**July 28, 2019 Hosea 1:2-10**

 ***A Love that Conquers Betrayal?***

**Scripture:** Hosea 1:2-10 NRSV (2)When the LORD first spoke through Hosea, the LORD said to Hosea, "Go, take for yourself a wife of whoredom and have children of whoredom, for the land commits great whoredom by forsaking the LORD." (3)So he went and took Gomer daughter of Diblaim, and she conceived and bore him a son. (4)And the LORD said to him, "Name him Jezreel; for in a little while I will punish the house of Jehu for the blood of Jezreel, and I will put an end to the kingdom of the house of Israel. (5)On that day I will break the bow of Israel in the valley of Jezreel." (6)She conceived again and bore a daughter. Then the LORD said to him, "Name her Lo-ruhamah, for I will no longer have pity on the house of Israel or forgive them. (7)But I will have pity on the house of Judah, and I will save them by the LORD their God; I will not save them by bow, or by sword, or by war, or by horses, or by horsemen." (8)When she had weaned Lo-ruhamah, she conceived and bore a son. (9)Then the LORD said, "Name him Lo-ammi, for you are not my people and I am not your God." (10)Yet the number of the people of Israel shall be like the sand of the sea, which can be neither measured nor numbered; and in the place where it was said to them, "You are not my people," it shall be said to them, "Children of the living God."

**Notes:**

1. God told Hosea to take a ***wife***;
	1. She would be a ***promiscuous*** woman.
	2. His bride was named ***Gomer***.
	3. Each child is given a name representative of the ***relationship*** between God and the Israelites.
2. Israel ***betrayed*** God
	1. They no longer ***trusted*** God to supply their needs.
	2. It was ***God*** who gave them their land and crops.
	3. If you will be my ***people***, then I will be your God.
	4. Hosea said ***yes*** to God.
	5. Love the Lord ***completely***, and love others as we love ourselves.
3. *Hosea* paints a dreary picture of the people in their ***relationship*** with God.
	1. Israel betrays God to ***submit*** to other gods.
	2. Hosea’s message and plea is to ***return*** to God.
4. Humanity has ***strayed*** a ways from God;
	1. There is “good news”; There is ***hope***.
	2. God never ***gives*** ***up*** on us.
	3. ***Return*** to God.
	4. ***Assess*** your relationship with our Lord and Savior.

**Transcript:**

Betrayal, we have all experienced betrayal. As a young boy I can remember the various emotions I felt in the different relationships. I had boyhood crushes, many of which eventually ended with my heart being crushed, after all that is why they are called crushes. I had friendships, and many of these friendships from my childhood have not stood the test of time; some may still be my friends but others have ended. Of these friendships and crushes that have ended, many of them died because life pulled us in two different directions. But others ended because of betrayal. Somebody turning their attention to a different recipient; and the other person feeling left out and betrayed.

We have all experienced betrayal, as either the betrayed and/or the betrayer. Many times, while it may not have been intended to betray the friend or significant other, one may have done things that made the other feel betrayed. But in other instances; one may have intentionally did something to betray the other because of our own self centeredness and selfish desires.

Betrayal, is so very common in the world. It was common in the beginning when Adam and Eve ate from the forbidden fruit. It was common in the time of Christ, Judas betrayed Jesus leading to his crucifixion. It is common today when we look at the state of marriage in our world, and it was common in the days of the Prophets. Today we look at Hosea and his marriage to Gomer, a marriage filled with betrayal and a love that was able to overcome it. Join me as we read our passage from Hosea 1:2-10

 *(2)When the LORD first spoke through Hosea, the LORD said to Hosea, "Go, take for yourself a wife of whoredom and have children of whoredom, for the land commits great whoredom by forsaking the LORD." (3)So he went and took Gomer daughter of Diblaim, and she conceived and bore him a son. (4)And the LORD said to him, "Name him Jezreel; for in a little while I will punish the house of Jehu for the blood of Jezreel, and I will put an end to the kingdom of the house of Israel. (5)On that day I will break the bow of Israel in the valley of Jezreel." (6)She conceived again and bore a daughter. Then the LORD said to him, "Name her Lo-ruhamah, for I will no longer have pity on the house of Israel or forgive them. (7)But I will have pity on the house of Judah, and I will save them by the LORD their God; I will not save them by bow, or by sword, or by war, or by horses, or by horsemen." (8)When she had weaned Lo-ruhamah, she conceived and bore a son. (9)Then the LORD said, "Name him Lo-ammi, for you are not my people and I am not your God." (10)Yet the number of the people of Israel shall be like the sand of the sea, which can be neither measured nor numbered; and in the place where it was said to them, "You are not my people," it shall be said to them, "Children of the living God." (Hosea 1:2-10 NRSV)*

Over the past few weeks we have been spending time with the Prophet Amos. Amos was a shepherd from the southern kingdom of Judah, prophesying to the northern kingdom of Israel. But today we look at Hosea, Hosea is also called to prophecy to the northern kingdom of Israel. He lives in the same time period as Amos, but he is from Israel, and facing the same situations that are being addressed by Amos. Hosea was raised in the atmosphere that led to the situation that is at hand. He saw firsthand how the people were acting.

