

Sermon: Boundless Love for a Wayward Wife

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Date: 13 June 2020

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[0 : 00] Hey Hey Faith family, if you have a Bible, please turn to the book of Hosea, the book of Hosea, as today we start a brand new series called Boundless.

And if you're not familiar with the book of Hosea, it's one of the minor prophets in the Old Testament. Minor, not because it's less important, but because it's one of the smaller books compared to that of Isaiah or Ezekiel.

Right after the book of Daniel, you'll find the book of Hosea. And over the next several weeks, we're going to go through this minor prophet, looking at God's boundless love.

Now I realize that a series on the love of God may seem elementary to a lot of us. Many of us have been singing Jesus loves me ever since we were children.

And yet, the love of God, when it is fully understood, it blows our minds. It's not elementary at all. And the book of Hosea really helps us understand just how outrageous and scandalous the love of God is.

[1 : 38] And so I'm praying that over the next few weeks, as we're on this journey together, that we will all experience the love of God in a very fresh and transforming way.

Now I want to warn you, this series, particularly this book, is very intense. There will be language and content and concepts that kind of make us say, is that really in the Bible?

And I'm not going to hold back at all. I'm going to preach the Word as the Word is written. And so just get ready, put your seatbelt on as we go on this journey of understanding God's boundless love.

Today let's read Hosea chapter 1 and the first three verses. Hosea chapter 1, 1 through 3. Word of God says that the Word of the Lord came to Hosea, the son of Barah, in the days of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah, kings of Judah, and 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 Hortum, and have children of Hortum.

[2 : 58] For the land commits great whoredom by forsaking the Lord. And so he went and took Gomer, the daughter of Diblimum, and she conceived and bore him a son.

Let's pray together. Father, we thank You for every bit of Your Word. There is not a single book, a single verse that is not inspired by You. We thank You for this book of Hosea, and as we begin to study it today and over the next few weeks, God, we pray that You would teach us more about Yourself, more about Your love, just how amazing Your love really is.

So come and meet us today as we encounter You through Your Word, and we pray it in Jesus' name. Amen. It was Monday morning, the day that Jill always did laundry.

She chose to do laundry on Monday because she wanted the clothes to be ready for her family for the rest of the week. And yet what was normally an ordinary day on this Monday took a life-altering turn.

Jill took the laundry basket up to the bedroom, and she was folding clothes. And as she was folding clothes, a card fell out of her husband's pants pocket.

[4 : 26] It was a card for a Las Vegas prostitute. Jill was startled by this. She froze. She was quite familiar with the fact that they handed these kinds of things out in Las Vegas streets all the time, and that her husband had just returned from a business trip to Las Vegas.

But what made this card even more troubling was that it had a personal handwritten name and number on it. She thought, surely this is some kind of prank by his work buddies.

He would never do anything like this. And so she tried to dismiss it. Later that evening, when Jill's husband came home, she decided not to address it right away because she didn't want to cause a scene in front of the kids, and so she decided to wait till bedtime.

When bedtime came, her husband was brushing his teeth, and Jill walked in, placed the card on the bathroom counter, and froze.

What? What do you mean, what? What is this? I don't want to talk about it. You don't want to talk about it.

[5 : 48] You have to talk about it. Why? Because this card is for a prostitute. Did you sleep with her?

You know I would never do anything like that. Give me a straight answer. Did you? Yes.

It was Friday afternoon. Nick couldn't wait to get home. He wasn't really what you would call a romantic type, but this was he and his wife's anniversary.

And so he consulted Google, and planned the whole evening out. It was going to be spectacular. He was going to surprise her with a gift card at Nordstrom's, flowers from Bachman's.

They were going to check into the Graves Hotel, where he had a spa package all planned out for her, dinner at the Butcher and the Boer, tickets to the State Theater, and a night that would end back at the hotel with a glass of red wine.

[7 : 01] It was going to be the best anniversary they'd ever had. And when Nick pulled home that day, he noticed a car in the driveway that didn't look familiar.

When he walked through the garage, he heard strange noises upstairs. When he opened the bedroom door, his wife and another man frantically tried to grab their clothes to minimize the situation.

