

Prayer

My song is love unknown,

My Savior's love to me;

Love to the loveless shown,

That they might lovely be.

O who am I,

That for my sake

My Lord should take

Frail flesh, and die?

Let me just ask you one question as we start?

How do other people see you?

Can you see yourself from the other person's point of view?

Most of us are not good at answering that question, are we?

What kind of colleague do you think you are?

What kind of husband/boyfriend do you think you are?

What kind of student are you?

What kind of housemate are you?

Are you able to see yourself from the other person's point of view? Not many people can do that.

In two years of marriage, I can confess here that 90% of the things that drive my wife crazy about me are things that I am completely ok with.

Can you see things from your spouses point of view?

You see, most of us are not good at seeing ourselves from other people's point of view.

But not just other people. The book of Hosea is a big reminder that we are particularly terrible at seeing ourselves from God's point of view.

You see the book of Hosea is like asking God to come in here, give him the microphone, and ask him what **sort of people we are, from his point of view.**

The story begins with God calling Hosea and telling him, "Hosea, I'm going to choose you a wife that reminds me of my people Israel"

And which point most of us would think, lucky Hosea. A wife that reminds God of his people. Brilliant

I don't know if Hosea had a chance to discuss this with his mates, but you can imagine the boys having fun discussing the suggestion. What sort of girl is she gonna be?

Maybe the pure and beautiful type, the dazzling, long hair type, the wonderful smile, great sense of humour type. Hosea, You will wake up every morning cheered up just seeing her beside you.

Surely That must be what it must look for God to wake up with Israel beside his bed every morning. How privileged God must be to have Israel as his people

You see Hosea was writing at a time when Israel was doing quite well actually. No doubt they worshipped the golden calves, no doubt they had abandoned the temple in Jerusalem. But they must have assumed God doesn't really care about those things.

You see when Hosea begins to write, just around 200 years after Solomon, life in northern Israel is good. 2kings 14 is the place you want to go to get a bit of the background.

They have a great and brilliant army. The economy is doing really well, and they have just conquered Assyria—the super power of the time.

The nation is successful and going places. Surely God must be pleased with them. Things are going really well for them. Look how rich and powerful we are!

Surely God must be happy with them, even though Israel is full of idols- golden calves and all.

If Hosea is going to marry a wife that represents them- then she's going to be a popstar. She's going to be the woman everyone in the boy's club would like to marry.

Except that it's not.

This is the type God asks Hosea to marry:

v.2 “Go, marry a promiscuous woman and have children with her, for like an adulterous wife this land is guilty of unfaithfulness to the Lord.”

And that's a shock, isn't it? Maybe it's just a shock to hear those words said in church.

Now this translation uses a very mild word—  
promiscuous woman, because most translations use the  
other prostitute or the w-word.

And that's the big idea of this book and also this  
chapter.

1. Being God of Israel is like being married to a  
promiscuous partner

No doubt, this is not the type of a wife Hosea was  
expecting from God. It is very very shocking indeed.

Surely God didn't tell his prophet to go De Wallen in  
Amsterdam behind the windows and get himself a wife  
from there. For a prophet, even to be seen around  
there is scandal.

It is really really shocking!

And all the reasons why a prophet couldn't, shouldn't  
marry a woman like that is exactly the point.

He's not going to enjoy this marriage, and God doesn't  
enjoy being married to Israel.

She's not going to love him back. She's not going to be  
faithful to him

Hosea has to live out what it feels like for God to be God  
of Israel.

Being God of Israel is like being married to a  
promiscuous partner.

A video has been trending in Kenya of a man distraught  
and crying in public. Why? After paying university fees  
for his girlfriend for 4 years, 2 weeks to graduation- he's  
learnt that the girl cohabits with another man.

Asked how much he paid? €5000. Now that's a lot of  
money here, it's much more in Kenya.

Hosea marries Gomer, an unfaithful partner, so that he  
can tell people by experience what God feels about  
them.

So how do you think Hosea felt, when Gomer didn't  
return home in the evening without a word, or tumbled  
in at 3am in the morning, drunk and dirty

How do you think felt when he arrived home, and heard Gomer let someone else out from the back door

How did he feel that she wasn't just going out with other people, but she was being paid for it.

