

WEEK 26 -KINGDOM INFIDELITY

JUNE 29/30

HOSEA 4

June 26th Reading, Pages 762-763

June 27th Reading, Pages 774-775

Summary and Goal:

Hosea lived out the compassion of God. Hosea was married to Gomer, who was a known prostitute. Hosea remained faithful to Gomer even though she was unfaithful to him. This is a story and a prophecy of what happened to Israel when they were unfaithful to God. It shows that there are indeed consequences to choices, but there is also compassion, grace, hope and redemption.

Main Passages:

Hosea 4: 1-10

Hosea 14

Session Outline:

1. The Charge (Hosea 4:1)
2. The Commandments Broken (Hosea 4:2)
3. The Consequences (Hosea 4:7-10)
4. The Compassion of God (Hosea 14:1, 4-6, 9)

Session in a Sentence:

God's commitment and compassion for His people never diminish and He offers redemption as well as restoration for all those who have been unfaithful to Him.

Kingdom Connection:

The Kingdom of God is based on a relationship through Jesus Christ. He even refers to Himself as the bridegroom and the church as His bride. The bridegroom is perfect, and the bride is imperfect, therefore at times there is a strained relationship. We will mess up in a multiplicity of ways, yet the relationship is based on hope in Him, not perfection in us. Jesus is consistent in His compassion, grace, mercy and forgiveness for His bride.

Hosea 4

Kingdom Infidelity

Last week we looked at Jonah, the prophet on the run from everyone including God.

Today we look at Hosea, another prophet, who had every reason to run away but did the exact opposite. He stayed connected with his wife and God during the most difficult of circumstances.

Whether directly or indirectly I think it would be safe to say that every one of us has been impacted by a strained and/or difficult marriage.

- For some it was the household you grew up in; your parents were married but it didn't seem like they loved each other. There were arguments that escalated, possibly beyond words. Perhaps the relationship ended in a divorce.
- For others, it was a friend who had a marriage that was strained and perhaps there was infidelity, rejection, or abuse.
- Perhaps your own marriage didn't work out for various reasons.
- Or it may be your son or daughter, grandson or granddaughter are going through a difficult marriage right now.

No one is exempt. We all have been either directly or indirectly impacted by a strained/ difficult marriage. The tide turns when the conversation stops. I tend to be an optimist and believe if there is conversation, there is hope. Even if the conversation is not fun to listen to and even if the truth hurts; if both sides are still communicating there is a glimmer of hope.

Today we are going to be looking at Hosea, one of the minor prophets during the Divided Kingdom Era. Remember the minor prophets are minor only in length of their books, not minor in the meaning of their message.

The 12 minor prophet books cover about 450 years of history for Israel. They are divided up in their audience by North and South (Divided Kingdom). North being Israel. South being Judah. Hosea served for approximately 60-70 years, in the 8th Century B.C.

This is a book of brokenness.

Hosea will experience betrayal, anguish, embarrassment, and brokenness on his journey all because of who he married. Yet its been noted that the book has more to do with divine brokenness than with a broken human relationship:

"The major truths of the book are: (1) God suffers when His people are unfaithful to Him; (2) God cannot condone sin; and (3) God will never cease to love His own and, consequently, He seeks to win back those who have forsaken Him." (*Scofield Reference Bible*)

The setting for this book reads very much like the headlines of today's paper in the United States. Israel, though divided, was enjoying great prosperity when Hosea began his ministry. However, Hosea could see that the nation was "rotten to the core" in the words of Warren Wiersbe.

- Honest Government
- Pure Religion

- Godly Homes
- Personal Integrity

All those things had vanished from the land of Israel. Judgment was inevitable.

The Theme of the Book:

It's been said that devotion to the Lord is like faithfulness in marriage. Idolatry is like adultery.

Edgar Guest wrote a poem called "I'd rather see a sermon than hear one". The people of Israel see a sermon with Hosea. He is a living, breathing, illustration of God's love for us even when we betray Him, embarrass Him, and break His heart.

The first three chapters of Hosea look at his marriage. Hosea's wife was Gomer. Some would say that the marriage between Hosea and Gomer was doomed from the beginning. Gomer was a known prostitute.

Whether or not Gomer was a prostitute when they got married or not can be debated, however, Hosea knew that she was going to be unfaithful and prostitute herself to other men.

