

1. This morning we are going to look at a picture of God's love. I will warn you today, the text we are going to study is a pretty graphic or vivid or clear picture of not only our sinfulness, but also God's incredible love for us in spite of our sinfulness.
2. We are going to look at God's love through the eyes of the Prophet Hosea. Turn in your bibles with me if you will to the first chapter of Hosea.
3. I know that many of you are involved in ministry. If you have ever thought you had a tough ministry assignment, or if you have ever been forced to make an extremely hard decision, you might want to thank God that you weren't asked to do what God asked Hosea to do.
4. I'm going to read three short passages of scripture that will kind of give us the skeleton of the story and then we're going to fill in the blanks.

TEXT: **Hosea 1: 2-3** When the LORD began to speak through Hosea, the LORD said to him, "Go, take to yourself an adulterous wife and children of unfaithfulness, because the land is guilty of the vilest adultery in departing from the LORD." **3** So he married Gomer daughter of Diblaim, and she conceived and bore him a son.

Hosea 2:5 Their mother has been unfaithful and has conceived them in disgrace. She said, 'I will go after my lovers, who give me my food and my water, my wool and my linen, my oil and my drink.'

Hosea 3:1-3 The LORD said to me, "Go, show your love to your wife again, though she is loved by another and is an adulteress. Love her as the LORD loves the Israelites, though they turn to other gods and love the sacred raisin cakes." **2** So I bought her for fifteen shekels of silver and about a homer and a lethek of barley. **3** Then I told her, "You are to live with me many days; you must not be a prostitute or be intimate with any man, and I will live with you."

TITLE: **Will you marry me?**

INTRO:

1. I realized the other day that it's been over a year since I saw a particular scene take place at a sporting event.
2. Have you ever been watching a sporting event and during a break in the action the camera focuses in on an unsuspecting woman and her boyfriend as he got down on one knee and over the public address system proposed to her, and asked her to marry him?
3. She was shocked, but managed to get out a yes, and as she said yes about 50 thousand people started cheering and clapping and whooping and hollering in joy that this couple was going to get married.

4. That's the kind of joyous response you want when you think of the announcement of a wedding.
5. But I can't help but wonder what kind of response there was when Hosea asked Gomer to marry him.
6. You see Hosea was a prophet of God. He had been called by God to lead the nation of Israel back into right relationship with their creator but the people had not been following the voice of the Lord.
7. So as an illustration of not only their rejection of God and their evil behavior but also God's amazing love for them, God told Hosea to go and get married.
8. However, the person God told him to marry was not the kind of person you would think of as appropriate for a prophet of God or a man of God.
9. To put it bluntly, according to Hosea 3:3, Gomer was a prostitute.
10. Now if you think God has ever told you to do something crazy or something that has stretched you way out of your comfort zone, imagine being Hosea.
11. My mind just goes wild imagining the responses Hosea got from his friends and family.
12. Imagine what it was like when Hosea told his mother he was getting married.
13. Mom, I've met a girl and I asked her to marry me and she said yes.
14. Well is she a nice girl Hosea? Because only the best will do for my baby boy. I want to meet her, when can I meet her?
15. Well mom, when you meet her you might notice that she's dressed kind of funny, that's because she's a....she's a.....prostitute.
16. Can you imagine his mother hitting the ceiling?
17. Imagine what kind of gossip started around the church. I imagine people were whispering in the hallway, in the restroom and probably the phone lines were jammed.
18. Did you hear who Hosea is marrying? You know he grew up in the church and I know his parents raised him better than that.
19. Can you imagine him approaching his pastor to ask him to perform the wedding ceremony?
20. Son, I don't have any pre-marital counseling material that covers this kind of situation.
21. The responses had to be pretty wild, but despite everything that must have happened, Hosea marries Gomer for one simple reason. God told him to.

22. After getting married Hosea and Gomer have three children together, and things seem to be pretty normal in their lives when one day Hosea comes home and discovers that Gomer is gone.
23. Gomer has decided she doesn't like being married anymore. She wants to be free of her marriage. Free to engage in prostitution all over again.
24. If the responses Hosea received in the first place weren't bad enough, I wonder how many I told you so's Hosea had to endure after Gomer left?
25. Gomer goes out and begins her life of prostitution again. She has children by other men. She is sinking even lower than she was when Hosea first married her.
26. Maybe Hosea thought finally he could put this thing behind him and move on with his life. He had done what God told him and Gomer wouldn't stay.
27. But God had different plans. Because after a period of time God speaks to Hosea again, this time he tells him to go get his wife again. To rescue her again from her life of degrading sin.
28. I would have loved to have been a fly on the wall when Hosea had that conversation with God. God I can't endure that humiliation again.
29. And besides God, she's the one who left. She doesn't want to be here. Sure I love her but she has made her choice.
30. But again Hosea obeys God. He goes and buys back his wife. When he gets her home he tells her how much he loves her and he begs her to stay with him.
31. Now I must admit, this seems an awfully extreme thing to ask of a mere human being, but we are reminded of the fact that there really was a good reason for God's strange request.
32. God's love for the people of Israel was an extreme love. In fact it had to be an extreme love.
33. Because like Gomer the Israelites had turned their backs on God. They had sold themselves like prostitutes. They had been unfaithful, but yet God loved them so very much.
34. I believe that message of God's extreme love is still relevant today in 2021. Because in truth, though we don't like to admit it. If the most intimate places of our lives were to be revealed and laid bare.
35. If the closets of our lives were opened and the skeletons were exposed, we would have to conclude that sometimes we are not much better than the prostitute Gomer.

