife**

3 The Lord said to me, "Go, show your love to your wife again, though she is loved by another man and is an adulteress. Love her as the Lord loves the Israelites, though they turn to other gods and love the sacred raisin cakes."

2 So I bought her for fifteen shekels[a] of silver and about a homer and a lethek[b] of barley. 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 behave the same way toward you."

4 For the Israelites will live many days without king or prince, without sacrifice or sacred stones, without ephod or household gods. 5 Afterward the Israelites will return and seek the Lord their God and David their king. They will come trembling to the Lord and to his blessings in the last days.

Q: What is shocking about v1?

A: *God tells Hosea to go and love his wife again, even though she is **still**, at this point, being "loved by another". Also, "raisin cakes" (? probably used in idol worship)*

Q: What is shocking about v2?

A: *Hosea does it*

Q: What does Hosea have to **do** for Gomer?

A: *He has to buy her back*

Q: What does Hosea say **to** Gomer?

A: *That she must be faithful to him*

Q: What is the "deeper" level meaning we should get from this? What are Hosea's actions a picture of?

A: *Even though the Israelites have been unfaithful, God loves them (v1 "the Lord loves the Israelites"). And God will "buy back" his people, and call them to live faithfully as his people*

Q: Read 1 Peter 1:18-19 - How is the "payment" made to redeem God's people?

A: *Not by silver or gold but by the blood of Jesus Christ. This is what it cost God to bring us back into a relationship with him - his own blood.*

Q: How was Gomer able to show that she appreciated what Hosea had done for her, and had returned to live with him as his wife?

A: *Public commitment that she's renounced her ways and is now committed and faithful to her husband*

Q: What does this tell us about our relationship with God as his redeemed people?

A: *We have been bought with a price through Jesus' death on the cross, so no longer belong to ourselves, doing whatever we want. Rather we belong to God, and therefore we should do what pleases and honours him, in every aspect of our lives.*

Q: Do we think of ourselves as valuable? Does it make a difference to think of ourselves as a chosen bride of God, bought with a price?

Takeaway

Hosea's marriage is a picture of the unfaithfulness of God's people towards God. The image of adultery is used to describe Israel's attitude towards God: God's people have not stayed faithful to him but have chased after and loved other gods - in particular, they have worshipped the Baals, who were fertility gods in Canaan. They gave thanks to these other gods for the things God himself had given them (grain, wine, oil, silver, gold). And so God pronounces judgment on the people, taking away the good things he has given, so they would know they came from his hands, not from idols.

God disciplines his people - not to punish them so much as to convince them to stop being adulterous and unfaithful and to return to him. Their return should be a genuine repentance and a return to a relationship with their first love.

God promises to remove the idols and also gods, and restore his relationship with his people - but there will be a cost.

Hosea loves Gomer again, even though he pays a high price.

Ultimately Hosea's actions point us forward to the way in which God will bring his people back, at the price of his own Son. We are redeemed not with precious stones or gold, but with Jesus' blood.

# BIBLE TIMELINE

Where does the book of Hosea fit into the whole story of God's word?



## HOSEA 793-722BC

