

The Most Expensive Engagement Ring Ever!

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[0 : 00] If we turn together please now to Hosea chapter 2, Hosea chapter 2 and especially the words in verses 19 and 20.

And I will betroth you to me forever. I will betroth you to me in righteousness and in justice, in steadfast love and in mercy. I will betroth you to me in faithfulness, and you shall know the Lord. This is one of the most amazing verses, or couple of verses, particularly in the light of what the previous part of the chapter, from the beginning of the chapter through to verse 13, says. Where God sets out his indictment against Israel for her unfaithfulness. Where you find Hosea's adulterous wife to be an image, a representation of the relationship between God and Israel as a people.

Where Hosea's wife went and left him for someone else. So God's wife Israel had left him for the Baals.

[1 : 20] Or these gods of the Canaanites, whom she had taken into her worship. And in this most wonderful book, the relationship between God and these people is brought out in such a way as shows that from God's side of the relationship, it's not a relationship in which he is now done with Israel.

He has not divorced her. He has not separated her from him. He has so many things to say against her using language that is so strong, so critical.

And yet he is saying at the same time that the day is coming when he will again be betrothed to her. And when they will be betrothed and joined together in a way that is forevermore married without any interruption.

What comes across, of course, especially in the book of Hosea, the prophet, is the indescribable love of God.

Hosea is required under God's instruction to take this woman as his wife. Hosea is required this woman having left him and gone to live with someone else.

[2 : 45] In chapter 3, as you see, Hosea is required to again 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.

It is the love of God. The love of God in covenant with his people. That unbreakable love of God. That love which will not be shifted as he continues to love them and provide for them, even throughout their wayward years.

And as you come to these verses, so you come to God saying that he will betroth them to himself forever. And as you look at the terms of these two verses, it is very obvious that you cannot possibly confine their meaning to Israel.

Israel came as a people, as a nation, to be eventually taken away by the Assyrians, who overrun Samaria, their capital, before the southern kingdom of Judah suffered the same catastrophe under the Babylonians years afterwards.

These verses have to be taken forward from the Old Testament to what God has done and is doing in Christ.

[4 : 08] To the salvation and the love of God as revealed in Jesus Christ to us. And that is especially where you come to find these words fulfilled to the maximum.

God has been brought to their complete fulfillment in the relationship between God and his saved people. That he has betrothed them to himself forever.

That he has betrothed them in these great qualities that he mentions through into verse 20. And that of course tells us, and it may be helpful to the young ones to remember this as well, that here and many places in the Bible, God speaks about our relationship with him as a spiritual marriage.

His people are his wife. They are joined to him as he has joined them to him in a spiritual marriage. In other words, salvation for us is really God entering into marriage with us.

Which is then why, following on from that, just like in any ordinary marriage, you find the requirement on the part of us who are married to God, the requirements of commitment and faithfulness and steadfastness in our relationship with him.

[5 : 31] The very things that Israel was accused of not doing anymore. And as we look at these verses, I want to look at them just in the, using that illustration that they themselves contain of a marriage or a betrothal.

But looking at it in our own usual terms of engagement, which although it wasn't exactly the same as a betrothal, just for convenience, let's use that term, engagement.

Here is an expensive engagement ring that's described here as God enters into the engagement in which he betroths himself to his people and his people to him.

It's the most expensive engagement ring ever. Because we can take these five great qualities that are mentioned, these great qualities of righteousness, justice, steadfast love, mercy and faithfulness, think of them tonight as the great priceless jewels that this engagement ring contains. As God enters into marriage with his people, as he betroths them to himself forever, this is his engagement ring, this is what he gives us, the pledge of his own love, the pledge of his commitment to them, he gives them this engagement ring.

[6 : 57] He gives them these great qualities that are really his own attributes, righteousness, justice, steadfast love, mercy and faithfulness.

Because you see the language from verse 14 there is the language of courtship. Although all of this is true about Israel, as you read in the previous part of the chapter, nevertheless he's saying, I'm not going to leave it at that.

This is not the end of the relationship. I'm not going to turn and take another people and leave these people. I will allure her and bring her into the wilderness.

I will speak tenderly to her. There I will give her her vineyards. And she shall answer me as in the days of her youth, as the time when she came out of the land of Egypt. In other words, God is saying, as it were in his own mind and setting before the people there, he's taking them back to the time when he began the relationship with them, as a people in the land of Egypt.

