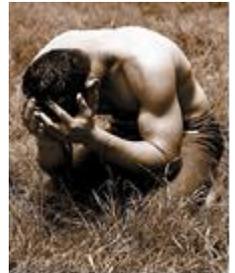


(Retreat weekend)

# Hosea

## God's love for spiritual whores



(Not on the reasonable scale)

Sometimes the **Word of God** seems **wrong**;

- feels like God is telling us to do something unreasonable
  - your husband is being a total blockhead
    - ⇒ God tells wives to respect their husbands;
  - your wife is being totally unresponsive
    - ⇒ God tells you husbands to sacrifice for your wives;
  - you parents are being so infuriating
    - ⇒ God tells you children to honour your parents.
- if only God knew your own circumstances
  - ⇒ He wouldn't tell us to do these things - or would He?
    - not reasonable;
    - not on!

Today, we looking at book where **God tells a man** to do something totally **unreasonable**;

- but there was a good reason;
- will explain in a moment;
- we have good reason for looking at this book today ...

(Not on the retreat)

Up in Jindabyne – **David Jones** is leading rest of congregation thru **Hosea**;

- we may not be able to be at retreat,
- but we can partake of some of blessings by considering same text;
- truly amazing book of Bible
  - would not dare to imagine such a book / such a story
    - except God revealed it / gave it to us in His word;
- not try to repeat everything David Jones been saying;
  - but give you something of overview;
  - basis on which you can ask the others what they learnt;
    - some understanding of starting point.

## The Man

Where was Hosea?

**Israel** – might seem obvious;

- but this is after division of kingdom of Israel – split in two;
  - northern / southern kingdom;
  - 10 tribes in N / 2 tribes in S;
  - southern kingdom surrounds Jerusalem;
    - more faithful than northern kingdom;
    - not always faithful - far from it;
    - but still generally better than north.

Significant : Hosea is called by God as a **prophet to Northern kingdom**;

- spiritually things at v low ebb;
- can draw some parallels w Canberra;
  - prosperity in political / earthly terms;
  - but spiritually impoverished / decadent;
- = what makes all the difference in end.

## When was Hosea?

Date around - 750 – 720 BC;

- significant because something happened about **720BC**
  - N kingdom invaded / overrun by Assyrians;
  - N kingdom taken captive / kingdom destroyed / ceased to exist.

So what we have in book of **Hosea** = right at **end** of life of this kingdom;

- as 1 commentator says:
  - what we see = last few swirls as kingdom of Israel goes down the **plug hole**.

## Why 'Hosea'?

Name means “**salvation**.”

Why did he get this name?

- because **God raised him up** to be a prophet;
- made sure he was given name that would be in harmony w his message.

Reminds us : prophet of God **gave his all** for the communicating of God’s message;

- he knew God commissioned him to speak on His behalf;
- whole life devoted to / revolved around proclaiming message of God;
  - everything wrapped up in it;
  - even his name conveys his message.

God’s **last** gracious offer of salvation / **overture of love**

- before nation goes down the drain.

## The Message

☐ **detailed outline** of whole book on back of sermon outline sheet;

- headings on LHS;
- sub-headings on RHS;
- purpose today = overview.

## 2 major parts:

- 1-3 A real life parable – an unfaithful wife & a faithful husband;
- 4-14 Real life history – unfaithful Israel & the faithful Lord.

So whole book centres around theme of **faithfulness & unfaithfulness in marriage**;

- marriage as picture of relationship : God's people have w Him;
- marriage covenant as picture of covenant of grace;
- binding relationship w priceless privileges / reasonable responsibilities  
/ serious consequences for breaking covenant.

**Adultery** = when one marriage partner breaks that covenant

- pursues someone else instead of being faithful to husband / wife.

**Spiritual adultery** = when one of God's people is unfaithful to Him;

- pursues pleasure outside of God;
- instead of receiving what He gives from His hand;
  - pursuing what world has to offer;
    - might be self-help gospel of self-esteem;
    - might be youth gospel of we are wonderful - we are invincible;
    - might be advertising industry's gospel of covetousness;
    - might be hedonist's gospel of entertain me to the max;
    - might be egocentric gospel of give me what I want / give it now.
  - all examples of failing to wait upon God / look to God / cry out to God for His blessing from His hand in His way in His time, as His child.

