

Hosea

Introduction

- A. God's covenant with Israel: God's love tolerates NO RIVALS
 - 1. "The Shema": Hear O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is one. You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength. (Dt 6:4-5)
 - 2. 10 Commandments
 - 1. You shall have no other gods before me
 - 2. You shall not make for yourself a carved image, or any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is on earth below. You shall not bow down to them or serve them; for I the Lord your God am a jealous God.

- B. The Historical Context
 - 1. Hosea writing to the Northern Kingdom ("Israel") in roughly 760 BC
 - A time of military and economic prosperity
 - A time of moral decay and spiritual idolatry
 - 2. Assyria will destroy the northern kingdom in roughly 40 years time

The Passage

Hosea's Experience

- I. The first command: "marry a whore" (1:2-3)
 - Either she already is a prostitute, or she will prove to be unfaithful
 - Imagine a prophet (a respected man of God) marrying such a person!
 - A. Three Children
 - 1:4: Jezreel (reminds them of an unpleasant event in Israel's history, see 1 Kings 21:21-24)
 - 1:6-7: No Mercy
 - 1:8-9: Not My People
 - B. Gomer's downward trajectory
 - She eventually moves out and moves in with another man (probably as his sex slave)
-
- II. The second command: "go again and love this woman" (3:1)
 - A. He has to buy her back (3:2)
 - B. They live together again (3:3)
-
- III. The object lesson
 - A. Israel's response to Hosea
 - Israel must have thought Hosea was crazy. Why would he continue to love someone who was so unfaithful and so unlovable?
 - B. God's response to Israel
 - God says to Israel: "you are like Gomer. I have been faithful to you, and you have cheated on me again and again!"

God's Experience

I. A Summary of God's experience (chapter 1)

A. Judgment (1:4-9)

The three names all represent God's judgment on Israel for her unfaithfulness

B. Mercy (1:10-2:1)

The reversal of the 3 names: god restores Israel

II. Specifics on God's experience

A. The Nature of Israel's sin/adultery

Baal Worship: 2:5, 2:8, 2:1

1. Who was Baal?

Canaanite God of thunder, storm god who brings the rain
He was responsible for agriculture, fruitfulness (grain, bread, wine) and human fertility

Issue: Israel had abandoned Yahweh as the creator of all and the source of crops and babies, and attributed these to Baal

2. What did Baal worship look like?

- a. it involved manipulating carved idols (13:2, 14:3)
- b. it involved sacrificing on the high places (4:13)
- c. it involved cult prostitution (4:14)
- d. it involved cutting/gashing yourself (7:14)

B. The Nature of God's Response

1. Judgment: in order to bring Israel to a place of desperation so that she returns to Him

a. Famine (2:3, 2:9)

b. Assyria (11:5-7)

Yet God's heart breaks for Israel (11:8)

2. Mercy (2:14-23)

a. He will woo her (v. 14)

b. Bring her back to the good old days/honeymoon (v. 15)

c. Have a relationship of intimacy and affection

v. 16: call me "My Husband" and not "My Baal"

d. Gives her a new start (v. 19-20)

This is the gospel: a God who commits himself to an unfaithful people
Never gives up: disciplines, punishes but also calls back, woos, heals, fresh start

Application

I. What are the lesser gods (idols) we go running after?

What has first place in terms of our affection, allegiance, trust

Examples: money, possessions, reputation, job, people, ourselves

Subtle Process

We get distracted by these other “lovers,” they begin to take first place in our heart, we become enslaved to them, and we lose our affection and passion for God

II. What is our image of God?

God is not just a moralist; He’s a lover who wants our hearts
He wants a relationship of intimacy and passion and commitment

III. What do we do?

Repent

1. Turn from these idols

Identify: What has first place in my affection, allegiance, trust?
And confess them

2. Turn to God

Pursue a relationship with God

1) Start with giving thanks to him for these gifts

2) Make it easy for him to woo you

Spend time in his word, pray to him (talk to him)

Discussion Questions

1. Opening questions: What struck you most about the sermon/the passage? What surprised you? What confused you? What did you disagree with?
2. What do you make of God’s command to Hosea to go and marry a “wife of whoredom?”
3. How do you react to the idea that God is a lover who eagerly desires a relationship with you of intimacy, joy, and commitment? What are the barriers to you fully accepting that view of God and actually living within it?
4. An idol was defined as anything besides God that takes first place in terms of your affection, allegiance, or trust. Several contemporary “idols” were mentioned on Sunday (the self, money, etc). What else would you add to the list? What are the idols that hold the most temptation for you personally?
5. Based on your own understanding and personal experience, discuss the following statement: Idolatry always leads to being enslaved in some way, and staying close to God always leads to greater freedom.