

1. Last Sunday I shared the message of the prophet Hosea.
2. God instructed the prophet Hosea to go and marry an adulterous woman. A prostitute. And even though he obeyed, eventually that woman left him to go back to her life of sin.
3. But the Lord instructed Hosea to go and buy her back and bring her back into his home again.
4. This is a picture of the love God has for us. It's a reminder that...
5. He is looking for us even when we're not looking for him.
6. He's willing to buy us back, even when he's already paid the price.
7. He wants to live with us forever.
8. This morning we will consider another aspect of God's love for us.
9. **TEXT:** **Romans 11:11-12** Again I ask: Did they stumble so as to fall beyond recovery? Not at all! Rather, because of their transgression, salvation has come to the Gentiles to make Israel envious. **12** But if their transgression means riches for the world, and their loss means riches for the Gentiles, how much greater riches will their fullness bring!

TITLE: **The God of Second Chances.**

INTRO:

1. Have you ever been to an amusement park or a carnival or perhaps the county fair?
2. Each of those places usually has a large area where games can be played and prizes can be won.
3. When I was a boy growing up we lived about 30 miles from the amusement park Six Flags. From the sixth grade on our school would take a field trip to six flags near the end of the school year.
4. I had never been so my first year I didn't know what to expect, but the next year I remembered that big area where you could play those games.
5. I remember one booth had a game where you could win a stuffed animal the size of a human being. Inevitably I would see some guy carrying one of those huge stuffed animals around the park and it built faith inside of me.
6. I would think, if that guy can win one of those I can win one of those. So I would immediately run to the area where they had those games and I picked out the game that had those life sized stuffed animals and I would plop my money down to get my chance.

7. The only problem was, for the big stuffed animal you usually only got one chance. One try. One opportunity. And that one chance cost two, three or even five dollars.
8. If you made it on the first try that was great. But how many smart people do we have here this morning who understand that the stand isn't in the business to lose money so you could easily spend \$50-\$100 dollars if you weren't careful and still come up short.
9. Now as a boy I didn't have that kind of money. So at the most I might have enough to try twice. Often times however I only had enough to try once. I would wait till later on in the day because I was just sure I was going to win and I didn't want to have to carry that big stuffed bear around all day long.
10. But I never did win. And because I didn't have any more money I couldn't get a second chance.
11. I have learned along the way that in life like that game. A second chance is a pretty valuable thing. Now maybe to you second chances don't mean that much but to me they mean a whole bunch.
12. Probably because I usually don't get it right the first time. I miss the mark. A lot. I usually have to practice for a while before I get it right.
13. Wouldn't it be wonderful if none of us ever needed a second chance? If all of us got things right the first time.
14. Wouldn't it be great if we were all born perfect babies, and we grew into perfect kids and teenagers?
15. And then we developed into perfect adults who became perfect husbands and perfect wives and perfect parents and grandparents who never had any regrets.
16. And wouldn't it be great if all of us were perfect employees and perfect Christians. Never leading anybody astray. Never leaving a bad taste in an unbeliever's mouth. Never mis-representing Christ.
17. That would in fact be a wonderful thing, but unfortunately, we all know that's not the way it is.
18. The fact of the matter is we all mess up. We all miss the mark. We all make mistakes. And sometimes we even make big, huge, awesome, embarrassing mistakes.
19. The truth is...all of us need a second chance at times.
20. In the book of Matthew chapter 18, Peter approached Jesus with a question. His question was...Lord, how many times should I forgive my brother when he sins against me?

21. In other words. Lord, how many chances should I give my brother before I say no more. No more forgiveness for you and no more chances with me. Before he even gave the Lord a chance to answer, Peter offered what he thought was a pretty big number.
22. Seven times Lord. Is that how many times I should forgive my brother who sins against me? I would loved to have been a fly on the wall when Jesus responded in verse 22. **Matthew 18:22 Jesus answered, "I tell you, not seven times, but seventy-seven times.**
23. We know that some translations of the bible interpret that to mean seventy times seven. Or 490 times. Now before I expound on that a little further I want to clarify something.
24. I personally believe that there are some offenses and some sins that require us to put our foot down and say no more. I will not be a door mat.
25. I don't believe God expects a spouse to put up with 490 affairs by their mate before they say no more.
26. I don't think God expects a spouse to be beaten or abused 490 times before they say enough is enough.
27. I don't think the Lord expects us to let the same person rob us blind 490 times before we put a stop to it.
28. But I also believe that there are a whole host of other offenses that don't require such drastic measures.
29. And the reason why it makes perfect sense that we would forgive someone over and over again and give them another chance is because that is precisely how God treats us.
30. That is exactly how God relates to us as fallible human beings.
31. My friend may I encourage you today? There is no blunder, no mistake, no sin, no mess up no matter how big that God won't give us a second chance just as long as we repent of that thing, ask the Lord's forgiveness and then seek his help to overcome that weakness.
32. Now if you want to sin and make a mess of things and act like a fool but you don't ever want to repent or say I'm sorry or admit wrong then you won't get very much out of this message today.
33. But if you're willing to come clean with your need for a second chance then I'm here to tell you that there is a God that loves you who specializes in second chances.