36. As much as God has loved us and **as much as God has done for us, sometimes we are unfaithful and we are wretched** and we are spiritually and morally bankrupt.
37. But yet in the background there is a loving God who cries out for us and after us. A God who intentionally proclaims his love for us. A God that begs us to come back to him and come close again.
38. The bible describes the church as the bride of Christ and Jesus as the bride groom. And if Jesus were standing here today I think what he would say is, I want to declare my love for you all over again. I want the world to know how much I love you. Let's renew the passion and the love and the trust that we once had.
39. When a couple has been married for 25 or 50 years sometimes those couples will renew their vows as a sign that they would do it all over again if they had the chance.
40. Maybe you're here or watching online and you've served Jesus for 50 years or more.
41. Maybe you're here or watching online today and you're a new Christian.
42. Maybe you're here or watching online today and you don't even know Jesus as your lord just yet.
43. Let me tell you no matter where you are there is an extremely passionate God who longs to ignite or re-ignite a passionate love relationship with you.
44. I want us to notice three things about God's love that are really quite powerful. First of all. God loves us so much that...

He is looking for us even when we're not looking for him.

Hosea 1:2-3 When the LORD began to speak through Hosea, the LORD said to him, "Go, take to yourself an adulterous wife and children of unfaithfulness, because the land is guilty of the vilest adultery in departing from the LORD." **3** So he married Gomer daughter of Diblaim, and she conceived and bore him a son.

1. It was a very significant command for God to say to Hosea, go take for yourself an adulterous wife.
2. That word adulterous tells us quite a bit about Gomer. Gomer wasn't looking for Hosea. She may not have even known that he existed prior to Hosea introducing himself.
3. Gomer was busy. She was pro-occupied with living the life she wanted. She had her loves and she had her interests and she had her way of living and those were the most important things in her life.

4. But even though she wasn't looking for Hosea, Hosea was looking for her. He went in search of her, and he found her and when he found her he showed love to her.
5. What a powerful picture of the way God loves us.
6. I don't know about you, but I must confess sometimes it's easy to become pre-occupied with life.
7. Sometimes it's easy to let God slip down the list of priorities. I don't believe we do it on purpose with malice in our heart it's just that we get sidetracked.
8. It seems like we are busier than ever. We have more commitments than ever. There are more things vying for our time and attention than ever and God just kind of get's left out of the picture.
9. I thank God however, that during those times God doesn't get sidetracked from his love for us. **God's full attention is always on us** and is always focused on bringing out the very best in us.
10. I am so thankful that during the hustle and the bustle and the stresses of life that God still speaks and God still reaches out to us and he gently reminds us, hey I'm still here. I haven't gone anywhere.
11. I know I have quoted this verse before but what a powerful reminder of the truth of God's love. **1 John 4:10 This is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins.**
12. Maybe you're listening this morning and you have gotten sidetracked. I know you're listening or watching today but the truth is experiencing the powerful, passionate love of God has slipped down the priority list.
13. May I remind you that he still loves you passionately and powerfully? His attitude toward you hasn't changed. He's still the same God who longs to be near you that he always has been.
14. Next. God loves us so much that...

He's willing to buy us back, even when he's already paid the price.

Hosea 3:1-2 The LORD said to me, "Go, show your love to your wife again, though she is loved by another and is an adulteress. Love her as the LORD loves the Israelites, though they turn to other gods and love the sacred raisin cakes." **2** So I bought her for fifteen shekels of silver and about a homer and a lethek of barley.

1. Now don't miss the fact that Hosea was commanded to buy his wife back. The significance is that this would have been the second time had had to purchase her.
2. It would have been customary for Hosea to pay a bride price for Hosea when they first got married.

