# Home - Part 4

Hope for the Hurting

(Hosea 2:14-15)

Welcome to Christ’s Community Church. This morning we’re wrapping up our series entitled “Home”. We have talked about protecting our priorities, having great relationships, and marriage being a covenant partnership. Today I want to talk to you about love, because there is hope for those who feel unloved.

I have discovered that most people who feel unloved have a distorted view of reality. You see, they aren’t really unloved, they just don’t recognize the love that’s in their life. And so, their emotional pain blinds them to the fact that they have friends and family who love them very much. And so today, I want to encourage you, if you sometimes feel unloved, or if maybe you’re actually in a position where there is no one that loves you, there’s hope for you, because there’s hope for the hurting.

God speaks to his people through the prophet Isaiah saying, “Though the mountains be shaken and the hills be removed, yet my unfailing love for you will not be shaken nor my covenant of peace be removed…” (Isaiah 54:10).

If you feel unloved, if you feel estranged from the people that matter most, I want you to know that there’s someone who loves you very much, and he’s gone to great lengths to prove it. To the prophet Malachi God said, “I have loved you” (Malachi 1:2). And to the prophet Jeremiah the Lord said: "I have loved you with an everlasting love; I have drawn you with loving-kindness” (Jeremiah 31:3).

And what I want to do today is look at a story that’s very painful and yet very beautiful all at the same time. We’re going to look at a few excerpts from Hosea that describe the extent of God’s love for you. You see, God doesn’t just love you as part of the crowd, he loves you as an individual; he not only knows your name and your needs, but Matthew’s gospel tells us, “Even the very hairs of your head are all numbered” (Matthew 10:30). And so, God’s love toward you is personal and he understands your hurts and fears.

This morning, we’re going to look at an interesting couple named Hosea and Gomer, and we’re going to see a marriage that had every reason to end in divorce, but we’ll discover that God is going to call them to something entirely different. You see, there’s no greater feeling than to be unconditionally loved, but love is much more than a feeling, love is a commitment to the well-being of another. And therefore, there’s no greater emptiness any human can experience than to feel that no one loves them and then to vainly search for love thinking, “If I succeed enough people will love me,” or “If I sleep with this person or that he or she will love me” because none of these strategies work and they’ll soon end up feeling alone and abandoned.

Today we’re going to look at a story that illustrates God’s great love for you and shows to what length he will go to keep loving you. It’s the story about a man named Hosea and it begins with God telling Hosea to marry an adulterous woman named Gomer. Now to give you a little bit of context, this was about 760 years before the birth of Christ, the northern kingdom of Israel was enjoying a time of great prosperity. Unfortunately, whenever the economy flourishes, there’s almost always a moral and spiritual decrease, and that’s what was happening under the reign of King Jeroboam the second. So, God raised up a man, a prophet named Hosea, to speak to the people about their unfaithfulness and their spiritual adultery. Hosea chapter 1, begins in a very unusual way as God began to speak to Hosea. Verse two tells us that God 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." So he married Gomer daughter of Diblaim…” (Hosea 1:2-3).

The Hebrew word translated as 'adulterous wife' could also be translated ‘prostitute’ and so what God was telling the prophet was to go marry a very sinful woman. And in this vivid illustration, we see Hosea loving this immoral woman, just as God is loving the immoral nation of Israel, and we see how our idolatry and rejection of the Lord feels to him. In this story, there are layers upon layers of meaning buried in this disturbing and yet very beautiful marriage as God puts Hosea in the place where he feels what God feels when he’s loving us as we continue to sin. Hosea’s marriage to Gomer symbolizes God’s love for you, a perpetual love, a covenant love that continues in spite of our rejection and rebellious ways. And so, number one we see God’s pain in rejection.

## 1. God’s Pain in Rejection

Hosea married Gomer, but very quickly something happened.  She began to believe the most common misconception in our homes that there is. She bought into the lie that what she is missing, is better than what she has, and she became discontent. Even though she knew Hosea was a pretty good guy, she felt like he wasn’t giving her everything she wanted, and determined that what she didn’t have was more important than what he was giving her. So, she began thinking about what she was missing, what she could have had, and she left Hosea at home and returned to prostitution. She was an adulterous woman, she was unfaithful, perfectly fitting the command given to Hosea, "Go, take to yourself an adulterous wife and children of unfaithfulness…” (Hosea 1:2). And so, she does what people have done for centuries, she set aside her faithfulness for a feeling, what she didn’t have for what she thought she could obtain.

And that’s what it tells us in verse five of Hosea chapter 2, 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 2:5). Now, we don’t know exactly what happened in Gomer’s situation, but in our culture, it could go like this; you know, there is this other woman at work who thinks I’m cool, you know, she doesn't tear me down all of the time, she laughs at my jokes, she enjoys watching sports with me and we have these things in common. And so, he or she is exciting and they trade what they have for the little that they’re missing and end up with less than they had in the first place. They believe the lie that what I'm missing is better than what I have, overlooking the fact that if they would invest in what they have it will be so much better. I mean seriously, what could you have more in common than years of faithfulness to one another and the children that you’ve had together. But it happens all the time, years go by and we start to believe the lie that what I'm missing is better than what I have.