Now, those of you listening to those two scenarios, I have a question for you. How would you respond in those situations?

How would you respond? Anger? Sadness? Confusion? Violence?

Shouting? Silence. All of the above. Faith family, get your response in your mind firmly.

[8 : 10] How would you respond? What would you do if in one of those situations, now with that response firmly planted in your mind, consider these responses.

In scenario one, after Jill's husband admits to being with a Las Vegas prostitute, Jill responds this way, quote, I want you to take tomorrow off work.

And I want you to cancel all your appointments. Because we are going to spend all day together where I will romance you like you can't imagine.

Is that how you would have responded? Is that how you would have responded? Or imagine this response in scenario two. After Nick finds his wife with another man and telling the man to leave before he knocks his block off, Nick then says this, quote, honey, get cleaned up, put on your favorite dress, and get ready because we are going to experience the best anniversary we've ever had.

Is that how you, faith family, would respond? How many of you, when you think about those responses to those situations, would say, that's insane, that's unjust, not right, no chance, no way, not in a million years, would anybody ever, for a second, ever even come close to responding that way, much less should they?

[9 : 57] And yet, faith family, that is exactly how the insane love of God is for you in the person of Jesus Christ.

The Bible says that you and I, pardon the language, have prostituted ourselves with worldly lovers. James 4, verse 4, which we'll look at in just a moment.

And yet, God, according to His boundless love in Jesus Christ, wines and dines you anyway.

That's the scandal of the gospel. That's the amazing nature of God's boundless love. It's insane, it's outrageous, it's a scandal of all scandals, and it's what the book of Hosea is all about.

The book of Hosea is about the outrageous, insane, unthinkable love of God towards those who have outrageously and insanely given their love to things other than God.

[11 : 16] And that's the insane, boundless love that we're going to look at over the next few weeks as we study this minor prophet.

Let me give you three reasons why we ought to study the book of Hosea. Three reasons why this book is so important. Number one, notice this, is that the book of Hosea helps you feel God's love.

The book of Hosea helps you feel God's love. For most of us, the love of God is head knowledge. We know God is a loving God. We know that we're loved by Him.

Again, we've sung, Jesus loves me this I know since we were little children. But do we feel it? Like emotionally feel it, gripped by it.

You see, the book of Hosea uses powerful language, like the kind of language I've already used in this message. Powerful language and metaphor and symbolism that makes you as the reader go, what?

[12 : 18] Are you serious? That's in the Bible? It gets you emotionally involved with the language that it uses because it's intended to grip you emotionally so that you feel the love of God.

Here's a second reason why we ought to study the book. Not only does it help us feel God's love, but Hosea helps us understand sin. Hosea helps us understand sin.

When you and I tend to think about sin, we think of often the fruit rather than the root. Okay? And for you northern Minnesotas, it's root, not root.

I don't know what a root is. It's root. We think of the fruit, not the root of what sin is. Here's what I mean. For an example, take lying. We tend to think that the issue is the lie.

But the issue really isn't the lie. It's the love underneath. Here's what I mean. Notice this on the screen. The problem is not that we are liars.

[13 : 23] The problem is that we are lovers. So, the reason I lie, that's the fruit, is because I love acceptance.

That's the root. I'm loving something like my reputation or something, some type of God of acceptance. And the reason I love that is the reason I lie to keep that or to get that.

See, the issue isn't the lie. It's the love of something other than God. Notice this on the screen. This is so important. If the number one command, as Jesus said, is to love God with all your heart, then the number one sin is loving other things other than God with all your heart.

That's the fundamental root issue with sin. It's not the thing itself, but the love of something other than God that's at the core of that behavior.

And the book of Hosea helps expose those idols. It helps us do the heart work of getting down to, what is it that I really love?

[14 : 43] What's the idol or the false god my heart is chasing? The book of Hosea is all about that. And it's going to be so good for us not only to feel God's love, but to really understand what's behind sin.

Here's the third reason why we ought to study this book is that Hosea helps you grow in the gospel. It helps you feel God's love, it helps you understand what sin is, and it helps us grow in the gospel.