3. The family of the bride would have agreed upon a dowry and they would not have been able to get married until that price was paid.
4. Now, several years later, here is Hosea having to pay the price for her all over again.
5. I know it isn't pleasant to consider, but more than likely Gomer has sold herself as a sex slave so that she would be taken care of and protected. She probably sold herself to a pimp.
6. But if Hosea wants her back, he is going to have to pay the price for her all over again. It would have cost him dearly because Gomer was a source of income to this man.
7. I'm trying to imagine the flood of emotions that must have been overwhelming Hosea as he takes the money to go buy her back.
8. I'm sure his mind was filled with all the wrongs that he has suffered and all the embarrassment he has endured because of Gomer.
9. I'm sure he probably wondered, why do I have to pay when she is the one who has done wrong, when she is the one who has given herself to another.
10. Don't miss the fact however that this is a perfect picture of the sacrifice that Jesus has paid for our sins.
11. He has paid the price. He died and gave his life on a cruel. Horrifying cross. His body was pierced for our transgressions and he was bruised and he shed he blood all for us.
12. But yet every time we sin and we turn our backs on God it's as if we nail him up on that cross all over again.
13. I've got news for you, it wasn't nails that held Jesus on the cross it was our sin that held him there.
14. But more than that it was his love. Because he loves us he pays the price, and he keeps paying the price so that we can be free. (pause)
15. And as if that isn't profound enough, we find that after Hosea re-pays the price for Gomer, he doesn't treat her badly, he doesn't scold her but rather he pours out his love on her like the past had never happened.
16. Isn't that exactly what God does for us? The word of God says that he removes our sins from us as far as the east is from the west. That's a long way away.
17. Can I encourage you today? If your love for him has grown cold. If some sin has slipped in your life. If your commitment is waning, run to him and repent.

18. He won't beat you over the head he will love you because you are the love of his life.
19. And finally, he loves us so much that...

He wants to live with us forever.

1. I want to make a powerful statement. Many people don't want to talk about hell because they reason that a loving God wouldn't send people to hell.
2. My friend, God didn't create hell for human beings. He created hell for the devil and his demons.
3. He created heaven for us. But access to heaven is only granted through acceptance of Jesus as lord and savior.
4. Hosea 3:3 Then I told her, "You are to live with me many days; you must not be a prostitute or be intimate with any man, and I will live with you."
5. That phrase many days meant for good. Until death do us part. That's the kind of relationship God longs to have with us. Hosea said, you are to live with me and I will live with you.
6. It was a two-sided commitment that was to be lasting.
7. In the most loving way possible, may I implore you.
8. Stop taking your relationship with God so lightly. Stop treating him like you are just holding on to him until something better comes along.
9. Stop relating to him as if his relationship is expendable because it isn't. God's commitment to you is an eternal commitment. He wants it to last.
10. He has created you for eternal fellowship. I know that almost everything in this world is disposable but that's not God's plan for you. You are not disposable.
11. John 14:2-3 In my Father's house are many rooms; if it were not so, I would have told you. I am going there to prepare a place for you. 3 And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am.
12. God loves us so much that if we know him as savior he is building a mansion for us even as we speak.
13. And when we walk through the gates of heaven God is going to hand us a title deed with our name on it that declares this belongs to you. It can never be taken from you.
14. That is the kind of love our father has for us. God's plans are eternal plans.

Conclusion:

1. I love the quote I heard this week, it said. Beware of short term pleasure at the expense of long term joy.
2. I know we are living in this moment but God's desire is to take us to eternity.
3. And he does it by declaring his love for us.
4. Will you marry me?
5. I started the message today by telling you the story of a young man who proposed in front of a stadium full of people. There was great joy when she said yes.
6. Now let me tell you another true story. February 14th of the year 2012, a young man decided to propose to his girlfriend by having them flash the question over the jumbo tron at the basketball game.
7. 17,000 people were anxiously waiting her answer. Imagine the horror when she said no and walked out. Imagine his heartbreak and embarrassment.
8. Obviously that was her right to say now and I wouldn't have wanted her saying yes if it wasn't right.
9. But I really don't think there is any question that accepting Jesus proposal of life is the right thing to do. Loving him intimately is the right thing to do.
10. Can we get in an aisle this morning in symbolic acceptance of Jesus act of love?
11. Kind of like the bride walks down the aisle, by our movement, we are accepting God's gift of love.
12. Can we begin, everyone who will, whether here in person or at home. Will you take a few moments and thank God for the love he has for you?
13. I'm not asking you to thank Him if you feel loved, I'm asking you to thank Him because you are loved.
14. If your love for Him is in a place where it could be better or stronger, ask the Lord to forgive you for allowing that love to grow a little cold.
15. Ask the Holy spirit to help, guide, and empower you to love the Lord back in a way that he deserves.
16. Father overwhelm us with your love.
17. Salvation call.
18. Closing prayer.