

**Sunday January 17
An Unfaithful Bride
Hosea 1:1-11**

1 The word of the LORD that came to Hosea son of Beeri during the reigns of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz and Hezekiah, kings of Judah, and during the reign of Jeroboam son of Jehoash king of Israel:

² When the LORD began to speak through Hosea, the LORD said to him, “Go, marry a promiscuous woman and have children with her, for like an adulterous wife this land is guilty of unfaithfulness to the LORD.”

³ So he married Gomer daughter of Diblaim, and she conceived and bore him a son.

⁴ Then the LORD said to Hosea, “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.

⁵ In that day I will break Israel's bow in the Valley of Jezreel.”

⁶ Gomer conceived again and gave birth to a daughter. Then the LORD said to Hosea, “Call her Lo-Ruhamah (which means “not loved”), for I will no longer show love to Israel, that I should at all forgive them.

⁷ Yet I will show love to Judah; and I will save them—not by bow, sword or battle, or by horses and horsemen, but I, the LORD their God, will save them.”

⁸ After she had weaned Lo-Ruhamah, Gomer had another son.

⁹ Then the LORD said, “Call him Lo-Ammi (which means “not my people”), for you are not my people, and I am not your God.

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.’

¹¹ The people of Judah and the people of Israel will come together; they will appoint one leader and will come up out of the land, for great will be the day of Jezreel.

Good Morning (Afternoon) my sisters and brothers in Christ, I am grateful to God to be able to stand before you and prepare to bring you the good news of Jesus the Christ. I was in a discussion with two of my clergy friends and the discussion turned to what makes a good sermon. One said a good sermon must always share the good news, the gospel of Jesus the Christ. The other said that he thought a good sermon was one that leads you to celebration. I listened as they went back and forth and finally I asked, "Isn't a good sermon one that leads you to examine your life and seek to be transformed into what God has called you to be? One of them said, "well, yeah" and then they returned to their good news vs. celebration discussion. I am glad that that I am clear about what makes a good sermon.

¹ In the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who will judge the living and the dead, and in view of his appearing and his kingdom, I give you this charge:

² Preach the word; be prepared in season and out of season; correct, rebuke and encourage—with great patience and careful instruction.

³ For the time will come when people will not put up with sound doctrine. Instead, to suit their own desires, they will gather around them a great number of teachers to say what their itching ears want to hear.

⁴ They will turn their ears away from the truth and turn aside to myths.

⁵ But you, keep your head in all situations, endure hardship, do the work of an evangelist, discharge all the duties of your ministry. 2 Timothy 4 (NIV)

The Word this morning comes from Hosea and our scripture selection is the entire 1st chapter. Now I knew this was coming for I had previewed the entire quarter a while back, but when I begin to prepare at the early part of the week I was just not ready to talk about another man and his wife after last Sunday and the Song of Solomon. If you were present or read the sermon on the website you know that I used the songs I grew up with to explain the kind of love that Solomon expressed for this unnamed women and that she is turn expressed for him. It was a positive love, a holy love, a love pleasing to God. And so the sermon title was:

GOD'S KIND OF LOVE

The transformation that I was seeking to bring to your attention had three teaching points and I am going to repeat them as they lead us into the message for today.

First Teaching Point:

God intended the act of sex to be within the bonds of marriage.

I think that is simple and straight forward enough that I don't need to make any other comments.

Second Teaching Point

Love requires attention

This teaching point said in part that when you love **something, someone or God** you give it attention. You spend time with your love, you do right by your love, and you tell others about your love. I was seeking to remind you that you couldn't fully love God and not give God any attention. That attention includes **time** in the form of church attendance; your **talent** in the form of singing, ushering, cleaning, folding bulletins and your **tithe** – 10% of everything God provides belongs to Him. You also cannot love God and not be willing to tell anyone else about that love and introduce them to your God.

The **third teaching point God is love, God loves you, and God will take you back**

I did not develop, but instead left it to you to ponder, pray over and practice during the week. I did not know at the time it would become the title of this week's sermon.

This morning we are again posed with a similar situation to last week. There is the story of Hosea and Gomer – a love story – and there is also the story of God's relationship with an unfaithful people. We don't have to speculate as to whether or not this story has two meanings for scripture tells us that it does! So the challenge during this preaching moment is to bring you to the point where you are able to recognize yourself in the story and seek God's help in being transformed. Would you pray with me as I wrestle with three statements that I know to be true? They are the three statements I closed with on last week:

God is love!

God loves you!

God will take you back!

Shall we pray!

