

Hosea 1:1-2, 3:1
Summer Sermon Series 2015
June 7 & 8, 2015

^{1:1} The word of the Lord that came to Hosea son of Beeri during the reigns of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz and Hezekiah, kings of Judah, and during the reign of Jeroboam son of Jehoash king of Israel: ² When the Lord began to speak through Hosea, the Lord said to him, "Go, take to yourself an adulterous wife and children of unfaithfulness, because the land is guilty of the vilest adultery in departing from the Lord." ³ So he married Gomer... ^{3:1} The Lord said to me, "Go, show your love to your wife again, though she is loved by another and is an adulteress. Love her as the Lord loves the Israelites, though they turn to other gods and love the sacred raisin cakes."

Slowly I'm beginning to learn how to use something called "Facebook." I have no doubt that there are some of you here today, who are much better at it than I am. However, there may be some here that have no idea what "Facebook" is or what it is about. Facebook users create their own profile using pictures, video and information about themselves and they get to share it with others they may know. You get to see what others are doing, and they get to see what you are doing. But it isn't just individuals who can use it. For example, on our Church Facebook page, I'm able to post information about all kinds of different activities that are going on here at St. Paul's. Instantly, that information can go out to hundreds of people who are "friends" of St. Paul's. If you "like" what is there, you can "like" so that more people can see the pictures or information that is posted there.

This past week when I posted information about the new sermon series that we are starting today, I had a record number of people "like" it – 3. I wrote: "*We begin a new summer sermon series on Sunday, June 7th. It is titled: "A Major Message from the Minor Prophets."* It didn't really surprise me that only 3 people responded. After all, how exciting can prophets of the Old Testament be, right? On top of that, we are going to take a look at the prophets who are known as the "minor" ones. That makes it even more exciting?

Well, I want to tell you that we are going to talk about some stories with the prophets that are going to surprise you (I think). One of those stories about the first of the Minor Prophets is about a man named Hosea. It is the story of **Hosea, the prophet with the adulterous wife.**

When I read that Scripture reading this morning, was there something that jumped out at you and said: "*Did I just hear that right?*" , "**Go, take to yourself an adulterous wife and children of unfaithfulness, because the land is guilty of the vilest adultery in departing from the Lord.**" God's prophet – Hosea – has begun his work among the children of Israel of calling them to repentance. Outwardly, there was prosperity happening in the northern kingdom of Israel at the time of Hosea. The housing and employment market were doing well. But when it came to their spiritual lives, it had gotten really, really ugly. God describes it in very vivid terms: "**the land is guilty of the vilest adultery in departing from the Lord.**"

God comes and tells His prophet that he wants him to go find and marry a woman who is a prostitute. How do you explain that? As you read the first three chapters of the book of Hosea, you see that Hosea's wife doesn't leave her previous line of work after they are married. Marriage is sacred to God. He performed the marriage in the Garden of Eden with Adam and Eve. He protects it in his commandments. God is a holy God. How can he tell one of his spokesman to go and marry someone who doesn't feel the same about marriage?

What is the *major message* this *minor prophet* is trying to tell his people? God had made a promise to Abraham and to the children of Israel. They were going to be a great nation. They were going to be given a special land by God himself. Not only were they going to be blessed, the whole world was going to be blessed. "**All nations on earth will be blessed through him.**" (Gen. 18:18) A Savior would rescue God's people from their sins. God remained faithful to that promise. He never once went back on it. The children of Israel had promised that they were going to be faithful to God as well. "**We will serve the Lord our God and obey him.**" (Joshua 24:24) Yet, again and again they turned away from God. They would sin. God would punish them. They cried out for help. God would rescue them. The pattern repeated over and over.

See the picture that God is laying out for the people of Israel with Hosea and Gomer? He would use the relationship between Gomer and Hosea to show them how they were acting with God. God was the faithful husband. They were the adulterous wife. God would say to His people through Hosea: Hear the word of the Lord, you Israelites, because the Lord has a charge to bring against you who live in the land: **"There is no faithfulness, no love, no acknowledgment of God in the land. There is only cursing, lying and murder, stealing and adultery; they break all bounds, and bloodshed follows bloodshed."** (Hos. 4:1-2) The penalty for adultery was death. God would have had every right to put his people to death. They were unfaithful. They broke the promise that they had made to God. They were guilty, and they deserved to die.

But the story of Hosea and Gomer doesn't end there. **"The Lord said to me, "Go, show your love to your wife again, though she is loved by another and is an adulteress. Love her as the Lord loves the Israelites."** Gomer had left Hosea, perhaps, to live with one of her lovers. But God said to Hosea – *go find her and love your wife again*. He does what God tells him to do. He finds her, and he wants to bring her back home. But before he can do that he needs to pay a price for her. Hosea writes: **"So I bought her for fifteen shekels of silver."** (Hos. 3:2) That was about ½ the price of a slave. Yet, he pays the price. He brings her back home and says to 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."** (Hos. 3:3) It's pretty amazing love on the part of Hosea, isn't it?

It's pretty amazing love on the part of God! God's faithful love was still there in spite of their unfaithfulness. That is the love that God shows us every day of our lives! We sin. We are unfaithful to God's commands. God would have every right to put us to death. Yet, he would go to any length to save his people – to save you and me. He would send his Son to die on the cross for OUR sins. Yet he says to us: **"You are to live with me many days... and I will live with you."** Jesus washes away our sins. He loves us again and again. He is faithful to his promises. He covers us with his righteousness so that we are **"holy and blameless"** (Eph. 5:27).

So, maybe you thought the minor prophets weren't going to be that interesting. There are more messages that God wants to teach us through them. We will look at them over the next 12 weeks. Perhaps, there is no more of a major message than the message that God teaches us today. We have a God who is faithful to us. When we fail, he still loves us. He forgives our sins. He washes us clean. He makes us once again his beautiful bride. May we trust and believe in our faithful husband – our God! Amen.