



BELIEVERS CHAPEL

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The Sermons of S. Lewis Johnson

Hosea 1:1-3

“The Pedagogy of Biography”

TRANSCRIPT

Well, we are studying the Book of Hosea beginning today. And so if you have your Bibles, would you turn to Hosea chapter 1? And I'm going to read the entire first chapter, although we will devote our attention simply to the beginning this morning.

Hosea chapter 1 verse 1,

“The word of the LORD which came unto Hosea, the son of Beeri, in the days of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah, kings of Judah, and in the days of Jeroboam the son of Joash, king of Israel.”

Just a couple of comments. You may remember from your study of biblical history that in the time of, shortly after the time of Solomon, the kingdom of Israel was divided, and so Hosea's ministering during the time of the divided kingdom: Israel in the north and Judah in the south, and Jeroboam was the king of Israel in the north, and was of the line of Jehu, and in a moment he will mention Jehu, and I think it's important to remember that. In the second verse, Hosea writes,

“When the LORD first spoke through Hosea, the LORD said to Hosea, ‘Go, take to yourself a wife of harlotry and have children of harlotry; for the land commits flagrant harlotry, forsaking the LORD.’”

Three times that word harlotry is mentioned, but in the Hebrew text, four times it is mentioned, so there’s a great stress on that.

“So he went and took Gomer the daughter of Diblaim, and she conceived and bore him a son. And the LORD said to him, ‘Name him Jezreel; for yet a little while, and I will punish the house of Jehu for the bloodshed of Jezreel, and I will put an end to the kingdom of the house of Israel. On that day I will break the bow of Israel in the valley of Jezreel.’

Then she conceived again and gave birth to a daughter. And the LORD said to him, ‘Name her Lo-ruhamah, for I will no longer have compassion on the house of Israel, that I would ever forgive them. But I will have compassion on the house of Judah and deliver them by the LORD their God, and will not deliver them by bow, sword, battle, horses or horsemen.’

When she had weaned Lo-ruhamah, she conceived and gave birth to a son. And the LORD said, ‘Name him Lo-ammi, for you are not My people and I am not your God.’

Yet the number of the sons of Israel
Will be like the sand of the sea,
Which cannot be measured or numbered;
And in the place
Where it is said to them,
‘You are not My people,’
It will be said to them,
‘You are the sons of the living God.’

And the sons of Judah and the sons of Israel will be gathered together,

And they will appoint for themselves one leader,
And they will go up from the land,
For great will be the day of Jezreel.”

May the Lord bless this reading of his inspired word. Let’s bow together in a moment of prayer.

[Prayer] Father, we thank Thee and praise Thee for the privilege that is ours to read the Scriptures and to study them. We thank Thee for the way in which the prophet has illustrated for us the importance of obedience to the Scriptures through the power of the Holy Spirit.

And Lord, we know that in ourselves and of ourselves, we do not have the power to obey the word of God. We know that without Thee we can do nothing as the Lord Jesus so plainly told his apostles. We thank Thee for the redemptive work that has made it possible for us in the power of our great God in heaven to be pleasing to Thee, and we ask Lord that wouldst so work in our lives that we each – each one of us in this auditorium – may be pleasing to Thee.

And we commit all who are here to Thee, and we ask that the needs that exist in the hearts of all of us may be met in our great triune God in heaven. We are so grateful to Thee, Lord, and we would worship Thee today as the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who gave himself a sacrifice for our sins and through whom we have life.

And we thank Thee, Lord, that the life which Thou hast given to us has come the promises of God and all of the other blessings of the Christian life, and we pray that Thou wilt, Lord, lay hold of us and appropriate the magnificent promises that Thou hast given to us.

We would also remember those who are on our calendar of concern, and we pray Lord for each of them and the special needs that they have. We pray that Thou wilt minister in such a way that Thy name will be honored and glorified.

We pray for our country, for our President in these critical days, for the whole body of the Lord Jesus Christ; the church. May together Lord we be able to honor and glorify Thy name in this age which Thou hast placed us.

And Lord, we pray that in our meeting today the Lord Jesus may be lifted up and honored and glorified. Give us eyes of our heart to understand and respond to the Scriptures. And Father, if there should be someone in this audience who does not understand the saving grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, may today be the day in which, recognizing their own need – their sin, their guilt, their condemnation – they flee to him who is able to save to the uttermost those that come to God through him.

We pray in his name. Amen.

