

Hosea 3

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 06 February 2022

Preacher: Paul Levy

[0 : 00] Turn to Hosea chapter 3. Hosea chapter 3, which in the church Bible says 752.

I'm going to need your attention. I've got a fairly lengthy and explosive quote that we're going to start this sermon with.

If your phone goes off, it'll kind of totally ruin the effect of this quote, and the sermon will take a nosedive. So I'm going to need you to concentrate on the whole sermon, but that's too much to ask. Five minutes, aren't it? Thank you.

A woman in a too-tight black dress, sitting with her arm entwined with a skinny one of a boy in a sleeveless T-shirt. She waved at the crowd. He grinned.

[1 : 24] The talk show host, Christy Adams, wasted no time. Did the two of you really sleep together? The mother, still holding the hand of the boy, looked at him. He grinned and she smiled. Yes.

She went on to explain how she's been lonely since her divorce. Her daughter's boyfriend hung out at her house all hours of the day and night. Well, one afternoon, he just plopped down beside her on the couch, and the pair started talking.

One thing, one thing led to another, and the next thing she knew, her face flushed. The boy shrugged. And the audience completed the sentence.

The girl just sat there expressionless and silent. Aren't you worried what this might teach your daughter? Christy inquired.

I'm only teaching her the ways of the world. What about you? Christy asked the boy. Aren't you being unfaithful to your girlfriend? The boy looked honestly amazed.

[2 : 30] I still love her, he said. I'm only helping her by loving her mother. We are one happy family. There's nothing wrong with that. The audience erupted with whistles and applause. Just as that began to subside, Christy told the lovers that not everyone would agree with you.

I've invited a guest to react to your lifestyle. With that, the crowd got quiet. Anxious to see who Christy had recruited to spice up the dialogue, she said, he's the world's most famous theologian. His writings have long been followed by some and debated by others. Making his first appearance on the Christy Adams show, please welcome controversial theologian, scholar, and author, the Apostle Paul.

Polite applause welcomed a short, balding man with glasses and a tweed jacket. He loosened his tie a little uncomfortably, and as he settled his small frame into the stage chair.

Christy skipped the welcome. You've got trouble with what these people are doing. Paul held his hands in his lap, looked over at the trio, and then back at Christy.

[3 : 39] It's not how I feel that matters. It is how God feels. Christy paused so that the TV audience could feel the oohs rippling through the studio audience.

Then tell us, Paul, how does God feel about this creative tryst? It angers him. And why? Evil angers God. Because evil destroys God's children.

And what these people are doing is evil. The strong words triggered a few hoots, some scattered applause, and an outburst of raised hands. Before Christy could speak, Paul continued, As a result, God has left them, and let them go their sinful way.

Their thinking is dark, their acts are evil, and God is disgusted. A lanky fellow in the front row shouted out his objections. It's her body, she can do what she wants.

Ah, said Paul, but that is where you are mistaken. Her body belongs to God, and it is to be used for him. What we are doing is harmless, objected the mother. Look at your daughter, Paul urged her, gesturing towards the girl whose eyes were full of tears.

[4 : 50] Don't you see how you've harmed her? You traded healthy love for lust. You traded the love of good for the love of the flesh. You traded the truth for lies, and you traded the natural for the unnatural.

Christy could restrain herself no longer. Do you know how old-fashioned you sound? All this talk about God, and right, and wrong, and immorality. Don't you feel out of touch with reality? Out of touch, no.

Out of place, yes. But out of touch, hardly. God doesn't sit silently while his children indulge in perversions.

He lets us go our sinful way and reap the consequences. Every broken woman, every unwanted child, every war and tragedy can be traced back to our rebellion against God.

People sprang to their feet. The mother put her finger in Paul's face. Christy turned to the camera, delighting in the pandemonium. We've got to take a break, she said, shouting over the noise. Don't go away.