Spiritual adultery is **not spiritual divorce**;

- may be legitimate basis for divorce ;
  - ∃ just grounds for God to formally sever covenant
    - because we broken it in deed;
- but spiritual adultery is what goes on when person is **still married**;
  - so in spiritual terms – person still sees themselves as living w God;
    - love may have grown cold;
    - but there is still the appearance of living like a Christian;
    - person still claims all the rights & privileges of being a believer,
      - at same time as carrying on w the world.

Message of Hosea **goes further** than even that:

God's people are worse than spiritual adulterers

God starts to address people directly in Ch 4:

- (1) Hear the word of the LORD, O children of Israel,  
for the LORD has a controversy with the inhabitants of the land.  
There is no faithfulness or steadfast love, & no knowledge of God in the land;
  - (2) there is swearing, lying, murder, stealing, and committing adultery;  
they break all bounds, and bloodshed follows bloodshed.
- guilty of **every sin** in the book;
  - but ∃ **1 sin** God uses to encapsulate all the rest:

4(10-14) ∃ one word common to all of these verses:

- (10) ... they shall play the whore, but not multiply,  
because they have forsaken the LORD
- (11) to cherish whoredom, wine, and new wine,  
which take away the understanding.
- (12) ... For a spirit of whoredom has led them astray,  
and they have left their God to play the whore.
- (13) Therefore your daughters play the whore, & your brides commit adultery.
- (14) I will not punish your daughters when they play the whore,  
nor your brides when they commit adultery;  
for the men themselves go aside with prostitutes  
& sacrifice with cult prostitutes.
- every verse mentions whores / whoredom / prostitution
  - spirit of whoredom / harlotry / prostitution pervades everything.

### What is **spiritual whoredom**?

- even worse than spiritual adultery
- spiritual whoredom is when we make a **living out of it**;  
- make living out of godlessness / covetousness / lies / deceit / stealing;  
- we do it for what we get out of it;  
- money we make out of it;  
- we have to do it to make ends meet;  
- we sell our soul for sake of pleasure / material gain.

Book of **Hosea** is in Bible to tell us that **God's people** are **not immune** from this snare;  
- these warnings are real warnings – intended for you & for me – today & everyday.

### God punishes by withdrawal

5(6) They shall go to seek the LORD, but they will not find Him; He has withdrawn from them.

When we **fail to find God's presence** in personal devotions / worship together;

- we need to be asking ourselves:  
*Have I done anything to provoke the Lord to depart from me?*  
*Have I been unfaithful to Him – in responsibilities / opportunities He given me?*
- it may not be the case;  
- God may have other reasons for withdrawal  
- may simply be to test / strengthen us;
- but we still need to ask ourselves the Q:  
*Have I provoked this withdrawal by being unfaithful to Him?*

### God's people repent (& renege)

6(1) "Come, let us return to the LORD; for He has torn us, that He may heal us;  
He has struck us down, and He will bind us up.

- God's people **appreciating** His chastening hand – which tears in order to heal;  
- exhorting one another to faithfulness;  
- wanting to pursue knowledge of the Lord;  
- confidence in Lord's reviving power.  
- sounds wonderful;

- 6(4) What shall I do with you, O Ephraim? What shall I do with you, O Judah?  
 Your love is like a morning cloud, like the dew that goes early away.
- *man looks on the **outward appearance** – the Lord looks on the **heart**;*
  - we can say all the right words;
  - we can say them w emotion / feeling / persuasion;
  - we can have all best intentions under the sun;
  - we can put on a good show;
  - but Lord tests the heart;
    - He could see when our repentance was a **flash-in-the-pan**;
    - promising everything;
    - but delivering precious little.
- they **repent & renege!**

Meanwhile the **Lord** does **not** stand by as **impotent observer**,

- wringing His hands in frustration;
- but withdrawal has not been effective;
- time has come for Him to resort to stronger measures of correction.