[Message] I hope in our study of the prophecy of Hosea over the next number of weeks you will do your part and read constantly this magnificent book. It will mean that you will profit a great deal more from the expositions of the word of God, and you will understand a whole lot more of what is said, and furthermore, you will understand a whole lot of the book that is not referred to by me. So I would suggest that you set aside a certain part of the time each week and keep reading through the Book of Hosea.

As I mentioned in our first announcement concerning this series of studies, I am basing the comments I am going to make on the New American Standard Bible for this primary reason, that it is probably a more accurate rendering of the Book of Hosea than, for example, the Authorized Version, and we’ll save a little bit of time by having this particular text before us. I will be trying to expound the Hebrew text, and consequently there will be one or two points here and there that I may express a little bit of disagreement with those who have translated this book, but it is an accurate translation, and if you have a New American Standard Bible, I suggest you read that particular text.

Our subject for this morning in our first of the series of studies in Hosea is “The Pedagogy of Biography.” Hosea is both a prophecy and a poem. It is not an easy book,

and yet it’s one of the most evangelical in its expression of unconditional love. In fact, the author has often been called “the prophet of unconditional love.”

It seems to me that people, when they think of the prophet of unconditional love, often fail to note the importance of the adjective, unconditional. And they think of an individual who is the prophet of love as being the prophet of conditional love, and even when the word “unconditional” is mentioned, sometime the force of it is lost upon us.

When we say that Hosea is the prophet of unconditional love, we mean that Hosea is a prophet who proclaims that the love of God for his people is without condition. Now, when we say that, we are talking about a particular view of the grace of God. There are, as you know, from your attendance at Believers Chapel, two generally Christian approaches to the love of God. One approach is to the love of God as if the love were conditional, and the other is as if were unconditional.

These are reflected in two theologically differing viewpoints. One of them states that the love of God is conditional upon the human response of the human in free will. In other words, the love of God begins by self-movement toward God, not induced by God the Holy Spirit, not brought about by God, but actually brought about in the heart of the individual response in free will.

Now that view is very loudly proclaimed in evangelicalism today; it arguably is the majority view. In the early days of evangelicalism it was not; it was regarded as heretical. But today unfortunately it’s the majority view; that’s conditional love, love conditioned on the human response of the human being out of his free will.

Now the other viewpoint is the viewpoint that the love of God is unconditional. That is, it is brought about that an individual loves God by God. In fact, the Apostle Paul states this, I think, very plainly when in the first chapter of the Epistle to the Ephesians, he talks about the good pleasure of his grace. In other words, God has in his own sovereign, good will worked in our hearts to bring him to himself. The Lord Jesus has said it so plainly, “No man can come to me except the Father which hath sent me draw

him. No one can come to him except it be given him of the Father.” Salvation does not begin in a self-movement. It begins in the activity of the Holy Spirit, who by his marvelous, divine unconditional grace makes the unwilling willing. So they respond in a decision of the will, but one that is provoked by the grace of God.

So when we say that Hosea is a prophet of unconditional love, to simplify it we mean simply this: we love him because he first loved us. Not, we love him because we first loved him, but we love him because he first loved us. The other viewpoint is just the opposite, and we want to stress that, and I think you will see that the Prophet Hosea follows unconditional love and its teaching. We love him because he first loved us.

One of Hosea’s great words is the word, *chesed*, which in Hebrew means “lovingkindness.” He uses it chapter 2. He uses it in chapter 4. He uses it twice in chapter 6. He uses it chapter 10. He uses it in chapter 12. It’s what the Scots would call *leel* love, or loyal love. In fact, Hebrew scholars often speak about this word as often meaning, simply, loyal love.

Hosea was an evangelist, and another scholar has said, “If Psalm 22 is the Calvary of the Old Testament, Hosea’s sobs are its Gethsemane.” He has a tremendous appreciation of the unconditional love of God. His name meant, salvation: Hosea. His name was really *Hoshea* – very close to Joshua and Jesus. In fact, his name was probably something like, it’s the shortened form of, *Jeboshua*, or “the Lord is salvation” or “the Lord is my help,” or “the Lord is my salvation.” The fact that he was given this name is probably a reflection of his father’s faith. It was his father who called him Hosea, and in that was the expression of faith, but it was the divine intention to have Hosea as one of his great prophets of love.