[5 : 49] We've got some more questions for our friend the apostle. Now, of course, the script is fictional. But there are TV shows like that.

The script is fictional, but Paul's words are not. You've just had them read to you. They're from Romans 1. God is angry at evil, and that comes as a great shock, doesn't it, to many people, even people in churches.

Many people assume that God is a harassed high school teacher who's got his work cut out monitoring the planets, too busy monitoring the planets to even notice us.

Others assume that God is a doting parent who's blind to all the faults of his children. Still others think that he loves us so much that he'd never be angry with us.

But love is always angry, isn't it? I've said this a number of times recently, but love and anger are not opposites. Indifference is the opposite to love.

[6 : 58] You cannot be indifferent when those you love are destroying themselves. It makes you angry. And God cares about the way that you behave and the way that we treat one another.

He cares about the way we behave as his people and how we behave towards others. And the attitudes we adopt, he is not indifferent to these things.

And nowhere, I think, do you see this more clearly than in Hosea chapter 3. James Montgomery Boyce, he was the minister for decades at 10th Presbyterian Church in Philadelphia.

He's a far better preacher than I am. He calls this the greatest chapter in the Bible because it tells us of the greatest story ever told. It's the story of God's faithful love to people like us who are hell-bent on destroying ourselves.

And that's what the story of Hosea is about. It's what the book of Hosea is about. Hosea is very, very shocking, like that opening illustration was shocking.

[8 : 04] But it speaks of his unconditional love, which means that he loves us even when he hates the way that we behave and what we've become. Three things.

First of all, our plight as human beings. And secondly, a price that has been paid, the cost to bring us back, and then thirdly, I want to see a prophecy or a promise.

So let's look at the plight of human beings. It's described for us there in verse 1. And the Lord said to me, that's Hosea, go again. Love a woman who is loved by another man.

Hosea is told, do you remember chapter 1? He's told to go marry a prostitute. That's verse 1 of chapter 1. And since they got married, the lady's been unfaithful.

She's been sleeping around with other men. We saw that in chapter 2 last week. They've got three kids. The first one might well have been Hosea's. We're not too sure about the other two. One of them was actually called Not Mine.

[9 : 06] It's a pretty sordid story. And even when she's been sleeping around with other guys, Hosea has been secretly caring for her. Look at verse 7 and 8 of Hosea chapter 2.

Verse 8, she did not know that it was I who gave her the grain and the wine and the oil who lavished on the silver and gold. And that even in the midst of her unfaithfulness, Hosea has been providing for her.

But here in chapter 3, it goes from bad to worse. She's back on the streets. She's discarded by her lovers. She's probably lost her looks. She's destitute. And worse than that, God says to Hosea, now go and love her again.

The woman who's betrayed him, she's broken his heart. She's brought shame on him and he's just gone on loving her. There's an old hymn, I haven't sang it for decades, but it says this, preserved in Jesus when my feet made haste to hell.

And there I would have been, but he does all things well. Preserved in Jesus when my feet made haste to hell, and there I would have been, but he does all things well.

[10 : 30] It's talking about before I was a Christian and before I knew him, when I was going my own sweet way in rebellion against him, doing my own thing, what was he doing? What was God doing before you became a Christian?

Let me tell you what he was doing. He was putting breath in your body. He was causing the sun to shine on you and the rain to fall on you. Preserved in Jesus even when my feet made haste to hell, and there I would have been.

You see, this woman, she is hell-bent on destroying herself. herself. But Hosea's love went out to her, and he provided for her, and he cared for her, and when she comes to the very bottom, to the rock bottom of her life, he is there for her.

Go and love her again, God says. Show love to your wife again. She's loved by another man, and she's an adulteress, even as the Lord loves the children of Israel, and though they turn to other gods and love cakes of raisins.

It seems so strange to us, doesn't it, at the end of verse 1? What's the problem with fairy cakes? We're not really sure. The commentators spend hours and pages and pages on what these sacred love cakes are.