Under the reign of Jeroboam II, the northern kingdom had prospered materially but had decayed spiritually. The people were greedy and had adopted the moral behavior and idolatrous religion of the surrounding Canaanites. Hosea was called upon to demonstrate the spiritual failures of the Israelites. He would do this through obedience; first God told him to take a wife; but not any ordinary wife. His wife would be one of whoredom, in other words, she would be a promiscuous woman. One who may have even been a prostitute.

Did God really order his prophet to marry a woman who was a prostitute? Some who find it difficult to believe God could make such a request view this story as an illustration or allegory, not a historical event. Many, however, think the story is historical and give one of these explanations: According to God's law, a priest could not marry a prostitute or a divorced woman. However, Hosea was not a priest. His bride was named Gomer, the daughter of Diblaim. It is possible that Gomer was not a prostitute when Hosea married her and that God was letting Hosea know that Gomer would later turn to adultery and maybe even prostitution. In any case, Hosea knew ahead of time that his wife would be unfaithful that their married life would become a living object lesson to the northern kingdom. Hosea's marriage to an unfaithful woman would illustrate God's relationship to the unfaithful nation of Israel.

God also ordered him to have children with Gomer. Each with names representative of the relationship God had with the Israelites. The first born was a son. God instructed him to name him Jezreel; named after the Jezreel Valley, the place where King Ahab’s family was massacred by Jehu. The next child would be a girl and God referred to her as Hosea’s daughter, her name God said would be Lo-ruhamah. This name was significant because it meant unloved. A terrible name for a little girl. Then a third child was born, another son. This time the Lord said, “Name him Lo-ammi”, another odd choice for a child, this name means you are not my people and I am not your God.”

I wonder, when did Gomer find the need to step out on her husband, Hosea. It doesn’t really say, but we are quite certain that she does. Her betrayal may not have been all at once, it could have been a gradual tendency, maybe once a week to go out to visit a friend, it may have escalated to several nights each week stepping out to hang out with friends. It could have been the need for an extra income to support the family, maybe she stepped out at first to try and help support the income of the family; then the opportunities to bring in more money with less menial tasks, tasks perhaps at something she was familiar with. Maybe she decided that all the hard work was too much, and being a prostitute in the temple of Baal was much easier

Take a look in our own communities, look closely and you can see it many places. Husbands and wives frustrated by the struggle of keeping a family together. They begin to work odd shifts, they begin to share their frustrations with the people they work with, they begin to listen to the advice they are receiving from others; and before you know it, they are involved in a betrayal of their marriage vows; putting someone or something above the one they entered into the marriage covenant with.

And this is where Hosea and Gomer find themselves. Gomer betraying Hosea; Gomer walking away from her three children and husband. It doesn’t matter how it happened, she betrayed the man who wanted to make an honest woman out of her; much like Israel betrayed God. God had rescued the children of Israel. He led them through the desert, back to the promised land that he given to their ancestor Abraham so many years ago. He gave them the land, the crops, the cities, they only needed to be obedient, and love the Lord their God.

But they were never satisfied. The people wanted a king like other nations, so God gave them Saul, and then David, who was followed by Solomon. Then the decline began. But it wasn’t all at once ten of the twelve tribes of argued with two and there was division. As I said before the southern nation was called Judah, the Northern nation was named Israel. Jeroboam set a new religion, and the people began to change. They were always doubting God so they began to hedge their bets by offering sacrifices to the idols of Baal; they sought plenteous crops in the fertility rituals of the Baal Goddess Anath.

Perhaps it wasn’t the rituals that hurt God; maybe it was the fact that they no longer trusted in Him to supply their needs. Maybe they forgot that it was God who gave them their land and crops. But they were believing it was these wooden and stone idols that met their needs.

God made a covenant with the children of Israel long before in the desert. He entered into a marriage contract with them; and he said if you will be my people, then I will be your God. But he could have stated it in another way, a way that is more suitable for the events we see taking place in Hosea’s time. If you will not be my people, then I will not be your God. The nation of Israel had not looked to Yahweh as their God for quite some time.

SO now We hear the word of God saying that I will no longer be your God. I will not protect you; I will not make you prosperous; I will not make you plentiful; I will allow another power to come and conquer you. I will allow another Kingdom to take over you. I will allow another army to march you off to a foreign land and make you their servants and slaves. And for those of you who are not taken, you will be left behind to live in the ruins. Hosea’s prophesy is not much different than Amos. But there is the mention of the broken covenant, much like the marriage between the Husband (God) and the bride (Israel); a marriage broken because the bride betrayed her Husband, for the idols of Baal.