Hosea, the book of Hosea, is an Old Testament picture of the love of Christ that is seen in the gospel. I'll put it this way, if you think marrying a prostitute is a scandal, just wait till you get to the cross.

If you think marrying a prostitute is a scandal, imagine dying for one. That is what Hosea prepares us for as we come to the gospel which is found in the New Testament when Christ comes.

And so we need to study this book because it helps us understand the gospel of Jesus Christ. So let's dive in. Are you ready? Are you ready to get in this book? Let's get in this book.

[15 : 58] And we're just going to kind of do an introduction today to kind of the three main themes that we find throughout this minor prophet. And they're all found in chapter 1 that sets us up for the rest of the book.

Number one is this. One of the main themes in the book of Hosea is a wayward people. A wayward people. Now, we don't know much about Hosea. We know that he's likely from the northern kingdom.

For those of you that aren't familiar with that, when Solomon died, the kingdom of Israel split into two different kingdoms. You'll notice a picture here on the screen.

You've got the northern kingdom Israel and the southern kingdom Judah. Well, generally speaking, the kings in the northern kingdom were a lot more wicked than the kings in the southern kingdom, just proving the south is always more godly than the north.

Okay? That was true then. It's still true now. Just saying. And if you look at the kings listed in verse 1 that we read just a few moments ago, we can conclude that Hosea prophesied he did his ministry in the 8th century, roughly 750 B.C.

[17 : 11] Now, all of this is important, so hang with me, faith family. The counterparts or colleagues of Hosea would be prophets like Isaiah, Amos, and Micah.

Now, the reason why that's important is because that leads us to the next understanding. If Hosea was doing his ministry during that time, that means he's doing his ministry during a time of economic prosperity.

Economic prosperity. You see, under Uzziah and Jeroboam II, the nation experienced what you might call a second golden age.

The first, of course, being King David. This is a second golden age. Yes, Assyria is on the rise, but Israel and Judah, northern and southern kingdom, have not quite felt the pressure of that yet, so they are partying like it's 1999.

They are living it up, and things are economically booming like a rocket ship, you might say. The borders are expanding.

[18 : 20] This is a very, very prosperous time in the nation of Israel and in Judah. Now, here's why that's important. Okay? So we know when Hosea is doing his ministry, that helps us understand economically what's taking place, prosperity, and that helps us understand what they're struggling with.

Namely, a moral decline or idolatry. Notice this on the screen. With prosperity often comes idolatry.

Now, you think about that. With prosperity often comes idolatry, both then and now. Here's what I mean. It's easy to fall in love with money if you have lots of it.

It's why Jesus said it's hard for a rich man to get into the kingdom of God, because your heart begins to love other things other than God. You add to the fact, historically, that when King Ahaz married Jezebel, an Assyrian, she brought in Baal, or Baal, worship.

And so, the people of Israel are worshiping idols. And they're looking at all their prosperity, not being from the hand of God, but from the hand of these other idols.

[19 : 32] Add to that, you've got abuse of power. And by the way, check out Hosea 7, 1 through 7, if you want more background on this. I'm just kind of summarizing it right now.

You've got abuse of power. They're taking advantage of the poor. There's drunkenness and theft and murder. So right here, Faith Family, we know when Hosea does his ministry. That helps us understand the economic prosperity that's taking place.

That helps us understand the idolatry that's taking place within the land, which gets us, here we go, to this metaphor. All of that context helps us understand the main metaphor in the book of Hosea.

Namely, Israel's sin gets illustrated by a relationship between Hosea and Gomer. Look at it.

Here's how the book starts. Verse 2. When the Lord first spoke through Hosea, the Lord said to Hosea, Go take for yourself a wife of Hortum and have children of Hortum, for the land commits great Hortum by forsaking the Lord.

[20 : 42] Now look over at chapter 3 and verse 1. Chapter 3 and verse 1. And the Lord said to me, Go again, love a woman who is loved by another man and is an adulteress, even as the Lord loves the children of Israel, though they turn to other gods and love cakes of raisins.

I don't know why anybody would love cakes of raisins, but we'll explain that more later in the series. The point is this. There's a relationship and that relationship is real, but it's a metaphor for the whole book.