That’s what happened to Gomer and she ended up with far less than she had in the first place. She went after her lovers, other guys who listened to her, complimented her, bought her little gifts, and told her she was special. She went out, conducted business with a couple of other guys, got pregnant and had three kids.

First, she had a son with another guy, but God actually told her husband to name this boy in verse four saying, “Call him Jezreel (yiz-reh-ale') …” (Hosea 1:4) which means God will sow; scattered; because Israel would soon be scattered and in exile.

She conceived again and gave birth to a daughter and God told Hosea in verse six to, "Call her Lo-Ruhamah (lo roo-khaw-maw'); …" (Hosea 1:6) a name which means not pitied or no mercy; really describing the hurt that God felt.

Now after she had weaned Lo-Ruhamah, Gomer went out with another guy and had another son. God told Hosea in verse nine, "Call him Lo-Ammi (lo am-mee')” (Hosea 1:8) which means, “Not my people, no kin of mine, or not related to me”. And again, you can hear the hurt that God experiences when his people are rejecting him over and over and over again.

Some of you, if you’ve ever been cheated on, if your significant other has ever been unfaithful, you know the pain. And God felt cheated on, his people were committing blatant spiritual adultery, and so he becomes jealous. He’s hurt, he’s angry, and he has every right to be, because he’s God. He created us to worship him and yet he gives us free will, because he doesn’t want these little mindless robots worshiping him. He wants all of your heart, all of your soul, and all of your mind (Matthew 22:37).

And so, today I want to look at God’s response to unfaithfulness. I want to take a little time, because quite honestly our hearts easily become hardened, we become desensitized, and so we need to understand how our sin makes him feel. Number two, I want to look at God’s heart and see how he responds to unfaithfulness.

## 2. God’s Response to Unfaithfulness

You know, one of the things about being a holy God is that you no longer have the luxury of turning your head and looking the other direction when a problem comes up. There was a time in Jesus ministry when he found himself in a bad situation, where others had been willing to let things slide, but he couldn’t look the other direction. Instead Jesus did something that no one expected and as the saying goes, “Desperate times call for desperate measures.”

It happened that as Jesus was in Jerusalem for the Passover feast, that he visited the temple as was his custom and became angry because of the injustice that he saw. As worshipers entered the temple area they were being taken advantage of by moneychangers. Though they performed a necessary service for travelers, they charged inflated exchange rates, and not only that, but there were also merchants selling animals for sacrificial purposes at ridiculous prices. Worshipers were encouraged to buy their sacrifice at the temple just to be sure that it was kosher, that it was acceptable and lawful. And so, Jesus recognized that it was a religious scam that was taking advantage of sincere people and it made him furious. John chapter 2 tells us in verse 15 that,

“He made a whip out of cords, and drove all from the temple area, both sheep and cattle; he scattered the coins of the money changers and overturned their tables…” (John 2:15-16).

Jesus was outraged by the injustice he saw and his first response was a righteous anger, his actions were drastic, but they were deliberate. He remained level-headed throughout the entire ordeal, he wasn’t controlled by his emotions, because there is such a thing as unrighteous anger as well as righteous anger. Here we see that Jesus

wasn’t thinking about himself, but he was thinking about his Father, he was concerned, even consumed by the things of God. As a matter of fact, the Scripture says, “Zeal for your house will consume me" (John 2:17). And so, Jesus chased the moneylenders out of the temple, not because they were threatening to him, but because their motives were impure and they were offensive to a holy God.

Just like Israel in Hosea’s day, almost 800 years before Jesus cleansed the temple, God speaks to the people of Israel, saying in Hosea chapter 2,

“She has not acknowledged that I was the one who gave her the grain, the new wine and oil, who lavished on her the silver and gold... "Therefore, I will take away my grain when it ripens, and my new wine when it is ready. I will take back my wool and my linen, intended to cover her nakedness. So now I will expose her lewdness before the eyes of her lovers; no one will take her out of my hands” (Hosea 2:8-10).

And you can hear the pain in his words, you can hear the hurt, you can hear the jealousy. This is our God who says, “I’m very jealous for Jerusalem and Zion” (Zechariah 1:14). Therefore, you are to have no idols, “no other gods before me” (Exodus 20:3). And honestly, he has every right to demand your allegiance and your worship because he is your God, your Savior, and your Redeemer, but I want you to notice how he changes his tone and begins to apply the principles of tough love.

Verse 13, “I will punish her for the days she burned incense to the Baals; she decked herself with rings and jewelry, and went after her lovers, but me she forgot” (Hosea 2:13).

God reprimands her with a little bit of fatherly discipline, there’s a sternness in his voice, yet it’s almost as if you could hear the tears as he says, “You want your home and your children, you want to do your own thing; you want to put your idols, your lovers before me, and you want to do life without my Word and my Presence. Well, just go ahead. Go ahead and see how you like it!”