## God punishes by dispersion & destruction

- 9,10 - not time to go into;
- focus on – where God lands story – last few chapters :

## God promises to heal their waywardness

- 11(1) When Israel was a child, I loved him, and out of Egypt I called my son.  
 - father-heart of God;
- 11(3) Yet it was I who taught Ephraim to walk; I took them up by their arms ...
- 11(4) I led them with cords of kindness, with the bands of love,  
 and I became to them as one who eases the yoke on their jaws,  
 and I bent down to them and fed them.  
 - farmer-heart of God;
- 11(8) How can I give you up, O Ephraim? How can I hand you over, O Israel?  
 How can I make you like Admah? How can I treat you like Zeboiim?  
 My heart recoils within Me; my compassion grows warm and tender.  
 - recoiling heart of God – not recoil away – but recoil to.
- 13(14) Shall I ransom them from the power of Sheol?  
 Shall I redeem them from Death?  
 - the redeeming / resurrecting heart of God.
- 14(4) I will heal their apostacy, I will love them freely.  
 - beautiful - the freeing heart of God  
 ⇒ frees them to be the people they were always meant to be;
- 14(7) They shall return and dwell beneath my shadow;  
 they shall flourish like the grain; they shall blossom like the vine.  
 - those upon whom the Lord sets His love ⇒ **blossom & flourish**.

An amazing message of love:

- **sin abounded**;
- but **grace** abounded much more.

Sin is not hidden / glossed over – rather exposed;

- but all in context of redeeming love;
- I tried to **emphasise** this;
- same emphasis comes thru in:

## The Method

God's method was more than proclamation of message;

- message is to be **lived out**.
- Hosea is God's prophet – Hosea must live out message in his life;
- Hosea must act it out like a play – where he plays character of God;
- but not a play – it is in real life.

Recounted in 1<sup>st</sup> 3 chapters – not a parable – **really happened** / history.

### Hosea must marry her

**Who is her?**

1(2) "Go, take to yourself a wife of whoredom and have children of whoredom, for the land commits great whoredom by forsaking the LORD."

**You can imagine** – Hosea – thinking *God that's not fair – that's not right – I can't do that.*

- you can imagine God saying:
  - *I didn't tell you life would be fair;*
  - *I didn't call you to promise you a life that was nice;*
  - *I'm here to tell truth – you're here to take this truth to your people;*
  - *this is how we're going to do it.*

DJ: Who would want to be OT prophet / preacher / Christian?

= **Challenge** especially to those of us who are **called to lead** in church – but to all of us:

- How far are we prepared to put ourselves out for sake of gospel?
- What price are we prepared to pay to be faithful to Lord?
- What pain / anguish are we willing to experience to be obedient to our God?

### Hosea must endure her

- endure her **returning to whoredom** and bearing children of whoredom.

We read before in **Ch 1** about children born to Gomer;

- you might have assumed they were children she bore to Hosea;
- we might have hoped so;
  - but 2(4) ...**children of whoredom**
- she has returned to her old ways – old customers & new customers;
- she bears children who are not his.

**Imagine grief** / **shame** he must feel inwardly;

- defiled / defied.

But ... Hosea must allure her

3(1) "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

- what a picture of us:
- while we were yet sinners, Christ **loved us & reached out** to us;

2(14) ... allure her ... speak tenderly to her.

3(2) I bought her for 15 shekels of silver and a homer and a lethech of barley. ...

- while we were yet sinners, Christ **died** for us (Rom 5<sup>8</sup>)
- paid ransom price to redeem us from death.

## (The Main point)

I don't think anyone can say – this book is not **relevant** to us:

- certainly relevant to **me**:
  - I was a rebel against the Lord – in bed w world;
  - yet the Lord intervened in my life;
  - even then as a believer I am too easily enticed by lusts of this world;
  - I think we all are.

Maybe you **ensnared** in that state just now

- Lord would use this text to draw you back.

Maybe some of us have **children** who wandered away from Lord;

- let us cling to God of Hosea;
- plead w Him to woo / win them back;
- this is our God!

**Main point** = God given us this book to teach us about His love for us: - DJ emphasising:

- **sin** is not just breaking God's rules – breaking God's heart.

(1) His love is a **resolute** love;

- resolved to love us – go and love – love us to end;
- love that will not let us go.

(2) His love is a **redeeming** love;

- extravagant – out-of-all proportion love;
- love when we forfeited any right to His love;
- love which pays exorbitant price to redeem us;
- purchasing us from power of sin
  - ⇒ that we might be exclusively His forever

(3) His love is a **reconciling** love:

- 3(3) **You must dwell as mine for many days ... so will I also be to you**
- taking heart captive to be His own – love to be His – forever.

**What a God** of love we have – you have!

Pray

**Sing** How deep the Father's love for us, how vast beyond all measure ...

**Benediction** – Rev 1(5,6)