Father God we are here in this place and at this time to hear from you. We have sung our songs of praise. We have worshipped you for who you are and what you are doing in our lives and now we need to hear from heaven. If the word you send takes us to the cross, we will thank you. If the word you send causes us to jump up, reach up and make some noise we will do just that. But Father, we also need a word that moves us to be more like the people you have called us to be. Let the word lead to a transformed heart, transformed mind, and transformed actions. Abba, use me. I wish to empty myself, so that you will fill me as you see fit. In the name of your Son, Jesus the Christ we pray. Amen and Amen.

God is love!

God loves you!

God will take you back!

For those of you unfamiliar with the story of Hosea and Gomer let me give you a plot summation and after the summation let me attempt to make it relate to where we are as a people.

The Children of Israel were once again on one of their downward swings, they had allowed the people around them to confuse them and lead them back into sin – sin of temple whores – sin of over indulgence – sin of idolatry and the sin of adultery. Because God considered the Children of Israel His bride, when they worshipped other gods, they were breaking at least two of the Ten Commandments – they were placing others god in place of God and they were committing adultery. **Put a pin there for a moment and ask yourself**

“Have I been cheating on God?”

Into this situation God calls and sends Hosea a prophet, not a priest because he was not born of the priestly order, but a prophet sent by God to speak to the Israel, the northern kingdom. Hosea was chosen by God to live a life that would be an example to the people of how they had treated God and how God had and would respond. In order for Hosea to live this example God told him to go and take a wife. God also told him what to expect from this wife, what to name the children born during this marriage, and finally what to do when his wife left him. The names of the children spoke to the sins of the Children of Israel –

son named for the site of a massacre

daughter named not loved

another son named not mine

Let's see if we can bring this story to where we are right now.

A Baptist preacher has just complete seminary and he hopes to find a church to pastor. But instead God sends him into the mission field and tells him I am going to use your life as an example to my people. Now the first thing I want you to do is find a wife. No, God says, not a typical "preachers wife" – not a pianist, or a teacher, or a soloist, or an excellent organizer – but go and marry a woman that I am telling you will not keep her vows – will probably have children outside of the marriage and eventually leave you. **The Baptist preacher listened and did as God said.**

Teaching Point #1

Are you willing to listen and do what God asks you do to?

Do you love God enough to trust that "all things work together for good"?

Do you love God enough to take the first step when you cannot see the staircase?

Do you love God enough to risk the conversation that will take place behind your back as you do what God asks you to do?

God is love!

God loves you!

God will take you back!

God is not only using the marriage of a preacher and a prostitute to teach the lesson God is using the naming of the children to continue to teach and illustrate the lesson. The Baptist preacher marries a woman whose first talent was not being a loyal preacher's wife. But the preacher loves her anyway and because he loves her he pays attention to her and they have a child. And God says name your first born from "**Selma to Ferguson**" to remind the people and yourself that they have been compliance in moving forward with the dream I had given my prophet Martin. And the Baptist preacher and his soon to be cheating wife did as God asked.

Can you hear the preacher – every time he looks at his son, every time he calls his son, every time someone hears the name of his son – he has a story to tell. A story of a people who became compliance – thought they had arrived – stop paying attention to what was going on – stop teaching their children about a God who loves – stop going to the polls – stop caring for their neighbor as themselves – stop serving God and still expected God to bless.

Are you willing to give your first born – your most important possession to God – so that God can use it as a teaching illustration to a hard headed, hard hearted, non-loving people?

Are you willing to name your first born to reflect the mission you believe God has given you?

It is not really that far fetched.

Michael King Sr. went to Europe and the Holy Land, he had an opportunity to visit many of places he had only read about. Taylor Branch in his book *Parting the Waters* says that Michael King Sr. was so impressed by the teachings and actions of a German Catholic Priest named Martin Luther that when he returned home he changed his name and the name of his five-year-old son. Branch writes

"Name changes have always been part of religious history, used to announce the existence of a 'new person,'" ¹

I just think God had to have been in the plan and Michael Sr. had to trust the plan.

Teaching Point #2 When you don't understand the plan – trust the PLANNER

Neither the congregation nor the community was certain if the next child, a daughter belonged to the Baptist preacher. But the Baptist preacher welcomed her into his home and God said call her

Yolanda Denise Bernice Albertina

Name her for the children left behind when hate killed their father

Name your daughter for all the daughters ignored in schools and communities

Name your daughter for all those daughters who have been victims of child abuse and domestic violence.

Let the name of your daughter remind you and the people of all they have not done.

Teaching Point #3 God can use anybody to bring his plan into being

¹ http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2015/01/17/martin-luther-king-jr-name_n_6481554.html

The modern day preacher looked at all that God was doing in his life. He knew that God was not finished with him yet. He went to the scriptures to see if he could hear a word that would sustain him. God pointed him toward the cross. Amen