And what this relationship displays, what it's a picture of, is a faithful God married to a wayward people.

That's what that relationship symbolizes. It's a real relationship, but it becomes a picture for all of Israel, namely her unfaithfulness to God.

It's a prosperous time. And she's running to all different kinds of idols. Baal, money, all these things. And so God gives this picture, this metaphor of Hosea and Gomer.

[21 : 59] Now this is why in the book, language like, and I told you that this is intense. Okay, it's like not PG. It's PG-13 to rated R at best.

And you have language in the book like prostitution and adultery and divorce and all of this only because it's playing off the marriage metaphor. And this is not new imagery in the Scripture.

The Scripture uses this kind of language often. Let me give you a few examples. Ezekiel 6 verse 9. Ezekiel 6 verse 9 says, Then those of you who escape will remember me among the nations where they were carried captive.

How I have been broken over their whoring heart that has departed from me and over their eyes that go whoring after their idols.

So you see that language is used in Ezekiel. Let me give you a New Testament example. I mentioned earlier James 4 verse 4. James 4 verse 4. You adulterous people, do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God?

[23 : 06] Therefore, whoever wishes to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God. Do you love God or do you love the world? And the imagery, the metaphor that's used is that of an adulterous people.

So the point is that language that's often used in the book of Hosea is used frequently in Scripture as a metaphor for our sin. It's not just the thing itself.

It's a picture of our rather than loving God, we love other things. Now why? Why is this spiritual adultery or spiritual idolatry such a big deal?

This is important, faith family. Listen. It's not because the sin itself is a big deal. It's not because the sin itself is a big deal.

It's that God is a big deal. God is a big deal. Here's what I mean. God is the best, most satisfying, treat you the way you ought to be treated, handsome husband you could ever ask for.

[24 : 13] God is everything the heart longs for. Which is why it's a big deal when your heart longs for something else.

It's not the sin itself that's such a big deal. It's the fact that you're running to a little boy rather than experiencing the love of a real man.

That's the imagery we get here. C.S. Lewis put it this way. He said, we settle for mud pies because we can't imagine a holiday at sea.

Sin is settling for mud pies because we can't imagine a feast at sea. Well to bring that into Hosea language it would be like this and it's what I just said.

We settle for boys that is idols of the world because we can't imagine what it would be like to be loved by a real man. God is everything your heart was created to long for.

[25 : 19] That's why unfaithfulness to God is such a big deal. It's not because sin is a big deal but God is a big deal. Faith family, you and I have looked to pimps to provide what only our Heavenly Father can.

that's the language of Hosea. The theme throughout the book is a wayward people. Here's the second main theme that we see in the book.

Look at verse 4. Verse 4 of chapter 1. And the Lord said to him, Call his name Jezreel for in just a little while I will punish the house of Jezreel at 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.

Here's the second big theme in the book of Hosea and not just a wayward people but a warning of judgment. A warning of judgment. In the ancient Near East names represented realities.

Okay? A lot of times people today they may just name a kid because they think it's cool or they like the name but in the ancient Near East names had meaning and often that meaning represented reality.

[26 : 39] Now when I say the name Jezreel that really doesn't mean much to you at all does it? But if I were to say name your child Benedict Arnold well now that has some meaning.

Name your child Nixon. Name your child Paris Hilton. You're obviously going to have some context of which that name means something.

what Jezreel was in the ancient Near East was a valley. There's a map here on the screen and I don't know if you can see it well but there's kind of a red section that's outlined.

That was the valley of Jezreel and in the valley of Jezreel that was a place where many many battles happened. It was known to be a place of bloodshed.

So it would be kind of like naming your kid Armageddon. I mean you just immediately think okay that's that's a bad thing. That is a judgment. That is bloodshed. That is war.