We know very little about Hosea’s life. Some have suggested he probably was a priest because there some references in the book that might suggest that. Still others have suggested that because he was a prophet, he was a professional prophet. That is, one who attended some school of the prophet. There is no direct reference of that. Still

others have suggested he was a baker by profession, because in the 7th chapter, there was an extended metaphor by which he discusses things that a baker would know. But then, in the ancient world it was true that others knew things like that, and there is no evidence that he really was a baker. And finally, others have suggested that he was a farmer, because he uses a number of agricultural metaphors.

The facts are we know very little about his personal life. He was, evidently, from northern Israel, the Northern Kingdom. He mentions the term Ephraim which was the name for the Northern Kingdom often used in the Old Testament. He mentions that name about thirty-seven times. So we know probably that he was a home missionary, for he was from the north, and a home missionary to his own people.

Jonah was raised in the south, that was his home, but he ministered to the north, and so Jonah was a kind of foreign missionary to the north. But Hosea was the home missionary. He was a gentle, sensitive Jeremiah of the north, although Jeremiah was more of a theologian; Hosea is more of a poet. He’s called the tenderest soul of all the prophets, and I think we all learn a great deal from reading and pondering Hosea.

Just as is the case in many of the books of the Old Testament, it’s very helpful to know something about the historical times in which the poets and prophets ministered. And in Hosea’s case, it’s extremely significant to note the background against which he uttered his prophecies.

Jeroboam II, the fourth of king of Jehu’s dynasty, who ruled from the year 782 to 753 B.C., was one of Israel’s most illustrious rulers. In his early days, he was a kind of *Grand Monarque*, a Louis XIV of Samaria: a successful, arrogant military despot. He was able to restore Israel’s boundaries virtually to their Solomonic scope. And the nation was very prosperous economically, but the economic prosperity was accompanied by spiritual declension. Extreme wealth existed by the side of empty religious ritual.

And if you want to get some picture of the times of Hosea, it’s helpful to turn over to Amos, also a prophet of that time who writes in the fifth chapter of his book these words:

“I hate (and he’s speaking for the LORD God) I reject your festivals, nor do I delight in your solemn assemblies, even though you offer up to me your burnt offerings and your grain offerings, I will not accept them. I will not even look at the peace offering of your fatlings. Take away from me the noise of your songs, and I will not even listen to the sound of your harps, but let justice roll down like waters and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream.”

One can catch something of the feeling of the Lord God, and when you remember that these ceremonies that were given by the Lord God were given to the Nation Israel were given by him for them to observe, and when you remember that they were ceremonies that pointed forward to the ministry of the Lord Jesus Christ, if you reflect upon the morning offerings and the evening offerings, all of that which taught the atoning significance of the death of the Lord Jesus, and then if you add to them the festivals and the other kinds of ceremonies, add to that the priesthood itself which in all of its ministry foreshadowed Jesus as the great priest after the order of Melchizedek, and when you think of the fact that God gave them this magnificent Levitical ritual to be a pedagogical device to prepare them for the coming of the Messiah, and then reflect upon the fact that the same God who gave them this magnificent ceremonial system says, “I hate, I reject your festivals, I do not delight in your solemn assemblies...take away from me the noise of your songs, I will not even listen to the sound of your harps;” I don’t care a bit for your burnt offerings and your grain offerings; I will not accept them – you can see that he intended for that system to be observed out of faith in him as the Lord God of Israel.

And when the religious ceremonies, even though given by God are observed, but not observed in faith – yes, that applied to Believers Chapel – that means that when you attend meetings on Sunday morning, and you do not attend out of a sense of faith and trust in the Lord God. When you sit at the Lord’s table and you do not sit at the Lord’s table in the sense of faith and trust in the Lord God, with that in your heart, then the same thing that the Lord God said to the people in his day, I hate your festivals, I hate your ceremonies, I hate your morning services, I hate your observing of the Lord’s Supper – that pertains to us as well.

This was the kind of day in which Hosea ministered, in which people had elaborate ceremonies – elaborate church services, if we may use that in a figurative sense – elaborate ceremonies, elaborate ordinances, but there was no real trust in the Lord God, and God was very much disturbed over it.