[11 : 45] They're probably offerings to a Canaanite God. But here's the point. How can you love people who prefer raisin cakes to the God who made the universe?

How can you love people whose God literally is their belly? Who worship created things rather than the creator? But we do that, don't we?

Just what we're like. We chase. People chase after trivialities. We give our heart to next to nothings. Tolstoy in his novel Anna Karenina.

Tolstoy describes the relationship between Anna and her lover Ronski like this. He soon felt that the fulfillment of his desires gave him only one grain of the mountain of happiness that he had expected.

This fulfillment showed him the eternal error men make in imagining that their happiness depends on the realization of their desires. I love the way he puts that.

[12 : 52] He says, it's an eternal error. We make mistakes, don't we? But this is a mistake that will ruin you forever. To imagine that your happiness can be found in the fulfillment of your desires.

in Scruti letters, C.S. Lewis Wormwood is giving advice to his nephew as to how you trap human beings.

It's a fascinating book. And he says, this is the way to do it. He says, give them an ever increasing craving for an ever diminishing pleasure. That's the way to destroy the human race.

That's the story of the raisin cakes. That's the story of Goma. She's an addict, isn't she? At first it looked so exciting and pleasurable but then she's lost her looks and her lovers and she's dumped and she's discarded and nobody wants her now.

Her lovers are now her pimps. They sell her to whoever is willing to pay for her and that's the plight she's in and that's the plight of men and women and boys and girls when they run away from God.

[13 : 59] But it gets worse. Notice, secondly, there's a price to pay. Look at verse 2. So I bought her. Where is Goma now? She's been trafficked.

She's in the marketplace. So I bought her for 15 shekels of silver and a homer and lethech of barley. Verse 2 is really that's the price that you would have paid for a slave.

That is the going rate in the slave market in Hosea's day. And that's where she is in chapter 3. She's up for sale. She'd have been stripped of all her clothing so that potential buyers could have seen what they were getting.

it does not get more sordid than this. And they begin bidding for her body. And at the depths of her degradation she must have felt mustn't she so worthless so worthless so ashamed.

But as she stands there with men bidding for her she hears a familiar voice. there's somebody that says 14 shekels of silver and half a homer and a lethech of barley.

[15 : 20] And then she hears this voice which she recognizes. She hears the voice of her husband say no 15 shekels of silver and a homer a full homer and a lethech of barley.

You see in the Old Testament when a wife behaved in the way that Goma had behaved and when she brought so much shame on her family divorce was almost mandatory or even death. Death was the punishment for the sort of behavior that she'd indulged in. But what does Hosea do? He buys her back and he brings her home. And if you can't see the gospel in that come and speak to me afterwards.

Do you see what Hosea does in verse 3? And I said to her you must dwell as mine for many days. You shall not play the whore or belong to another man and so will I also be to you.

It's hard to imagine isn't it how costly that would have been for Hosea to even turn up in the slave market. To raise his voice to identify himself with this woman.

[16:39] Just think socially and culturally how costly it would have been for him. Think how emotionally costly it would have been for him. It's not easy to forgive.

You can't just kiss and make up and pretend that nothing has happened. And so what is Hosea going to do with all the hurt and all the pain that's inside of him?

All the hurt and all the betrayal. What's he going to do with it? It doesn't just disappear, does it? It doesn't just dissipate. So either he's going to take it out on her and she must take it or he must bear it.

And he does. He absorbs it into himself. And he could have poured his righteous indignation on her. He could have made her life a misery.

He could have treated her like a slave for the rest of her days. But he doesn't do that, does he? Instead, he absorbs it into himself.

[17:49] And so what I'm trying to say is that there is always a price to pay when you love someone. In this way. To love anyone involves a substitutionary sacrifice.

Just think about it for a moment. You'll know this from your own experience. Let's say you have a friend and she's going through a pretty terrible time.

