

Hosea 1

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Preacher: Stuart Cashman

[0 : 00] Hosea chapter 1, verse 1, page 908. The word of the Lord came to Hosea, the son of Biri, in the days of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah, kings of Judah, in the days of Jeroboam, the son of Joash, king of Israel.

When the Lord first spoke through Hosea, the Lord said to Hosea, Go, take yourself a wife of Horden, and have children of Horden, for the land commits great Horden by forsaking the Lord. So he went and took Gomer, the daughter of Diblaim, and she conceived and bore him a son. And the Lord said to him, Call his name Jezreel, for in just 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.

And on that day I will break the bow of Israel in the valley of Jezreel. She conceived again and bore a daughter. And the Lord said to him, Call her name No Mercy, for I will no more have mercy on the house of Israel to forgive them at all.

But I will have mercy 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.

[1 : 26] When she had weaned No Mercy, she conceived and bore a son. And the Lord said, Call his name Not My People, for you are not My people, and I am not your God.

Yet, the number of the children of Israel shall be like the sand of the sea, which cannot be measured or numbered. And in the place where it was said to them, You are not My people, it will be said to them, Children of the Living God.

And the children of Judah, and the children of Israel shall be gathered together. And they shall appoint for themselves one hand, and they shall go up from the land.

For great shall be the day of Jezreel. Say to your brothers, You are My people. And to your sisters, You have received mercy. Well, it was an extraordinary romance.

He had everything. He had the looks, the money, the status, the resources. She had nothing. She had no hope in life. There was nothing particularly attractive about her.

[2 : 32] She was trapped in a situation she could not lift herself out of. Powerless to get out of the state she was in. And yet, he loved her. And he pursued her.

He wooed her and won her. He set her on her feet. He got her out of the trap, the cycle that she was in. He provided for her when she could not provide for herself.

He gave her shelter. Gave her clothes. Gave her an income. More than that, he gave her the home she never had before. He married her.

Despite her dubious past. Despite her very doubtful ability to keep her wedding vows. He married her. He loved her. He gave her the opportunities she could never dreamed of.

Provided all she could ever need. And he loved her. And yet, she only fleetingly loved him. Quite quickly, she took the new home and the fine clothes and the great food.

[3 : 31] And his love for granted. It all started with indifference and complacency. And then she found other men a bit more exciting. Pretty soon, she was flirting with them.

She found her husband's desire for her. Her husband's desire that she spend time with him.

Actually a bit tiresome. A bit restrictive. A bit irritating. So pretty soon, she was donning the party dresses.

Heading out on a Friday night to the nightclubs. And she didn't think it was serious. She thought, well, he loves me. He's promised me for better, for worse. She reasoned it couldn't really matter that much.

It was all harmless. If he loves me, he'll want me to have a good time. So indifference pretty soon became resentment. And resentment led to adultery.

Well, what is that marriage I'm talking about? It's not the marriage of Hosea to Gomer. It is the marriage of the living God to his people Israel.

[4 : 35] God had loved them when they had nothing. When they were slaves in Egypt and even before that. He had rescued them. He had won them and wooed them in the wilderness. He had brought them to the promised land.

He had lifted them out of the trap of slavery they could not free themselves from. He had given them a land to live in. He had fed them, provided for them, given them everything. And yet they were indifferent.

And then proud. And then resented him and found him restricted. And ended up committing spiritual adultery. And that is the background to Hosea chapter 1 verse 2.

When the Lord first spoke through Hosea. The Lord said to Hosea. Did he give him words to speak? Not primarily. He said, go take to yourself a wife of whoredom.

And have children of whoredom. For the land commits great whoredom. By forsaking the Lord. He says, Hosea, this is your job description. You're going to be part of a parable.

[5 : 34] A lived out enactment. Of Israel's relationship with me. Of my relationship with Israel. And as they have forsaken me. And turned their backs on me. So you're going to have a wife who does the same for you.

To you. So that Israel can see. Who they are. And what they have done. And who I am. And what I will do. See Israel's problem.

Was not that they had broken a few rules. It wasn't that they had disobeyed. Done a few naughty things. On the fringes of what God wanted. Their problem. Was adultery. They had forsaken.

Turned their back on their marriage vows. They had to discover. That you cannot live in an open relationship. With a God who gives everything. To the ones he loves. So that's why the Lord. Commanded Hosea to do this. To marry a woman. Who was bound to become unfaithful. It's not that she was a prostitute. In the original language. The sense is that she was going to become unfaithful.