When Jeroboam died, internal feuds, anarchy and debauchery caused a swift decline to the captivity in 722 B.C. after a period of time of vassalage to that great war machine to the north, the country of Assyria. Bishop Loath called the Book of Hosea, “Scattered leaves of a Sybil’s book,” alluding to the fact that the prophecies often do not seem to connect to the other. The next verse does not seem to follow along logically like the Apostle Paul’s letter to the Romans, for example. And there is some sense of truth in that. Verses abound to verses by identity of feeling, but the message of the book is very clear: Yahweh is the God of Israel by covenant, and Israel is the people of Yahweh by covenant; faithfulness in grace and faithfulness in judgment are the things that the prophet sets forth. He is faithful to his promises, and because he is faithful to his promises, when his people depart from him, it is necessary for judgment, because ultimately he is going to fulfill his will. He is the prophet of unconditional love, and he will fulfill his promises.

Now, when one reads through Hosea, there are very clearly two divisions of the book. The first three chapters give us the tragedy of the biography of the prophet. The lesson is the loyal love and the faithless apostasy of the two involved: the love of God

and the faithless apostasy of the covenant people. And then in the rest of the book from chapter 4 on through chapter 14, there is an application of that biography, and so there are many homilies of guilt, of doom, and then mixed in with the homilies of guilt and doom there is the homily of hope. And so, the prophet will make very plain that inward corruption is very dangerous than outward enemies.

One of the striking things about the prophets to me is that their books, written so many years ago, this over 2,000 ago, 2500 years ago, and yet the lessons are the same. Here we are in the United States of America. We’re a country with unusual economic blessing from the Lord God, but there is not question but that extreme wealth, extreme riches is mixed with empty religious ritual, that characterizes not simply the false religions of this country. And one doesn’t have to look far to see them; those counterfeits of Christianity, some of which are just to the south of us [laughter].¹ Then, reflect upon the fact that in Christianity itself today is largely empty ritual. And you can sense that Hosea’s prophecy is very, very appropriate for us today.

In the United States we are in a period of time in which we are strengthening our country militarily – personally, I’m delighted; it should have been done a long time ago. We should never have been allowed to reach a state of weakness. I believe in the President’s rearmament; personally speaking for myself. I am happy over that. But the thing that disturbs me is the moral disarmament that is going on all the time that the military rearmament is going on, and the tendency of people, and even the tendency of those who are Christian people to fail to make the point and understand the point and apply the point in their own lives that moral disarmament will be the ultimate destruction of the United States of America as a world power. One can sense that if one just looks at history.

¹ Believers Chapel of Dallas borders a Mormon Temple at the rear of its property

And so the things that Hosea writes, though of course he writes about a theocratic nation, and we’ve never been a theocratic nation, are things that are slightly different, but the principles are the same. We never can have it said too often that the God of ancient history, Yahweh, is the God who still operates in modern history. The Yahweh who spoke to the Prophet Hosea is the same Yahweh who is active today in our history. And if we are not responsible to the God in our history, we’ll suffer the same kind of end that the Nation Israel has suffered and also, without the same marvelous series of covenants and promises which pertained to them. So let us not forget the lessons that Hosea teaches when we talk about his unfolding of unconditional love.

Now let’s turn to the first of the prophecy. This biographical in these opening verses reveals a domestic tragedy, but God hid a gospel in the heart of Hosea’s sufferings. We read, “The word of the LORD which came to Hosea the son of Beeri.” That’s the standing attitude of the prophets, the apostles as well. The word of the Lord is that which came to them. They never had any question about the reliability, about the inspiration, about the authority and inerrancy of the word of the Lord. They never debated that question. They knew that this was the word of the Lord, and that he was sovereign, and that it was something that was to be obeyed.

So, the word of the Lord came to Hosea, and what a strange message came to the prophet: “Hosea, go take for yourself a wife of harlotry and have children of harlotry, for the land commits flagrant harlotry, forsaking the Lord.” Immediately, moral and ethical questions arise. A prophet? Taking to himself a harlot for a wife?

Just after I was converted in Alabama through Donald Grey Barnhouse, he came back to Birmingham and preached another series of messages in the Third Presbyterian Church there, and of course, I had been influenced by him and had been converted through the messages that he had preached at our South Highlands Presbyterian Church there. And so I attended the meetings, and I’ll never forget one of the titles – [Johnson laughs] I don’t remember anything about the message. I can remember sitting on about

the third row or the second row which is, I think, the place where you ought to sit in a congregation; you want to get down there where you can hear everything.