When he came to win them by his love, by which they were delivered from the clutches of the Egyptians, by which they were redeemed to himself, by which he entered into marriage with them as a people, in order to bind them to himself and bring them onwards to a place where he would live with them.

[8 : 15] And he's taking them back to those days and giving them a picture of those days, those tender days, those days when he actually heard Israel saying that, yes, this indeed was her husband.

She consented to the marriage. She gave her hand to the Lord in marriage. He won her by his grace, by his power, by his love. And he's taking her back to these times.

He's going to take her into the wilderness. That's going to be bad for her, difficult for her. It's going to be a time of deprivation. He's going to take things away from them that they value as a people, but that they're misusing in their idolatry, in their adultery with the baals.

But it's in order that I will speak then tenderly to her. I will re-win her hand. I will come back to woo her.

And in my courtship I will come to betroth her to myself forever. What's the price? What's the value of this engagement ring?

[9 : 27] It is the most expensive engagement ring ever, and it always will be. What's the most expensive engagement ring ordinarily?

The ordinary kind of engagement ring that people actually give. Well, first of all, I went to Google it, as you do nowadays, to see if I could find out what the price was of the most expensive engagement ring ever bought.

And apparently, the answer I got from Google anyway, was that it's called the Graf Pink Diamond. It's a massive diamond.

And this man, Graf, bought it. I hope whoever he gave it to really appreciated. Because, do you know how much he paid for it?

£29 million. £29 million for a pink diamond ring.

[10 : 34] Absolutely splendid looking jewel. Magnificent, huge, and unusually pink for a diamond. £29 million as a huge sum of money.

bigger than any of us can possibly imagine. Than any of us will possibly see or handle or have a note of possession. But it's a pittance compared to the value of this one.

How much did this one cost? Well, look at the price tag. What's the price tag attached to this engagement ring that God gives to his people, that God gave to his church?

The price tag says, God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten son. That whoever believes in him should not perish but have everlasting life.

That's what the price tag says. That's what it costs God. That's what God gave away. That's what he paid out in order to purchase this salvation for us.

[11 : 45] in order to purchase this wonderful engagement ring full of these precious jewels that we'll see in a minute that are actually so magnificent that they just put the pink diamond, the graph diamond, into insignificance.

You see, it cost God the life of his son. It cost the Lord Jesus Christ in our place as we saw this morning, in our nature, the death of the cross.

And you cannot put a price on that. It is impossible, in human terms at least, to measure it. Only God can measure it. Only he knows the price of that engagement ring.

It's paid not in pounds or in dollars. It's paid in the currency of atonement. It's paid in the currency of redemption.

It's paid in the currency in which God himself operates in the salvation of his people. We can put it this way.

[12 : 57] In order to marry us, God separated from his son. My God, my God, said the son, why have you forsaken me?

The forsakenness that Jesus experienced on the cross, which we can mention but can hardly go into. Which we can actually read about and know that he experienced it, but that's where we have to leave it, pretty much.

But that forsakenness is really expressing the cost of our redemption. The great separation between God the Father and God the Son as, well, let's put it in the way the Bible puts it, as he was made a curse for us.

You see, in order to marry us as his people, to marry his people to himself, God did not stop loving his son.

That's not what it's saying at all. When God separated himself from his son and his son from himself in that terrible time on the cross where this forsakenness was experienced and expressed by the Son of God, that's when God the Son was made a curse for us.

[14 : 15] It wasn't that God stopped loving him, but God sent him to hell in his love for us.

In order to give us this engagement ring, in order to pay the price of our redemption, the Son of God took our place.

And as we saw this morning, taking our place meant taking our guilt. And taking our guilt meant taking our punishment. Taking what we deserved and what we deserved is hell, the damnation of God.

That is what Jesus took and that is what Jesus experienced. And that is what Jesus expressed in the forsakenness that he expressed in his soul at that time. No wonder the world was dark.

How could there be light when the light of the world was in hell? Now how much does it cost?

[15 : 22] How valuable is it? The most valuable things, friends, are never valued in terms of money. The most valuable things of all are always valued in spiritual terms and moral terms.

Righteousness, justice, steadfast love, mercy, faithfulness, and especially the love of God. That is what defines what is valuable.

That is what is defining of what is precious to us tonight. Because there is nothing else in this whole world, in this whole universe, that can possibly match the value of God's love in providing salvation for his people.

And who chose the ring? Well, there is a question. When a couple come to be engaged, who chooses the ring?