[6 : 34] Not that she already was. That she was going to do. What Israel had done. Now. None of us needs me to tell us. Tell you. How devastating adultery is.

How it wreaks havoc in people's lives. How it destroys children. How it destroys individuals. Including the ones who committed. Opens long lasting wounds.

And even in our society. It doesn't really like talking about right and wrong anymore. Still. Adultery is a bit of a taboo. Isn't it? Remember a few months ago. Where hackers broke into the Ashley Madison database.

Ashley Madison is that. Dating website. For married people. To help them have affairs. On the quiet. On the side. And actually it was outrage. That there were people involved in this.

There were outraged that people should feel. That they'd been. Had their integrity. Blown apart. By their private things coming out. No. Everyone knew. They'd forsaken any right.

[7 : 34] To have privacy. By destroying their own marriage vows. By breaking their own marriage vows. Even in our society. We know that. There's something special. Something important about marriage. Yet do we see.

That the way. We turn against God. The way Israel. Had rejected and turned against. The God he'd done so much for them. Was adultery. They were supposed to be faithful to him alone.

To look to him alone for security. To look to him alone to provide. To look to love him alone. And worship him alone. But they hadn't. They'd gone off.

To the gods of the nations around them. And so. In this chapter. God is speaking to them. Through this marriage. Of Hosea to Gomer. And he's giving them.

First of all. A wake up call. And secondly. Showing them where their only hope lies. So first of all. The wake up call. In verses 3 through to 9. And the wake up call.

[8 : 33] Comes in the form. Not just of the actual marriage. But the whole of Hosea's family. And the interesting names. He gives his children. So look at verse 3. So he. Hosea. Went to Gomer. The daughter of Dublun.

And she conceived. And bore him a son. Now probably. Looking at the subtleties. Of the words here. This was the only child. Of which Hosea was the father. Seems the other two children.

Somebody else fathered. So child number one. Is actually Hosea's. But the name is shocking. See the name. He's to give him. Verse 4. God says. Call him Jezreel. Now I don't suppose you or I.

Have ever met a Jezreel. And that's okay. It doesn't mean much to us. But maybe I could put it like this. Imagine if. If the Lord told someone today.

Give your child the name. Auschwitz. Or Shevronica. What do those names conjure up in our mind? They're bloodbaths aren't they?

[9 : 31] The horrific genocide of Shevronica. The horrific Holocaust. The Auschwitz. That's the kind of name. That Hosea has to give his first child.

You can imagine can't you. People say. Hosea congratulations. You've got a little boy. You've got a name for him yet. Yeah. Jezreel. Bloodbath. What? Why are you calling him that?

And so he gets into conversation. About why. The Lord told him to call him that. And the Lord gives him a reason. Doesn't he? Tells him what to say. When that conversation comes up. For in just a little while. I will punish.

The house of Jehu. For the blood. Of Jezreel. See in Israel's history. Jezreel was not only a place. It was a place where a massacre. Had happened. It started.

About a hundred years earlier. Maybe a bit more than that. When the king at the time. Ahab. He'd been a really bad king. Had murdered. A faithful worshipper of the Lord.

[10 : 27] Because he wanted to steal his vineyard. The Lord had then said. To a man named Jehu. You are going to be my agent. To punish Ahab's family. So Jehu had gone in.

And massacred the whole of Ahab's family. At Jezreel. It was a bloody incident. Now the purpose of that. Was supposed to be. To clean out. Israel. So that they would come back.

To faithfulness. To the living God. But that hadn't happened. Because Jehu himself. While he stopped worshipping. The same gods that Ahab worshipped. Still. Led the nation.

In worshipping other gods. And so the Lord says. You know what. This is time on. There is a blood bath coming. You have rebelled against me. My judgment will fall.

And God has to judge. Because he is loving. Because of that blood bath. Because of the false worship. That led his people astray. Led his people into destructive lives.

[11 : 23] He has to judge. So this first. The name of the first child. Tells people. That judgment is coming. They had been. Israel had been complacent. About God's word.

They maybe thought. God was a bit restrictive. He should be a bit more open minded. Maybe they thought. God will never judge us. And so Hosea. Has to give his boy this name.

Jezreel. Auschwitz. Killing Fields. Whatever you like. To show that a blood bath is coming. Because of the way his people. Have treated. The living God. Well if that doesn't sound too cheery.