Now in Chapter 4, the focus shifts, from Hosea and Gomer to the children of Israel- the very people that God had made a covenant with all the way back in the Patriarch Era with Abraham. These are the descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; the descendants of the ones delivered from Egypt and entered the Promised Land, which was designed to be a united Israel.

Hosea is a prophet and as a prophet, he will have the dubious honor of speaking the words of the Lord. You can imagine the difficulty that might be for anyone, but especially for someone who is speaking for the Lord and married to an active prostitute.

The bottom line, truth of the matter was that Israel had been unfaithful to God, as Gomer had been unfaithful to Hosea.

Israel had turned from God.

- God who had been faithful.
- God who had been loving.
- God who had been protective.
- God who had been a blessing.

In many marriages, this is when the conversation would end. This is when there would be silence, isolation and perhaps even departure. Sadly, there are some marriages that end up in the court system and there are charges brought forth.

And today in Chapter 4 we have what is like a courtroom scene.

Turning from the analogy of his own marriage, Hosea made the judicial charge in God's indictment against Israel.

Hosea speaking on behalf of God.

THE CHARGE

Let's look at Hosea 4: 1

Hos. 4:1 Hear the word of the LORD, You children of Israel, For the LORD brings a charge against the inhabitants of the land: "There is no truth or mercy or knowledge of God in the land. (Chronological Bible, June 26th, pg. 762)

There is no question that these are harsh words. But there is also grace in these words.

- God has every right to be silent.
- God has every right to go direct to judgment.
- God has every right to punish Israel.

The covenant had not been kept. The vow of faithfulness had been broken. And yet, even with these harsh words of truth, God is still speaking; which is a picture of grace. If God is still speaking, there is hope.

These words are specifically for Israel during the time of Hosea, but the parallel to our nation in 2019 is alarming and humbling.

Look again at vs. 1 where God starts off by declaring an imperative; "Hear" the word of the Lord. The word "Hear" is the Hebrew word "Shama", which means to "listen with the intent to obey."

Hosea declares on behalf of God, "Hear the word of the Lord".

If there is ever going to be hope of change; there must be a willingness to hear/listen.

How many arguments could be avoided if one of the people involved stopped to listen?

James 1: 19 My dear brothers and sisters, take note of this: everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to become angry.

Luke 11: 28 He replied, "Blessed rather are those who hear the word of God and obey it."

For true "Shama" listening to take place, we must humble ourselves. Listening is a form of humility.

There have been times when I've been "discussing" something with my wife, and I keep interrupting her.

- I know what I want to say.
- I know what point I want to prove.
- I know how this should be resolved (in my favor).

But each of those points portrays a prideful heart.

- I know what I want to say. -----PRIDE
- I know what point I want to prove. ----PRIDE

- I know how this should be resolved (in my favor).----PRIDE

This is not only true in marriages and other earthly relationships, but even more so with our relationship to God. When you are willing to “Shama” listen, you take pride off the table.

There is humility in listening; in hearing the word of the Lord.

Typically, when I “listen” in the midst of an argument, oops I mean discussion, my breathing is a bit more labored, a bit more calculated. And I take those deep long breaths and exhale slowly, though trying not to be too obvious. But all of that is in order for me to pause, slow down, stop speaking and actually listen.

Listening occurs when you are not thinking about what you are about to say; when you actually hear the words and listen to what is being said.

- Israel had not been listening for a long time.
- Israel had not been humble for a long time.
- Israel had been prideful for a long time.

And pride comes before a fall.

If you have been doing the daily reading, this week you noticed in the first 3 chapters of Hosea, there was a picture painted of the marriage between Hosea and Gomer. We have seen that Gomer was not faithful at all and did not try to hide that fact. She was a known harlot who prostituted herself; the epitome of unfaithfulness, as was Israel to God.

So, God is declaring an imperative for Israel to listen and hear (Shama). The charges God makes are harsh but valid.

Hos. 4:1 Hear the word of the LORD, You children of Israel, For the LORD brings a charge against the inhabitants of the land: “There is no truth (faithfulness) or mercy (kindness) or knowledge of God in the land. (Chronological Bible, June 26th, Pg. 762)

1. There is NO Truth/ Faithfulness

- a. Hebrew word: “emeth” Literally means faithfulness, truth, reliability.
- b. Most translations will use the word “faithfulness”

2. There is NO Mercy/ Kindness

- a. Hebrew word: “chaced” Literally means love, kindness, goodness.
- b. Often translated as loving kindness

3. There is NO Knowledge of God

- a. Hebrew word: “dahath” Literally means knowledge, understanding, discerning.
- b. Translated as knowledge with the expectation a heartfelt understanding

The NKJV translates “faithfulness” as “truth”; i.e. there is no truth.