And so, I was right down front, my favorite place to sit. And I still remember him preaching, and the subject of his message that particular night was, “The Prophet who Married the Prostitute.” And at the time, I didn’t know what prophet he was talking about. But he opened up to the Book of Hosea and gave the Book of Hosea in one message. Sorry, I cannot do that. [Laughter] We’ll study it for a quite a while, although not in eighty-eight messages like we did with the Gospel of John.

The Prophet who Married the Prostitute. What kind of thing does this opening command mean for the prophet? Well some have suggested it’s just an allegory. Well, that doesn’t solve the moral problem. Even if it’s an allegory, it’s still is an allegory of a prophet marrying a prostitute.

And then, it has been suggested that Hosea married a temple prostitute. That is, one of those prostitutes who engaged in intercourse as part of the worship of the false gods. And the fertility gods had their temples and their temple prostitutes. Individuals came and had sexual intercourse with them and that was designed to be means of blessing: physical, economic and otherwise. Because the gods were fertility gods and this was the way to please them. It was suggested that she was a woman with that kind of sexual history, and that this is the kind of person Hosea married.

That of course still presents us with a moral problem. It also, in the minds of many weakens the analogy of Jehovah’s relationship to Israel, because he speaks about how glad he was to allure them in the early days of the ministry. For example, of his ministry to them. For example, in the 15th verse of the 2nd chapter we read, “Then I will give her her vineyards from there and the Valley of Achor as a door of hope, and she will sing there as in the days of her youth, as in the day when she came up out of the land of Egypt,” and God seems to take great delight for Israel in those days. And so that would

seem to weaken the analogy, because the analogy is, of course, Hosea represents the Lord and Gomer his wife represents Israel, the unfaithful wife of Yahweh.

It has also been suggested that Hosea married a pure woman who became adulterous. In other words, this is proleptic language. “Take to yourself a wife of harlotry” means, Hosea, take to yourself a wife *who will become* a harlot. Now that’s possible because he also says, “take to yourself children of harlotry” and so obviously that is a reference to children who become associated with harlotry. Well that’s a possible understanding of the text, and it suits the analogy to Israel in chapter 2 verse 15. It suits Hosea’s denunciation of sexual immorality late in the book, and perhaps it explains Gomer’s deteriorating character when one reads through this and notices that the prophet’s wife will ultimately leave him and go off and commit adultery against him.

I’d like to suggest rather tentatively a slightly different interpretation. I rather think that Hosea is told to marry an outwardly pure woman – that is, a woman who has not yet been involved in illegal sexual activity. She is not a woman who has a sexual history; she may have a roving eye, but she does not have a sexual history yet. And Hosea marries her, but she is an inwardly immoral person. She is outwardly pure, outwardly untouched, but inwardly immoral.

And if that is true then I think that explains the nature of Israel. Israel, when God lover her and brought her to himself, was a sinful group just as all men are, and so in that sense, it is important to note that it is God who exercised marvelous grace and love toward Israel in the days of her sin and guilt and condemnation. But yet there was implicit within Israel all of this rebellion against God from the beginning. In other words, it’s true to the nature of man, because that’s really what we are, naturally, we are sinners. We fall under divine judgment and condemnation because we are sinners. Our natures are evil. We are children of wrath, born that way, so the Scriptures say. So I rather think that is what is meant by, go take to yourself a wife of harlotry.

This Hebrew expression, the Hebrew expression, *ishsb zanuwnim*, is an expression that refers to the character of Gomer; not her actual activity, yet, but her character – her outward character. So, she was a wife of harlotry in the sense that that is going to be the ultimate end of the activity of her heart, and it seems to me that that satisfies the requirements of this passage, and it makes sense.

Now, we read in the 2nd verse, “When the Lord first spoke through Hosea.” I’d like to stress that word. In the original text it’s simply the word “in” – but the sense of speaking in Hosea is really the Lord speaking through Hosea. And so what Hosea is saying is that the first public revelation made through me is my marriage. So that God spoke, not so much through the word of Hosea at the beginning, but in the activity that he called him to perform. So God spoke through Hosea by what he did, primarily, in the beginning. When the Lord first spoke through Hosea.

Now we read, Hosea, take to yourself a wife of harlotry and have children of harlotry; for the land commits flagrant harlotry, forsaking the LORD. Now God is just simply saying this: this marriage is pedagogical. Hosea is to carry out this activity in order to teach something more important than that actual marriage relationship. Hosea is to teach the word of God. Hosea’s wife, Gomer, is to illustrate the unfaithfulness of the Nation Israel, so that on one side of the comparison we have Hosea and Gomer, and on the other side we have Yahweh and we have Israel.