Spare a thought for this poor daughter. Mentioned in verse 6. She. Hosea's wife. Conceived again. And bore a daughter. Notice. Not bore him a daughter.

Just bore a daughter. And the Lord said to Hosea. Call her name. No mercy. For I will no more have mercy. On the house of Israel. To forgive them at all. Imagine Hosea.

[12 : 21] Going to the school gate. Oh what's this one called Hosea? No mercy. No mercy. It's not a nice name is it? Years ago. My brothers. Brought my father a dog.

He's my parents. 25th wedding anniversary. So he brought a little cute golden retriever puppy. Like an Andrax puppy. Big brown eyes. 12 weeks old. When we first introduced it to my father. I said.

Dad. You've got to think of a name for this dog. And he looked at it and said. You know what? You can call that dog unwanted. Unwanted. Now to be fair to my father.

He ended up becoming great friends with that dog. And was heartbroken when he died eventually. But it's almost like that was the name for this child. Call her unwanted. Whatever she does. I will not want her.

I will not have mercy. Now mercy was at the very heart of God's character. That God revealed back in Exodus chapter 34. It was at the very heart of God's covenant relationship.

[13 : 17] His marriage relationship. With his people. The Lord is full of mercy. And steadfast love. Yet here's the wake up call to Israel.

The Lord says. No more. No more shall I have mercy. I will not forgive. You have gone too far. Imagine what it would be like.

Imagine what it's like to hear those words from a loved one. Maybe some of you have. The parent. The spouse. The child.

He says no more. I don't want anything more to do with you. That's painful isn't it? Imagine if the living God said that to me or to you.

There will be no more mercy. No love. But notice there's a contrast. Verse 7.

[14:15] No more mercy for Israel. Which is the northern kingdom. But I will have mercy on the house of Judah. And I will save them by the Lord their God.

To back up here. The history was that 200 years before Hosea. The nation of Israel was split in two. The northern half took the name Israel. The southern two tribes took the name Judah. And Israel had always gone astray. They had always been unfaithful. They set up their own ways of worshipping God. Their own ways of doing things. Where down in the south. In Judah. They still had a king descended from King David. The family of whom God had said. One of this family will always be my king over my people. And down in the south. They also had the temple. Where they could make sacrifices for sins. The temple that was the sign of God's presence. And God's willingness to forgive. They had those things. And so they still had the potential to be faithful to the Lord.

[15:13] That's why he says for them there is still forgiveness. There is still mercy. For they are still being faithful. They still have the opportunity to approach me. And love me. And worship me. The way I've asked.

But for Israel. Who have gone astray. Doing their own things. There will be no more mercy. There's a warning there for us isn't there? That nation of Israel had kind of assumed God would always forgive.

Assumed the Lord didn't really mind what they did too much. Many people today think that if God's there he's bound to be forgiven. Isn't that God's job? Isn't that God's job to forgive? If I've done my best. If I've been nice to people. If I gave a bit to charity. Isn't that what God wants? Well no that is not what God wants. He doesn't want us being nice people around the edge. He loves us too much for that. He wants our hearts. He wants our lives. And he's given us so much. As we'll see in a moment. See thinking we know what God will want.

[16:19] Thinking we can make up our own ideas. Thinking that actually he overlooks our little misdemeanors. Whatever we do. Is to trivialize the love of the living God. Is to be unfaithful to the God who's been faithful to us.

Think of the heartache for Hosea. Cradling this daughter. No mercy. And this son. Not my people. Not my son. Knowing they were not his. Well that was God's position. With Israel. Look what this boy's got to be called.

Not my people. Verse 9. Not my son. Bit of a shock to the neighbors wouldn't it? So what's this one called Hosea? Not my son. That would go down well wouldn't it? That would get people talking. He has such a powerful image for Israel. One of God's great promises to Israel. Had been that they would be his children.

[17:19] He would be their God. Now he says no more. You're not mine. One commentator I read on this. Used this illustration. So imagine a little boy going for a walk with his father.

And suddenly a dog bounds up. Barking and growling and foaming at the mouth. Ready to attack the child. And what would a good father do at that point? You'd expect him to jump in. And kind of beat the dog away. Or pick the child up and protect him. But imagine instead. With that dog running towards the child. The father says. You know what? I never told you. You're not actually mine.

Bye. And runs off in the other direction. And yet that is kind of the situation Israel were in. The big dog was the empire of Assyria. That was expanding on the northern border. That from 730 BC. Repeatedly came into Israel. And encroached on their land. And in 722 BC. Destroyed the nation. It's like they were the big dog.