She's lonely. And you know that if you go to see her, there goes your evening. You'll spend the whole evening there. And you've made plans for your evening, but she is lonely and she is suffering and she is hurting.

But if you go and see her, then that's your evening gone. So at that point, it's her or you, isn't it? you could have your evening and keep yourself intact while she emotionally suffers on her own.

Or you could sacrifice your evening in order to bring comfort and friendship and comfort to her. Do you see? An act of love towards a needy person always involves a substitutionary sacrifice of some sort.

[19:03] There is always a cost involved. And so in our redemption, there is a cost and a price to be paid. And Jesus pays it on the cross. It's not simply the physical suffering that he went through.

People are always asking me, kind of non-Christians who realize I'm a Christian or a minister and they don't know what to say. They say to me, have you seen the passion? Have you seen the passion? What do you think of the passion?

What do we say to that? What we say, don't we, actually the Bible, I'm sure the film accurately portrays the physical suffering, but the Bible actually plays the physical suffering of Jesus down.

It doesn't dwell on it. It doesn't dwell on the agony of the physical crucifixion. One of the Puritans said the soul of Jesus' suffering was the suffering of his soul.

Bearing shame and scoffing rude in my place, condemned he stood. That's his suffering. That is the cost that was paid. It wasn't just his physical crucifixion.

[20:13] Actually, it's his substitution that was absorbing all the shame and all the guilt onto himself. Vijay Menon.

Anybody met Vijay Menon? He's a very, very funny man. He was a Hindu, became a Christian.

There's some legendary stories about Vijay Menon in London. He worked in Lloyds of London and one time security stopped him on the door and said, what's in your suitcase?

He said, dynamite. They shut down Lloyds of London. He's a very, very funny guy. He was a Hindu. There was a Bible in his briefcase.

I should have said that. He wrote a book called Found by God. If you find it, it's a really good read.

He says this in his book. He says, I wanted to belong to God so much.

He'd been going to some lunchtime services in the 80s when Dick Lucas was preaching there at St. Helens. I wanted to belong to God so much that in my heart I was willing to pay any price. This is what it actually cost me, he says.

[21 : 19] Imagine I came to your house with a kidney machine to sell when you're on the point of dying with kidney failure. You ask me how much it costs. If I were to say to you, well, I'll exchange the kidney machine for the rubbish in your back garden, would you consider that too great a price to pay?

Wouldn't you be only too willing to pay any price for that machine? Vijay says, the cost that I had to pay Jesus for my salvation, for my redemption, to get my life on track, the price that I had to pay Jesus to save me and redeem was the rubbish in my backyard, the rubbish in my life.

My sin and my selfishness, all that made me unhappy, all that made my life a misery. I could have hung on to that. I could have cherished my rubbish and hung on to it, but that thought never crossed my mind.

You see, that's it, isn't it? That you and I have nothing to contribute to our salvation except the sin that we need to be saved from. Jesus pays it all.

And Jesus pays the price. And Paul reminds us of that in Romans, doesn't he, that God demonstrates, he shows his own love for us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

[22 : 36] So just like Gomer chasing after the lovers, just like Israel running after the Canaanites gods, unfaithful, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. We've sanitized the cross, haven't we?

And so the crosses that you see all around the place are nothing like the crosses Jesus died on. We decorate our buildings with crosses, we turn it into jewelry, we put it around our necks, but the Bible says cursed is everyone who hangs on a tree.

there's a hymn, isn't there? I know, he chose it for tonight, but didn't. Cecil Francis Alexander, she wrote this, she says, there is a green hill far away outside a city wall where our dear Lord was crucified.

And so the lady who wrote those words, she lived in Ireland. if you go to Ireland, I'm not a great fan of Ireland at the moment, but if you go to Ireland, everything is green, isn't it?

Everything is green. So the thing you notice is you fly over it. Everything is green. It's the Emerald Isle. So much rain there. But when Jesus died, there was no green hill outside a city wall.

