

Hosea 11: “Never Going to Give You Up” (19-Jul-2017). God is a holy judge and our loving father

Opening Question:

What makes a good father in today's world?

God makes a good father
Someone who's around
Protective
Supportive
Patient
Loving
Provider
Good Role model

Background:

Hosea lived in Israel, “the Northern Kingdom”, after the kingdom divided, with Judah in the south. Book of Hosea set c750BC, about 200 years after the death of David. There have been a set of kings since then (1,2 Kings, 1,2 Chronicles) and most of them were bad, and the people have drifted away from God

In the first study, God told Hosea, his prophet, to marry an unfaithful woman, Gomer. Gomer bore Hosea a son, and then another daughter and son who it seems may have been fathered by someone else. Gomer's behaviour led to sorrow for Hosea, and punishment for Gomer, but despite the way that Gomer behaved, God told Hosea to restore his relationship with Gomer, and Hosea paid a ransom to bring Hosea back.

This story of Hosea's marriage/separation/reuniting with Gomer is an allegory to explain how Israel has rebelled and God will bring severe consequences, but God's love and mercy are more powerful than Israel's sin. The rest of the book has Hosea exploring these themes in more depth.

Chapters 4-10 look at the causes and effects of Israel's unfaithfulness

- God's people, and especially the leaders, didn't stay loyal to God
- There was suffering and bad effects (famine etc.) which the people realised had something to do with their separation from God, but their apologies were insincere (saying “sorry” without meaning it)
- Last week we saw that God's judgment is deserved and dreadful

Remember from what happened between Hosea and Gomer, God desperately wants his people to come back to him. This week's passage has a change of tone that reflects this

Q: What was the relationship between Homer and Gomer?

A: *man and wife*

Q: What does this say about God's relationship with his people?

A: *It's painted as being a marriage*

In this week's passage to picture changes to that of a parent and child

Someone Read Hosea 11:1-4

God's Love for Israel

1 “When Israel was a child, I loved him,
and out of Egypt I called my son.

2 But the more they were called,
the more they went away from me.

They sacrificed to the Baals
and they burned incense to images.

3 It was I who taught **Ephraim** to walk, Ephraim==Israel

taking them by the arms;
but they did not realize
it was I who healed them.
4 I led them with cords of human kindness,
with ties of love.
To them I was like one who lifts
a little child to the cheek,
and I bent down to feed them.

Q: What are "Baals" (v2)

A: *Baal is a false god who was worshiped by peoples around Israel (originally Canaanite?) and many people in Israel had also been guilty of following rituals relating to Baal worship*

Q: Who does God describe as his "son" here? What is wonderful about God's fatherhood?

A: *The nation of Israel is God's "son". Contrast with pictures used previously about a marriage.*

Q: How do the events being described here reflect what happened with the nation of Israel?

A: *When Israel was a young nation God cared for it (they didn't deserve it); brought them out of Egypt, gave them the law ("taught Ephraim to walk") loved them even though they were unappreciative*

Q: What is sad about the way Israel responds to God's fatherhood?

A: *They move away from him (v2); "They did not realise" what God was doing for them. Generally unappreciative, in the way that a child can be unappreciative of their parents*

Someone Read Hosea 11:5-7

5 "Will they not return to Egypt
and will not Assyria rule over them
because they refuse to repent?
6 A sword will flash in their cities;
it will devour their false prophets
and put an end to their plans.
7 My people are determined to turn from me.
Even though they call me God Most High,
I will by no means exalt them.

Q: What is the reference to Assyria?

A: *Assyria will invade (happens about 20 years after Hosea) and carry off the Israelites into captivity*

Q: What do these verses tell us about God?

A: *As well as being loving and caring, God is a just and holy God, and cannot tolerate sin. Because of the rebellion, judgment will fall in the form of the invading army of Assyria*

Someone Read Deuteronomy 29:22-28

22 Your children who follow you in later generations and foreigners who come from distant lands will see the calamities that have fallen on the land and the diseases with which the Lord has afflicted it.
23 The whole land will be a burning waste of salt and sulfur—nothing planted, nothing sprouting, no vegetation growing on it. It will be like the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah, Admah and Zeboyim, which the Lord overthrew in fierce anger. 24 All the nations will ask: "Why has the Lord done this to this land? Why this fierce, burning anger?"
25 And the answer will be: "It is because this people abandoned the covenant of the Lord, the God of their ancestors, the covenant he made with them when he brought them out of Egypt. 26 They went off and worshiped other gods and bowed down to them, gods they did not know, gods he had not given

them. 27 Therefore the Lord's anger burned against this land, so that he brought on it all the curses written in this book. 28 In furious anger and in great wrath the Lord uprooted them from their land and thrust them into another land, as it is now."

This passage dates from about 700 years before Hosea

Q: Israel in Hosea's time should have been familiar with these words. What difference should they have made to the way they acted?

A: *God's judgment should not have come as a surprise: they had been told about the consequence of turning away from God. They should have listened!*

Someone Read Matthew 2:13-15

13 When they had gone, an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream. "Get up," he said, "take the child and his mother and escape to Egypt. Stay there until I tell you, for Herod is going to search for the child to kill him."