Does the man choose it without consultation? Does the woman choose it when she has agreed to marry? Well, usually, I'm sure, it's something that's shared.

[16 : 35] But in this case, God did it. He didn't consult with us. Did we want to be saved or not? He didn't get our agreement, which we wouldn't have given anyway.

He didn't come to actually see if this would be all right with us. He himself, from all eternity, planned in love the salvation of his people, the giving of this engagement ring to his redeemed church.

And as God did it, so God accomplished it. This priceless jewel of redemption.

Well, what about the jewels that are in it? There are five sparkling jewels of different colors in this glorious ring. I will betroth you to me forever.

I will betroth you to me in righteousness. That's a big word and it's a lot of meaning packed into it.

[17 : 39] But righteousness as an attribute of God, remember all of these are attributes of God, qualities of God himself. The righteousness of God describes, if you might say, his always being right and doing right, being true to himself.

In everything that he does, he matches the standard that he himself is in his truth. He is righteous. He is constantly righteous.

He is never unrighteous. And that's why it's such an amazing thing when you think of what Christ did and where Christ was put and the exchange that we mentioned this morning and I mentioned again a minute ago, in Christ, in our place, the Son of God, how does the New Testament put it? How does Peter put it? It is the righteous in the place of the unrighteous. The righteousness of God in which, in his own being and character and works and thoughts and plan and wisdom and everything, he is marked by this righteousness, by this perfect standard of behavior of being true to himself.

And that's why nothing less than the righteousness of God, the righteousness which matches that of God himself is required of you and for me.

[19 : 08] Let's imagine that tonight you were asked to come and give your account to God.

For every single one of us tonight, let's imagine that we didn't have anything but ourselves, our own abilities, our own attributes to bring to God.

What shall I bring before the Lord, said Micah? What shall I bring as an offering for my soul? Will my goodness do me? Will my faithfulness do me?

Will my love do me? Will my righteousness do me? Of course not. Let's just polluted rugs.

As Isaiah put it, all our righteousness are as filthy rags in the presence of God. But listen to the way that Paul gave his testimony in Philippians 3.

[20 : 16] We've read it often. It's something worth reading time and time again. He's saying that the things that he once saw us gain, these he now counts but loss for the sake of Christ.

Indeed, he said, I count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For this sake I have suffered the loss of all things and to count them as rubbish in order that I may gain Christ and be found in him not having a righteousness of my own.

Not having a righteousness of my own that comes through from the law but that which comes through faith in Christ. The righteousness from God that is by faith.

That is why Jesus is offered to us as a saviour in the gospel. That's why it's absolutely crucial and indispensable that you have taken him as your saviour.

That you accept the gift of grace that in the gospel is laid before us in Christ. Because that God is saying is where you'll find the righteousness that I require of you.

[21 : 30] And we might think somehow that we are going to be righteous with God without being in Christ. Without having accepted Christ. Without having bowed the knee to Christ and given our life to Christ.

We're not going to do it. We're not going to make it. The thought of coming before God in his judgment carrying in my arms nothing more than my own righteousness is a thought that just fills me dread.

Because there's nothing there but what will condemn me forever. But if I come to the right to the judgment of God carrying in my arms by faith the Son of God crucified and risen from the dead as offered to me in the gospel.

If I've accepted him in the offer of the gospel in this life and I come to the judgment of God and God asks me and demands of me what are you going to give me on the basis of which I will decide whether or not you live with me forever.

You say Lord here is your son. Will this not do? You know what his answer is going to be. this is my beloved son in whom I am well pleased and therefore he is pleased with me in him.

[23 : 05] Righteousness what we need this wonderful bright sparkling white jewel of righteousness and it's ours in Christ.

The second jewel is the jewel of justice. I will betroth you to me in righteousness and in justice. Look out over the world.

Look out over the affairs and the dealings of human beings with each other. The one thing or one of the main things that you find so sadly lacking is justice.

And we have to be passionate about justice because justice matters not only to ourselves as human beings but justice matters to God.

He is a just God and a savior. He does not save without upholding his own justice. He doesn't forgive our sins as if his justice didn't matter. That's why he required the death of Christ.

[24 : 08] He could not pronounce forgiveness over us without providing something to take our sin and to make up for it and to pay the price of it and to pay the debt of it. It had to meet his justice and his just demands.

And that's what the cross has done. That's why this jewel of justice, this wonderful green jewel of justice sparkles the way it does because God has found in his son through his death the way of saving sinners justly.