There is a saying that “experience is life’s greatest teacher,” and there is a sense in which that is true. Hosea’s experience is to be the greatest teaching that Israel is an adulterous nation in the days of the prophet.

Hosea, if you’d approached him, you might’ve expected him to say, if you didn’t understand this prophet, you might have expected him to say, “That marriage was the mistake of my life.” But he would never have said that. He would have said, “No, God guided me in that.” He intended to teach something very significant by that. I may have been puzzled and shocked by it in the beginning, but I see what he was driving at. He

wanted to teach that Israel was an unfaithful wife even though God had loved her; called her out of Egypt; had loved her in the wilderness; had blessed her and us with great promises – covenantal promises. But we’ve turned aside from him. We’ve gone after the world. We’ve gone after sin. We’ve gone after things of this life and as a result, we’ve become idolatrous, adulterous.

There’s a very important application of this opening passage to me that I don’t think we ought to miss. Let me illustrate it this way.

I know many of you in this audience – in fact, most of you in the audience I know – I know many of you have many acquaintances. Some of you, I know, have numerous acquaintances. I think of Merle Weaver who made the announcements today; he has many acquaintances. It’s obvious if anyone knows him, it’s pretty soon he knows them. After he’s introduced to him, you know him. Merle is a very friendly individual; I’m sorry Merle, I have to use you as an illustration, [laughter] but it comes to mind so naturally.

You know, the Scriptures say, and we were reading in Proverbs, Martha and I around the table, that if a man wants to have friends, he has to be friendly. Now lots of people complain about unfriendly churches – about this church, too. I’ve heard it about a lot of other churches as well. Usually, there are people who’re very difficult to be friendly to. The Scriptures make it very plain, if a man wants to have friends, he should be friendly.

Now there are some who are naturally that way, and some have to work at it. But all of us have acquaintances. We have a minimum of responsibilities to our acquaintances, but then some of us have friends. There is a difference between an acquaintance and a friend. And a friend is the kind of person with whom you have much closer and more significant responsibilities. To be bound to a friend is a very serious thing; to have a friend is serious thing. I have friends and I feel very obligated to my friends. And I expect my friends to also feel obligated to me. The relationship of friend is a very significant relationship. Many of us, of course, have several friends who we can

call real friends when times of need or times of trouble arise. We can count on them. They are like friends who stick closer than a brother, to use Scriptural language.

But then there’s a third relationship which is different from the relationship of acquaintance and different from the relationship of friend. It’s the relationship of husband and wife. That’s the closest of all relationships. And in fact, to have three people in the relationship of husband and wife is to destroy the relationship. Two people are sufficient in that relationship: husband, wife. When a person intrudes into that relationship, that relationship is destroyed.

In fact, we have one of the most, worst words in the English language when a third party intrudes into the relationship of husband and wife, and we call it, adultery. Adultery.

Now what I would like to express to you that what Hosea is saying to Israel is simply this. Israel, you are my wife. Israel, to go after a false god is to commit adultery. To go after the world is to commit adultery. To be concerned with the things of this life apart from the Lord God is adulterous. To love the world, or to love the world more than the Lord is to act out spiritual adultery. Think what that means. That means for you and for me to put our material well-being about the interests of the Lord God is to play the harlot in our relationship to the Lord. We have been, Paul says, espoused to one wife. Those are Paul’s words. We have been espoused to one wife. Or to put it another way, we have been married to someone who has been raised from the dead. (I said one wife, I meant one husband) We’ve been espoused to someone who has been raised from the dead. So, the Lord Jesus is our husband.

And so, to love the world, to love the things of the world, is to commit adultery against him. It’s that serious. And when we are doing that, we can be sure that we attend church on Sunday morning and when we sit at the Lord’s table and when we gather in meetings in which we are ostensibly listening to the Lord God and our hearts are really trailing off after these other lovers, we are adulterous and God’s condemnation

and judgment come upon us: “I hate your festivals, I hate your peace offerings, your burnt offerings and your grain offerings. I despise those things.” And when you trample in your religious courts – that’s what Isaiah says to the people of his day – I don’t even bother to listen.

My dear Christian friend, it’s possible for us to be very active members of Believers Chapel or of another evangelical church and be a spiritual adulterer at the same time.