- [27 : 38] That's the point here. The point is not just a wayward people Hosea and Gomer but it's also a warning of judgment. Name your first child Jezreel and Jezreel to the people receiving this would have been like yep that means judgment.
- That means bloodshed. But notice how it keeps going and by the way that happened in 722 BC when Assyria will finally raise to an even greater power and will judge the northern kingdom Israel.
- But notice how this picture of judgment keeps going. Look at verse 6. She conceived again and bore a daughter and the Lord said to him call her name no mercy.
- That's a horrible name. 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 the bow or sword or by war or by horses or by horsemen. Verse 8. When she had weaned no mercy the second child she conceived and bore a son and the Lord said you're going to call his name not my people for you are not my people and I am not your God.
- [28 : 55] Wow. Now you put all that together faith family. Okay. First main theme wayward people seen in Hosea Gomer. Second main theme judgment look at their children.
- Jezreel a place known for bloodshed and then these two other children one is called no mercy and the other one is called not my people.
- So let's put all that together. Oh this is so important. If you've zoned out you better zone back in. Listen to this. The judgment that was coming would be one bloody two would show no mercy and three would be a son treated like he's not my people.
- That is the judgment that is prophesied by Hosea to the people of Israel. And isn't that the right response?
- Isn't that what you do with whores? Judge them. Get rid of them. Kick them out. Sinners. That is clap to God.
- [30 : 07] That is how you properly deal with prostitutes. You kick them out. You say they're disqualified. You put them all alone outside of town and you have nothing to do with them again.
- The end. Game over. Isn't that how it's supposed to end? Sin, Hosea Gomer.
- Judgment, Jezreel and the two other children. And that's the end of the story. Faith family, that's not the end of the story.
- That's nowhere close to the end of the story. Look at the third main theme in the book of Hosea. Not just a wayward people and not just a warning of judgment, but now look at verse 10, the very first word, yet.
- Yet. Praise God for the little word yet. Yet, but, nevertheless, may be one of the greatest words in all the Bible.
- [31 : 25] Faith family, aren't you eternally grateful for the word yet? Yet is great news. Yet is wonderful news. Let me give you two examples elsewhere in scripture of the good news of yet.
- In the story of Jonah, when Jonah is experiencing judgment from God in the waters, in the belly of the fish, look at what he says, Jonah chapter 2 verse 5, the waters closed in over me to take my life, the deep surrounded me, weeds were wrapped around my head at the roots of the mountains, I went down to the land whose bars closed upon me forever.
- Watch, yet, you brought up my life from the pit, O Lord my God. Praise God for yet.

I deserved judgment, yet you brought me up, Jonah says. Let me give you another example in the New Testament. Ephesians 2 verse 3, Ephesians 2 verse 3, among whom we all once lived in the passions of our flesh, carrying out the desires of the body and the mind, we were by nature children of wrath, just like the rest of mankind.

And here it is, but God, but God, being rich in mercy because of the love with which he loved us, praise God, for yet, but nevertheless, here's the point, follow it, Hosea 1, Israel is a way where people, symbolized in Hosea and Gomer, and judgment is coming upon them, symbolized in these three children, yet, look at verse 10 again, 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 is said to them, you're not my people, guess what, 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 head, and they shall go up from the land, for great shall be the day of

[33 : 54] Jezreel, here is the point, here is the good news of yet, but nevertheless, my people are wayward, and they are deserving of judgment, yet, I will bless them, their number will be as the sand of the sea, meaning, they're unfaithful to me, I will not break the promise I made to Abraham, I will be faithful to them, they will be scattered, but they will be restored, they're going to be brought from a not my people, to children of the living God, faith family, every one of you, look right here, when it comes to the love of God, there is no such thing as a point of no return, when it comes to the love of God, there is no such thing as a point of no return, notice this on the screen, the fire of God's love cannot be put out by the waterfall of your sin, there's about 30 of you that said, preach, preacher right there, at least you should have, the fire of God's love cannot put out the waterfall of your sin, that's the good news of the book of Hosea, as we sing often in the praise song, our sins they are many, his mercy is more, this is the boundless love of

God, and listen faith family, if this feels like a scandal to you, if this feels outrageous to you, then you're probably starting to understand the love of God, if this is moving from Jesus loves me, this I know, little children's story at vacation Bible school, to a how can that be?

God's now you're getting it, now you're starting to feel how boundless God's love is, now here's the question, why would God do this?