As Thomas Chalmers once put it in a famous sermon, this is the greatest dilemma in all theology, the greatest question in all theology.

How can God justify the ungodly and be just in doing it? Well, he can and he does by his own method through the death of Christ.

Because in God's transaction, it is not cruelty for him to make him who knew no sin to be sin for us.

[25 : 24] It is not God treating his son cruelly as some kind of despot. It is in fact his love for his people that lies behind that great act.

And as you see, God giving his son to be a propitiation for our sins, it is full of justice.

It is just of God to condemn him, because he has come to willingly bear our guilt, and guilt carries condemnation.

And it is just of God to forgive our sin, because we come to have his righteousness. And it is just of God to accept us with himself, because the righteousness of God, the righteousness of Christ, is what he imputes to us, what he puts on our account instead of our own.

You don't have to worry that somehow the forgiveness that you have from God does not match up with his justice, that somehow along the way God has not quite been just in all the way leading to your forgiveness.

[26 : 44] It's all just. It's answered every demand of his justice. Look at this engagement ring that he's given you to wear.

And one of the sparkling jewels is the jewel of justice. One of the great things that comforts our hearts as we come to think of reaching God and meeting with God in his judgment, which all of us will, is that when our faith is in Christ and when his righteousness is ours, we can come to God with the confidence that he himself gives us and know that his justice means for us, not our condemnation, but his full acceptance.

Well done, good and faithful servant. Thirdly, there is steadfast love. Another glorious sparkling jewel.

We come across this word so often in the Old Testament scriptures. In the authorized version translated, loving kindness. And really you need both translations to bring out something of the richness and the color of this jewel.

It sparkles with a blue intensity that fills your vision as you think of the love of God. That it is not just covenant steadfast love, but it is loving kindness.

[28 : 17] It's love that delights to do good. Love that bestows so many gifts, so many benefits, so many things, and particularly the things of salvation.

That in fact, as you could say, is the root of all the benefits we have in our salvation. Where do you find it rooted? What's the source of it? Well, it's there in the love of God, isn't it?

God so loved. Nothing should be of greater value to us than this jewel, this glorious love of God.

Did he love us because we deserved it? No. Did he love us because we attracted his love, the kind of people we were?

No. Did he love us because we pleaded with him to love us? No. Why then did he love us?

[29 : 25] I don't know. He loved us because he loved us. He knows why. love. Only God knows the rationale in his own eternal love.

He wasn't constrained to love us. He loved us. He loved us from all eternity. He loved us to the extent of giving his son in our place.

He loved us, as Jeremiah put it, with an everlasting love. And of course that means more than just a love that goes on forever without end.

It does mean that. The love of God will never end for his people. But it means more than the way that it goes on without end.

It also means that it didn't have a beginning. And it also means not just the extent of it, without beginning, without end.

[30 : 30] What it means probably more than anything else is the sheer quality of it. It's not in terms of its extent that you marvel at the love of God, but at its amazing quality.

That he would love me. That takes love beyond any love that you know in this world.

love. Because human love can only go so far. And then it peters out. And it reaches something, it comes up against something beyond which it's not prepared to go.

love. The love of God looked out on sinners, his dire enemies, who deserve his condemnation forever.

And what he said was, in my love for these people, I will send my son to die for them. love. Oh, that's some engagement. That's some love.

[31 : 39] That's amazing grace, and amazing love, right enough. Righteousness, justice, steadfast love, and then there's mercy.

A wonderful, deep, colored, jewel, the jewel of mercy. Because this word in the Old Testament is related to the word for womb.

The womb of a woman where a child is conceived and develops until the time of birth. And you know that there's such a close connection between the woman and the child that she has carried and brought into the world.

There's such a close connection that a father even cannot enter into. Even though a father loves the child that's brought into the world, still there's something less than that compared to less than the woman's love, the woman whose womb bore the child who was so much a part of herself.

And you know there's something in that what God is describing as mercy for us. It's a mercy, it's the kind of thing that is full of great pathos and great intimacy and a wonderful motherly quality if you like in terms of the way that it brings to us God's incredible care, God's detailed care of his child.

[33 : 19] He's bound up with the heart of God himself. his mercy, his can we not say with reverence his womb-like quality, the mercy of God that embraces his children as a child is embraced in a mother's womb and love in that wonderful relationship.