The word, “emeth” means “faithful to your word.” In this context it is implying lack of follow through with commitments. That the children of Israel made a promise and then broke the promise.

Are you true/ faithful to your word in your relationships, friendships, at home, at work? Do you follow through with your promises and commitments?

Israel was not true to the covenant made with God. Israel was not faithful to the covenant made with God. And God made it clear, lest there be any misunderstanding. Faithfulness/ truth was lacking.

There was also no kindness/ loving kindness/ mercy (NKJV). The picture here is compassion and concern for others. Again, this comes down to a pride issue. To be kind to others and show mercy to others there must be a sense of humility. You must see the value in others and not just yourself or what can benefit you. It comes down to “selfishness” or self-LESS-ness.”

And then we come to the 3rd item named in this indictment. There is no knowledge of God. This perhaps is the most painful for God to say.

This wasn't just educational knowledge of God. The Israelites had an educational head knowledge of God. They knew the stories of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.

They knew God, but this word is more than just head knowledge; it is heart knowledge. It is more of an intimate knowledge of God on a personal level. The One who was with their ancestors as a pillar of cloud by day and pillar of fire by night.

A recognition that God is with you wherever you are, and God will be the great I AM in whatever you need and in whatever you are facing even today. We are to recognize God as Creator of the universe but also as the One who protects and guides daily.

In the days of Hosea, for Israel; God made it clear.

1. There is NO Faithfulness/ Truth
2. There is NO Kindness (love/ loving kindness)
3. There is NO Knowledge of God

And then God lays it out with specifics.

THE COMMANDMENTS BROKEN

Hosea 4: 2 By swearing and lying, killing and stealing and committing adultery, they break all restraint (employ violence NASB), with bloodshed upon bloodshed.

³ Therefore the land will mourn; And everyone who dwells there will waste away with the beasts of the field and the birds of the air; Even the fish of the sea will be taken away. (Chronological Bible, June 26th, pg. 762)

On any given day in any given city in our country, that reads like the morning news. In recent weeks there have been mass shootings, abductions, bloodshed, both in big cities and small towns. You see the craziest stories of people stealing money, jewelry, ATM machines, and now days stealing identities. Adultery is rampant, and no one is immune.

- **Swearing** – Commandment #3 – You shall not take the name of the Lord your God in vain.
- **Lying** – Commandment #9 – You shall not bear false witness.
- **Killing** – Commandment #6 – You shall not murder.
- **Stealing** – Commandment #8 – You shall not steal.
- **Adultery** – Commandment #7 – You shall not commit adultery.

Israel was experiencing prosperity, but at the expense of what was righteous. One compromise led to another compromise. It's like the rudder of a ship, just a little slight turn will end up taking you in a completely different direction. And there were going to be consequences.

Hosea 4: 4-5

Vs 4 "Now let no man contend, or rebuke another; For your people are like those who contend with the priest. ⁵ Therefore you shall stumble in the day; The prophet also shall stumble with you in the night, And I will destroy your mother. (Chronological Bible, June 26, pg. 762)

According to Mosaic Law (Deut. 17: 8-13), those who "contend with the priest" are deserving of death. The people in Hosea's day were deserving of death according to the Law. Notice here God is saying through Hosea, "your people;" there is a spiritual distance between them and God because of their unfaithfulness.

No one was immune, including Hosea, the prophet. (vs. 5b)

The end of verse 5, "*I will destroy your mother*" is a reference to the nation of Israel.

God is not happy, and He is just getting started.

Hosea 4: 6

Vs. 6 My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge. Because you have rejected knowledge, I also will reject you from being priest for Me; Because you have forgotten the law of your God, I also will forget your children. (Chronological Bible, June 26, pg. 762)

Notice how God is referring to Israel as "My people". God is a relational God. Even when we are messing up. Even when we are unfaithful. Even when we turn away. Even when we are not listening. God says, 'My people'. But don't miss the consequences.

My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge.

The word "destroyed" is the Hebrew Word: "Dah-Maw"

It literally means to: cease, cut off, destroy, perish.