14 So he got up, took the child and his mother during the night and left for Egypt, 15 where he stayed until the death of Herod. And so was fulfilled what the Lord had said through the prophet: "Out of Egypt I called my son."

Q: What connection does this passage have with Hosea?

A: *v15 "out of Egypt I called my son". This is a direct quote from Hosea 11:1*

Q: How does Matthew compare Jesus of Nazareth to Israel in Hosea's day? What is he saying about Jesus?

A: *Drawing a parallel between Israel and Jesus. Israel was brought out of Egypt by God, a "child" who was disobedient. Jesus is called out of Egypt when Herod is dead, and is a "child" who is obedient.*

Someone Read 1 Peter 2:21-23

21 To this you were called, because Christ suffered for you, leaving you an example, that you should follow in his steps.

22 "He committed no sin, and no deceit was found in his mouth." [e]

23 When they hurled their insults at him, he did not retaliate; when he suffered, he made no threats. Instead, he entrusted himself to him who judges justly.

Q: What sort of Son was Jesus? Why is this great news for Christians?

A: *Sinless; obedient. Even when under pressure*

Someone Read Galatians 3:26-29

26 So in Christ Jesus you are all children of God through faith, 27 for all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. 28 There is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither slave nor free, nor is there male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus. 29 If you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise.

Q: What does "clothed with Christ" mean?

A: *That when God looks at us, he doesn't see our imperfections, but Jesus' perfect obedience*

Q: Why is this good news for Christians?

A: *When we trust in Jesus we are "clothed with him"; we inherit all that God gives to his obedient son Jesus. Read Hosea 11:1-4 and see how God wants to treat Christ, and therefore us*

Q: How does this give us hope when we commit the sins of Hosea 11:2-4?

A: *Although we are sinners as Israel was, we have been "clothed with Christ" - so our sin is not counted against us.*

Q: How does this motivate us to avoid living in these ways?

A:

- *Why would we want to live in a way that should bring God's judgement instead of his fatherly love?*
- *As we live as Jesus did and Israel didn't we're able to enjoy life as God's children and to delight him as our Father*

Someone Read Hosea 11:8-11

8 "How can I give you up, Ephraim?
How can I hand you over, Israel?
How can I treat you like Admah?
How can I make you like Zeboyim?
My heart is changed within me;
all my compassion is aroused.
9 I will not carry out my fierce anger,
nor will I devastate Ephraim again.
For I am God, and not a man—
the Holy One among you.
I will not come against their cities.
10 They will follow the Lord;
he will roar like a lion.
When he roars,
his children will come trembling from the west.
11 They will come from Egypt,
trembling like sparrows,
from Assyria, fluttering like doves.
I will settle them in their homes,"
declares the Lord.

Q: How are things turned around for Israel here?

A: *Even though his people are determined to turn away from him, God offers forgiveness and mercy. God cannot give up his precious child, and promises that his anger will be turned away. Instead he will show compassion and bring his people back to peace and safety*

Q: What has happened between v7 and v8 to cause this change of mood?

A: *Nothing has changed in the people between vv7-8; they have not become more righteous or more obedient. God chooses to be gracious and merciful simply because of his loving commitment to his people and the covenant he has made with them*

Q: In Hosea 11, we're given a glimpse of the heart of God. What two priorities does he have? How do they seem to be in tension with each other?

A: *To be just - bring judgement on people who reject him. He is holy (v9); to be merciful - to forgive his people despite their sin. He has compassion (v8). There is tension here.*

Someone Read Romans 3:21-26

21 But now apart from the law the righteousness of God has been made known, to which the Law and the Prophets testify. 22 This righteousness is given through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe. There is no difference between Jew and Gentile, 23 for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, 24 and all are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus. 25 God presented Christ as a sacrifice of atonement, through the shedding of his blood—to be received by faith. He did this to demonstrate his righteousness, because in his forbearance he had left the sins committed beforehand unpunished— 26 he did it to demonstrate his righteousness at the present time, so as to be just and the one who justifies those who have faith in Jesus.

Q: How is it that God can be a just judge and a forgiving father to his people?

A: *The salvation in Hosea 11:8-11 can only be achieved by Jesus' work on the cross. God is both loving **and** holy. He cannot ignore sin or leave it unpunished. God punishes sin through Jesus' death and satisfies justice and also provides grace and mercy to us*

Q: These verses direct us to have a correct view of God and his character. What difference does it make if we think of God as...

- a loving Father, but not a just judge?

God becomes a nice companion, but compromises his own standards, has no answer to the problems of evil in the world, and his word cannot be trusted

- a just judge, but not a loving Father?

God becomes a terrifying creator, who we must face on the day of judgment. He is also a God who does not keep his word because he promised to bless and love his people

- a loving father and a just judge?

This is the God of the Bible. This is a God we can trust and love and enjoy knowing - who cares about wrongdoing, who will see that justice is done, who we can call our Father. he deserves and demands our respect and obedience and our love