Sadly, that’s the way that many people are living today. We’ve been trained to do what we’ve done 5, 10, or 15 times before, which is to pack up our toothbrush and move on. But I believe, like God, there should be a bit of possessiveness in our homes, a little bit of righteous anger, because we’re not going to give up that easy.

So, God responds to Israel with a righteous anger, when suddenly there’s a shift in his response. He’s angry, his eyes are flashing, when suddenly he’s overcome with compassion. Suddenly, he shifts roles from that of a father scolding and disciplining a rebellious child to reconciliation. The third thing that we will see is God’s message of unfailing love.

## 3. God’s Message of Unfailing Love

You know, it’s kind of like in our homes when things don’t go the way we want, when our spouse, or our kids go and live outside of God’s will and our wishes, when they’re prodigals, and many of you may have prodigals right now. If you’re in that season of hurt, loneliness, emptiness and pain, and yet if you’re hurting, here’s something that may bring just a glimmer of hope to you. God understands your pain.

There’s no one who understands better, what it’s like to hurt as a husband and a parent than God. In Isaiah chapter 1, speaking of Israel, God said, "I reared children and brought them up, but they have rebelled against me…my people don’t understand" (Isaiah 1:2-3). Israel doesn’t know, my people don’t understand. You see, God understands your pain and now we see this shift in his tone in Hosea chapter 2,

"Therefore, I am now going to allure her; I will lead her into the desert and speak tenderly to her. There I will give her back her vineyards, and will make the Valley of Achor (aw-kore') a door of hope” (Hosea 2:14-15).

Now remember, to Israel, the valley of Achor was a place of trouble. That’s what Achor means, “trouble” because that’s the place where Achan stole from God and brought judgment and defeat to Israel’s Army. But that memory would soon be erased from their minds and the valley would become a door of hope. The prophet Isaiah said,

“Sharon will become a pasture for flocks and the Valley of Achor a resting place for herds, for my people who seek me” (Isaiah 65:10).

Today, I’m believing that for those of us who’ve been walking through the Valley of trouble, we’ll find our way to the door of hope. Some of you, in your homes are walking through the valley of betrayal, like God, you know what it’s like to walk through the valley of adultery, of pornography, of rejection, that valley of deceit. And yet, when you walk through it together with God leading the way, you’ll always come to the door of hope.

You see, there are two ways to have a great home. The first way, is to always do everything right, just never sin. It’s amazing because it really works! The second way, is to walk through the Valley of Achor together with your spouse, with your children, and with your friends until you find the door of hope. And so, what that means is that when you mess up, when you say mean and spiteful things, when you’re hurtful; you turn to God, you repent, and you apologize. You ask him to conform your mind to the mind of Christ and your heart to the heart of Christ. You walk through the Valley of Achor, because when you walk through it together there is a door of hope.

Some of you, hope is the last thing on your mind, you’ve given up on it, but I promise you, if you’ll continue to pursue God in your home, and you walk through the Valley of Achor, God will make that valley a door of hope. And yet, I understand that the challenge remains for those that don’t have someone to walk with them. Maybe today you’re walking through the Valley of Achor alone, but what you do is you determine that you’re going to walk with your hand out, ready to receive your spouse whenever they’re ready to join you, but you’re not going to let go of God. You’re never giving up, you’re never letting go, because there’s always hope with God.

Now watch closely as we fast-forward, because God’s going to say the most amazing thing to Hosea, a man who’s been nothing but faithful, but time and time again has been betrayed by his wife. An undisclosed amount of time has passed, Gomer has left Hosea, she’s out prostituting herself, and God gives a very clear, yet challenging message to the betrayed spouse. God tells Hosea,

"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…” (Hosea 3:1).

In other words, here’s what he said, “I want you to forgive and love as you’ve been forgiven and loved.” Love her just as God is loving us right now even though we don’t deserve it. Love her as God is loving us even though we openly and consistently reject his goodness. God tells Hosea to love her the same way that he has loved and forgiven us. "Love her as the Lord loves the Israelites, though they turn to other gods...."

God through his living, powerful, active, and eternal Word is speaking into all of our lives, speaking into our homes, into our relationships, and where we all live. There’s no guarantees as to what Gomer is going to do, no guarantee of her faithfulness, no guarantee of the outcome, but God is very clear on what we should do. And that is, that we should love and forgive as we have been loved and forgiven. We’re going to choose to do what’s right, we’re going to honor God, and we’re going to walk through the Valley of Achor over and over and over again, because on the other side there has always been a door of hope.

God tells Hosea to go and pursue his adulterous wife, to go show his love again, and so he finds her and purchases her out of prostitution. It is such a beautiful story of redemption, because he pays for his wife, which is precisely what God did for us. That is what the Bible tells us, that while we were prostituting ourselves against God, while we were still sinners, Christ died for the ungodly. He shed His blood to purchase us, to buy us back, so that we could truly know His love.

Now we don’t know what happened to the marriage of Hosea and Gomer. We don't know how the story ended, but I imagine that once he bought her out of slavery, out of her sin, once he did that, how in the world could she ever walk away from him again? And yet, when I look at what God did for us through Christ, I ask you the same question; how could we not give ourselves to him? When you see and believe what He did, what other response could you have?

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