[18:16] The Lord is saying. You know what? You're not my children. You have gone too far. I will not save you. Imagine the Lord saying that to us.

See verses 2 to 9. We get this torn family photo. The destructiveness. Of Israel's spiritual adultery. Their faithlessness to God. He gives them this wake up call. Yet after the wake up call. He shows us that he is their only hope.

You see that in verse 10. Chapter 2 verse 1. You see there's a total reversal of what's come before. Verse 9. I am not your God. Verse 10. Yet the number of the children of Israel.

Will be like the sand of the sea. Which cannot be measured. Or numbered. That goes back to a promise. The Lord had made to Abraham. Back in Genesis. When he founded this whole nation.

[19:14] And it's important we understand what was going on there. Because when God chose Abraham. When God chose Abraham to father the nation of Israel. He chose Israel for a purpose.

It was not just so they could be his. But so that through the nation of Israel. God could rescue and reach and bless the world. He said to Abraham. I'm going to make you a great nation. Your children will be as many. As the sand on the sea shore. And the stars in the sky. You'll be a great nation. And in you. Through you. All the families of the earth will be blessed. So that was always God's plan. It was always his plan. To bring his blessing. To every nation on earth. To people from every nation on earth. Now Israel had done their best to thwart that plan. By being unfaithful. By rejecting God's great love. Yet the Lord's plan is not going to be stopped. Hence the title of this series.

[20 : 12] The love that will not lose. So if Israel isn't going to do. What they're supposed to do. Then God will in his own miraculous way. Make things happen.

So to make this little nation. That's going to be destroyed. As numerous as the sand on the sea shore. Takes a miracle. Notice that's going to be restoration. Look at verse 10 as it goes on. 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. Notice it's children of the living God. The true God. Not the pretend gods.

Not the imaginary gods they'd worship. But the true God. It's going to be restoration. It's going to be reunification. Verse 11. The children of Judah and the children of Israel.

Shall be gathered together. The nation that had been fragmented 200 years earlier. And divided 200 years earlier. God will reunify. And if there's going to be one nation. There's going to have to be one king.

[21 : 07] They shall appoint for themselves one head. They'll be back again. Under the king of God's choosing. The king from David's family. Not only that.

There will be resurrection. They shall go up from the land. For great shall be the day of Jezreel. And Jezreel here doesn't go back to the bloodbath. Or rather it goes back to the town of Jezreel. Representing the people of God. Living in God's land as he promised. How could any of this happen? Well the clue is in the second line isn't it?

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. In the place where Israel is rejected.

In the place where judgment happens. In the place where the father says. You are not my child anymore. In the place where God the father says. There is no mercy for Israel here.

[22 : 07] In that place. People can become children of the living God. So what is that place? Let's tell the story another way.

When Israel had failed. Failed to be faithful. God sent a new Israel. Sent his own son. The eternal son of God.

The Lord Jesus Christ. Who as we read later on in this book of Hosea. Was brought out of Egypt. Went to Egypt as a child. Was brought out of Egypt. Who grew up. Faithfully obeying his father. Who did all that Israel had never done. And who was obedient even to death on a cross. That as the Lord Jesus Christ. The Lord Jesus Christ hung on a cross outside Jerusalem.

As the sky went dark from midday to 3am. The father turned his back on the child. He said there will be no mercy for this one. He is not my child.

[23 : 09] He says. Because the Lord Jesus himself took upon himself. Embodied in himself. Or our unfaithfulness. Or our spiritual adultery.

Or our wandering from the garden as faithful. He took it all upon himself. God's own faithful son was forsaken.

So unfaithful ones like me and you. Can become children of the living God. Jesus was treated as the whore. So that we can be treated as the faithful son he was.

In the place. In the cross. Where judgment fell. In the cross. That stands for Jezreel. For Srebrenica. For bloodbath.

For Auschwitz. On the cross. Which speaks to the son unwanted. No mercy. In that place. Through Jesus. We can be children of the living God.

[24 : 11] See we need to learn from Hosea. To turn away from our idolatry. To turn away from our faithlessness. And to be loyal and loving. To the one who has died to save us.

To learn our security. Our significance. Our contentment in him. We need to look at Jesus. And be amazed at the price God paid to win us. Because only in Jesus.

We can be one. Let me pray for us. If you have questions. Do you. Stick around at the end. We'll try and respond. Let's pray. Amen.