It is used only 14 Times in the OT and 4 of those times are in Hosea, more than any other book.

In case you missed it: God is NOT HAPPY. God is angry and God is hurt.

God had high hopes for His bride, Israel; only to find out she was unfaithful. God had been betrayed and rejected by His people, His bride.

When God says you have "forgotten the law" it does not mean "they didn't remember". It isn't like "I forgot an appointment" or "the time just slipped by".

The picture is betrayal and rejection; it is "ignoring" the Law of God. It is making a willful choice not to follow the Law of God (i.e. biblical principles).

THE CONSEQUENCES

And there are consequences to that kind of choice and lifestyle.

Hosea 4: 7 “The more they increased (multiplied), the more they sinned against Me; I will change their glory into shame. ⁸ They eat up (feed on) the sin of My people; They set their heart (desire) on their iniquity. ⁹ And it shall be: like people, like priest. So, I will punish them for their ways, and reward (repay) them for their deeds. (Chronological Bible, June 26th, pg. 762)

Think about the missed opportunities of parents and grandparents.

“The more they increased (multiplied), the more they sinned against Me.”

This is a challenge for all of us. Whether you have kids, grandkids, or no kids; we have a responsibility to this generation and the next. If you haven’t noticed our country is still being fruitful and multiplying.

We don’t have to look any further than the nightly news to see the waywardness of our multi-generational country as we have been unfaithful to God. One of the results of this sin of unfaithfulness to God is there will be frustration after frustration.

Hosea 4: 10 For they shall eat, but not have enough; They shall commit harlotry, but not increase; Because they have ceased obeying the LORD. (Chronological Bible, June 26th, pg. 763)

And if you have ever known anyone who has struggled with anything-

- It could be alcohol.
- It could be eating.
- It could be pornography.
- It could be video games.

They come to a point where they “eat/ drink/ watch/ play, “but not have enough.”

And they need to do more and more and more just to get that “fix”, but they are never satisfied. That is the reality of Hosea 4:10, they have “ceased obeying the Lord.” The word for “obey” is the same root word “shama” which was used in Hosea 4:1.

God is not afraid to take action and hold someone or some nation accountable. We each have a choice to make this week in our relationship to others; a spouse, a friend, a coworker, an employer, an employee, a neighbor. But most importantly we have a choice to make concerning our relationship with God.

THE COMPASSION OF GOD

Remember God wants to have a relationship with us and is willing to show compassion and forgive. There is always hope and grace offered to those who repent.

Hosea 14:1 *O Israel, return to the LORD your God, for you have stumbled because of your iniquity;*

Hosea 14: 4 *“I will heal their backsliding, I will love them freely, For My anger has turned away from him. ⁵ I will be like the dew to Israel; He shall grow like the lily, And lengthen his roots like Lebanon. ⁶ His branches shall spread; His beauty shall be like an olive tree, And his fragrance like Lebanon. (Chronological Bible, June 27th, pg. 774)*

Hosea is a beautiful reminder of the relationship God wants to have with His bride. It is never too late to reconnect with God. He is always willing to show compassion through forgiveness.

The last verse of Hosea gives us a glimpse of eternal hope.

Hosea 14: 9 *Who is wise? Let him understand these things. Who is prudent (discerning)? Let him know them. For the ways of the LORD are right; The righteous walk in them, But transgressors stumble in them. (Chronological Bible, June 27th, pg. 775)*

Sometimes faithfulness comes down to wisdom and discernment being put into action on a daily basis. That is our challenge this week, to learn from the story of Hosea, that in spite of what we have done in the past, God is willing to communicate through His Word and His Spirit. God is willing to show compassion through forgiveness as we confess and repent. God is willing to renew our vows in this relationship with Him that we may walk hand in hand down the path of righteousness.

- **God Speaks** by warning about the consequences of sin in advance and by raising up a prophetic voice to turn His people back to Himself.
- **God Acts** by sending a prophetic visual to mirror Israel’s sin, by allowing His people who refuse His overtures to wallow in their sin.
- **God Reveals** His heart for his people by using the adulterous wife of a prophet to illustrate Israel’s blatant adultery and to get their attention.

References:

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Gary G. Cohen and H. Ronald Vandermeij, *Hosea and Amos, Everyman’s Bible Commentary*. Moody Press, 1981. Pg.35-41