That is the force of this passage, because that is exactly how God felt to be the God of Israel.

And it doesn't require rocket science to tell that that's not a relationship that would go on for ever.

So God tells Hosea to name their children the sort of things you would write in a divorce certificate

2. The marriage has no future  
Being God of Israel is like being married to a promiscuous partner, and so the marriage has no future.

And that's shown in the three names he is to give his children. None of them is happy, it's going to be a miserably sad family

So, v.4 the firstborn is called Jezreel, which at first sounds like a beautiful name. but if you know the story;

naming your child Jezreel, is like for the war in Ukraine to end, the Ukrainians to go back, and then one of them to name their child Vladimir Putin.

It's in bad taste. It's a reminder of past destruction, and is a premonition to a future destruction

v.4 Call him Jezreel, because I will soon punish the house of Jehu for the massacre at Jezreel, and I will put an end to the kingdom of Israel.

There is no future for Israel. Destruction is on its way.

The second name is called Lo-Ruhamah, which means NO mercy or love. I will not forgive you

The third name is Lo-Ammi, not my people, which is really an annulment of the Abrahamic covenant.

The divorce contract is drawn. The marriage cannot continue forever

At which point I wonder if the appropriate question to ask is, what do you feel about this? Does it feel right that our point 1 should lead to point 2— that if the marriage feels like you are married to a partner who

works behind those windows in Amsterdam, then the right thing to do is to end it

Does that feel like a reasonable conclusion to you?

And in my experience, I think most people in our culture today would say it's not a reasonable conclusion. It's not right for God to end this relationship—that's not how God should operate

He should stop being petty and small minded — Surely people have a right to do what they like with their lives and bodies. God should not really be cross with them.

Of course partly it is because, as I said earlier, we are terrible at seeing ourselves from God's point of view. If it feels good to me then it must be ok with God. Or actually, if many of us are happy with it, then the Holy Spirit must be happy with it. We think our point of view about ourselves is God's point of view about us

But as I heard someone say, it's also because we've been very good at taking biblical metaphors of the relationship that we like, something like God is our father and deals with us as his children, and we just

translate that anyway we want to and how we think that should work.

So if your child does sth naughty, you pretend to be cross. But really, you are not cross at all. You just want to show them that it is wrong what they've done, but it doesn't really matter.

And we project that mentality on God; which in middle eastern contexts doesn't work like that. Ask your Middle eastern friends how father-children relationship traditionally works in those cultures. But we also forget other metaphors about God's relationship with us—that God is king, judge, husband etc

And really, in our normal life, we wouldn't think of unfaithfulness in the way we usually think about it with God. We don't just sweep it under the carpet when people are unfaithful to us. We don't just happily be unfaithful with each other as if it was all ok.

You see, we must say God is right. No relationship can work like that.

Which makes v.10 even more shocking

### 3. Yet there will be mercy

V.10 Yet the Israelites will be like the sand on the seashore, which cannot be measured or counted. In the place where it was said to them, 'You are not my people,' they will be called 'children of the living God.'

You see, it is a Complete reversal of the divorce contract. Turns it completely on top of its head.

We are meant to be puzzled with this

Just this week there was a screenshot of a zoom court session going round in Kenya. After covid they've continued to hold some court sessions via zoom. And this woman who was pressing for a divorce with serious allegation against the husband showed up in the zoom court session, and forgot to switch off her video because she was still in bed. And next to her, was the husband she was divorcing both of them cuddled up.

No idea if the divorce will go on, but here we have total stop to the divorce.

And to understand Hosea properly, is to feel the shock that this relationship would ever get back together. Can you imagine what would need to be amended. Can you imagine what would need to be forgotten?

That is the gospel message. That is the God of the Bible. That even if indeed it is reasonable and right for him to end the relationship, he chooses to still have mercy.

It is shocking indeed.

There is a song out there called the reckless love of God, and some people have questioned the use of that word reckless. I think the critics have a point, if reckless means without care or thoughtfulness. But I can think of no other word that describes a God that sticks to and pursues like a husband who sticks to and pursues, at a great cost to himself, a partner who sells themselves, a husband who loves and is faithful to a partner who does not love him and is unfaithful to him