34. In Romans chapter eleven, Paul dedicates the first ten verses of the chapter to point out all the shortcomings and faults and sins and failures of the Jews and the gentiles who were living in Rome at the time.
35. Paul reminds them that their ancestors and even some of them themselves have killed the Holy Prophets, have turned their backs on God. They have been disobedient. They have served other Gods.
36. They have even been obstinate, working against the very plan of God and the will of God for their lives and his kingdom. I can't think of a more scathing rebuke than what Paul says to them.
37. But then Paul asks a question in verse number eleven. **Romans 11:11 Did they stumble so as to fall beyond recovery?** In other words. Have they fallen so low that there is no more hope for them?
38. Have they messed up so badly that God won't give them another chance to be saved?
39. I absolutely love Paul's response. Because it is obviously a letter and the ones receiving the letter can't respond Paul immediately answers the question.
40. Not at all. No way Jose. Not on your life.
41. In fact, Paul using the illustration of a plant says in verse 23. **Romans 11:23 And if they do not persist in unbelief, they will be grafted in, for God is able to graft them in again.**
42. Church, let me say it again. There is no mistake, no blunder, no mess up, and no sin that God can't give us a second chance.
43. How do we know that is true? We know it's true because God's word is full of instances where he gave individuals and groups of people a second chance.
44. In fact, the word of God is full of instances where he gives people and individuals third and fourth and fifth and sixth and 490th chances.
45. God is a God of second chances. So if you're here today and you need a second chance you are in the right place.
46. Let's look at a couple of examples from scripture.

God gives individuals a second chance.

1. And interestingly enough, nobody needed more second chances than they Guy who had brought up the subject to Jesus in Matthew chapter 18. Peter.
2. In the gospels of Matthew, Mark and Luke we find different accounts of the same story.
3. Jesus had been arrested. He was being interrogated by the high priest and he was being beaten and bruised by the guards that had him in custody.

4. History tells us that the beating and the abuse was so severe that many who had spent much of their lives around Jesus didn't even recognize him afterwards.
5. While Jesus was suffering, not only for the sins of Peter but for the sins of the entire world. Peter was outside warming himself by a fire. Though his internal struggle was probably great, Peter was relatively comfortable.
6. All of the sudden a young girl says to Peter, "Hey, I know you. You are one of that Jesus' disciples aren't you?"
7. And Peter being afraid that they would arrest him and beat him like they were Jesus cursed and lied and denied even knowing Jesus Christ not once, not twice but three different times.
8. As the rooster crows, Jesus' eyes meet Peter's and Peter was crushed. Overcome by shame and embarrassment he runs into the city and he cries.
9. You know, there are a lot of things we can do to displease God but I tend to think that one of the most hurtful is denying that we even know him.
10. We see how serious this offense is to God in **Matthew 10:33** **But whosoever shall deny me before men, him will I also deny before my Father which is in heaven. (KJV)**
11. I am sure there might be times when we are tempted to deny that we know and serve Jesus, but for the most part we don't have to fear physical harm or punishment or imprisonment for following Christ so chances are most of us would not deny knowing Jesus with our mouth.
12. But the Apostle Paul explained to Titus in the book of Titus 1:16 that if we are not careful that by our actions we can deny Jesus.
13. He says if we claim to be believers but yet we are disobedient to his commands that by our disobedience we become detestable and good for nothing.
14. If that is the case then all of us have disobeyed God and as a result denied him at one time or another. Now I don't know about you but that is pretty discouraging.
15. Fortunately however, the love of Jesus doesn't leave us in our miserable state. The love of Jesus doesn't leave us without hope. Because God is who God is and because he is a God of second chances we know there is hope.
16. I wonder what most of us would do with a guy who denied Jesus. I wonder how that kind of person would have fared in the modern day church?
17. Well let me tell you how Peter made out. He was remorseful and he was repentant and as a result, in the book of Acts chapter 2 when the Holy Spirit was given and the church as we know it was born.

18. With thousands of people gathering around to see what has happened. On the biggest world stage of that day, guess who is front and center. That's right. Peter. It was Peter that the Lord used to preach his word and help direct a great move of God.
19. I am convinced if God can give Peter a second chance he can give you a second chance.
20. David and Moses were murderers.
21. David was an adulterer.
22. Abraham was a liar.
23. Jacob was a deceiver and if God can give each of them a second chance then why would he offer any less to you?
24. Stop telling yourself that what you did was too bad or that things are too hopeless. Things are not hopeless as long as you serve a God of second chances.
25. We also find that...

God gives churches a second chance.

Revelation 2:4-7 Yet I hold this against you: You have forsaken your first love. **5** Remember the height from which you have fallen! Repent and do the things you did at first. If you do not repent, I will come to you and remove your lampstand from its place. **6** But you have this in your favor: You hate the practices of the Nicolaitans, which I also hate. **7** He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To him who overcomes, I will give the right to eat from the tree of life, which is in the paradise of God.