Why would God love whores? Why would God, when He can have a princess, choose a prostitute? here's why, look at Hosea chapter 11 verse 8, this is such good news, Hosea 11 verse 8, how can I give you up, O Ephraim, which is Israel, northern kingdom, how can I hand you over, O Israel?

How can I make you like Adma? How can I treat you like Zebulun? My heart recoils within me, my compassion grows warm and tender, I will not execute my burning anger, I will not again destroy Ephraim, why?

[36 : 59] Here's your answer as to why, for I am God, not a man, the Holy One in your midst, and I will not come in wrath.

Faith family, everybody, come on, look right here, why does God do this? Why does God love so boundlessly? Why does God love so insanely? Is it because He takes pity on you? No, it's just who He is.

It's just the kind of God He is. Did you see the for, the reason? For I'm God, not man.

I love like this because I'm God. That is, my love, this is so good news, is grounded in me. It's not in how good you are.

It's not in are you lovable. It's not in do you deserve to be loved this way. Oh, if that were the case, we would not be loved.

[38 : 00] God loves because He's God. And it is the most natural, normal thing for God to love in a boundless way.

Notice on the screen, the love of God is grounded in God, not your goodness. goodness. That's the best news in the world. God's love for us is based on the character of God, not the goodness of our life.

So how should we respond to this as we bring this to a close? How should we, what should you feel as a result of this passage today, Hosea chapter 1, and the theme of wayward people and a warning of judgment and this wooing God who keeps pursuing a wayward wife?

How should you feel? Here's the first thing, you should feel shocked. Totally shocked. And you remember the song, Amazing Love? How can it be?

That should be your first response. Like, I can't believe that God loves me. I can't believe. Given my sin, given what my sin is, how can it be?

[39 : 17] I'm shocked. Shocked at the love of God. How can it be true? But here's the second response. Not only shocked, but thrilled. Thrilled. Not only am I shocked that God loves me, I am thrilled that He loves me.

Why? Because it's true. Because it's real. Notice this on the screen, Faith Family. The love of God may be hard to believe, but it is not make-believe.

It may be hard to believe, but it's not make-believe. This is our story. This is our song praising our Savior all the day long.

We ought to be shocked at this. We ought to be thrilled at this. And thirdly, we ought to be changed by this. We ought to be changed by this. This love changes everything.

It changes how we love others. It changes how we look at others. When somebody starts to cast judgment on somebody, oh, look at them, they're a prostitute.

[40 : 19] Look at them, they're a whatever. Whoa, whoa, whoa, whoa, that's precisely the kind of person God loves. So who are you to cast judgment on them when that's the very type of person the love of God pursues?

How do you know? Because He did so for you. It totally changes everything. You're shocked, you're thrilled, and you're changed.

Just realizing that what the world rejects, God's love runs after. And that ought to impact the way we approach one another.

Are you excited for the book of Hosea? Oh, this is just an introduction. We're just getting warmed up. And the three main themes of the book that we've seen in chapter one, again, wayward people, the warning of judgment, and the wooing of God, how God's love is yet, but, nevertheless.

it keeps pursuing the wayward wife, namely, you and I. Faith family, it was a Friday afternoon, and she wasn't what you would call the romantic type, but it was their anniversary, or as they called it back then, Passover.

[41 : 38] Passover. And oh, how he wanted to celebrate this anniversary with his bride. He wanted to celebrate the day that he purchased them from the pimp known as Pharaoh.

He wanted to celebrate the day when he entered into a marriage covenant with them at Mount Sinai. But when he arrived on planet Earth, he found them chasing other lovers.

And what is the proper response in dealing with a whore like that? Judgment. Except, this judgment was more scandalous than the sin itself.

Here's why. Because the one who was judged was not the wayward wife, it was the faithful husband. And the judgment, just like was said in Hosea chapter 1, was bloody.

The judgment showed no mercy. The judgment treated a son like he was not my people.

[42 : 58] And yet, that faithful husband so loved the world, he took the judgment with joy. And three days later, he prepared for her a table where he would wine and dine her for the rest of her eternal life.

If