SO what! You may say to me, my marriage is strong, my spouse and me get along great. SO what can I learn from this. It is difficult to imagine Hosea's feelings when God told him to marry a woman who would be unfaithful to him. He may not have wanted to do it, but he obeyed. God often required extraordinary obedience from prophets facing extraordinary times. God may ask you to do something difficult and extraordinary, too. If he does, how will you respond? Will you obey him, trusting that he who knows everything has a special purpose for his request? Will you be able to accept the fact that the pain involved in obedience may benefit those you serve and not you personally? Would you enter into a relationship even when you know they will betray you? Many of us say no, but Hosea said yes, yes to God.

I have attempted to embrace the simple command that God asked upon all of his followers, to love the Lord completely, and to love others as we love ourselves. Putting God ahead of everything else. We need to focus on our relationship with God; focus on a loving and intimate relationship that spins out into relating to others in a like manner.  A simple command, but a difficult one to live up to on a daily basis. Yet, that is what I believe we are all called to focus on in our lives. And, I believe that this is the first and most important thing that we can do with our lives everything else comes second.  We are called to “kingdom building.”

*Hosea* paints a dreary picture of the people of God in their relationship with God.  Using his own experience of betrayal; having a wife who sleeps around, Hosea points to the people and proclaims to them—for God. As Gomer sleeps with other men, the northern kingdom—Israel, betrays God to submit to other gods.  It’s a bleak picture of betrayal and no one enjoys being called a traitor; not then not now.

So, Hosea’s message and plea, return to God. In looking at the world around us, listening to all of the rhetoric being thrown around, watching the nightly news the word on the street seems to be that we are living in some pretty messed up times, times that reflect the possibility that humanity has strayed a ways from God; a long way from God.  In the minds of many, we are not living as God wants; humanity has wandered away from God. humanity has betrayed God.  And so many times I have even heard that the “end is coming.”  As I look around it seems to get worse and worse. I wonder, “how long O Lord, must we wait to be taken away from this cesspool of sin. How long O Lord must we endure in this evil environment?”

And, how can we defend this world?  The similarities are pretty consistent. It is almost as if we are walking in the shoes of Hosea. Is there any “good news” to come out of this situation out of this story of Hosea and God’s betrayal?  Of course there is.

Despite the bleakness of the story despite all the pain that is felt in the story there is “good news”; there is hope.  And, again, it comes in Hosea’s own story.  That hope is built upon that idiom that we, the faithful, often forget God never gives up on us.  Hosea never gave up on Gomer.  As Hosea offered Gomer a relationship despite her betrayal, so would God for the people of the northern kingdom of Israel.  The constant love of God for the people would prevail.  God would win back the hearts of the people.  As Hosea could not give up on Gomer, neither could God give up on Israel.  This love was too expansive, too broad, for God to give up. God would not run, as the people had. God would stand with them despite their betrayal, because he had a love for his people that would conquer Betrayal and sin..

Despite the bleakness of the world we are living in today, there is hope. God will not abandon us despite humanity’s betrayal of God and the ways of God. God will stick with us.  But; we need to return to God.  We need to return to what we have been called to do as the followers of Jesus. We need to work on our relationship with God to embrace the intimacy of God’s love and grace into our lives; to make it our own; to realize God’s immense love for us as individuals; to be who God created us to be—the children of God. We must then allow God’s love to spill out of us into the relationships we have with others in the relationships we have with each other.  We need to love others as we are loved by God as we love ourselves.  This is the return to God that we need.

That command from Jesus came in a dialogue with someone who was questioning him; questions as to the commandments and laws of faith. The question was, which is the most important.  Jesus told the individual that loving God and others was the most important. Then, to emphasis just how important these are, Jesus said, that with these two, all the laws and words of the prophets are covered.  If you do these commands, everything else will take care of itself.

So today I ask you to assess your relationship with our Lord and Savior. Can we say that there is nothing in our relationship that needs attention? We need to look at the time we spend in relationship with Him; we need to assess the time we are in conversation with Him; we need to consider where our trust is found, do we trust him fully.

Where do we need to improve our relationship? If you see a place where the relationship is weak, the first thing you need to do is ask forgiveness. Ask God to forgive you for neglecting Him. Ask God to help you to strengthen your walk with him and the relationship with him. What if we have never asked Jesus to forgive us of our sins; what if we aren’t sure if we even have a relationship with the Lord? Ask Jesus to enter into your life and make himself known to you. Ask Jesus to forgive you of your sin, and make you a new being. Then, believe that he will, do everything that you have asked, because he has.