And of course, we remember in Isaiah the great words of Isaiah 49, which actually uses the mother and her womb in declaring the way in which God remembers his people in his mercy and his love. Zion said, the Lord has forsaken me, my Lord has forgotten me. Can a woman forget her nursing child, that she should have no compassion on the son of her womb? Even these may forget, yet I will not forget you.

For I have engraved you on the palms of my hands. Your walls are continually before me. There is the merciful God saying, such is my mercy and my regard for you, that I will never forget you.

You are part of me forever. You will continue to be before me for all eternity. What an amazing thing.

[34 : 46] God and it all stems from this mercy of God through which he comes toward us day by day to act toward us in his deliverance and his guidance because the mercy of God is seen in his actions.

His actions in delivering us from danger and protecting us and guiding us and teaching us and nourishing us. The merciful God and finally his faithfulness and you notice how this one is kind of singled off on its own in a way you might say that this is the one that he gives prominence to here just because of the situation of Israel I will betroth you to me in faithfulness the thing that was lacking in Israel faithfulness to her husband God God is saying when he comes to marry us to himself he does so in faithfulness his faithfulness is never questioned it's never in doubt but he comes to join us to him so that we will be faithful to him also you shall have no other gods before me you shall love the

Lord your God with all your heart with all your mind with all your soul with all your strength and your neighbor as yourself it's all about being married to God and being married to God means being married to faithfulness and therefore having to be faithful in return on our part of course all of that carries into ordinary marriage and we could study that whole field of study as this in the New Testament is developed into marriage between a man and a woman and all these great qualities that come into their own in that relationship as well but we won't go into that let's just confine it to God and his people as he marries them to himself this is the most expensive engagement ring ever it is beyond price because the cost of it is the death of Christ it is glorious to look at because it's filled with these five sparkling jewels righteousness justice steadfast love mercy and faithfulness you are very blessed indeed if you wear this engagement ring today because God has singularly chosen you for his special favor but let me just finish by what he says here

I will betroth you to me forever it's not just the most expensive engagement ring ever but it's an everlasting marriage it's a marriage that will never be broken you notice how he says you shall know the Lord and that word know is a word that's used of human marriage Adam knew his wife Eve and she conceived and bore a son marriage it describes the intimacy the personal relationship aspect in intimacy between a man and a woman and here it is applied to God without any of these connotations that apply in human terms and yet nevertheless that is the deep intimacy between them in this glorious relationship of spiritual marriage I will betroth you to me forever and you shall know the Lord in other words the opposite of knowing in this context is not ignorance the opposite of knowing in this sense of it is estrangement separation that's where they are that's what God is saying about them but this is his future for his people you shall know the Lord you shall no longer be estranged separate you shall be brought back to know me to be close to me to be bound up with me for your heart to be knitted with mine and there is no such thing as there is in human marriage what we say at the end of declaring a couple married as we did on Friday with Joanne and Sean whosoever God has joined together let not man put asunder now we live in an imperfect world of imperfect relationships we all have to confess that things happen which are less than the ideal that God sets we're in a world of sin of failure but in

[40 : 06] God's marriage to his people there is no such thing as we are together until death do us part because death does not part them and that's what Romans 8 reminds us of in these glorious words with which Paul finishes that section of Romans for he says I am persuaded when he is answering his own question what shall we say to these things I am persuaded he said that nothing neither death nor life nor angels nor rulers nor things present nor things to come nor height nor depth nor anything else in all creation will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord there is no end to this marriage nor there is an end to the reception that celebrates it because that's in the marriage supper of the lamb and that's what revelation tells us blessed are they were called to the marriage supper of the lamb the most expensive engagement ring ever this everlasting marriage between

God and his people that's what God has brought to us tonight are you married to him are you still estranged from him are you still rejecting his courtship overture towards you are you denying him the fulfillment of love in a saving relationship between you and him here is your God here is your savior here is his offer of a hand his hand in marriage take that hand sincerely extend it to you and say as

God said of Israel in that day you shall no longer call me my bail you shall call me my husband my lord let's pray oh lord our gracious god help us once again we pray to dwell upon the great fact of your love and to do so in a way that would respond in the only proper way to give ourselves to you in love in return bless to us we pray this great emphasis of your word where you bring yourself to us in the gospel as a God who is married to his people help us lord we pray to hear your voice tonight calling to us to come to be joined to you in this permanent spiritual marriage grant that our soul may come to rejoice in you that we may be glad and thankful that you have reached us with the invitation glad to give thanks in return that we accept it hear us we pray for Jesus sake amen