[23 : 53] It was Golgotha. It was the place of the skull. skull. Jesus died outside the city wall in Golgotha in the place of the skull.

He was made sin for us, he who knew no sin. And the sin of his people was dumped on him. He became sin for us so that we might be put right with God.

That's the price he pays. Somebody has written this haven't they? To make us, God only had to breathe. To redeem us, he had to bleed.

Now, you should be asking this, you should be thinking, where is this in the text, Paul? Where does it say in the text that God comes into the marketplace to redeem his people and to pay the price?

Where is Jesus in chapter 3? Where is the cross in Hosea chapter 3? So, thirdly, a prophecy, a prophecy, a promise you. Look at verses 4 and 5. For the children of Israel shall dwell many days without king or prince, without sacrifice or pillar, without ephod or household gods.

[24 : 58] And afterward, the children of Israel shall return and seek the Lord their God and David their king. that should surprise you because David's been dead for years.

David died years ago. And Hosea is after David's time. But the prophet is looking forward, isn't he, to a time when the Israelites will return and they will seek their king and they will come trembling and they shall come in the fear of the Lord and to his goodness in the last days.

In other words, there will be a time when Israel will be in the wilderness. Where it will be far away. But eventually the children of Israel will return to David, their king.

But David is dead. And so there must be another David, a descendant of David. There must be great David's greatest son, Jesus Christ, in the town of David.

David. Born in the New Testament. Do you remember on Palm Sunday, they wave their branches and they say Hosanna to the son of David.

[26 : 14] Do you remember Bartimaeus, blind Bartimaeus, he hears that Jesus is coming and he cries out, son of David, have mercy on me. And you remember that Jesus identifies himself as the son of David, but also he identifies himself as the bridegroom.

he's the bridegroom that will be taken away to restore his runaway bride and restore her to himself. John the Baptist, he's the best man at the wedding, but Jesus is the bridegroom.

And the bridegroom is going to be taken away in order to restore his runaway bride to himself. love. And so what does that mean? It means simply this, it means that your life and my life is not your own.

And that's what the Lord's Supper will remind you of. It will remind you that you are not your own. You've been bought with a price and you've been redeemed.

there's an urban legend, I wish it was a true story, but I looked it up and it's a myth. But let's not let that ruin an illustration.

[27 : 32] It's about Winston Churchill. And apparently, when Winston Churchill was a child, he almost drowned. That much is true. His life was saved by the gardener, that's also true.

And years later, when he was Prime Minister, he had pneumonia. But his life was saved by penicillin. And the man who invented penicillin was Alexander Fleming, who according to the myth, just happened to be the son of the gardener, who had saved his life as a boy.

Now, there's some truth in that, but it didn't happen exactly like that. My point is this, you see, you and I owe our lives not just once or twice, but three times to God, to Jesus.

He made us. He redeemed us. He is the word by which the world was made, and that word was made flesh and made his dwelling amongst us.

To bleed and die for our sins, he made us for himself, and when we ran away from him in our rebellion, into the arms of other gods, he came and sought us and bought us and brought us back. And he's given us his Holy Spirit, the Spirit of Jesus, and he lives in you tonight if you are a Christian.

[28 : 44] And it means that Spirit of Jesus actually dwells in your heart. You're occupied by him. And so we are triply, not our own.

And so the Lord's table says to you tonight, how dare you live for yourself? How dare you live for yourself? You can't live any old way.

God. New Testament teaches us we must live, seeking to please him, not squandering what God has paid such a high price for.

The Apostle Paul says to us, do you not know that your bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit? He who is in you, whom you have received from God, you are not your own.

you are bought at a price. Therefore, honor God with your bodies. I said to her, you must dwell as mine for many days.

[30 : 02] You shall not play the whore or belong to another man. So will I also be to you. Let's pray. Thank you.