Of course, the ultimate exposition of all Hosea is saying is the Lord Jesus Christ’s conquering love on Calvary. And if we haven’t come to the place where we appreciate that, why it’s not surprising that we trail off after other lovers. And what I like about the Prophet Hosea is expressed in that third verse, “So he went and took Gomer, the daughter of Diblaim.”

We in our day, we speak of self-expression. That’s our goal: self-expression. Or if it’s not self-expression, it’s self-fulfillment. These are the goals which the world has taught the church to regard as the ultimate goals. Self-expression, self-fulfillment, self-knowledge, and here in the word of God is something diametrically opposed to that. Hosea is a man who relentlessly pursued the goal of obedience to God. That’s the ultimate goal for a Christian – obedience to the word of God. Not self-expression, not self-fulfillment. Obedience to the word of God. This is the goal that Christian should have. And to be interested in one’s self as the goal of life is really to veer from the Lord God.

Hosea’s real genius is the ability to portray God’s anguish at his people’s rejection. And so, he’s the kind of prophet who doesn’t tailor his message to meet the needs of the day. Twenty-five years ago, I can remember the things that preachers preached on. They were the topics of the day. Today, preachers preach on the topics of our day. The topics are determined by the world. They’re not determined by the word of God; they’re determined by the word of God. And so, we follow the fads of the day. That’s why we hear so much about self-expression and self-fulfillment, and knowing one’s self, and we

are carried away without thinking, and thus begin to depart from the Lord God, and ultimately it leads to spiritual adultery.

I like Hosea. His real genius is the ability to portray God’s anguish at his people’s rejection, and he doesn’t tailor his message to meet the needs of the day. He’s really a bit like Amos, and you should expect that. They both were prophets. And if you’ll remember in Amos chapter 3 and verse 8, the prophet said in his prophecy,

“A lion has roared! Who will not fear? The Lord GOD has spoken! Who can but prophesy?”

When God speaks, the response of believers is to obey. The great goal of the believer’s life out of thanksgiving for what Jesus Christ has done for us is to respond in faithfulness to the word of God, and may God give us grace to do that. May the lessons that Hosea teaches and the apostles teach be messages that come home to us in Believer’s Chapel, and may God deliver us from the fads of the present time, and particularly from the love of the world and the things of the world which so displease him who has loved us and given himself for us, the saving sacrifice.

If you love the Lord Jesus Christ and you love the grace of God and his unconditional love to you. You love him because he first loved you and brought home to you in marvelous, illuminating grace what Christ has done, then give yourself wholly to him. May the goal of obedience to the word of God be the goal of your life. Not to fulfill yourself – well actually, to fulfill one’s self, one obeys God. That really is the fulfillment of ourselves, and the true expression of ourselves. May God help us in the Chapel, in the Church of Jesus Christ to do that.

If you’re here this morning and you’ve never believed in Christ, we invite you to come to him who to know is life eternal. He’s offered the sacrifice for sinners, a sacrifice sufficient for the sins of the world, sufficient for your sins, sufficient for all of your sins,

sufficient for you condemning sins, sufficient for yours sins which will ultimately take you to the Lake of Fire if you are not arrested in your path and brought back by God’s drawing to the Son of God.

We invite you to come to Christ. Confess your need to him, receive as a free gift, not through baptism, not through sitting at the Lord’s table, not through good works, not through joining the church. Not through praying through, not through culture, not through education. Through faith. Receive it as a free gift. Come to Christ. Believe in him. Don’t leave the audience this morning without the assurance of everlasting life. He that believeth on the Son hath – Roland Hill used to say, H-A-T-H got it! [Laughter] Don’t leave without it. Come to Christ.

Shall we stand for the benediction?

[Prayer] Father, we are so grateful to Thee for the love that sought us out and brought us to Thyself. We thank Thee for unconditional love. We thank Thee, Lord, that we loved Thee because Thou hast first loved us. In fact, we love because Thou hast first loved us. And we thank Thee that it is not the other way around – that Thou dost not love us because we first loved Thee. We are so grateful.

And Lord, we do confess our failure. We so often allow the things of the world, the things of ourselves to cloud our eyes so that we cannot see the true goal of our life, to respond to the revelation in loving obedience. O God, deliver us from disobedience. By Thy grace, enable us to obey Thee without pride, without the arrogance of trust in ourselves, but truly to the glory of God.

If there’re some here who’ve never believed, O God, bring them to Thyself. And may Thy grace, mercy and peace go with us.

For Jesus’ sake. Amen.