1. The church in Ephesus had many good things going for them. The Lord pointed out several things, wonderful attributes that characterized who they were.
2. But the Lord also pointed out that they as a church had forsaken their first love. They had fallen. They had gotten their priorities out of line.
3. They had fallen away from what was really important and gone after other things.
4. You see churches in a sense are like people.
5. Churches can miss the mark. Make mistakes. Get their priorities out of line. Make bad decisions. Allow bitterness and strife and division to reign and rule.
6. Churches can pursue their desires rather than God's desires. Churches can do things that damage their witness in the community and that keep them from fulfilling God's plan.

7. But I am so thankful that God doesn't give up on churches any more than he gives up on people. God told the Ephesian church that they had fallen but then he says to them in verse number seven. If you will hear what I have to say and will overcome then I will give you the right to eat of the tree of life.
8. That phrase eat of the tree of life may not mean too much until you consider where it gets its origin. In the book of Genesis, Adam and Eve were in the garden and they had been given to eat of the tree of life.
9. They were given permission to live forever. But then they sinned and as a part of their punishment they were banned from the garden where the tree of life grew.
10. For centuries mankind has struggled and fought and failed. For centuries the church has experienced the same kind of history.
11. But God revives an old privilege and an ancient promise. He says if you will repent and come back you will eat of that tree of life again.
12. You will experience victory again. What a promise that is for every church that has experienced hard times. What an encouragement. Don't ever count God's church out.
13. All that is necessary to see a change is for a group of people to believe God's promise, repent for settling for anything less and to determine to overcome in Christ's power.
14. God gives churches a second chance. And finally...

God gives nations a second chance.

2 Chronicles 7:14 if my people, who are called by my name, will humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then will I hear from heaven and will forgive their sin and will heal their land.

1. God knew the nation of Israel would miss the mark. He knew that this chosen nation would fall and break his heart.
2. He also knew that there would have to be consequences for their disobedience. Drought, pestilence, plagues of destruction.
3. But before they ever failed once, God had already made provision for their second chance.
4. The name Israel actually means, God fights. God was fighting for the right to give them a second chance even before they knew they needed one.
5. He says if my people will humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn back to me I will bless them again and I will heal their land.
6. Church it isn't any secret that America for the most part has turned its back on God. I could give you statistic after statistic but the truth is I don't need to.

7. All you have to do is turn on the national news every night and you can see it with your own eyes.
8. Any time our leadership calls out and out sin acceptable and normal something is terribly wrong.
9. Anytime churches or church leaders call blatant sin normal and acceptable, something is terribly wrong.
10. America is no longer a predominately Christian Nation. But does that mean there is no hope for America. In the words of the apostle Paul. Not at all.
11. If there is no hope for America and the rest of the world then why hasn't Jesus come back yet to get us out of this mess?
12. Because my friend there is hope and his name is Jesus. He is the God almighty but he is also the God of the second chance.
13. If God's not giving up then I'm not giving up. If God hasn't stopped believing then I'm not going to stop believing.
14. If God hasn't said enough's enough then I'm not going to either. As long as there is still oxygen on this planet then we have to believe that **God still gives people second chances** and he still gives churches second chances and he still gives nations a second chance.

Conclusion:

1. On April 25, 1958 a young Korean exchange student, a leader in his university's Christian organization left his apartment and went around the corner to mail a letter back to his parents in his home country.
2. No sooner had he deposited the letter in the box when around the corner came 11 teenage thugs. Without saying a word they brutally attacked him, beat him with a lead pipe and kicked and hit him with their fists.
3. Later that night the Philadelphia police found him in the gutter and he was dead.
4. Word got out about what had happened and the entire city cried out for justice.
5. The boys were arrested and there were demands made that they be tried as adults so that they would be eligible for the death penalty.
6. But then to the surprise of everyone a letter was received from the slain young man's parents and signed by more than 20 other relatives.
7. The letter said, our family has met together and decided to petition the government that the most generous treatment possible be given to those who committed this crime.

8. To show how sincere we are in this matter, we have decided to start a fund and save money to help pay for the religious, educational, vocational and social guidance of these boys when they are released.
9. Our prayer is that the same spirit will be shown to these boys as was shown to us when Jesus died on the cross for our sins.
10. I am convinced that is the message of the cross. No matter what an individual or a church or a nation has done.
11. No matter how bad or how terrible or how unforgiveable it may seem.
12. None of us has stooped so low that our God cannot reach down and dust us off and give us a second chance.
13. Maybe you are here today and you did something sinful just yesterday or maybe years ago. Give yourself a break. Give yourself a second chance. God does.
14. Maybe you have grown tired of organized church. Maybe you have been hurt. Maybe you have stopped working because it just seems hopeless. May I challenge you? Give the church another chance. God does.
15. Maybe you have prayed for that lost one time and time again. Maybe that loved one has blown it so many times and dug a hole so deep it seems they will never get out.
16. Don't stop praying for them. Don't stop believing God for a miracle. There's still another chance.
17. Prayer of thanksgiving for second chances.
18. Salvation call.
19. Have people ask God if they feel like they need a second chance.
20. Have people pray for the lost if they know someone who needs a second chance.
21. Let's pray as a church body for our nation for another chance.