

Hesed- God's Faithful Loving Kindness is a Persistent Pursuer- Hosea 2:14-23

Sermon Study Guide- 02/25/18- Pastor Ben Sollie

Hesed is described as God's Faithful Loving Kindness towards those who place their trust and confidence in Him. This week as we look at the book of Hosea we will see that God's Hesed is a persistent pursuer of us.

Background to Hosea:

During the time of Hosea, the nation of Israel had drifted far away from God. Sin and idolatry were rampant. **The Nation of Israel had become so spiritually bankrupt that they were unrecognizable as God's unique people. God's people loved their sin more than they loved God.**

God was grieved by the idolatry and unfaithfulness of his people. So He sends the prophet Hosea to plead with the people to repent and return to God. God also gives Hosea a very unusual task. He tells Hosea to marry a woman who was known for her unfaithfulness. Hosea obeys and marries a woman who had lived a life of prostitution. Time, and time again, his wife, Gomer is unfaithful. She leaves her loving and caring husband and runs back to a life of prostitution. YET God continually tells Hosea to be faithful to his wife, to pursue her, and to win her back, despite her unfaithfulness.

Hosea's marriage is an acted-out parable of God's relationship to the nation of Israel and to us. It is a picture of how God continues to pursue us and to call us back to Him, even in our wandering and unfaithfulness.

Together read Hosea 2:14-23.

Many scholars and preachers describe the text in Hosea as one of the most beautiful love songs in the Bible. It is sung by God to his unfaithful people, Israel. It is a reminder of God's faithful pursuit of us.

As we look more closely at the text, we find that God's persistent pursuit towards His people is revealed in several ways:

The first way God's persist pursuit of us is revealed is in **God's jealousy and protection of His people**.

Throughout the book of Hosea and much of the Old Testament, we see God being one who is jealous. **God is a God who wants the undivided attention and loyalty of his people.** Like a husband in pursuit of his bride, God is in pursuit of his people.

In Exodus 20:5-6 God says,

"You shall not bow down to them [idols] or serve them, for I the Lord your God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children to the third and the fourth generation of those who hate me, but showing steadfast love to thousands of those who love me and keep my commandments."

Discussion Questions:

- When you hear the word jealous, do you think of it as a positive or negative term?
- When have you seen jealousy be a good thing?

Many think of the word jealous as a negative term.

However, God's Jealousy towards his people **is a righteous jealousy.** It's a jealousy that is meant to protect and keep his people from harm.

God's jealousy is his desire to protect the covenantal love relationship between Himself and his people.

In a marriage, there's a healthy jealousy that motivates a husband and wife to cultivate their marriage spiritually, relationally, emotionally, and physically. It's a jealousy that sets boundaries that help protect the marriage relationship. In the same way, God sets up boundaries to protect his people **from sin and its consequences, sin and its destruction**. God's Word and His Law help protect us from the destructive nature of sin.

Discussion Questions:

In what ways have you seen God's Word and His commands serve as a protection for you?

How does God's desire to protect you from the destructive nature of sin encourage you?

The second way we see God's persistent pursuit of us is in **God's promise of restoration and renewal**.

Read Hosea 2:14-18

In verses 14-15, God speaks of the restoration and peace he wants to provide for his people. The valley of Achor was known as a place of trouble and destruction. God promises that if his people will return to Him, **Achor will no longer be a "valley of trouble" but a door of hope**. In fact in verse 18 God says He will remove all violence and conflict and make the valley a place of peace and safety.

Not only does God promise to restore what is broken, but He promises to renew His people.

Hosea 2:17 says,

For I will remove the names of the Baals from her mouth, and they shall be remembered by name no more.

This speaks to the renewal God wants to do in each of our lives as we place our trust and confidence in Him. The Baals represent all the sin and idolatry God's people were pursuing. Scripture tells us that out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks (Luke 6:45). In verse 17, God is speaking about the work of transformation and renewal He wants to do in the hearts of His people.

Ezekiel 36:25-27 says,

I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you shall be clean from all your uncleannesses, and from all your idols I will cleanse you. And I will give you a new heart, and a new spirit I will put within you. And I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. And I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes and be careful to obey my rules.

That's the faithful loving kindness of our great, loving God! Even in our unfaithfulness, even in our wandering, He says, "I want to remove the Baals and idols that so easily entice you. I want to rid your heart of those things. I want to do a work of renewal in your heart so that you will walk in my ways."

Discussion Questions:

- How have you seen God's promise of restoration and renewal at work in your life?
- What "Baals/idols" have you seen God remove?
- Is there a renewal He currently wants to do in your heart?

The final way God reveals His persistent pursuit towards his unfaithful people is in **God's promise of Mercy and Salvation**.

Hosea 2:19-20 says,

"I will betroth you to me forever. I will betroth you to me in **righteousness** and in justice, in steadfast love and in mercy. I will betroth you to me in faithfulness."

The word righteousness in this text is significant. Righteous is the **idea of being blameless and upright**. However, Israel was far from being blameless and upright. They were anything but righteous.

Israel was an unfaithful people who would not, who could not meet the demands of The Law. It is impossible for anyone to meet the demands of the Law. God was revealing to Hosea just how unfaithful we are as His people, and how we can never be faithful or righteous enough. So God sent **Jesus who would, who could meet the demands of the Law**. God sent Jesus who would be the Faithful One.

David Taylor writes,

"Where Israel failed; Jesus was perfect. Israel was tested in the wilderness for forty years and failed; Jesus was tested in the wilderness for 40 days and passed. Israel made sacrifices for their sin, Jesus was the perfect sacrifice for your sins. Israel was isolated and suffered for their sin; Jesus suffered for our sin. When Jesus died on the cross, all of our sin, past, present and future, was imputed upon him."

2 Corinthians 5:21 says,

For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

How will God betroth His people to him in righteousness? Through Christ.

Through Christ, all our waywardness and idolatry is forgiven. Through Christ a new and all-inclusive covenant has been established.

Why this is significant:

For those who place their trust and confidence in Christ, He warmly receives us with open arms. So, whatever you did last night, last week, last month, or last year, the Lord does not look upon you with disgust. Your worth and your acceptance before God is not based upon your behavior at **any** given moment, good or bad. It is based upon what Christ did for you on the cross!

1 Peter 2:24

He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, that we might die to sin and live to righteousness. **By his wounds you have been healed.**

Discussion Questions:

- Reflect on what it means that in Christ we are the righteousness of God? What are the implications of that for God's people?
- As you consider the story of Hosea, how have we as God's people been unfaithful? How have we ignored God's persistent pursuit of us?
- Take time to pray for one another and Hope Church. Thank God for His love and His persistent pursuit of us. Ask God to soften our hearts so that we would listen to His voice and return to the One who has rescued and redeemed us.